

Vietnam

## Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base

377th APS Assigned TSN AB, 8 Apr 1966-15 May 1967; 377th SPS, TSN AB, 15 May 1967-28 Mar 1973



### *The Waving Nurse!*

**Major Ruth Sidisin**  
**21st Casualty Staging Unit**  
**Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base**  
**December 1968 - December 1969**

The following emails were posted on the [Vietnam Security Police Association Public Bulletin Board](#):

#### **Waving To A Security Policeman, Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base**

**[Charles Penley, 377th Security Police Squadron](#),**

*Tue, Sep 15 2009, 11:32 PDT)*

"Waving To The Security Policemen

I am hoping that some of the former Security Police members can fill in the blanks on this story -- or at least will remember what happened.

I lived in one of the two female BOQs that were behind the VNAF Chapel (which had the impressive hole in the roof from an earlier rocket attack). During the first half of my tour (April 1968 -- May 1969), there was a nurse who had started a tradition of standing on the second floor balcony of our building and waving at the SPs who passed, late in the afternoon, for a shift change.

Charles Penley, who is my guru on "all things TSN," has told me that the SPs could have been going to Bravo Sector, Charlie Sector, Delta Sector, or Base Police guard posts. (We were just told at the time that they were going "out to the perimeter.")

This grew to be quite a "tradition." Other women in the "Q" who were off-duty would join her, and the women would wave and shout and clap for the guys, and the guys would wave and holler back. This nurse must have worked a shift where she'd be back in her quarters by 1600 or thereabouts.

I only got to participate in this "tradition" once, that I recall. I worked at 7AF Intelligence, and we worked until about 1800, so I was rarely there. (I worked in the secure area "behind the banana trees," which had an SP post to check us in and out.)

This went to the back of my mind until November 1992 and the tenth anniversary of The Wall. Living in northern Virginia, I went into DC with a relative and a friend, both Vietnam vets, on November 11th to walk in the 10th anniversary parade. It was also the dedication of the Vietnam Women's Memorial, so there were many women there. The three of us were heading for the Virginia section of the parade when someone told me, "Quick, go up to the front of the parade. The women are walking there and you should be there." So I did, and there were probably about two dozen women in our contingent. As we walked and talked, this story suddenly came into my head and I

mentioned it -- and someone in the group said -- "There she is, over there." And it was the same [waving nurse] woman. With the crush of people and all that was happening I never got to talk to her.

In retrospect, I lived in the same small building, but I had never talked with her. We never really socialized with anyone other than the people with whom we worked (Talk about staying in a small circle!). If I had it to do over again, I would have expanded my circle -- and talked to this woman (and the others).

Does anyone remember this? I have a vague memory of being told at the time that she had been invited over to the SPs' area and they thanked her and "made a fuss about her." I hope that happened!

Maybe this will ring a bell with someone --  
"Welcome Home Brother!"

**Date Posted:** *Tue, Sep 15 2009, 12: 03: 28 PDT*

**Author:** [Jack Smith 377th SPS 68-69 LM 453](#)

**Subject:** Re: Waving To A Security Policeman, Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base

**In reply to:** Charles Penley, 377th Security Police Squadron 's message, [Waving To A Security Policeman, Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base](#)" on *Tue, Sep 15 2009, 11:32: 32 PDT*

I was at Tân Sơn Nhứt, Dec 1968-Dec 1969 and I remember well going out on QRT and the Nurse's waving at our truck. I do not remember her name but one of the Nurse's was a Major. We would stop the truck and talk to them. That's all that happened, was talk. They were there every night waiting for the QRT for that shift to go by.

Jack the Old Cowboy

**Date Posted:** *Tue, Sep 15 2009, 13: 26: 18 PDT*

**Author:** [Ray Rash](#)

**Subject:** Re: Waving To A Security Policeman, Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base

I remember very well... the HWS Section stopped and presented a plaque to the Major, who we called 'Mom'. I have or had some pictures of the presentation and will send them in to Charles... IF I can find them.



377th SPS arrive for thank-you presentation for 'mom, the waving nurse', Major Ruth Sidisin (Ret. LTC).



