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# *The Tiger Gazette*

121st AVN Association      Volume Number 11      Issue Number 4      Date 7 December 2021

## **From the Editor's Desk**

There is less than three shopping weeks until Christmas! With the lack of products on the store shelves there are many parents and children in a state of dismay as to how Christmas will be this year. As for me, all I want for Christmas is a relaxing day to reminisce about old times and old friends. Some of my memories are of Christmas at Soc Trang. I spent two Christmases there: 1966 and 1967. There was a different cast of characters for both of them, but both were marked by longing for home and sharing our Christmas with our buddies. In '66 I was still in the 80<sup>th</sup> Trans. Det. Each of us received a parcel from a Salvation Army Chaplain in Kentucky. The Salvation Army has been my favorite charity ever since. We also listened to Armed Forces Viet Nam radio. All of the programs featured Christmas music except the news. One news flash was to announce that the Christmas Truce had been broken. Oddly enough the chief effect of this announcement was to provoke laughter. Of course, alcohol was consumed freely. In '67 I was a Blue Tiger Crew Chief and was staying pretty busy. A Christmas party was organized and CWO Frank Orifici took charge (or was coerced into taking charge) and did a splendid job under the circumstances. Each of us was given a steak and a turn at the grill to cook it the way we wanted it. I had purchased a bottle of Christian Brothers brandy, because I had read so many stories of men being given a "shot of brandy" after a mission. After tasting that stuff, I figured that anyone who drank brandy was pretty desperate for something with alcohol. Later I discovered Courvoisier, which is palatable, but that is another story. At the time, my gunner and I placed our steaks on the grill and started drizzling the brandy on them. We kept turning and drizzling, only quitting when we ran out of brandy. I presume we did not over-cook the steaks but have no idea whether or not the brandy accomplished anything being used like that. Once again the radio announced that the Truce had been broken, but it was not broken by us.

As we prepare for this Christmas, let us be glad that we are at home rather than in some far-flung land.

## **Secretary's Report**

### **Another Try for a Reunion**

After the three cancellations of our reunion in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID, we are going to try it again with the hopes that the number of COVID cases continue to decline.

We have the preliminary details worked out and arrangements with the Hilton Garden Inn to gather in Columbus, Georgia on September 22, 23, & 24, 2022. Most of the details remain as originally planned. We still plan to have the Huey rides available which will take place at the parade field at the National Infantry Museum, just a short distance from the hotel. Hopefully, the DOD will open the Museum and military bases to the public so those of you who wish to visit Fort Benning will be able to do so. Several

folks had planned to make the trek over to Fort Rucker to visit our monument honoring those who were KIA while serving with the 93<sup>rd</sup> & 121<sup>st</sup> and it is possible you can do that, too while you are in the area. We plan to mail out the reunion information and registration forms in early March to give everyone plenty of time to make their travel arrangements. As usual, we ask that you register early, so your committee can plan the meals and hospitality room needs.

We will have all our PX items at this reunion, so if you are interested in our logo embroidered shirts or hats, patches, pins or other items, will be available. You also may want to check out the PX tab on our web site ( 121avn.org ) to view or purchase items from the PX.

The raffles which we hold at every reunion will be handled by some of the ladies who volunteered to take care of that at this reunion. The raffles, which help fund our scholarship program, will have some unique prizes this time, so you won't want to miss the opportunity to purchase tickets with the hope of winning one of these items.

### **Educational Financial Assistance (Scholarship) Program**

The past two years we have been able to award 8 scholarships (4 each year) for \$1,000 each to students who applied and fit the criteria for our program. We hope to be able to continue this annual trend as long as the Association has the funds to support it. This program is funded (in part) by the raffles held at our annual reunions.

It is not too early to tell your grandkids to prepare to send in their scholarship applications. The information can be found on the website – 121avn.org .

Even though we have not been able to meet in person, your Board of Trustees continues to operate and maintain the Association via email and phone calls. Everything is up to date and the Association is doing well.

Looking forward to finally get together for a reunion! Hope to see you in Columbus.

I wish everyone Happy Holidays and hope you have an enjoyable time with family and friends while celebrating in your own way.

John Schmied, Secretary

### **In Memoriam**

We are not always notified when one of our Brothers passes away. Sometimes we are only aware of the death when mail is returned. The following is a list of deaths we have been informed of since the last time we published obituaries in the Gazette.

