

Former GI Seeks Vietnam Veterans to Help in Missing Biological Father Case

Former Military Intelligence Officer seeks those stationed at U-Tapao or those who can recall the bar scene close to base to help identify woman's father.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A., July 24, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the Vietnam War was coming to an end, Sergeant George E. Helton retired to the farm life in the hills of Morristown, Tennessee. With him were his young Thai wife, Sumalsri and their two-month-old daughter, Patricia. George's previous marriage ended in divorce, and his first Thai girlfriend ran off with another G.I. Though he had hopes for a fresh start with a new family, with a history of a broken heart, this time would be no different. Before the child's first birthday, Sumalsri went back to Thailand and never returned, abandoning her with the G.I. The stigma from the war created an environment of social discrimination and adversity within her transracial family and the community, which was inevitably passed on to Patricia.

When Patricia reached her early thirties, she discovered her mother living in Texas with a fourth American G.I. husband. During the first conversation with her mother, she learned that the man she had known as "Dad" her entire life was not her biological father. Over the course of a decade, her mother refused to divulge information regarding her father, but earlier this year she had a change of heart; she finally gave the name of Patricia's father and his last known whereabouts. His name is Veera, from Bang Chang, Thailand and he is approximately seventy years old. His family were business people, owning several bars and restaurants in the area. Unfortunately, her mother cannot pronounce his last name nor remember how to spell it. Veera's physical description is 5' 8" tall and resembles Smokey Robinson with a mustache similar to the one Charles Bronson often sported. He had a younger brother who was a "ladyboy", and a sister whose name is unknown. Her mother also stated that Veera knows he has a daughter, but was never given any details. Patricia is now on a mission to find the father she never knew.

Patricia enlisted the services of Gene Ponce, a former U.S. military intelligence officer who has made it his mission to bring together U.S. veterans and the children they fathered during the Vietnam War. Ponce has reunited many Thai children left behind after the war with their American parents, through his organization, Thai-American Research Group. His mission to reunite fathers with their children came about through his own story. Ponce worked at U.S. air bases in Thailand during the Vietnam War. He had a biological child and adopted a Thai-American baby before returning to the U.S. in the early 1970's. There came a time when his adopted child desired to learn more about her biological parents and siblings. Eventually, he started creating a database of veterans and civilians who served in Thailand, which has since grown to about 100,000 names. He also has ten websites devoted to soldiers, pilots, and sailors assigned to Thailand during the war.

Ponce's cases are primarily searches to find American parentage. In this case, he is investigating in reverse, seeking a biological father in Thailand. This serves to be a challenge because he cannot follow the investigative process that he would if the father were in the military. He can retrieve military records of an American GI, but it is not an option with a Thai local. However, with his vast knowledge of the area around Ban Chang and through his detailed archive of records, he possesses information that may lead Patricia to her biological father.

He is currently working on approximately 50 cases, most at the request of Thais looking for their lost fathers. However, due to certain challenges of this particular case, he is seeking those who served during the Vietnam War to help him. He is specifically interested in connecting with those stationed at U-Tapao. Anyone who can recall the names of the establishments near there and those who may remember some of the people in the bar scene close to the base during that time will be helpful. To aid in the search, Ponce requests that anyone with information contact him directly.

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