

AVEL VIETNAM

Newsletter - February 2016

AVEL REUNION 2016

The date has been set, the Hotel agreed upon.

Registration can begin - go to the website
www.avelvietnam.com

LZ Chicago
September 29th to October 2nd



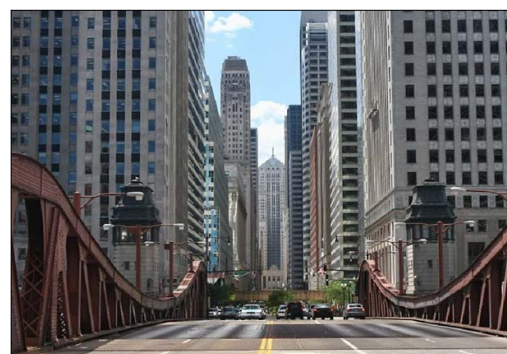
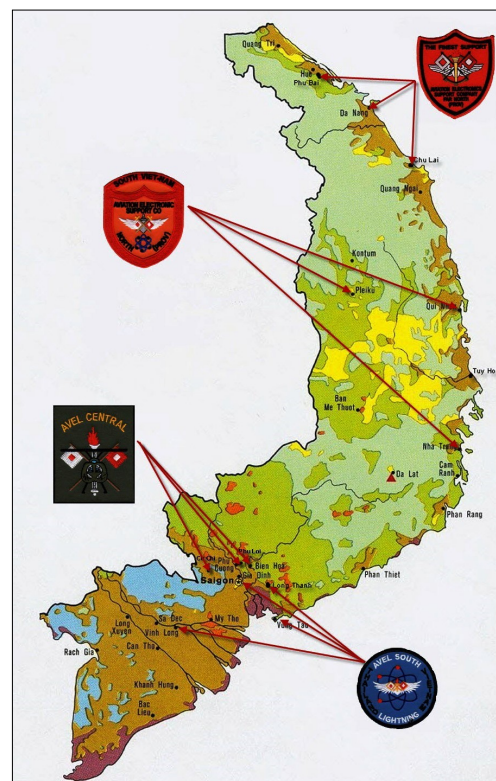
Hotel:
Chicago Marriott O'Hare
8535 W. Higgins
Chicago, IL 60631
Rate: \$139.00/night

Rooms available 3 days prior and after the event

The Hotel has an airport shuttle that runs every 30 minutes. The Hotel is walking distance to the Blue Line "L" and a 5 minute drive to the train.

Details on Hotel Registration will be forthcoming. Watch the website.

REGISTER NOW!
www.avelvietnam.com



Don't forget to join us on facebook. Search for the group: AVEL Vietnam.



Vietnam veteran makes a good life for himself in Cambodia

Cambodia has come a long way since the brutal Khmer Rouge massacred more than 1 million people in the infamous “killing fields” in the 1970s. Yet it remains a nation rooted in the past, a land of friendly locals and immense cultural beauty with darkness lurking beneath the surface.

Phnom Penh, its capital, is a place where the business of survival never sleeps — panhandlers carrying babies meander in a seemingly endless parade, motorized rickshaw drivers offer cheap rides at all hours, fast-talking children peddle homemade wares, and nearly every price is dirt cheap — and negotiable.

In many ways, it’s frozen in time, reminiscent of Saigon at the height of the Vietnam War.

For a handful of American Vietnam veterans who left a little piece of themselves behind during the ferocious jungle war and say they were vilified when they went back to the states, Phnom Penh has become home. “The war was the worst thing that ever happened to me,” Andy Richards, 65, said as he sat in a bar booth, swirling wine in a glass. “I’ve had three open-heart surgeries.”

Richards, a bar manager with a handlebar mustache and sunbaked skin, generally attributes his heart problems to the war. He is warm, friendly and easygoing. “I like Cambodia,” said Richards, who arrived in 2002. “I like the lack of rules. There’s more personal freedoms here than anywhere else. It’s inexpensive. The people are very nice.”

The Madison, Wis., native joined the Army in 1968 at 18 because he expected to be drafted. He spent a short time in the storied 82nd Airborne Division but disliked it because it was “too spit-shined.” He transferred to the 101st Airborne and headed for Vietnam’s jungles. Richards went from a paratrooper to a bandana-wearing grunt, like something out of the 1986 film “Platoon.” He and his fellow soldiers spent time in the most northern part of South Vietnam, the region with the highest concentration of North Vietnamese Army forces. They operated near Khe Sanh, in the highlands, and made forays into the demilitarized zone.

Richards left the Army and Vietnam behind in April 1971 and earned a journalism degree from the University of Wisconsin. He worked at small local newspapers but battled the bottle and his anger for years. “They considered us whiners,” Richards said of his return stateside. “We were a pariah.”

In 1999, at the prodding of a friend, he went back to Vietnam to “release the ghosts.” “I was scared,” Richards said. “I was apprehensive. But after my first day in Saigon, I was talking with ex-NVA, telling war stories. I got that monkey off my back. It was the best thing for me.”

In southern Vietnam, Richards got the thanks he never received at home. They were kind to him; they shook his hand and thanked him for trying to help them. He then traveled to Thailand and Laos.

