

Why ProNet International Gifts & Scholarships?

By Lawrence M. Abrams

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As a Dog handler in the United States Air Force, in February of 1968 I received orders to go to Vietnam: Ben Hoa Air Base.

But first, Gary P. and I graduated high school together in 1965. During high school, we took a few classes together, and on more than one occasion (after school and/or on weekends), we studied together. Soon after high school, Gary P. enlisted in the U.S. Army, and I enlisted in the Air Force.

In February/March of 1968, while home on leave and before I was to ship out to Ben Hoa Air base VN, I learned of Gary being one of the many KIA, and he was to be interned shortly after my leave. I contacted the Red Cross and asked if they could help me get an extension on my leave so I could stay and attend Gary's funeral. His parents asked me to be a Pall Bearer. I was honored.

Several days after Gary P. was interned, I flew to San Francisco and waited for about one week before the USAF was able to find me a seat on a commercial plane to VN.

I arrived at Ben Hoa Air base 3 weeks after the 1968 Tet Offensive. In fact, my CO was confident that I would spend my first night in VN in peace and quiet. They had not been hit since Tet. I inquired as to when the Tet Offensive was, as I lost track of days. It turned out to be the same day we buried Gary P.

There were several Security Police and Dog Handlers killed and wounded during that attack on Ben Hoa.

My first night at Ben Hoa was anything but uneventful. While asleep, the sirens and sounds of incoming mortar shells woke me! My CO yelled at us to get up and follow him! There were several of us who woke from a sound sleep with mortar shells dropping all around the flight line, of which we were in the proximity.

Running and half ducking, we followed our CO outside to two bunkers about 30 feet from our hut. I immediately began to enter one that appeared to be only half in place. I also noticed that there was a huge hole in the ground in front of the entrance to the sand bagged bunker. I thought that was strange.

My CO yelled for me and told me not to enter that bunker as it was not safe, but to follow him to the other, just a few yards away. While hunkered inside the second bunker, some of us praying for dear life, we listened intently to loud bangs and earth shattering noise from the mortars dropping.

My CO turned to me and pointed and yelled, "Son, that other bunker, you almost entered is not safe. Several weeks ago a mortar dropped at the entrance to that

bunker and exploded, killing all 13 airmen inside. That's what created that crater in front, near the entrance."

This was like a bad dream!

After the mortars dropped and the sirens signaled an all clear, the CO took us back to the hut and instructed us to remain alert and be prepared to hit the field with our weapons.

After a few moments, I became curious and asked him when the bunker was hit. He pointed to his calendar hanging over his cooking utensils. I noted the words "Tet" (for Tet Offensive) and the date on the calendar.

It was the same day we buried my friend, Gary P.

Honoring loved ones who serve us in the most sincere of ways is why ProNet International Gifts & Scholarships was formed.