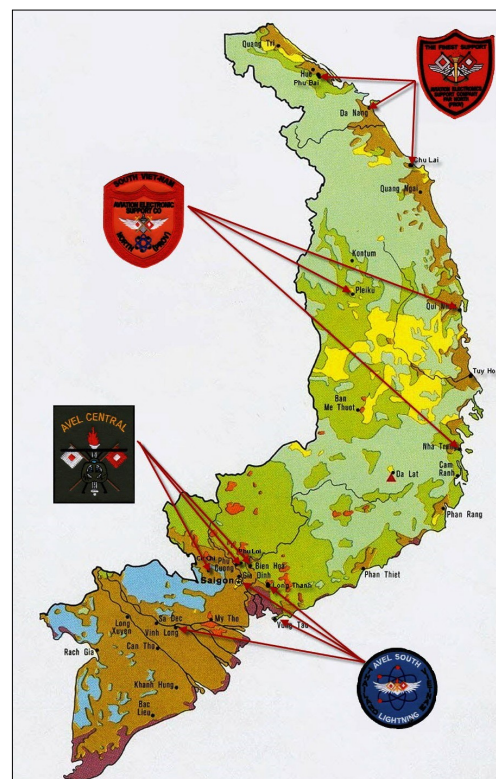


Bien Hoa Military Cemetery South Vietnam's Arlington



BIEN HOA, Vietnam — All but the ghosts have abandoned the wartime cemetery here. No relatives visit. The monument to honor the sacrifice of the dead stands unfinished. The pagoda for family prayer is empty. Weeds run wild among the graves, and headstones lie toppled.

A generation ago, when these boy soldiers died, bereaved mothers encased their photographs in the stone markers. Surprisingly, many of the pictures have not faded. The faces--clear-eyed, clean-shaven, proud--look much like those of the young men one sees today on the streets of Hanoi.

Even the names chiseled in granite here in southern Vietnam are no different from those one might find in the manicured military cemeteries of the North and the central highlands that are tended by children and veterans organizations: Nguyen Van Them, Do Van San, Pham Hiem, all buried as teenagers.

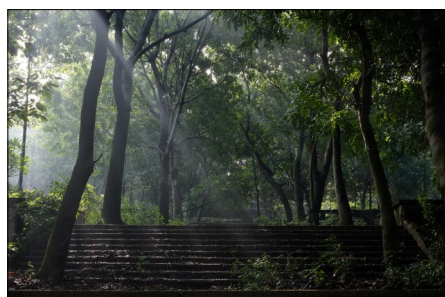
But there is one big difference. The Northern cemeteries are for the fallen soldiers of the victorious North Vietnamese Army, or NVA. And these vast, desolate grounds, a 45-minute drive north of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), are where the vanquished lie--the men who fought for the Republic of Vietnam, as the South was known until its collapse in 1975.

The cemetery is eerily still. Once a year, to mark the lunar new year, a handful of volunteers cut the knee-high grass covering the graves. Once in a while they get letters from Vietnamese families in North America or Australia asking them to search for the grave of a loved one. If they find it, they honor the dead with incense.

But the truth is that the weeping heavens of the monsoon turn the paths between headstones into brown rivers. That is normally the only sign of mourning at this Vietnamese graveyard. The untended graves are obscured by long grass, with black moss encroaching on the names of the dead.

Taking a step back in time I would venture to say that everyone that served in the Saigon area either drove past or flew over this cemetery at one time or another. By 1975 there were over 20,000 ARVN dead buried there. Part of the cemetery has been razed for a brick kiln and a factory. The families of the dead were told to remove them or forget them.

The photos below were taken in 1971. The second set were more recent.



AVEL REUNION 2015 UPDATE

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AVEL North: Aaron & Judy Bass, Leon Chlebowski, Bob & Kathryn Crutchfield, Fred & Carla Enslen, Orbin & Carolyn Hall, Dan & Dee Harmon, Jerry Parks, John Peacock, Andy Yancey.

AVEL Central: Ed & Darla Ardell, Pete & Bianca Biancalana, Mike & Dawn Blatt, Harold Emde, Bill Fesus, Greg & Gayle Garrison, Bruce & Ruth Goff, Dale & Marsha Link, Bob Madore, Jerry & Debbie Mahanay, Russ & Pat Mason, Joe & Joan Matos, Jack & Pat McCabe, Hector & Nancy Ramirez, Lynn (Rock) Rothrock, Roger & Jane Shiley, Bob & Linda Smith, Tony & Jean Stribling, John & Jane Veers

AVEL South: John, Leah & Sarah Chapman, Mario & Marcela De Leon, Bill & Nettie Engels, Carl Hagenstein

Non-AVEL: Chuck James, Tom McCabe

Register early please. You can always cancel if things change in your life. We have reserved the buses for the trip to Parris Island and will need an accurate count so we have enough but don't over book. **Register on the website** www.avelvietnam.com

NEW AVEL, AVIONICS AND VIETNAM VETERANS REGISTERED

Lauriat, Edward Russ (Slick) (SGT)

12 Elm St.

Goffstown, NH 03045

603-497-3002

317th Maintenance Co. (LEM), Vung Tau: Dec. 1969-Feb. 1972

thelauriat25@gmail.com

MOS: 63B20

AGENT ORANGE

Comments: Heart Disease, Diabetic, Arthritis, Prostate & Bladder Cancers. I'm totally & permanently 100% Disabled due to all my agent orange related health problems.

