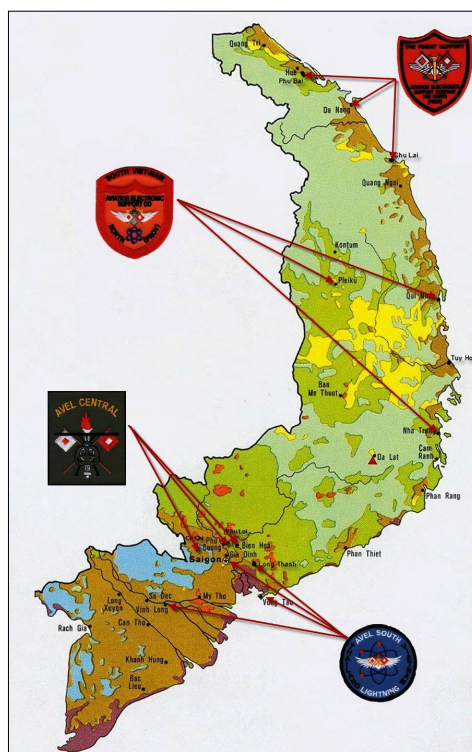


Top Hits Of 1968



At the start of 1968 there were 485,600 American troops fighting and supporting the war in South Vietnam. Replacements continued to pour in and troop strengths increased. The draft lottery had not yet begun. Casualties were high in Vietnam. There were 296,406 men drafted that year.



The year began with a bang - literally! On January 21st the North Vietnamese began their attacks on the Marine base at Khe Sanh in I Corps. General Westmoreland was deeply concerned about the possible loss of Khe Sanh.

Declassified documents show that Westmoreland considered using nuclear weapons in order to avoid a defeat at Khe Sanh. In 1970, the Office of Air Force History published a then "top secret", but now declassified, 106-page report, titled *The Air Force in Southeast Asia: Toward a Bombing Halt, 1968*". Journalist Richard Ehrlich writes that according to the report, "in late January, General Westmoreland had warned that if the situation near the DMZ and at Khe Sanh worsened drastically, nuclear or chemical weapons might have to be used." The report continues to state, "this prompted Air Force chief of staff, General John McConnell, to press, although unsuccessfully, for Joint Chiefs of Staff authority to request Pacific Command to prepare a plan for using low-yield nuclear weapons to prevent a catastrophic loss of the U.S. Marine base

While attention was focused on the major attack at Khe Sanh, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops prepared for an even bigger battle - the Tet Offensive.

Early in the morning of January 30th communist forces launched attacks throughout the country, attacking in one manner or another every American base in the country. Casualties were high on both sides but militarily it was a victory for the allied forces. Politically? That was another story.

Before Khe Sanh and Tet, Westmoreland and other representatives of the Johnson administration had been claiming that the end of the war was in sight; now it was clear that a long struggle still lay ahead. Westmoreland requested more than 200,000 troops to mount a counteroffensive.

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Fighting continued at a high intensity throughout 1968 and the country was in turmoil. In March Johnson announced that he would not to seek a second term. On April 4th Dr Martin Luther King was assassinated triggering riots throughout the large cities. Robert Kennedy was also assassinated and then there were the Democratic National Convention riots in Chicago.

The war in Vietnam was constantly on every Americans mind. The film of General Loan shooting a Viet Cong prisoner on the 6 o'clock news sparked outrage. But the My Lai massacre was even worse. Protests broke out with renewed vigor and soldiers serving in Vietnam were now closely associated with Lieutenant Calley by the protestors. It didn't matter where you served or what you did. The atrocities committed by the NVA in Hue seemed to be forgotten and only the murders by Calley and his men were remembered.

Troop strengths in 1968 increased to 536,100 by the end of the year. In that year there were 16,899 war related deaths and 92,820 troops wounded.

Check out the Top Ten songs of 1968!

