

Winds of Peace



Newsletter for Madison Quakers Projects in Viet Nam
May 2002

Issue #9

Going Back

by Mike Boehm

My return to Viet Nam last February marked, almost to the day, the ten-year anniversary of my first trip to Viet Nam since the war. In early February 1992, I traveled with eleven other American veterans to Dong Nai province in Viet Nam to work with the Vietnamese people to build a medical clinic in the village of Xuan Hiep. What I didn't realize at the time was that my whole life was about to be turned on its head.

This trip was a time to reflect on the intervening ten years and what has been accomplished during that time. Working with the Madison Quakers, we have made tremendous strides in providing economic aid to the poor people of Viet Nam. However, it took hard work and perseverance to get where we are today. From the yearlong effort in 1993 to raise a modest \$3,000 for our first project the My Lai Loan Fund, we have now raised more than \$350,000 for our projects in Viet Nam. From providing only 30 poor women with loans in My Lai in 1994, we have now provided more than 1,500 poor women with loans through loan funds in nine different villages. Repayment rates for these loans are close to 98%. Mrs. Tuyet, Chairwoman of the Quang Ngai Province Women's Union told me this year that the Madison Quakers now fund 70 per cent of all their poverty reduction programs in the province. You can read more detailed reports on these loan funds starting on the next page.

In addition to the loan funds we have funded two peace parks, a series of primary schools, projects for ethnic minorities, delivered medical supplies, developed art exchanges between the children in our two countries, and more. This September we will be bringing the women from Viet Nam and El Salvador to meet with each other through the Sisters Meeting Sisters project.

But none of this came easy. I had to pull myself out of despair many times because of what I perceived as lack of interest in our work in My Lai and elsewhere. I hadn't realized how traumatized people in this country still were from that war. I became reacquainted with the trauma that vets were dealing with and discovered for the first time that peace activists also had their

own trauma to cope with. So it took time, years in fact, for people here to begin to cautiously accept these projects.

The same process of learning from and about each other was true in Viet Nam. Nothing could be taken for granted. Years ago I heard a representative of the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, DC, talk about the misunderstanding by the Vietnamese government about the NGO's (the term used for non-profit, humanitarian organizations) working in Viet Nam. When the Vietnamese government heard

the term non-governmental organization to them it meant anti-governmental organization. It took years to overcome the distrust generated from that misunderstanding. Even the concept of peace had to be examined by our Vietnamese counterparts. What did the Madison Quakers mean by peace? An example of how even peace can be distorted and cause misunderstanding is the 'peaceful evolution' program being promoted by conservative elements in our government.

This program is an attempt to overthrow the existing government

in Viet Nam by 'peaceful' means rather than by war. So it took years for us to come to understand each other well enough to create the relationships that are vital for success in all of Viet Nam but especially in Quang Ngai province.

Relationships define our place in the world and how we develop these relationships determines the outcome of our work together with the people of the world. Working or businesslike relationships are common even among charity organizations but they fall short of the intimate personal and community relationships that are needed in the world today. Phan Van Do and I have formed such a relationship. We have worked hard for years to understand each other and each other's country. It has created a kind of intimacy between us that has helped us bring our countries closer together. We have shown that if we approach people in other parts of the world in an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other's dignity and culture, there is no limit to what can be accomplished together. We must begin to understand and dismantle the barriers that keep us focused on our differences rather than on our common humanity.



Mike playing violin for survivors of the My Lai massacre, March 16, 2002.

Progress Report for Loan Funds Established by Madison Quakers: 1994-2002

by Mike Boehm

Since the first loan fund in My Lai, more than 1500 women have received loans. Funding from the Madison Quakers for these loans constitutes 70% of all the poverty reduction programs by the Quang Ngai Province Women's Union. Repayment rates for loans is nearly 98% in all villages. These loan fund reports cover each village that receives loans in Quang Ngai Province and in Bac Giang Province. Most contain a story, either of individual women or of the fund itself to illustrate different aspects of these funds.

Quang Ngai Province

My Lai Loan Fund

- Established in January 1994, the My Lai Loan Fund is in its 5th funding cycle. 772 women have received loans.
- Investment to date is \$21,250.

Profile: Tran Thi Thao

Mrs. Thao is 54 years old and married with three sons. She received her first loan four years ago and started businesses raising cows and pigs. She also planted a large garden in which she grows many vegetables for the market.

