

**Pearson, Thomas Rickard Jr. (Tom), 4th Platoon**

20 June 1945 - 23 January 1968

Fort Rosecrans Nat'l Cemetery, SD CA



Thomas Rickard Pearson, Jr. was born 20 June 1945 in Vallejo, CA to Navy Commander Thomas Rickard Pearson, Sr. and Maryanne Louise Kuebelbeck. Tom's father was a 26 year career Naval Officer who served in WWII, the Korean Conflict, and Vietnam from 1943 to 1968. Tom, the oldest of three boys was followed by James Anthony – 1946 and Edward Francis – 1952. James became a Naval Officer in 1969.

He was the son of a career Navy officer, attended Purdue on an NROTC scholarship, and was an English major.

Second Lieutenant Thomas Rickard Pearson Jr died on 23 January 1968 at the age of 22 due to a mortar, rocket, or artillery incident at Quang Tri Province in South Vietnam. Second Lieutenant Thomas R. Pearson is honored on the Vietnam Memorial Wall at Panel 35E, Line 17.

Tom was buried at the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego, as are both of his parents. All three are listed at the same plot site – Section PS-5 Site 151.

**USMC Resume:**

The Basic School Class 1-68 Alpha Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon, Jun-Nov 1967

Vietnam: 3RD PLT, H CO, 2ND BN, 9TH MARINES, 3RD MARDIV, III MAF, Jan 1968

**Personal Reflections about Tom Pearson:**

**From Rich Metli as relayed to Bob Newlin, 16 April 2015:** I do remember very vividly that Tom was on the fence about switching to the Marines because of his father, brother and maybe a grandparent were or had been in the Navy. [On a Purdue NROTC short trip to some Navy base] I have a very clear memory of Tom's dissatisfaction with the lack of discipline in the Navy when a Lt. Jg. was taking a group of us around a ship for some forgotten reason and brought us over to a PO 3<sup>rd</sup> Class who was sitting on a pipe stand smoking a cigarette. The Lt. Jg., a nebbish sort, was giving the PO instructions of what to do with

us as the PO looked annoyed, remained seated and blew the smoke out his mouth. Tom lost his usual friendly composure and shouted at the PO to get on his feet when an officer spoke to him and put that God dammed cigarette out. I don't think anyone ever spoke to the PO that way before, he shot to his feet and dropped the cigarette. Sometime afterwards Tom was lamenting the lack of real discipline and made his decision (to go Marine Corps).

I knew him better at TBS. As you know he was one of the nicest guys in the platoon, save Newlin. As good looking as he was good natured, courteous and polite (Tom not Bob). The girls loved him (Tom not Bob). So he was good to hang out with in case there were any "hanger-ons".

**From Steve Freiherr, 16 April 2015:** Rich nailed it on Tom. No comment on his clothes - at least his uniform was squared away for drills and classes!

Seriously, I recall that besides the discipline issues w/his Navy cruise, the leadership displayed by the Marine NROTC staff, the comradery among the staff and the Marine Options, opportunity to be a platoon commander, and Marine Corps leadership opportunities all contributed to Tom's decision to go Marine Option. His father was supportive of his decision, but he caught lots of grief from his younger brothers, especially James who I think went by "Drew." I do recall he worked very hard to graduate with the distinction of being his class "Anchor."

Tom and I spent many memorable weekends in DC staying with a friend of Tom's Dad. His wife's sole purpose in life was to get Tom and I invites to many social events/parties and to "fix" Tom and I up with appropriate dates - daughters of senior military officers and feds. And of course, we were required to write thank-you notes before we left for Quantico. Memorable times! I can share more details of our liberty and his short time in RVN, but not for publication.