- #1 "Hey Jude" by The Beatles
- #2 "Love is Blue" by Paul Mauriat
- #3 "Honey" by Bobby Goldsboro
- #4 "(Sittin' on) The Dock of the Bay" by Otis Redding
- #5 "People Got to Be Free" by The Rascals
- #6 "Sunshine of Your Love" by Cream
- #7 "This Guys in Love With You" by Herb Alpert
- #8 "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" by Hugo Montenegro
- #9 "Mrs. Robinson" by Simon & Garfunkel
- #10 "Tighten Up" by Archie Bell & the Drells



Top Ten Albums of 1967

- #1 The Rolling Stones "Beggars Banquet"
- #2 The Jimi Hendrix Experience "Electric Ladyland"
- #3 The Beatles "White Album"
- #4 Van Morrison "Astral Weeks"
- #5 The Band "Music From Big Pink"
- #6 The Byrds "Sweetheart of the Rodeo"
- #7 The Kinks "The Village Green Preservation Society"
- #8 Simon & Garfunkel "Bookends"
- #9 The Mothers of Invention "We're Only in it for the Money"
- #10 Jeff Beck "Truth"



What songs do you immediately associate with Vietnam? Send them to me so I can put them in the next newsletter. Email me at jmccabe51@gmail.com

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park

Dawn and Mike Blatt (Avel Central) were on hand Saturday, May 25 for the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park in Seattle.



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The new park features a B-52G Stratofortress, memorial statue and a tribute wall with personalized plaques from people honoring the veterans in their lives.

General Mattis, Ret., the 26th Secretary of Defense was the keynote speaker.

The B52G #92584 spent its entire life in service with the Strategic Air Command and was one of 110 G-model B-52s that saw combat duty during the Vietnam War as part of Operations Bullet Shot and Linebacker II. The bronze aviator statue represents veterans from all branches who returned from their service in Vietnam from 1955-1975, and the folded American flag represents those who did not make it home.

The inspiring program began at 11:00 AM and included aircraft fly-overs, an Honor Guard presentation and a special pinning ceremony for Vietnam veterans in attendance.

This park is at the Museum of Flight in south Seattle.



'Napalm girl' Kim Phuc shares story of suffering and forgiveness in Vietnam and beyond

(Tribune News Service) — For the Vietnamese child who became known as “the napalm girl,” the searing burns, the years of surgery and the heavy scarring were only the beginning of her torment.

Long after her skin had slowly healed from a 1972 air attack that was captured in a world-famous photograph crystallizing the horrors of the Vietnam War, Kim Phuc Phan Thi found the aftermath scorching her soul as surely as napalm had once burned her body.

“I became a victim all over again; my life became as a bird in a cage,” Kim Phuc, now 55, recalled Sunday at Napa’s Hopewell Baptist Church. “I asked, why me? Why do I suffer so much? I felt so bitter and angry, I wanted those who had caused me suffering to suffer even more than me.”

From her despair began a journey that led her first to a religious faith she said finally allowed her to forgive those who had nearly ended her life – and then, two decades after the napalm attack, to freedom in the west and a career advocating for children victimized by warfare.

The story of her winding road to inner peace highlighted Hopewell Baptist’s annual Ladies Conference, where Kim Phuc, who has lived in Canada since 1992, was the keynote speaker for the four-day program.



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“Try not to see her as she was then – suffering, crying out in pain and fear,” she asked, with the image of her 9-year-old self on a projection screen behind the pulpit. “Try to see her as she is today: as a mother, a grandmother and a survivor, calling out for peace.”

“I was a happy child, just 9 years old, and I knew nothing about war,” she recalled of her early life in the village of Trang Bang in what was then South Vietnam. “My most serious injury was hurting my knee when I fell off my bicycle.”

But the war would come to Trang Bang – and Kim Phuc – on June 8, 1972.