At the time she received her first loan, she was living in a mud-walled, thatched-roof house. At first she refused to accept a loan because she had never borrowed money before, and she was afraid she would not be able to pay the loan back and so lose her house. The Province Women's Union visited her and persuaded her to take the loan. Through the various training sessions implemented by the Women's Union, Mrs. Thao received training in husbandry and retailing. She has now succeeded to such an extent that she has built a new house and operates a number of thriving businesses. These loans average only \$100, but in cases of talented businesswomen like Mrs. Thao, the loans act as a catalyst. Upon seeing her success, friends, family, and neighbors were much more willing to lend money to her, so that in only four years Mrs. Thao has been able to become completely self-sufficient and prosperous.



Mrs. Thao in her garden where she grows cassava, eggplant, squash, peppers, and other vegetables for the market.

Photo by M. Boehm



Mrs. Thao with root vegetables from her garden. This vegetable will be made into a flour for cooking

Photo by M. Boehm



Mrs. Tran Thi Thao in front of her new house.

Photo by M. Boehm

Loan Fund Progress Reports continued



Photo by M. Boehm

Mrs. Nguyen Thi Khoa with her father and one of her sons.

Nghia An Loan Fund

- Established in May 1998. This fund is in its 2nd cycle. 80 women have received loans.
- Investment to date is \$7,000.

Profile: Pham Thi Liu

Mrs. Liu is 44 years old and is married with four children. She and her husband for many years have been caring for the younger brother of her husband, who is mentally retarded. Her oldest son has been sick most of his life and lives with his parents but is unable to work.

Mrs. Liu borrowed money through this fund in January of this year and used her loan to buy a fishnet and a boat. These two items have greatly improved the family's economic situation and for the first time in her life she is self-employed. Before receiving her loan, she worked for other people doing manual labor, such as rowing their boats, cleaning houses, etc.

Pho Khanh Loan Fund

- Established in September 1997. This fund is in its 3rd cycle. 275 women have received loans.
- Investment to date is \$10,000.

Profile: Nguyen Thi Khoa

Mrs. Khoa is 49 years old with two children. The changes in her life come not only from the loan she received, but also from the compassion of her neighbors. Her husband died years ago, leaving her alone with no economic resources to raise their three children. Last year her oldest son drowned in a pond while tending buffalos for a neighbor. Last October she received her first loan and with this loan she purchased a cow and some building materials. Her neighbors rallied to help her first by building a brick house for her and then by furnishing it with their own tables, chairs and beds. They also gave clothing to her and her children. Although she is still in poor health, her neighbors are looking after her and will help when she needs it.



Photo by M. Boehm

From left to right: Mrs. Pham Thi Liu, her oldest son, and her husband's younger brother.



Photo by Phan Van Do

Mrs. Lich helping the women with their loan contracts.

Binh Minh Loan Fund

- Established in January 1999. This fund is in its 2nd cycle. 124 women have received loans.
- Investment to date is \$10,500.

Profile: Mrs. Nguyen Thi Lich

Mrs. Lich is Chairwoman of the Binh Minh Women's Union. Although in her mid-sixties, she and her staff travel by bicycle to visit all the women receiving loans at least twice a month. This is very hard work for a woman her age (these villages sometime spread out over many square miles). So this year the Madison Quakers bought a Honda Wave motorcycle for her. Mrs. Lich's organization and enthusiasm is an inspiration for everyone who meets her.

Loan Fund Progress Report continued**Truong Khanh Loan Fund**

- Established in March 2000. This fund has just started its 2nd cycle.
- 84 women have received loans.
- Investment to date is \$8,000.

Special Profile: Healing the Spirit—Mrs. Pham Thi Huong

In previous issues of Winds of Peace we have talked about Mrs. Pham Thi Huong, who survived the massacre in Truong Khanh village 32 years ago. When the Madison Quakers established a loan fund in Truong Khanh a little more than two years ago, Do and I met Mrs. Huong who said, before breaking down completely, that she could not forget the smell of the decomposing bodies of her two children who were killed in that massacre. As she told us this she looked dead inside, unsmiling, lifeless, old.