Donald Fox – DOD 10/23/21 – 80<sup>th</sup>/93<sup>Rd</sup> – Mid 50's

Louis R. McFadden – DOD 6/7/21 – 121<sup>st</sup> 64-66 – Pilot & Maint. Officer – XO

Frank Orifici – DOD 9/9/21 – 121<sup>st</sup> 67 – Pilot

Keith S. Scudder – DOD 5/5/21 – 121<sup>st</sup> – 69-70 – Pilot – Pay Officer

Brian Sipon – DOD 1/11/21 – 121<sup>st</sup> – 69-70 – 12st – 69-70 – Pilot

Dan Swecker – DOD 9/11/21 – 121<sup>st</sup> – 68-69 – Pilot

David Vollmar – DOD 6/1/21 – 121<sup>st</sup> – 67-68

RIP Brothers

## **To Our Afghanistan Veterans**

Once again, we are leaving a country in which we have fought for many years and have not won a final victory. I am sure that you are wondering: "What was it all for?" There are those who will tell you that it was a wasted effort that should never have been made. Let me assure you that your effort was not wasted, and that you accomplished something very important.

Because of you, we have not had any more terrorist attacks in our country. Those who would attack us know that we have brave men and women who will make them pay a terrible price for their actions. Because of you, Americans can get on an airplane and not be terrified that it will be blown up or taken over to become a suicide attacker.

Because of you, a generation of people in Afghanistan have known freedoms and opportunities that they never dreamed of, and it will be impossible to put that genie back into the bottle.

Because of you, women in that country know that they can be more than property, and children who were otherwise doomed to a life of ignorance and poverty have learned how to read and write and know that they can have an education.

You have given the idea of liberty to a people who did not know that it could ever exist in their world. You have enabled your people to sleep at night, knowing that heroes stood ready to protect them. You have done your job well. You make me proud to be an American.

Donald Jackson

## **Historian's Input to the Gazette, December 2021**

While it has been slow this year, several things have occurred worth mentioning to the readers of the Gazette. I made contact with Cathy Plaster, Ernie Miller's sister. She inherited all of Ernie's photographs and wanted to know how they could be preserved. Around the same time, I was in contact with Texas Tech University's Vietnam Center and Archive (TTU, VNCA) trying to understand their concern for their physical and intellectual property rights. I did not understand that photos are considered personal property, so it makes no difference whether or not you have given me copies of your photos for our archive, under the law they are still your property and will remain so until they are given by you to TTU, VNCA in a Deed of Gift. I have been providing a Deed of Gift for the 121<sup>st</sup> Avn. Association Archive every year since we have been providing our archive to them, but it does not include photos. So Cathy Plaster has given us a chance to legally grant Ernie's photos to TTU, VNCA as part of our archive. She has sent me all of Ernie's photographic materials (slides, negatives, and contact prints) plus a properly executed Deed of Gift which I will be sending to TTU, VNCA. I also intend to execute my own Deed of Gift for my photos in our archive. I will also send those photos I still have. I encourage each of you to do likewise, although sending your photos is probably not necessary. I will ask Don to attach a blank copy of a Deed of Gift to the Gazette for your use. Please send them to me and I will send them to TTU, VNCA. Not now, but soon I will attempt to approach next of kin. Frankly, at this late date I do not expect to get everyone, but hopefully we can show a good effort. I realize this information was already explained in the August Tiger Gazette, but at this point I see no advantage to waiting for the next reunion; hopefully, we can get this process underway as soon as you read this.

## DEED OF GIFT

I (we) ("Donor") hereby give, grant, and transfer all right, title and interest in the material in this/these package(s) to the Vietnam Center & Archive ("VNCA") and relinquish whatever physical and literary property rights, including any and all intellectual property rights **(to include copyright\*)**, I may possess to the VNCA. For all books that I have authored and am donating, I retain all intellectual property rights and copyrights.

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\*If you have questions about signing over your intellectual property rights, including copyrights, to the VNCA, please call 806-742-9010 to discuss your concerns.

## Getting to Vietnam by John Schmied

I left Fort Eustis, Virginia, on July 15, 1966 after completing UH-1 Maintenance School. At the time there was a lengthy airline strike, so I hopped on the first Greyhound bus that was available to get home to St. Louis, Missouri. It seemed like it took forever, but it was only 2 days on a bus. My duffle bag was not on the bus when I arrived in St. Louis and it arrived 4 days later.

While I was home on a two week leave, the airline strike continued. I kept trying to make a reservation, with no luck. I was told that once the strike was over the airlines would be booked solid for several weeks. I looked into getting a military hop from Scott Air Force base, just a short distance from home. No luck there either. Trains from St. Louis to Oakland, California were also booked up. My only other option to get there was Continental Trailways or Greyhound bus. My leave was running out, so I called Oakland Army base and had my leave extended an extra week. I was told to report as soon as possible. Two days later, which was the soonest I could book the trip; I was on my way to Oakland from St. Louis. It was to be a 4 day trip, since the busses stop at every little town along the way.

In Salt Lake City, Utah, I had to transfer from Continental Trailways to Greyhound for the last leg of the journey. It was then that I discovered that my duffle bag was not on the bus when I was in Salt Lake City! I started the process of a search for my lost duffle bag with all my belongings in it. On to Oakland (after several more stops in every one-horse town along the way) the only thing I had was a small bag with some toiletries and a change of underwear! I had chosen to wear khakis for the trip and by the time I got to Oakland, you can imagine how rancid I was after 4 days. I checked at the bus station when I arrived and my bag had been found and would be there in a day or two.

