

# THEY SERVED IN SILENCE

The Story of a Cryptologic Service and Sacrifice

## SGT. Robert E. Dew USA



**Bobby Dew was the guy everyone in his unit liked. If anyone needed anything, and Bobby could provide it, he was always there to help.**

**From Lonnie Long and Gary B. Blackburn's "Unlikely Warriors, The Army Security Agency's Secret War in Vietnam 1961-1973"**

SGT Robert Earl Dew was a native of the Tar Heel state of North Carolina. He was born on Veterans Day in 1948 in Raeford, and raised in the town of Tarboro. After graduating from the local high school in 1964, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. After basic and advanced training as a Morse intercept operator, he was assigned to the Army Security Agency (ASA). The ASA served as the signals intelligence branch of the U.S. Army from 1945 to 1984, and provided critical support to both tactical and strategic operations during the Vietnam War.

As his military career progressed, Bob became adept at sending, receiving, and intercepting critical communications sent in Morse code. July of 1970 found him working with the ASA's 330th Radio Research Company. It was his second tour in Vietnam. The 330th had a storied history, and had distinguished itself in World War II and Korea and had been "in country" since August 1966. Rob was part of a unit detail operating out of Nha Trang Air Base on the coast of South Vietnam. Since the earliest days of the conflict, the ASA had been conducting radio direction finding operations from the area to support the efforts of friendly ground units.

August 30, 1970, in Nha Trang started out as typical day for the 330th RRC. It was windy and cloudy with the temperature in the mid-80s. At one point the day's routine was broken by one of the all-too-frequent enemy rocket attacks; despite the disruption, operations continued unabated. Rob was scheduled to have the day off, but decided to relieve a fellow operator who had been working long, hard hours without a break. Shortly after he assumed his post, the area came under a second, and ultimately more lethal, 107 mm rocket attack. Shortly after the barrage began, a round hit directly where Rob was working, killing him and wounding 11 other soldiers. He had been in country for less than two months. To honor his memory and to help deal with the shock of his loss, his fellow soldiers held a solemn funeral on the unit's basketball court.



Rob would be remembered fondly by his fellow soldiers and family. A friend who was there at the tragic moment noted on a digital tribute site that, "I was there the day you died, we were both on our second tour. I have taken my sons to the wall and let them meet you there. I will always do my part to keep your memory alive."

On the same site, his sister related, "48 years, Bobby. It doesn't seem possible. What a hole you left in our family. We still miss you so much. Daddy, Pete, Ellen, Harry & Fred have left us now...so many felt your loss & still miss you."

Another fellow ASA stationed at Nha Trang perhaps said it best: "In the short time he was with us, he greatly impacted the lives of those that knew him."

Rob was laid to rest at Raeford Cemetery in his hometown of Raeford, North Carolina. For his service and sacrifice to his unit and nation, he was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star.