This year Do and I returned to Truong Khanh to monitor progress of the loan fund and to visit some of the women who received loans. This included another visit with Mrs. Huong. When we met her she was smiling, energized and much younger looking. We weren't sure at first if she was the same woman we had met two years ago. But when Do asked the neighbors what had happened to her to create such a profound change, they said the change was due to the loan she received. As the crushing burden of poverty was lifted, her spirit began to heal, and she was re-infused with energy and life. We talked about her new business of raising cows, and also about the massacre. She was able to talk at length about the massacre and the death of her children with calmness and dignity.

If someone had told me a story like this I would not have believed it. But there she was—standing right there before me—living, vibrant proof that these loans are not only improving economic conditions of women and their families. They are restoring life and spiritual health as well.



Photo by Kate Jellema

Mrs. Huong 2 years ago. She had just finished telling us the story of losing her children in the massacre.



Photo by M.

Mrs. Huong today, healthier and happier.



Photo by M. Boehm

Making reed brooms, one of the businesses started by women in Pho Thuan.

Pho Thuan Loan Fund

- Established in April 2001. This fund is still in its 1st cycle. 31 women have received loans.
- Investment to date is \$8,000.

Loan Fund Progress Report continued

Tinh Hoa Loan Fund

- Established in April 2001. This fund is still in its 1st cycle. 42 women have received loans.
- Investment to date is \$8,000

About a third of the loans given out through the Tinh Hoa loan fund were for raising shrimp. Shrimp raising is very lucrative, but the shrimp are vulnerable to disease. Last year shrimp throughout Viet Nam were devastated by disease, and only about 10% of the shrimp crop survived. This was a blow to the women who had used their loans to raise shrimp. The central government has been working hard to combat the disease and to give training courses to shrimp farmers so they can prevent further losses. Although diversification of business investments is one answer to this problem, the province Women's Union will continue to allow loans for shrimp farms in the future. They say that shrimp farms are so profitable that three out of four crops can be lost, and the women will still make a profit.



Photo by M. Boehm

Vast expanse of shrimp ponds in Tinh Hoa village.

Nghia Phu Loan Fund

- Established in April 2002. The 1st funding cycle has just begun. 40 women have received loans.
- Investment to date is \$8,000.

Bac Giang Province

Viet Lap Loan Fund

- Established in March 1999. The first funding cycle has just begun. This fund has given loans to 70 women.
- Investment to date is \$8,000.

This fund has had an interesting history. The original location for this fund was Song Mai village, site of the Vietnamese-American Peace Park. Because of support the village was receiving from other foreign NGOs, the Bac Giang province People's Committee decided that Da Mai village, located between Song Mai village and Bac Giang city, should be recipient of the loan fund because of the role played by the villagers during the American war. When we visited Da Mai village, we were dismayed at the relative wealth of the women who were receiving loans. Certainly they were poor by American standards, but not when compared to villages in the more rural areas in Viet Nam. Through careful questioning, we found that the Bac Giang Women's Union were also dissatisfied by this choice of villages and preferred a different site for this fund. Last year the village of Viet Lap was chosen to the satisfaction of everyone. Viet Lap has a high percentage of extremely poor women who are now the beneficiaries of this new fund.



Photo by M. Boehm

Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, with her mother and son.
Note mud walls and lack of windows.

Other Funding for the Women's Union



Photo by M.

Mrs. Hong, Vice Chair of the Provincial Women's Union, with motorcycle provided for Quang Ngai Province Women's Union.



Photo by Phan Van Do

Fleet of bicycles purchased for the Women's Union of My Lai.



Photo by M. Boehm

Miss Xuong from Provincial Women's Union with fax machine.



Photo by M. Boehm

Women from My Lai receiving training in husbandry and bookkeeping.

Schedule for Training Programs in My Lai, 2002

- 8/4/02 Raising reproductive cows and beeves
- 9/4/02 Raising reproductive pigs and porkers
- 10/4/02 Breeding shrimp on sand and in the lake
- 11/4/02 Savings-credit programme
- 12/4/02 Project management and books noting

Progress reports on the Peace Parks, schools, and ethnic minority programs will appear in the next issue of Winds of Peace.

Vo Thi Lien: A spirit watches over the My Lai Peace Park

By Mike Boehm



Vo Thi Lien, at age 13, with international press.

Vo Thi Lien was 12 years old when she survived the massacre at My Lai in 1968. She became a representative of the villagers there by becoming part of a delegation that traveled around the world giving testimony of the massacre. Years later her husband designed the large set of sculpted statues at the My Lai Memorial.

