

Provincial Reporters **by James Rosenthal**

Jim Rosenthal held many positions during the Vietnam War including Vietnamese Language and Area Trainee, 1960-61; Political Officer, Embassy Saigon 1961-65; Desk Officer, Vietnam Working Group, Department of State, 1967-70; Member of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam, 1970-72; and Director of the Office of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia Affairs, Department of State, 1975-77. He went on to serve as Deputy Chief of Mission in Kuala Lumpur, 1977-79, Deputy Chief of Mission in Manila, 1979-82, and Ambassador to Guinea, 1983-86.

In the 1960s, the political section of the U.S. embassy in Saigon included a unique unit called the Provincial Reporters. Formed in 1962 and composed of young Vietnamese-speaking FSOs, the unit's members were specifically assigned to travel the countryside beyond Saigon to observe and report on conditions there. Their reports included analysis not only of political and economic conditions in South Vietnam's provinces, but also of the military and security situation and the fight against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Their reports were highly valued and used by senior officers, both civilian and military, to help assess the overall U.S. and South Vietnamese effort. Their travel was often arduous and sometimes dangerous, and several officers were cited for heroism and outstanding performance.

The unit included original members Lyall Breckon, David Engel and Jim Rosenthal. They were later joined or followed by Walt Lundy, Sam Thomsen, John Negroponete, Dick Teare, Dave Lambertson, Bill Marsh, Harry Dunlop, David E. Brown, David G. Brown, Jim Mack and Brian Kirkpatrick, among others. The left photo below shows FSO Jim Rosenthal talking with Vietnamese farmers in the Mekong Delta in 1962. The right photo shows FSO Dick Teare in 1963 at the wheel of the unit's primary mode of transportation.