377th SPS wait for 'mom', along with Lt. Dee Corbett-Reiter (Ret. Major), nurse and fellow friend of 'mom'.



Major Ruth Sidisin [ret. LTC], nurse 'mom', is presented a recognition plaque and the sincere thanks of the 377th SPS.

**Date Posted:** *Wed, Sep 16 2009, 21:13: 44 PDT*

**Author:** [Bruce Ross](#)

**Subject:** Re: Waving To A Security Policeman, Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base

Jack & Ray, Damn you guys had all the luck, I was at Nha Trang and Phan Rang 65-66 and honestly don't recall ever seeing a round eye that whole year.

Bruce LM#174

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Sep 17 2009, 11:30: 51 PDT*

**Author:** [Ray Rash](#)

**Subject:** Re: Waving To A Security Policeman, Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base

Hello to all. FYI, I found three photos of the 377th HWS presenting a plaque to the nurses. I forwarded them to Charles Penley and undoubtedly, he will post them on the TSNA[ssociation] website. Looking at the photos brought back lots of memories. Just wish I could find Brian Lighthouse, who started it all by going by the nurses compound.

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Sep 17 2009, 14: 08: 29 PDT*

**Author:** [Charles Penley, 377th Security Police Squadron](#)

**Subject:** Re: Waving To A Security Policeman, Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base

Ray and Everyone, I have posted the story along with photographs supplied by Don Segraves, Ray Rash and Jack Smith.

I have put up a temporary web page for everyone to see. It would be nice if anyone knows the female Major's name. We called her "mom." Please copy and paste: <http://www.tsna.org/bessette/index.html>

Charles Penley

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Sep 17 2009, 17:27 PDT*

**Author:** [Jack Smith 377th SPS 68-69 LM 453](#)

**Subject:** Re: Waving To A Security Policeman, Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base

Charles: I just finished read the letter and what a great job you did on this project. Thank you for the fine work you do to bring our history alive. I hope all the members take the time to read it.

Jack The Old Cowboy

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Oct 15 2009, 6:47 PDT*

**MISSION:** "Waving Nurse" -- [Bill Paddock VSPA LM 205 NKP 1968](#),

I finally got... Ruth Sidisin... "The Waving Nurse"... on the phone... and I am to meet with her at 2: 00 o'clock PM this afternoon in Sumter, South Carolina at Covenant Place nursing home to deliver the gifts sent by and on behalf of all of you. I will repost this afternoon and let you know how it went. I will take pictures.

Best Always

William R (Bill) Paddock

VSPA LM 205

VDHA Assoc. Member #16019

56th Security Poilice Sq., Nakhon Phanom RTAFB (1968)

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Oct 15 2009, 9:08 PDT*  
**Author:** [Pat Houseworth](#) (Good Work Bill!)  
**Subject:** Re: MISSION: "Waving Nurse"

Good work Bill... tell "Mom" hello from all the guys from TNS and the 377th SPS.

Pat

**Tân Sơn Nhứt Nurse -- [Ken Smith LM570](#) ,**  
*Wed, Sep 30 2009, 16: 28: 26 PDT*

I read the BB last week about the Nurse that waved at SP's. I have a friend that was a nurse at Tân Sơn Nhứt AB in 1968. She remembers a Major that lived on the second floor of the barracks. She belongs to a group of Vietnam Nurses and is going to try and get her name. She could not remember her name but is sure that someone in the group will remember. All she could remember was that the Major used to cook for some of them on her electric skillet in her room and when they had to run for cover during an attack the Major was old and slow. When we were 19 or 20 we thought everyone over 35 was old. I will let you know what I find out.

**Date Posted:** *Wed, Sep 30 2009, 20: 13: 14 PDT*  
**Author:** [Charles Penley, 377th Security Police Squadron](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Tân Sơn Nhứt Nurse

Ken, I sent you a private email about the female Major.

Charles Penley

**Nurses wave to the 377th Security Police - UPDATE!**  
[Charles Penley, 377th Security Police Squadron](#) , *Tue, Oct 06 2009, 19: 03: 56 PDT*

Ray Rash, Don Segreaves and Ray Rash, here is the update on the nurses who waved at the 377th Security Police Squadron: I have found Major Ruth Sidisin also known as "Mom," on the internet. (Now I will see if I can locate her in person.)