Five years ago Vo Thi Lien died as result of childbirth. Although she was in her forties, she became pregnant again in an attempt to have a boy (she and her husband had only girls up to then). She was buried at what was to become the site of the My Lai Peace Park. In 1997 I asked the Son Tinh People's Committee if her grave could remain there as a guardian spirit for the park. They agreed and years later when construction of the park began, her immediate and extended family came to visit the Son Tinh People's Committee and also asked that her grave remain there.

Last year construction of the My Lai Peace Park had progressed to the point where a well needed to be dug to provide water for the newly planted trees and for the fish ponds. It soon became evident that this simple task was turning into an impossibility. Four attempts were made by different local well digging companies last year, and all failed to find water. This year the well diggers worked for three days digging in various spots to find water and again were unsuccessful.



Photo by M. Boehm

Two well diggers showing their frustration at yet another failure to find water.

At this point Mr. Phan Van Do, the Madison Quakers project coordinator in Viet Nam (and cousin to Vo Thi Lien), stepped in and reminded the well diggers of an ancient Vietnamese proverb that said, "Each river and each mountain and each land has its owner." Do pointed to the tomb of Mrs. Lien and asked the crew if they had burned incense sticks to her. They said there were no more incense sticks at the park. Do scolded them saying that "If you have a heart for her soul, if you have honesty for her soul, why don't you buy incense with your own money?" Admonished, the well diggers went out to buy incense. When they returned, Do had made a mark in the sand and told them to dig there when they were done offering incense to Mrs. Lien. Do left as the workers knelt before Mrs. Lien's tomb and began praying to her. Late that afternoon, digging where Do had told them to, the well diggers struck water. This well has maintained a strong flow of water ever since.



Photo by M. Boehm

Mr. Quan makes his living taking photographs of Vietnamese visitors to My Khe beach. In March of this year he approached our group while we were at the beach and asked who we were. Do told him that we were funding the My Lai Peace Park.

Quan then told us that he had been on one of the well digging teams last year that had failed to find water. He said he was telling us this not because he wanted to get paid, but to let us know how inspired he was by the My Lai Peace Park and how ashamed he was that he failed. He quit working for the well digging company after that and began to take photographs as a way to earn a living.

She Shimmered in Time

An excerpt from *Voices from Vietnam*

By Charlene Edwards

"She shimmered in time."

Lana's poetic words describe her adopted Vietnamese daughter, Heather, whose short life ended 24 years ago. "I'm sorry we couldn't save her, but I'm so very glad we had the opportunity to love her."

In 1973, after five years of marriage, Lana and Byron faced up to the realization that they had little hope of having children of their own. So they chose adoption. "We soon found out how futile an American adoption would be and instead we decided to look outside this country." They got in touch with Friends of Children of Vietnam and began a long, tedious adoption process. "Page after page after page of application papers, hours of home study, and interminable interviews—we thought it would never end. We were even fingerprinted. Almost an entire year after we began the process, we finally received our approval. Then we had to wait. Wait for our baby."

It was early 1975 and the tension in Saigon was rising. The Viet Cong were closing in on the city. President Ford announced that Operation Babylift would be set in motion using American military transport aircraft. Other countries around the world joined in the effort, and on April 3, 1975, the evacuation of Vietnamese and Amerasian orphans began. On the second day of the airlift, a C5-A cargo jet carrying 228 orphans crashed into a rice paddy 20 minutes into its flight from Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Forty-nine adults and 78 orphans died.

Lana, Byron, and an entire community of potential adoptee parents on Long Island were devastated. No one knew whose children were on the plane, and fear showed on their weary faces as they waited to hear the names of those who perished. "Without question, it was one of the worst days of my life." Lana, still visibly upset, tells the story of that day as she strokes Heather's face in one of the few photographs she has of her child. "Thank God, Heather wasn't on that downed plane."

From April 3 to April 19, 1975, Operation Babylift flew more than 3,000 children to new homes in America, Europe, Canada, and Australia. Heather was one of these children. She left Vietnam on April 11 and was twice hospitalized—for pneumonia, malnutrition,

anemia, scabies, salmonella, and a cough—before reaching New York on April 23. "Heather only stayed home with us until April 29, when we had no choice but to take her to the hospital. We stayed there with her day and night. I remember sitting at her bedside watching the television report that the North Vietnamese were taking over Saigon." As the South lost ground, so too did Heather. "I remember thinking, God didn't bring her all this way here, so many thousands of miles, to have her die on us. But she did." Heather struggled to hold on, but she was too ill. "Our tiny miracle baby, Heather

Constance, smiled at us twice before she died on May 17."

