

Binh Thuy AB
ARVN QC CAMP; CAN THO, SVN; and A Drive to the Beach
by David Summerfield (RIP), SMSgt, Ret.
TSN, 377th SPS; VT (TDY); BT, 632nd SPS
1967-1968
VSPA Life Member 186
RIP: Feb 20, 2008

In 2005, Retired SMSgt David Summerfield joined VSPA, and became Life Member-186.

In 2006 he submitted two stories, one as a tribute to KIA Charles E. Hebron (TSN, Silver Star at O51 Bunker), and a second regarding the construction of a home for war orphans in Bien Thuy. David phoned and told me he had other photos to dig out and send in, with stories covering a number of Air Bases, hamlets, villages, orphanages, and contact with ARVN, villagers, and civilians throughout southern South Vietnam. We talked briefly about when he scanned his photos to follow the VSPA file naming-conventions, which IDs the photographer, date, who, what, where, and when. He agreed, and apparently set straight to work doing so.

In 2008, David Summerfield passed away.

In May of 2011, David Summerfield's son, Rob, contacted VSPA member Lynn Patton reporting that after time passed, he had gone through his brother's things and found a number of photos and requested they be posted at VSPA and Lynn notified me. It seemed that David Summerfield had indeed taken time to go through his more than 100 photos and label them as requested (if he had not done so, we would have had just a pile of pictures). Nevertheless, exact locations for some photos should be viewed as "area of" and not necessarily a specific location. After restoring some of the photos, it was evident that David was an outstanding photographer, and more importantly had a second-gift in that his caring for the Vietnamese people shown through the lens of his camera. We knew about the orphanage home he helped build, but not of David's extended humanitarian efforts wherever he traveled in SVN, as his duties required him to travel between villages, Air Bases, and allied compounds. David never missed an opportunity to visit local war orphanages and contribute what help he could for the welfare of the children and support of the nuns and nurses. More so, David took time to befriend ARVN troops, and include some of them and their families in local visits to markets and beach areas. I am not aware if David Summerfield was awarded an Air Force humanitarian medal (whatever it is called, and perhaps someone can check), but he certainly deserved one if not.

What distinguishes David Summerfield's Photos is something that was not known, or apparently unknown, to most all our members, and that is the humanitarianism of this man. I believe there are Vietnamese alive in Vietnam today who remember Americans fondly due solely to David's personal contact with them. His goodwill was really what the much-used phrase 'winning hearts and minds' was all about. Nevertheless, I think, if David Summerfield were living today and aware of the respect his photos will win, he might have been embarrassed. I think you will also see David's friendliness to Vietnamese civilians, ARVN soldiers and their families, and children who gathered to him gleefully. Yes, they gathered to us to, but my thoughts were not usually as generous as Summerfield's (and oft entailed thoughts of a fly-swatter).

Do yourself a favor and check out the photos David Summerfield wanted us to see, before he passed away ... and now, thanks to his son Rob, and friend Lynn Patton, all 100 plus photos are here for you to enjoy:

Don Poss,
VSPA Webmaster
Director Communications

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Vietnam Security Police Association, Inc. (USAF)