After briefly returning to the U.S., Richards went back to Southeast Asia for good in November 1999, living first in Thailand, then Vietnam and Cambodia, where he decided to put down roots. After years of searching, he had found a home.

While Thailand has many Air Force and Army veterans living there, and Vietnam has a growing number, Cambodia still has few. Richards said Phnom Penh draws him partially because it is a big city with a small-city feel, and has become almost “cosmopolitan” in recent years.

Yet, despite all the growth and development, which was inevitable as Cambodia came out of the dark Khmer Rouge period in the early ‘90s, Richards says his adopted country will never lose its luster. “I will stay here,” Richards said. “I wouldn’t live anywhere else. This is the end of the road, dude.”



Tet, 1968

On this day in 1968, communist forces launched their largest offensive of the Vietnam War against South Vietnamese and U.S. troops. An estimated 80,000 troops of the North Vietnamese Army and National Liberation Front attacked cities and military establishments throughout South Vietnam during the traditional Tet holiday.

In coordinated attacks all across South Vietnam, dozens of cities, towns, and military bases were attacked. Commandos blasted through the wall surrounding the American Embassy in Saigon and attempted to seize the building. On their television screens, Americans were stunned to see fighting taking place on the embassy grounds.

Battles continued to rage throughout the country for weeks. The fight to reclaim the city of Hue from communist troops was particularly destructive. American and South Vietnamese forces lost over 3,000 men. Estimates of communist losses ran as high as 40,000. Most of the attacks were repulsed, with the communist forces suffering heavy losses.

While the offensive was not a military success, its size and intensity shook the confidence of many Americans who had been led to believe by President Lyndon B. Johnson that the war would shortly be coming to a successful close. Support for the war began steadily to erode as public opinion turned against LBJ.

In the aftermath of the offensive, Walter Cronkite, the anchor of the "CBS Evening News," went to Vietnam. He concluded his reports with a personal commentary.

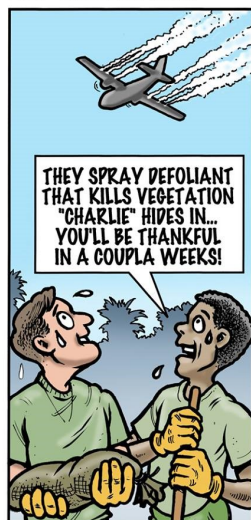
"Who won and who lost in the great Tet offensive against the cities," Cronkite asked? "I'm not sure. The Vietcong did not win by a knockout, but neither did we. The referees of history may make it a draw. It seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate.

"But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could."

Cronkite's editorial would be widely viewed as a critical turning point in public opinion toward the war.



IN-COUNTRY



AGENT ORANGE

Do you have any Agent Orange issues?

Go to the website: www.avelvietnam.com and post your problems, concerns, issues with the VA and anything else relating to Agent Orange.

Have you gone to the VA for your Agent Orange Assessment?

If you haven't, you need to. Don't delay and put it off another day. You need to do this for yourself and your family.

PINK, I Have Seen The Rain

This is a song the recording artist, Pink performed live on stage with her Dad Jim Moore. Jim is an Air Force Vietnam veteran.

Pete Poirier thought you might like to see the lyrics. I agree.

You can see the video of this performance on Youtube.



I have seen the rain
I have felt the pain
I don't know where I'll be tomorrow
I don't know where I'm going

I don't even know
Where I've been
But I know
I'd like to see them again

Spend my days just searching
Spend my nights in dreams
Stop looking over my shoulder baby
I stopped wondering what it means

Drop out, burn out, sold your home
Oh, they said I should've been more
Probably so if I hadn't have been
In that crazy damn Vietnam war

I have seen the rain
I've survived the pain
Oh, I've been home 30 years or so
And I'm just stepping off of the plane

Spend my days just searching
Spend my nights in dreams
Stop looking over my shoulder baby
I stopped wondering what it means

Drop out, burn out, sold your home
Oh, they said I should've been more
Probably so if I hadn't have been
In that crazy damn Vietnam war

We have seen the rain together
We survived the pain forever
Oh, it's good to be home again
It's good to be with my friends

Oh, it's good to be home again
It's good to feel that rain

Ever wondered why so many of our aviators in Vietnam got shot down?

"The Secret War and Other Conflicts" (Published 2014 by GENERAL PETE PIOTROWSKI ISBN 978-1-4931-6187-4 (Hardcover))

Following is a quote of much interest, from pages 246/247: "Nearly twenty years later, former Secretary of State Dean Rusk being interviewed by Peter Arnett on a CBC documentary called, 'The Ten Thousand Day War.'"

Mr Arnett asked, "It has been rumored that the United States provided the North Vietnamese government the names of the targets that would be bombed the following day. Is there any truth to that allegation?"

To everyone's astonishment and absolute disgust, the former Secretary responded, "Yes. We didn't want to harm the North Vietnamese people, so we passed the targets to the Swiss embassy in Washington with instructions to pass them to the NVN government through their embassy in Hanoi." As we watched in horror, Secretary Rusk went on to say, "All we wanted to do is demonstrate to the North Vietnamese leadership that we could strike targets at will, but we didn't want to kill innocent people. By giving the North Vietnamese advanced warning of the targets to be attacked, we thought they would tell the workers to stay home."