"The trauma of her death was such a shock that it followed us forever. We were never the same again." Heather's funeral was on May 20. "That night, in one of the darkest moments of our lives, the phone rang. It was Friends of Children of Vietnam. They had three more babies to place. They wanted us to take one. Our minds raced. We had just buried our daughter—we couldn't go

through it again. We needed time for silence and tears. I said I'd call them back the next day."

Evacuated when she was three months old, Jennifer was the very last baby placed from Operation Babylift. "She came home on June 5, 1975, and was ours the minute we saw her, shaved head and all. There was no sleeping her first nights home. We hovered over her day and night, constantly checking to make sure she was alive." Jennifer flourished and grew, bright and confident. Piano, flute, soccer, gymnastics, and dance lessons filled her childhood. "Jenny is so gifted and talented. And very much her own person. Her first sentence was, 'I do it!'"

Jennifer earned many achievements. She won a good citizenship award, was named sportswoman of the year, and graduated an honor student from high school. She graduated from Drew University cum laude with a bachelor's in psychology and from Columbia University with a master's in social work. She now works as a social worker with underprivileged, low-income families. Jennifer's interest in her heritage has grown stronger as she matured. She would like to visit



May 2002
Vietnam someday soon.

Lana and Byron did not want Jennifer to grow up as an only child, so on December 11, 1979, Jason, an abandoned child from an orphanage in Seoul, South Korea, became her new brother. He graduated from Hofstra University and is presently working as a social studies teacher. "We are so proud of both our children. Our lives have been transformed by them. We are truly blessed."

Even so, each and every spring, when the earth stirs, Lana remembers her lost child. "I loved her so much—she was my baby. She was a gift to us all. Not a day goes by that I don't think of her and talk to her. I am so thankful that she died being loved. It seems as if I wake early every morning from April 23 to May 17 and ponder what I will do in Heather's memory. It's as if I'm on a mission, and for those 25 days that mark the anniversary of Heather's life with us, I donate money and try to help increase awareness of the tragedy of her death."

Heather is buried far from Vietnam, near a bench, a lovely dogwood tree, and a globe of the world. Lying in the earth next to her is a young corporal. She died in his country. He died in hers.



Lana, Byron, and their adopted children, Jennifer and Jason, visit Heather's gravesite. Lana, still visibly sad over their loss says, "Our tiny miracle baby, Heather Constance, smiled at us twice before she died on May 17."

This story and the photos are a part of the book *Voices from Vietnam*, available in bookstores in November 2002. Copyright Charlene Edwards, not to be reproduced without the author's permission.

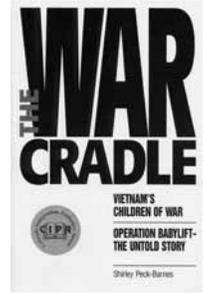
The War Cradle

Vietnam's Children of War
Operation Babylift—

The Untold Story

by Shirley Peck-Barnes

The Vintage Pressworks, 2000



Who could forget the images on TV in April 1975 of the war coming to a close. Especially heart-wrenching was the plight of orphaned and abandoned children, caught in the crossfire through no fault of their own. In the last days, President Ford began "Operation Babylift", a military effort to airlift 2700 orphans to the United States.

Twenty-five years after Operation Babylift, Shirley Peck-Barnes has published an interesting and compelling account of the many sides to the story. Peck-Barnes spent many years researching the facts and interviewing the many participants. She tells the story as a "you are there" docudrama.

Some of the people whose stories come to life include Ed Daly, president of World Airways, who took it upon himself to begin evacuating children against government orders; Dr. Ted Gleichman, a Denver physician, who organized the Friends of the Children of Viet Nam (FCVN) to send aid to orphanages after his tour of duty; and Ross Meador, a young man who ran an orphanage in Viet Nam and rescued many children.

Then there was the tragic plane crash of the C5A Galaxy cargo plane, the first to evacuate the children after President Ford's directive, killing more than half of the orphans and escorts on board.