I found her by searching google-search for "Tân Sơn Nhứt" nurse wave mom. [See following article]

Persistence definitely pays off.

Courtesy of URL: [John Hopkins University, Letters from the Front: Vietnam](#)

**Vietnam**



Ruth Sidisin '52, who served a 12-month tour of duty in Vietnam, said her most treasured memory was "the valor and courage of our American Servicemen."  
[Photo © [The Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives](#)]

Ruth Sidisin '52 spent a 12-month tour of duty with the United States Air Force Nurse Corps in Vietnam. She returned with hundreds of photographs, which she used to acCO a lecture she gave on her experiences.

... I was assigned to the Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base, Republic of Viet-Nam, located in northwest Saigon. The Air strip services both the military base and the civilian airport for Saigon. I arrived in Saigon December 17th, 1968....

The greatest time of my tour was involved in the care of the military men. The military medical system in the Combat Zone is the finest in the world. The wounded man is given immediate first aid in the field by the Medic and evacuated by helicopter to the nearest Army Field Hospital, usually arriving within 10-15 minutes after injury, for initial surgery and care by hard-working teams of Army Physicians, Nurses and Medical Technicians working round-the-clock. As soon as he is able to be moved, he is brought by ambulance bus to the Aeromedical Evacuation Plane and flown to one of the three Casualty Staging Hospitals for evacuation to the States...

My first months I cared for the Combat Casualties. We received them from the In-Country flight, changed their dressings, gave them baths and shaves, fed them and after a nights' sleep sent them on their way. The rest of my tour I was in charge of the 30-bed Dispensary Ward caring for Base Personnel and those passing through Tân Sơn Nhứt with general medical illnesses or minor injuries. More serious problems were cared for at the Army 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon or Air-Evacced to Cam Ranh Bay AB...

We worked hard and our work week averaged 60 hours, many of them were 72 hours. This did not leave too much spare time. Each of us had to find our own way to pass the long year away from home and loved ones. We read, listened to the Armed Forces Radio-TV, and mostly revived the lost art of conversation. As time permitted (and also security--we were restricted to base after 10 PM and during periods of increased guerilla activities around the base and in Saigon) we took brief trips into Saigon...

My most treasured memory of my tour in Viet-Nam is of the valor and courage of our American Servicemen--their selflessness, comradeship and brotherhood. My special favorites were the Enlisted men and Officers of the 377th Security Police. I became the "Mom" to the 368 men guarding the base perimeter at night. Every night, I would wave them off to work either perched on this Rat Bait Box outside my room or from the 2nd floor veranda, sometimes with the help of other Nurses or WAF. My sons would ride by in their trucks, jeeps, tanks or Armored personnel Carriers in fair weather or Monsoon rains to protect us... On Mother's Day they presented me with a beautiful bouquet of pink gladioli on their way to work. One night they surprised me by naming one of the mini-gun tanks after me...

I found her by searching google search for "Tan Son Nhut" nurse wave mom. Persistenace definitely pays off.

Your friend,  
Charles Penley

**Date Posted:** Wed, Oct 07 2009, 3: 30: 06 PDT

**Author:** [Stan Morris, LM 254](#)

**Subject:** Re: Nurses wave to the 377th Security Police - UPDATE!

Thanks for the update. Stan Morris

**Date Posted:** *Wed, Oct 07 2009, 4: 15: 03 PDT*

**Author:** [Bob Mitchell LM 301](#)

**Subject:** Re: Nurses wave to the 377th Security Police - UPDATE!

What a moving tribute to the men of the 377th. God bless her.

**Date Posted:** *Wed, Oct 07 2009, 8: 05: 16 PDT*

**Author:** [Glenn Wilson](#) (Appreciation)

**Subject:** Re: Nurses wave to the 377th Security Police - UPDATE!

A sweet story of appreciation from a Lady who was there and saw what our Security Police were doing on a daily/nightly basis. No doubt about it ... sometimes our work there was taken for granted, that is; until the action started. The threats to our bases became especially real when the Rockets and other Stand-Off munitions started falling on our flight lines and hootches. Nevertheless, we let the enemy know that they were uninvited guests and would not walk through the Main Gate while we were there.

