

The "Finding" of Dave Broeker by Ben Cox  
Report by Dave Broeker

On April 23, 2001, at approximately 1800 hours, 2001, I was napping at home in my stratolounger. My wife Pat and her daughter Julie, were conversing on the phone by the computer, trying to find a specific Website. The phone beeped which alerted my wife that a second incoming phone call was waiting for her to pick up. The conversation was short but even though I was in a semi-sleep mode, I heard the name Ben Cox mentioned. I practically jumped out of my chair stating that I knew a "Ben Cox", once, overseas in Thailand over thirty years ago. Pat said that the guy said he was Benjamin Cox and he knew me when I was in K-9 at U-Tapao, Thailand.

She said she couldn't talk right now because she was talking on the other line long distance to Florida. He said he was also calling from Florida and he asked if he could call back in an hour or so. Shortly thereafter, Pat and I discussed the call from Ben and I waited the longest hour I ever remember waiting, for Ben to call back.

I remember my wife asking me about Ben and I told her he was about 30 or 35 years old when I knew him 33 years ago. Let's see now, that would make Ben about, well you do the numbers! My wife said that the guy she talked to was only about 40 or 45 years old and that maybe it was the son of the Ben Cox that I knew in Thailand. Either way, I was excited to hear from or about 33 years in the past.

The phone rang once, then twice, and I ran to it from across the room because this was a call I didn't want to miss! Sure enough, it was TSgt. Ben Cox from U-Tapao, Thailand. His voice was clear as a bell and he certainly did sound as though time had stood still for him the past 33 years. We talked for an hour or so, reminiscing about old times and times to come.

Ben told me about this group of men that was dedicated to locating dog men and their dogs through a Website called Vietnam Dog Handler Association. Ben had been a member for over 4 years. Our Group was lead by Bill Cummings, 635th SPS Unit Director (VDHA), K-9 Brutus (X321). It seems that Bill arrived U-Tapao shortly after I left in June of 1968.

Ben told me it's never too late to locate a friend. He said to Cummings, "I will search for Broeker". He said he remembered me as a squared away Troop.

He said he had been looking for me since he saw my name on the list of K-9 personnel from the 635<sup>th</sup> SPS that had not yet been contacted. I guess he found a dozen or so listings of me and kept calling them until he hit pay dirt.

Ben wanted me to join the group for only \$20.00 a year and I sent a check the next day, as soon as I heard from Bill Cummings, giving me the Website address.

I was advised that TSgt. Tom Swartz, the 635<sup>th</sup> SPS NCOIC/Kennel Master, also lived in Florida just three hours drive north of Ben. Tom did not have a computer so it would prove to be more difficult to stay in touch with him than it would be with Ben.

Ben was a loan out to U-Tapao from TSN (RVN) to assist in the construction of the temporary Kennels, so he aid he was only at U-Tapao for five months, back to TSN, and two days later on his way back to the World for retirement in June of 1968.

After much communication with Ben and Bill Cummings, I found out that I had a multitude of valuable information in my daily diary, 300 slides, and 3 photo albums. Most of this information needed to be weeded through, but a lot of it was specific pictures and information that helped us to nail down dates and names. I had a duty roster that named each of the original "Wave-1" handlers, dogs, and tattoo's. I continue to contribute any picture or information that I can find that will help us to perfect the story as it actually was at U-Tapao.

I look forward to the 635<sup>th</sup> SPS Reunion slated for October of 2002 in St. Louis, Missouri. This Reunion is one I will not miss!