Peck-Barnes became personally involved in Operation Babylift in 1975 when she heard a radio news broadcast about the airlift. At the time she had just been appointed to open a healthcare facility in Denver. She offered the still-vacant facility for use as a temporary shelter for some 600 children from Viet Nam until their adoptive families could take them to their new homes.

At the end of the book, seven children who came to the U.S. as a result of Operation Babylift share their stories and thoughts. Now that they are adults, they want to know more about what happened in their birth country and better understand their cultural heritage. Many adoptees are traveling to Viet Nam to explore their roots.

In an interview with Allison Martin which appears on the Adopt Vietnam website (www.adoptvietnam.org), Peck-Barnes says that she would like people who read *The War Cradle* "to reflect on what war does to children and to be their voice. The lessons of Vietnam go unheeded. It is still with us, Bosnia, Kosovo, the Middle East, Ireland...there is no 'war cradle'...no protective environment for the children. We are often tangled in 'causes and reasons' for war and the incidents that perpetuate it. But, if we were to place emphasis on what war does to children, I think the diplomats might make a greater effort to take their arguments to the peace table, rather than the battlefield."

The *War Cradle* can be ordered for \$19.95 (plus \$3 shipping from: Vintage Pressworks, 999 Tehon St., Denver, CO 80204. (800-368-0550)

New Resources for Adult Adoptees from Vietnam

By Joshua Woerthwein

My name is Joshua Woerthwein, and I'm a Vietnamese adoptee. I had the honor and pleasure of meeting several dozen other Vietnamese adoptees at two Vietnamese adoptee reunions that took place earlier, one in Baltimore, MD (April 2000), and one in Estes Park, CO (July 2000). During the Colorado reunion, the adoptees had a few discussions pertaining to future events, and we've taken the initiative to start our own non-profit organization. We appreciate the effort that Holt International Children's Services, Tressler-Lutheran, FFAC, and FCVN (plus the countless other organizations that had their hands in the adoption process and are too numerous to list) gave in setting up the reunions in Baltimore and Estes Park, but it's time for the Vietnamese adoptees to be responsible for organizing future reunions, as well as other matters (and the Sisters in Colorado agreed!). It's an exciting time in our lives as we set out on this great endeavor, and together, we'll make it work!

So, out of Colorado came the birth of VAN—the Vietnamese Adoptee Network. After several months of phone calls, online meetings, and finally, an international business meeting in Chicago, IL, on 19 August 2000, VAN was "officially" founded. Two other organizations were present at the meeting and have played a great role in getting VAN up and running: AVI and Mam Non.

What is VAN's mission?

The Vietnamese Adoptee Network seeks to maximize the Vietnamese adoptee experience in a caring, supportive environment by networking them to other Vietnamese adoptees and community resources.

How does VAN propose to achieve its mission?

- To create and maintain a network of Vietnamese adoptees
- To build and foster connections with:
 - Those who affect our lives (by facilitating birth family searches and by collaborating with other Vietnamese adoptee resources)
 - The greater Vietnamese community
- To share experience and support by:
 - Cultivating tolerance of individual and ethnic differences
 - Recognizing individual self-worth
 - Promoting understanding and awareness of our native culture
 - Nurturing the growth of other Vietnamese adoptee adolescents and adults, e.g. mentorship
 - Organizing future reunions and motherland tours
 - Serving as a resource to parents considering adoption, to agencies who work with adoption, to social workers, and to the media, e.g. collecting and disseminating information relating to the adoption experience (Triad)
- To culturally enrich our community



VAN's sister organization is AVI—Adopted Vietnamese International—based in Sydney, Australia. Founded two years ago by Ms. Indigo Williams, the website (www.adoptedvietnamese.org) was officially launched on 30 April 2000, the anniversary of Operation Babylift. AVI's mission statement is as follows: "The main aim of the organisation is to provide support, services, and friendship to individuals who are adopted from Vietnam and to bridge the separation from their birth country, family and culture. This is a cooperative and sharing organisation with community participation strongly encouraged."

AVI and VAN have been working closely together since that international business meeting took place in August in Chicago.

VAN has started a directory of Vietnamese adoptees; most of the members of the directory are adult adoptees who were at one or both reunions that took place this past year. But in order for us to achieve a solid network of Vietnamese

adoptees, we need to populate the directory with as many Vietnamese adoptees that want to be a part of it.