Glenn LM#117

**Date Posted:** *Wed, Oct 07 2009, 11:47: 14 PDT*

**Author:** [Bill Marshall L/M 85](#)

**Subject:** Re: Nurses wave to the 377th Security Police - UPDAT E! (Nice Work)

Charles, just wanted to express my appreciation for the information that you are able to run down. The information to the question about the nurse who saw the 377th off to post was great and I have noticed in the past you have been very helpful in researching different questions that come along. Thanks for "Taking Care of our Own" Your efforts have not gone un-noticed. THANKS!

**Date Posted:** *Wed, Oct 07 2009, 18: 30: 14 PDT*

**Author:** [Ed Daubert,377th SPS,LM507](#)

**Subject:** Re: Nurses wave to the 377th Security Police - UPDATE!

Charles, you've done it again ... great work! Even though I wasn't there during that time period I feel that this lady needs a special place with the 377th!

Ed Daubert

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Oct 08 2009, 15: 45: 07 PDT*

**Author:** [Steve Gattis](#) (knew her an)

**Subject:** Re: Nurses wave to the 377th Security Police - UPDATE!

Hello to all.

Charles and I have both talked with Ruth on the telephone. She was thrilled. We also talked to another nurse from Tân Sơn Nhứt named Dee Corbet who was one of the nurses that continued to "wave" our troops to work at Tan Son Nhut after Ruth went home. They were both so happy to hear from us.

I will make an announcement at the reunion to explain all that Charles has done to find Ruth and that we have

talked with her.

We have a VSPA member who lives close to Ruth who is at the reunion. I will send something home with him to give to Ruth and Dee from all of us, especially from the guys in the 377th who knew Ruth and remember her as "Mom."

My best to all of you.  
Steve Gattis

**MISSION: "Waving Nurse"**  
**[Bill Paddock VSPA LM 205 NKP 1968](#)**

I finally got Ruth Sidisin "The Waving Nurse" on the phone and I am to meet with her at 2: 00 o'clock PM this afternoon in Sumter, South Carolina at Covenant Place nursing home to deliver the gifts sent by and on behalf of all of you. I will repost this afternoon and let you know how it went. I will take pictures.

Best Always  
William R (Bill) Paddock  
VSPA LM 205  
VDHA Assoc. Member #16019  
56th Security Poilice Sq., Nakhon Phanom RTAFB (1968)

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Oct 15 2009, 9: 08: 17 PDT*  
**Author:** [Pat Houseworth](#) (Good Work Bill!)  
**Subject:** Re: MISSION: "Waving Nurse"

Good work Bill. Tell "Mom" hello from all the guys from TNS and the 377th SPS.

Pat

**Mission... COMPLETED "Waving Nurse"**  
**[William R Paddock 56th SPS \(1968\) VSPA LM205](#), *Thu, Oct 15 2009***

I met with Lt. Col Ruth SIDISON this afternoon at Covenant Place nursing home. Sumter, South Carolina. Also there was **Dee Rector**, her friend and fellow nurse at TSN. I handed her each gift from all the members of the VSPA one at a time and she would exclaim and "cry" with each one. She has had a stroke and is fixing to go for more treatment at either Duke University or somewhere. She asked me to thank all of you for the gifts and she send her unqualified love to each and everyone of you.

**Dee Rector** also sends her love, thanks and appreciation for thinking of her... mostly remembering her! I have taken about twenty pictures of this event so if you would like some let me know and I will email them to you. [Photos follow the emails]

Best Always

William R (Bill) Paddock  
VSPA LM #205  
VDHA Assoc Member # 16019  
56th Security Police Sq. Nakhon Phanom RTAFB (1968)

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Oct 15 2009, 15: 14: 40 PDT*  
**Author:** [William R Paddock VSPA LM 205](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Mission... COMPLETED.."Waving Nurse"

I forgot to let all of you know the addresses of both Ruth and Dee if you would like them as follows:

**Ms. Ruth Sidisin**

2825 Carter Road  
Sumter South Carolina 29150

**Ms. Dee Corbett-Reiter (Ret. Major)**

575 Canvasback Cove  
Sumter, South Carolina 29150

Best Always  
Bill Paddock

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Oct 15 2009, 15: 52: 40 PDT*

**Author:** [Bill Marshall L/M 85](#)

**Subject:** Re: Mission... COMPLETED.. "Waving Nurse"

Bill, you're a good man! Excellent gesture to these fine ladies. You are to be congratulated for representing the association in recognizing these outstanding nurses. You made their day which they well deserved.