According to media reports, villagers had been sheltering in a local pagoda when soldiers yelled for them to flee outside. A South Vietnamese bomber plane, targeting trade routes used by rebel Viet Cong forces, mistakenly released its napalm bombs over the villagers, triggering a curtain of fire that rippled across a highway.

“My clothes burned off and my skin was on fire,” Kim Phuc said unflinchingly on Sunday. Through the lens of Associated Press photographer Nick Ut, the girl’s scorched body and her screams of “Nong qua, nong qua!” (Too hot, too hot!) were captured for millions to see.

The attack mortally injured Kim Phuc’s 3-year-old cousin, and Kim Phuc herself was taken to a Saigon hospital with little chance to survive. Fourteen months would pass before the girl was released from the hospital, and a succession of operations would continue through 1984, requiring painful daily exercises to restore her movement.

Recovery, however, would be followed by years of control by Vietnam’s victorious communist regime, which pulled her out of medical school and arranged interviews with the foreign media as a propaganda tool.

With seemingly no place to turn, Kim Phuc said, she turned to Christianity in 1982 at age 19 after finding a copy of the New Testament in a local library, and persisted in her new faith following her move to Cuba in 1986 to continue her studies. Along the way – trying to follow the Biblical command to love one’s enemies – she wrote down the names of those who had caused her suffering and pain: the plane’s pilots, her communist minders and so on.

“The more I prayed for my enemies,” she said Sunday, “the softer my heart became. When I felt real forgiveness, my heart was set free. If I can do it, all of you can do it too.”

At the University of Havana, she met a fellow Vietnamese student, Bui Huy Toan, whom she married in 1992 – shortly before the newlyweds defected to Canada during a refueling stop in Gander, Newfoundland on the return flight from a Moscow honeymoon. The couple, who have two adult sons, now live in the Toronto area.

A naturalized Canadian citizen, Kim Phuc serves as a UNESCO goodwill ambassador for peace and also leads the Kim Foundation International, a nonprofit that aids medical assistance programs for children who are victims of war and terrorism.

“I came through the fire, and I am so blessed to be with you today,” she said toward the end of a speech occasionally marked by sniffles from an often-rapt audience of well over 100. “My dream is that one day, all people will live without fear, in real peace, with no fighting and no hostility.”

As congregation members queued after the speech to meet with Kim Phuc, and get her autograph on their Bibles and copies of her memoir “Fire Road,” some marveled at the depth of her forgiving spirit in the face of nearly unbearable suffering.

“It’s powerful for her to show how much she’s been able to forgive – even the people who she didn’t know who caused her suffering,” said Balkis Johnson, a Napa resident who has attended Hopewell Baptist for three years.

“With this picture and how polarizing it is, you think, what picture do you want to represent?” she said. “The biggest thing for me is, how can my picture be of love and forgiveness for everyone?”

The conclusion of Kim Phuc’s testimony was calculated to show her as much more than the anonymous “girl in the picture.” In the Hopewell sanctuary, the black-and-white image of a grievously injured girl gave way to color pictures of the mother and grandmother of today.

“Yes, that girl is alive,” she said. “And not just as a piece of history, but as a living miracle.”

NEW AVEL, AVIONICS AND VIETNAM VETERANS REGISTERED

None Submitted

TAPS

None Submitted

PHOTOS

Ed Sitar submitted photos of Avel North Qui Nhon, Pleiku and Nha Trang
Robert Novotny submitted photos of 614th Maint. Co., Pleiku
Rodney Young submitted photos of 317th Maint. Co., Vung Tau

CHANGE OF ADDRESS/EMAIL/PHONE

None Submitted

Send your change of address and email to jmccabe51@gmail.com

VIETNAM SONGS REMEMBERED

What songs instantly bring you back? Send me your songs and I will publish them in the next news letter!
Criss Brown "We gotta get out of this place" by The Animals

IN-COUNTRY



THE SEND OFF.

IN-COUNTRY VET



ALL AVEL REUNION/GATHERING 2019

Join us at LZ Tucson!