Thanks to the efforts of Linh Lam and her organization, Mam Non (www.mamnon.org), several adult adoptees have met with parents of younger Vietnamese adoptees, and their parents have chosen to put them into the directory, too. Anyone in the Triad can be a part of the directory, for VAN wants the network to grow and flourish.

If you have any additional questions about VAN, please contact me or Chris Brownlee, VAN's other co-director. And if you have any questions about AVI or Mam Non, please contact Indigo Williams (info@adoptedvietnamese.org) or Linh Lam (info@mamnon.org), respectively.

Joshua J Woerthwein

Co-Director, VAN—Vietnamese Adoptee Network

E-mail: jawshoouh@earthlink.net

Chris Brownlee

Co-Director, VAN—Vietnamese Adoptee Network

E-mail: ccbrownl@hotmail.com

Website: www.van-online.org

To read Joshua Woerthwein's account of his first time back to Viet Nam since his adoption, visit www.comeunity.com/apr/babylift-joshua.html

A Path to Peace

By Susan Blake

It's a steamy mid-October day when we pull to the side of a narrow country road. My friends, Mr. Phan Van Do, Mr. Nguyen Van Duc, Nancy Diehl, and I get out of our rented white 1980 Mercedes-Benz. We walk slowly up a narrow grassy path between two rice paddies. A two-story pagoda rises majestically, almost magically, from the red sand of the field before us. This is the My Lai Peace Park.

The pagoda, a wide graceful pink roof supported by eight white pillars, invites us to take refuge from the blazing sun in its blissful shade. I climb the winding staircase and gaze at peaceful countryside—lush fields and swaying palm trees on three sides, a solemn cemetery on the fourth. But this memorial, immobile and insensate, depends on the memories of visitors to provide the context, and soon powerful images of tragedies, past and more recent, intrude. My reverie is shattered. Overwhelmed by sadness, I feel as though I am at a wake.

It is very quiet here—the only sound comes from the shovels of two local men digging holes in the rocky sand. Their work today is not in preparation for the rituals of death, but instead for a tree planting ceremony so generously arranged for us by Mr. Do and Mike Boehm, the Project Coordinators of the My Lai Peace Park. I join the others and step into the inferno of the midday sun.



Susan Blake, Nancy Diehl, and Vietnamese friends plant bamboo at the My Lai Peace Park.

We work together, an unlikely team, four serious, strong Vietnamese men, and two sweating middle-aged American women. In our struggle to plant the trees we all begin to laugh—the laughter uniting us in ways that words alone could not. In the solemn process of honoring the dead we discover ways to celebrate life.

Our tasks complete we shake hands and say good-bye. Walking back down the path I feel a sense of lightness—new memories begin to take root in the rubble of the past. As the car pulls away, I see a farmer drive his cows across the paddies in the direction of our newly planted trees. It reminds me that the My Lai Peace Park is not just for tourists. It is an integral part of the community. As such, it brings the local people together, providing shelter from the sun or storms and a place to play or pray. And in this place they will surely be offered a chance, from time to time, to walk with other pilgrims along the path of closure and peace.

(I wrote this short essay after my third trip to Viet Nam in October 2001.)

Mother's Day Proclamation

penned in Boston by Julia Ward Howe, 1870
(Unknown to most Americans, Mother's Day was founded as a protest against the carnage from our Civil War.)

Arise, then, women of this day!
Arise all women who have hearts,
Whether your baptism be that of water or of tears
Say firmly:
"We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies,
Our husbands shall not come to us reeking of carnage,
For caresses and applause.
Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn
All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.
We women of one country
Will be too tender of those of another country
To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.
From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with
Our own. It says, "Disarm, Disarm!"
The sword of murder is not the balance of justice!
Blood does not wipe out dishonor
Nor violence indicate possession.
As men have often forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war,
Let women now leave all that may be left of home
For a great and earnest day of counsel.
Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.
Let them then solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means
Whereby the great human family can live in peace,
Each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar,
But of God.
In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask
That a general congress of women without limit of nationality
May be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient
And at the earliest period consistent with its objects
To promote the alliance of the different nationalities,
The amicable settlement of international questions.
The great and general interests of peace.



Photo from *Quiet Courage* by Don Luce and Jacqui Chagnon.