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Oct 15 2009, 15: 19: 38 PDT*

**Author:** [Chaplain Jim Lm #442](#)

**Subject:** Re: Mission... COMPLETED.. "Waving Nurse"

Bill, thank you for your valiant efforts as you represented the VSPA in acknowledging this dear woman's contribution to the morale of our Security Police during those war torn days. You make us proud!

**Date Posted:** *Thu, Oct 15 2009, 17: 36: 07 PDT*

**Author:** [Warren Maynard LM#234](#)

**Subject:** Re: Mission... COMPLETED.. "Waving Nurse"

Bill I need your email address so I can send you my pictures and I would like some of the ones you just took. Once again thanks old friend.

An old NKPer just like you.  
Warren Maynard

**Date Posted:** *Fri, Oct 16 2009, 1:46: 04 PDT*

**Author:** [Bill Morris](#)

**Subject:** Re: Mission... COMPLETED.. "Waving Nurse"

Truly heart warming. God bless them both -- forever.

**Date Posted:** *Fri, Oct 16 2009, 7: 04: 46 PDT*

**Author:** [Carl L Chamberlin LM#504 Phù Cát 67/68](#)

**Subject:** Re: Mission... COMPLETED.. "Waving Nurse"

Well done Bill! Nice to know it brought joy and happiness to a couple of Nurse's who never thought much of what they did then but what it meant to those over the years!

**Date Posted:** *Fri, Oct 16 2009, 18: 08: 30 PDT*

**Author:** [Newell M. Swartz](#)

**Subject:** Re: Mission... COMPLETED.. "Waving Nurse"

Bill, what you did is just one of those remarkable events that everyone associated with it carries to their grave. It is especially great that it has happened to a person who not only waved everyday but was a person who saved lives. And I would bet, that she healed *hearts and minds* as well as bodies for all those men who were in her care. What a great lady. We are all happy for her and grateful that you were able to find her and brighten her life. Newell

**Date Posted:** Tue, Oct 20 2009, 16: 59: 14 PDT

**Author:** [Erlyce Pekas](#)

**Subject:** Re: Mission... COMPLETED.. "Waving Nurse"

Good job, Bill. And you are just the right one to have carried out this mission, too. I know you handled it right!

Erlyce

**Lt. Col. Ruth K. Sidisin "The Waving Nurse" @TSN**

[William R Paddock LM#205](#), Fri, Nov 13 2009

I just received an email from one of "Ruth's" friends. Her Birthday is next Friday, November 21, 2009... she will be 80 years old! They are trying to get everyone to send her birthday cards so that they can "fill up her room" at the nursing home with well wishes!!

Ruth's address is:

Lt. Col.(Ret) Ruth K. Sidisin  
2825 Carter Road Unit 90  
Sumter, South Carolina 29150

SO... all of you from Tân Sơn Nhứt... that knew the "waving nurse"... send her a birthday card...

Best Always

William R (Bill) Paddock  
VSPA LM #205  
56th Security Police Sq., Nakhon Phanom RTAFB: 1968

**Date Posted:** Fri, Nov 13 2009, 8: 22: 36 PST

**Author:** [Ray Rash](#)

**Subject:** Re: Lt. Col. Ruth K. Sidisin "The Waving Nurse" @TSN

Thanks for the info Bill. I'll get "Mom" a card in the mail ASAP. Your Friend,  
Ray Rash

**Date Posted:** Fri, Nov 13 2009, 15: 05: 44 PST

**Author:** [Gary Jones, LM-363](#)

**Subject:** Re: Lt. Col. Ruth K. Sidisin "The Waving Nurse" @TSN

I sent her a "Thinking of you" card a couple of weeks ago. I'll send her another card for her 80th.