No wonder all the targets were so heavily defended day after day! The NVN obviously moved as many guns as they could overnight to better defend each target they knew was going to be attacked. Clearly, many brave American Air Force and Navy fliers died or spent years in NVN prison camps as a direct result of being intentionally betrayed by Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara, and perhaps, President Johnson himself.

I cannot think of a more duplicitous and treacherous act of American government officials. Dean Rusk served as Secretary of State from January 21, 1961, through to January 20, 1969, under President John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Mr. Peter Arnett opined that this would be a treasonous act by anyone else. A very sad revelation.

Those that flew over North Vietnam always suspected that this was what was happening!!



NEW AVEL, AVIONICS AND VIETNAM VETERANS REGISTERED

Segura, John (SP/5)

6370 Freshwater Ln.
Fort Worth, TX 76179
817-291-5664

*Avel North, Pleiku: 1969-1970,
Avel Central, Phu Loi: 1970-1971*

sgm.99@att.net

Retired Army Sergeant Major

Kelly, Robert (SP/5)

167 Neville Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15202
412-734-1332

*Avel South, Third Platoon, Vinh Long: 8 Aug.
1968 - 7 Aug. 1969*

cankel3302@aol.com

MOS: 35M20/35K20

Lent, Victor (CPT)

141 Robert E. Lee Blvd, Unit 266
New Orleans, LA 70124

*E/701st Maint Bn. (DS)/1st Inf Div, Phu Loi: Jan
1969-Jan 1970*

lawaves@earthlink.net

MOS: 64823

Other units where you served in Vietnam:

Retired Army Colonel

POSSIBLE AGENT ORANGE

Comments: As a Maintenance Test Pilot, I also supervised the DS Avionics Shop for the Big Red One at Phu Loi. Prior to going into the Army I was a Broadcast Engineer (FCC 1st Phone ticket). Prior to that I ran my own radio-TV repair shop while still in high school.

TAPS

Ray Fagliano

Avel North

It has been reported that Ray Fagliano died in 2015. Details are not known at this time. If anyone knows more please email Jack McCabe.



PHOTOS

Dan Harmon, submitted photos of Avel North, Pleiku. They are posted
Gene Brinson, 34th General Support Group (AM&S) and MACV Annex/TSN
Submitted his 35L20 Signal School photo from 1969



DNA test proves Vietnam man is not missing Army Sergeant

A man who claimed in a controversial documentary that he was U.S. Special Forces soldier lost during the Vietnam War is an imposter, according to the missing soldier's family, which cited DNA test results. In "Unclaimed," Dang Tan Ngoc alleged he was Army Sgt. 1st Class John Hartley Robertson, who went missing following a helicopter crash over Laos in 1968. The film, which premiered in the U.S. last year at the annual GI Film Festival, evoked impassioned responses from all sides of the POW/MIA issue.

Directed by Emmy Award winner Michael Jorgensen, it followed the journey of Vietnam veteran Tom Faunce as he looked into Ngoc's claims and laid out an intriguing circumstantial case that he could be Robertson, despite government denials.

At the time of the documentary, friends and members of Robertson's family were convinced he was the missing GI. But, it was not to be. "We have received the results of the [nuclear] DNA test, and sadly there was NOT a match," Robertson's niece, Cyndi Hanna, wrote on her GoFundMe webpage that raised money for the test. "This is very disappointing." An Alabama-based forensics laboratory compared a recent sample from Robertson's nephew with a blood stain collected from Ngoc.

Gail Metcalf, daughter of Robertson's sole surviving sister, Jean Robertson-Holley, who was featured during an emotional reunion with Ngoc in the film, thanked Faunce and others for bringing Ngoc to their attention, something they have accused the government of neglecting to do. The family members reiterated that they believe the man is an American and will continue to seek his U.S. family. "Regardless of DNA test results, my family does believe the man we've met is an American, a strong likelihood bolstered by the oxygen isotope analysis performed on his tooth" Metcalf wrote in a statement on behalf of her mother.

During filming for "Unclaimed," Ngoc had a tooth removed and provided it to Faunce and the filmmaking team. The tooth was analyzed by Lesley Chesson, senior scientist at Salt Lake City's IsoForensics Inc., which stated it is "very likely" that Ngoc grew up in America.

Lynn O'Shea, director of research for the National Alliance of POW/MIA Families, said she hopes the DNA test puts the debate about Ngoc to rest. O'Shea has a book coming out, "Abandoned in Place," about POWs left behind in Laos and the top-secret mission to rescue them six years after the Vietnam War ended, called Operation Pocket Change. The effort was abandoned, she said.

O'Shea believes American prisoners of war were left behind at the conclusion of the Vietnam War, but thinks that fraudulent claims like Ngoc's dilute the truth. "I think it's highly unlikely that this individual is an American," O'Shea said. "I don't know anything about isotope testing, but from what we've seen, it's highly unlikely."



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