Wednesday September 25th to Sunday September 29th 2019
Homewood Suites by Hilton
St. Philip's Plaza
4250 N. Campbell
Tucson, AZ 85718

RESERVE YOUR ROOM NOW!

2019 All AVEL Gathering/Reunion Itinerary

Early Bird, Tuesday, 24 September 2019

Explore Tucson on your own

Wednesday, 25 September 2019

Reunion begins with open registration
17:30: Hamburger BBQ on the patio
Hospitality Room is open after dinner

Thursday, 26 September 2019

Hospitality Room open until 23:00
Pima Air Museum and Boneyard Tour

Friday, 27 September 2019

Hospitality Room open until 23:00
Bus tour to Tombstone

Saturday, 28 September 2019

Hospitality Room open until 17:00
John Veers Martini Golf Outing (Course to be announced)
Ladies Luncheon (Paid by Avel)
Hospitality Room will be closed until 17:30 to prepare for dinner
Group Dinner
Hospitality Room open until 23:00

RESERVE YOUR ROOM

If you think you can come please reserve your room. You can cancel anytime up to 24 hours prior to scheduled arrival. Call the hotel at 520-577-0007 and tell them the Group Code "VNR". Room rate is \$139.00/night.

REGISTER ON THE WEBSITE

Once again, if you even think you can make it, please register at www.avelvietnam.com. We need an approximate count in order to make arrangements for group activities. **Please register!**

Hope to see you there!

Group activities may change as we get closer to the reunion date!



Prominent '60 Minutes' journalist and Army Vietnam veteran Steve Kroft is retiring

Veteran broadcaster Steve Kroft, who began his journalism career with Stars and Stripes during the Vietnam War, will retire from CBS-TV's "60 Minutes" at the end of his 30th season on America's most-watched news program, the network said Friday.

Kroft, the news magazine's longest-tenured reporter, will announce his plans Sunday at the end of the program's 51st season finale, CBS-TV said. His final segment will be a report on bank fraud.

Kroft, 73, broke into news as a correspondent and photographer for the Pacific edition of Stars and Stripes, the U.S. military newspaper, while serving in the Army in Vietnam.

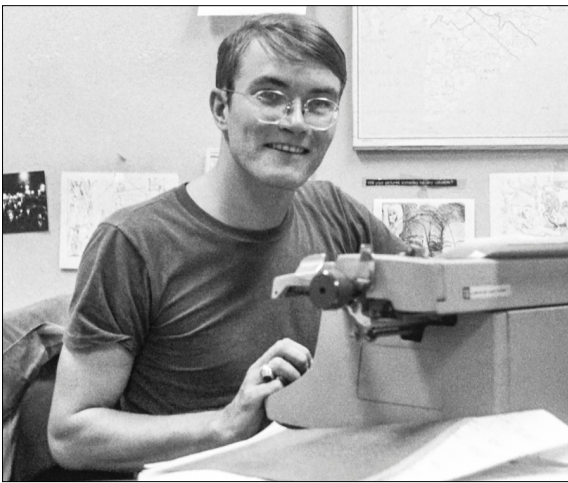
"That would be the thing that I really wanted to do, and I felt it was something that would show up on my resume and that I would be proud to have on my resume," Kroft said in October at the Washington premier of a documentary film on Stars and Stripes, which he narrated.

Following his military service, Kroft earned a Masters' degree from Columbia Journalism School and worked for local television stations in Jacksonville and Miami before joining CBS News in 1980.

At the network, he reported on the civil war in El Salvador and the invasion of Grenada before transferring to London where he covered European affairs and terrorism for "CBS Evening News."

He was transferred to New York in 1987 as principal correspondent for "West 57th," a news magazine that led to his assignment on 60 Minutes.

He won his first of five Peabody Awards for a 1990 critical look at how the military disciplined an experienced officer for a friendly fire incident.



AVEL VIETNAM



May 2019 Newsletter