While I was at the Oakland Army Base, I was chewed out at least 4 times a day because I was in khaki uniform and not fatigues. After two days there, when I checked with the bus station, my bag had arrived. I requested a pass to go pick it up. I was told to wait until after dinner and come back for a pass. They held a formation every afternoon and called out the names of those who would be shipping out the next day. My name was called! From that point everyone was corralled and taken to a huge building where we would get our celebrated steak dinner before departing the next morning. Before leaving, I again requested a pass to get my duffle bag. It was denied since I was on the list to ship out. The clerk in the orderly room suggested that I make another request when I get to the "warehouse" where we would be spending the night. I made two more requests with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants who were in charge (on different shifts). Both denied a pass for 30 minutes to go to the bus terminal that we could actually see from the office. My duffle bag was less than a half mile away and I was not allowed to leave the base to get it. I asked about having it picked up and sent over by taxi, which was also denied since we were in a secure area. (Keep in mind that I was still in the only clothes I had when I left St. Louis, my khaki uniform.) Both the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants I encountered also chewed me out for being out of uniform, but would not let me get my duffle bag, so I could be in compliance with a uniform. I was told that my bag would be sent to my next duty station. Go figure, I guess it's the Army way. By this time, I had traveled from coast to coast on a bus, not something I would recommend.

The next morning we boarded the Braniff Airlines plane for Vietnam. Of course, everyone I encountered over the rank or Corporal would rake me across the coals for being out of uniform. At least I had a comfortable time without worrying about being yelled at during the 25 hour flight to Saigon.

Because I did not have fatigues, I was held over at Tan Son Nhut, outside of Saigon for nearly a week. Then in someone's infinite wisdom, they decided to go ahead and ship me out and I would get some fatigues at Can Tho or Soc Trang. When I arrived at Can Tho, the first thing that happened was a reprimand for being out of uniform (of course). I was finally directed to the airfield for a hop to Soc Trang. Once I got there, the supply sergeant found some used fatigues and boots, since there were no new ones available at the PX or anywhere else. Since by this time I had worn those khakis for almost three weeks (although I laundered them in the shower almost every night), I tossed them in the trash. This was August of 1966. Fast forward to January 1967. My duffle bag, which by this time I never expected to see again, finally appeared in Soc Trang. According to the tags on the bag, it was on the same Braniff flight I was on when leaving Oakland and had been lost in storage in Tan Son Nhut for 6 months. The bag had gotten wet and everything smelled pretty bad but everything was intact, just like I packed it. Even a little Instamatic camera was fine and still worked well. My luck with traveling while I was in the Army was the same each time I had to go to a new duty station – my bag would somehow get lost on commercial transportation. Lucky me...

## **The Chaplains' Corner**

By all accounts these last two years have been trying, exasperating, challenging, and even discouraging. We have all witnessed local and global events that have everybody wondering what is going on in the world today? There is a political divide in our country the likes of which has not been seen before. We have a “woke” generation that appears to be bent on re-writing history rather than learning from it, and we have a global pandemic that continues to spawn new variants every six months or so. And we must not overlook the destruction of personal property and commercial business vandalism that appears to be tolerated by many different groups. It would appear that we have lost all respect for individuals or groups of people that do not think or act in the way “I or we think or act.”

We are entering the Christmas Season that should be a time of joyful preparation for all Christians for the coming of Our Savior. Even this is under attack and offensive to some. If nothing else it certainly has been highjacked by the commercial industry in which billions of dollars are spent by many trying to “buy” a little happiness.

So how does one go about putting together a message to an organization of many different religious and cultural backgrounds in this climate that helps to bring a message of hope and peace to all of us during these difficult times.

The message from the angels in the gospel of Luke to the shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus says it all to believers and non-believers alike. There is one thing we can all want and desire for ourselves, our families, and the whole world “that we live in peace and harmony with one another.” The angel’s message was simple and straight forward.

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

We are reminded that we are to give glory, thanks, and praise to our Creator and to also live-in peace with one another. This has been God’s message to us from the beginning of time and will be the same message until the end of time. We are to give thanks and praise to God for all the wonderful things he does for us and we are to live in peace with one another.

As we come to the end of 2021 let us all pray that 2022 will be a healthy and happy year for each and everyone of us and our families. Let us also hope and pray that we will be able to have our reunion this year and to “listen to and swap old war stories” from our glorious and distinguished past.

In closing I share this beautiful blessing from the Jewish tradition and their Book of Numbers. I like to add one additional phrase to this traditional prayer at the very end.

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord let his face shine upon you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord look upon you kindly  
and give you peace;  
may the Lord hold you in the Palm of His hand  
all the days of your life.

**Happy Hanukkah**  
**Merry Christmas**  
And **Happy New Year**

Jack Carey  
Chaplain

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