

Pictures of your Vietnamese father

Here is a beautiful story of a Vietnamese girl whose father was a pilot trained by the USAF and later died who remembers a painting of his instructor. With the help of a lot of people she was able to locate her father's instructor. She lives in San Diego and her quest for such a long time has brought her the rewards she wanted of people who could tell her more about her father. As I was coming home I heard today she finally found what she was looking for. I was only able to help her a little by sending out emails but never found what she was looking for. Now some great guys in the USAF have come forward to answer her long time yearning. If you ever lost a parent at a young age you know how she feels.

Gene - hope all is well

In early November, I contacted the Webmaster link, Major Treadway's 3389th PTS website. I was in search of information about my father and the two paintings that he had done while he was a Student Pilot at Valdosta AFB in 1961. I provided several photos, but the primary photograph of interest was of my father, an accomplished artist in my eyes, sitting at an artist's easel while painting a portrait of a little girl. In the background was another painting of a young USAF 2nd Lieutenant hanging on a wall. My thought was that the young air force officer in the "#51" hat may have been my father's instructor and the little girl may have been the instructor's daughter. I was hoping to locate the unknown officer and determine if he still was in possession of the two paintings. I requested any information that they might have or if anyone know who was behind the "#51" hat painting...

Based on information provided to me by Major Treadway (now has become a great friend and we are communicating almost every day), he was able to send my request forward to the six members of the 3551st pilot training squadron.

Note: Don Schmenk was the instrumental in getting 3389th squadron made a decision in 2014 to add two other pilot training squadrons: 3551st and 3812th on the websites because some of the instructor pilots were in two or all three pilot training squadrons. This decision helped me this year to find the only information on the man behind the "#51" hat...

Immediately Colonel Mobley recognized the Student in the photograph as his former Student, Phan Khoi and then Colonel Mobley took the initiative and made immediate contact with me. He informed me that he was my father's former Instructor Pilot, but he was not the individual in the painting. He apparently then contacted two stars General Noah 'Ed' Loy and Ed advised me that he believed the air force officer in the photo/painting was Colonel Doyle Ruff. Subsequent efforts by me and others unknown to me located Colonel Doyle Ruff and he confirmed that he was in fact the air force officer and that the little girl's portrait was his daughter. Unfortunately, he stated that he had lost both paintings during multiple USAF transfers and moves.

Two stars General Noah 'Ed' Loy called me and asked if he and his wife could come to see me in San Diego to talk about the Instructor pilot training history in January 2016 and so of course I said yes. I called Colonel Mobley and asked if he and his wife, Myrtle, would come from Texas to San Diego too and they accepted. Then we invited Colonel Doyle Ruff to fly in from Reno, CA too and he also accepted.

Once the initial connections were made, it snowballed and based on these U.S. pilot instructor's introductions and networking, we were also able to locate several former South Vietnamese students (pilots) in the US who were friends of my deceased father. These American USAF instructor pilots and Vietnamese VNAF student pilots (in their 60's) have decided to come to San Diego for an impromptu reunion here in San Diego from January 11-14 2016. After the reunion, I contacted Colonel Doyle Ruff's ex-wife, Kay Esmiol in Colorado, to see if she may know where about of the two missing paintings. Kay kept the paintings all these years and decided to give them to me and my family ;). Unfortunately, I had decided to go to visit my father's grave site in Hue and left for Vietnam on February 4th and the paintings came to the house on February 4th, so I will not be able to hold them until February 26th when I get home...

I still cannot believe how this last three month has changed my life... It was great to have them join/come together to share their war stories and for our family to get to know them and learn more about my father.

Wish I could of heard the radio footage today... I didn't even know the article came out until today

Woman finds artwork by father killed in Vietnam



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SAN DIEGO (AP) — Erika Colligan spent three decades searching for her father's artwork — paintings the South Vietnam pilot made for the U.S. Air Force in Laos and Viet.

www.bigstory.com

Thank you so much,

Erika Colligan

Can you help me identify the person in the painting with the 51 military hat? thank you

Hi

I am hoping you or someone that you may know can assist me finding my father's instructors around 1963 for the South Vietnamese pilots (flying the A-1). Phan Khoi was in the 522nd squadron (was part of "Than Phong" 83rd SAG to the American, commanded by General Nguyen Cao Ky from 1964-67) flying the A-1. The unit had the top pilots of the VNAF.... I narrowed it down based on the patches on his uniform.

While he was in the US (3389th PTS, 3551st PTS in Vadesto, GA (flying the T-28) and somewhere in the Navy squadron FL or TX for the A-1 Skyraider training), he did some paintings and I am trying to locate them. I have a picture of a painting that's a gentleman is wearing a #51 hat and I believe this person was his instructor/mentor at the time. I am hoping you can assist me finding this person or group of Skyraider A-1 instructors back in 1963 that I may talk to to assist me finding my father's paintings. I believe he went to Corpus Christi in 1963... Those chosen for the ADs were sent to the Navy at NAS Corpus Christi, where they trained with VT-30 or ATU-301, the AD advanced training squadron...

I know this is a very strange request but I hope you allow me some time on this matter. I just do not know what else to do at this point in time to further my research and afraid I have very little time left to locate these paintings that mean so much to me and my family. Your help is very very much appreciated.
Thank you,

Erika Colligan (Phan)