Cousino, James (SP/5)

362 Burger St.

Toledo, OH 43605

Avel North, Pleiku: Oct. 1966-Oct. 1967, Nha Trang: Oct. 1967-July 1968

cousinotoledo@aol.com

MOS: 76 P 20

Butler, Ken (SP/5)

614th Maintenance Co. (LEM): April 1971-October 1971

kebutler@wowway.com

Comments: Also served in the 604th Trans Co. until April 1972

Baxter, Allen (SP/4)

1819 Alicant Way

Henderson, NV 89014

702-580-1456

Avel Far North, Phu Bai: 18 Feb. 1968-18 May 1968

baxterconsulting@cos.net

MOS: 35K20

Comments: I was sent to Vietnam TDY for 90 days from Ft. Knox, Kentucky. I was working in the control tower (avionics office) at Godman Army Airfield at the time. I left Ft. Knox and flew to McChord AFB in Washington and then to Vietnam. When I arrived I went to Marble Mountain for a couple of days and then directly to Phu Bai where I worked on Mohawks. The CO at Phu Bai laughed at my orders that said 90 days TDY and told me I'd be there for the duration. I only had 8 months left to serve when I got to Vietnam. Also worked off duty hours at the officers club--bartender. I was drafted and served only two years total.

TAPS

None reported

PHOTOS

No photos submitted



Fort McPherson National Cemetery

Fort McPherson Cemetery is located in Maxwell, Nebraska. It is the burial place of over 10,000 veterans. Fort McPherson was established in 1863 to protect travelers along the Oregon and California Trails. The cemetery was started in 1873. 23 cemeteries were moved from abandoned forts to Fort McPherson. The last of these were the remains from those buried at Fort Robinson. They were buried here in 1947.

There are 4 Medal of Honor recipients buried here. Three from the Indian Wars and one from Vietnam. 63 Buffalo Soldiers from the 9th and 10th Cavalry are buried here.

Private First Class James W. Fous, U.S. Army, Company E, 4th Battalion, 47th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division. Kien Hoa Province, Republic of Vietnam, May 14, 1968.

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Pfc. Fous distinguished himself at the risk of his life while serving as a rifleman with Company E. Pfc. Fous was participating in a reconnaissance-in-force mission when his unit formed its perimeter defense for the night. Pfc. Fous, together with 3 other American soldiers, occupied a position in a thickly vegetated area facing a woodline. Pfc. Fous detected 3 Viet Cong maneuvering toward his position and, after alerting the other men, directed accurate fire upon the enemy soldiers, silencing 2 of them. The third Viet Cong soldier managed to escape in the thick vegetation after throwing a hand grenade into Pfc. Fous' position. Without hesitation, Pfc. Fous shouted a warning to his comrades and leaped upon the lethal explosive, absorbing the blast with his body to save the lives of the 3 men in the area at the sacrifice of his life. Pfc. Fous' extraordinary heroism at the cost of his life were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.



Remains of four Vietnam soldiers finally laid to rest in Arlington, 47 years after they were declared missing in action

The families of four U.S. soldiers who went missing fighting in Vietnam almost 50 years ago were finally able to lay the men to rest this June.

On January 9, 1968, the crew of a UH1C (tail #66-00745) consisting of WO1 James L. Phipps, aircraft commander; WO Rainier S. Ramos, pilot; SP4 Warren E. Newton, doorgunner; and PFC Fred J. Secrist, gunner, were on a gunship-cover mission about 20 miles west of the city of Tam Ky in Quang Tin Province. LT Williamson, the pilot of another helicopter, was flying as scout in front of WO Ramos' aircraft when he received a call from WO Phipps indicating that he had been hit, was on fire, and was going down. LT Williamson stated he would follow the aircraft down. He saw smoke trailing from Ramos' aircraft, but did not sight flames until the aircraft impacted on the ground. The helicopter hit and exploded (the estimated impact speed was between 65 and 80 knots). The senior officer of Troop C, 7th Sqdn, 17th Air Cavalry arrived and made several passes over the downed aircraft. Heavy automatic weapons fire from the north and east of the downed aircraft was received on the third pass, but it was noted that the downed aircraft was gutted by fire and explosions. At no time was any evidence seen that suggested that the crew had been thrown clear of the crash. During the first 45 minutes of the on-scene observation, the munitions, consisting of 2.75 rockets and 40 mm grenades were exploding every minute or two. The senior officer remained in the area for about one and one-half hours. On January 20, a recovery operation was initiated and the remainder of the aircraft was located in the bottom of a large trench. The crew was not declared dead, but Missing In Action, indicating that there was still the possibility that they were thrown clear of the aircraft and captured by the enemy.

The remains were recovered in 2011 but not fully identified until recently. The men were buried in a group burial in Arlington Cemetery. The Department of Defense has spent years excavating land in Vietnam in order to retrieve the remains of those who died in battle that were never brought home. More 1,600 veterans still remain unaccounted for.



AVEL VIETNAM



June 2015 Newsletter