**Date Posted:** *Fri, Nov 13 2009, 15: 55: 02 PST*

**Author:** [Jack Smith 377th SPS 68-69 LM 453](#)

**Subject:** Re: Lt. Col. Ruth K. Sidisin "The Waving Nurse" @TSN

My card goes in the mail in the morning. My wife Roberta the Chaplain of the Sisterhood is also preparing a nice card for Col. Ruth.

Jack the Old Cowboy

**Date Posted:** *Fri, Nov 13 2009, 20: 05: 26 PST*

**Author:** [Charles Penley, 377th Security Police Sq., Tân Sơn Nhứt AB](#)

**Subject:** Re: Lt. Col. Ruth K. Sidisin "The Waving Nurse" @TSN

My sister Janice and I sent Major "Mom" also known as Lt Col Ruth K. Sidisin a birthday card and letter today.

Charles Penley

**From:** DPoss [mailto:dposs@dposs.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, January 24, 2010 6:02 PM

**To:** 'N Swartz'

**Subject:** The Waving Nurse

**Importance:** High

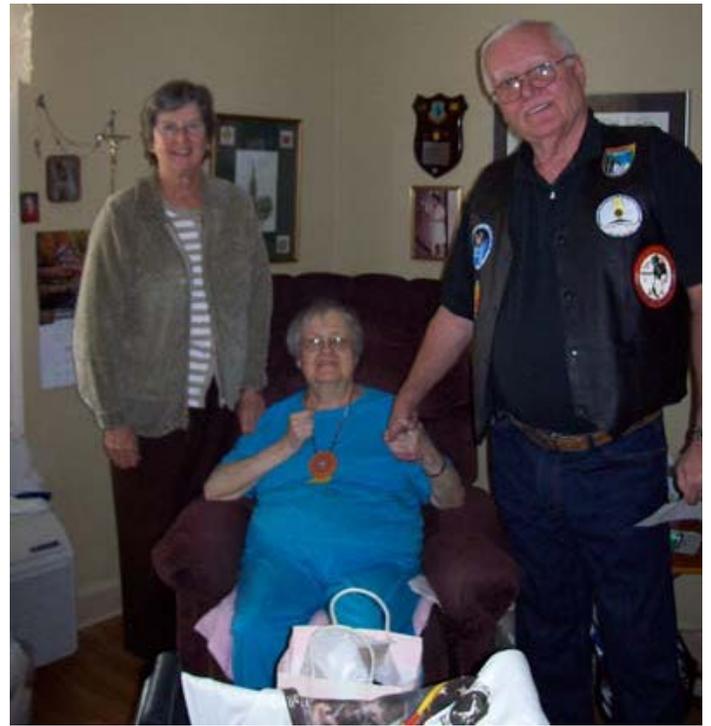
Newell:

In the next day or two, I will post the complete story that originated on the bulletin board concerning 'any remembering the waving nurse'. As you know, the nurse was located in a rest home and is in her 80's. She was thrilled that 'we' remembered her. We Take Care of Our Own...is not just a 'saying' to any of us. I recommend that VSPA consider a special Associate Membership in the Sisterhood for this nurse. We certainly all know these nurses Took Care of Our Wounded, and without doubt, Lt. Col. Ruth K. Sidisin "The Waving Nurse" went the extra mile to Take Care of Our spirit by waving to our men on the way to post daily. So, an Associate Membership and perhaps a plaque or photo of our men marching in the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade would truly be an honor for us to present Nurse Sidisin...the waving nurse.

Don Poss

**The following photos were taken in Sumpter South Carolina when I met with Ruth in the nursing home. The other lady in the pictures is "Dee Corbett-Reiter (Ret. Major)" Ruth's friend and fellow nurse back in 1968.**

**Bill Paddock**





*VSPA Takes Care of Nurses who Took Care of Our Wounded*

*We Take Care of Our Own*

[Click to Report BROKEN LINKS or Photos, or Comment](#)