Quiet Courage

By Don Luce* and Jacqui Chagnon

Published in 1974 as part of the Indochina Mobile Education Project

This book of poetry was published with the intention of giving the American people new insight into the impact the American war was having on the people of Viet Nam. The poets in this book range from high school students, prisoners, and soldiers to Ho Chi Minh and classic Vietnamese poets like Nguyen Du. All of our wars trigger PR campaigns, more accurately called misinformation campaigns, by the Pentagon and State Department. The American war in Viet Nam was no different. This book humanized the people of Viet Nam and helped to counteract the PR campaigns of our government.

The following two poems are from Quiet Courage, which we will soon be adding to our web site (www.mylaipeacepark.com).



Please Give Me Back

By Hoang Minh Nhan

People have said a lot
About the countryside
In difficult and lofty phrases
With feelings dark as night,
As cryptic or bitter
As the words of a lover betrayed.

But I would like now to say some simple things,
simple as a field of rice or sweet potatoes,
Or a silent early morning.
Please let me breathe again the air of yesterday,
Let children frolic in the sun
With kites over bamboo bridges.

Just a narrow little space will be enough
Four rows of bamboo trees around it;
And leave a little space for an entrance,
A place for a girl and boy to tell the story of the moon,
For old women with babies to gather and chatter.

Please give me back these things I've mentioned-
A story as simple
As a bird's unbroken song,
As a mother, as a baby
As the life of long ago the poets used to tell...

* "Dear Mike,

I'm glad you can put Quiet Courage on your Internet web site for people to read. Please go ahead. I don't know of anyone else you need permission from.

An interesting story about the book is that my home, with all the books there, was firebombed soon after publication. So the ones I have are water and smoke damaged. I hope you have a good one to work from.

Best regards,
Don Luce

The Rice of our Village

By Tran Dang Khoa, Age 12
Hai Hung Village

The rice of our village
Tastes of the silt
Of the river Kinh Thay.
It smells of the lotus
In the overflowing pond.
It murmurs the sweet song
Sung by Mother.

In every grain of rice of our village
There is the typhoon of July,
And the rain of March.
There is the scorching heat of June,
When one's back is wet with sweat,
And the water so hot that stickleback die.
Unable to stand the heat, the crabs crawl out on the paddy dykes.

Oh those years when American bombs
Were rained on our roof;
When soldiers left for the frontline,
and the shell-cases were bright-yellow
Like the ripening rice;
When harvest time came,
And the smell of cooked rice filled the trenches with fragrance.

Every grain of rice of our village
Embodies your efforts, friends
You fought against drought in the morning,
Scooping water until your scoop broke.
You rid the rice of pests and insects,
Standing in the fields under the noon sun,
And carried load after load of manure
Late in the afternoon.

I eat that rice
And feel infused with strength
And happiness.
Each grain is a grain of gold.

Letters

In keeping with this newsletter's purpose to educate and promote discussion, we will print not only letters which support our work, but also letters critical of this work. We request that all letters be signed by the writer.

Dear Editor,

My name is Ronald L. "Scotty" Scott. I was with C-1-20 11th Light Infantry, Americal Division, from April 1968 until October 1969. The My Lai incident happened on March 16th, just before I went to the Company. Yes, I was in Lt. William Calley's platoon. First I have to tell you I was with C Company for 7 months, and I never heard anything about My Lai. I am not saying what happened was right or wrong, only that I knew the people that were there.

When I got hurt in October 1968, it was in My Lai. We were in the My Lai area on Oct. 7, 1968. I was on point when a RPG rocket was fired over my head, and I was injured from the blast. My left ear was damaged, and I was taken out of the field and never had to return after that.

I heard about the Massacre in Dec. 1969 when Lt. Calley was brought up on charges. I was watching TV, and I was shocked when I realized what was happening. After the news broke, I couldn't believe myself that nobody said anything while I was in the unit. I didn't know what to think about the massacre. My first thought was this had to be a mistake. As the information came out, I still couldn't believe it. I think this is one of the reasons I went into a shell along with my service in Vietnam and didn't want to talk about it for many years until I started to get help for my PTSD.

My feelings changed about the Vietnam War after doing research and finding out that our government didn't care if we won or lost the war and because of the men the government left behind. I lost faith in our government completely.

The Vietnam War changed us so much, and we never received the help we needed when we came back. I am never going to be free of the war, but I don't blame the people of Vietnam, North or South. I feel just as bad for them as I do for all the young women and men that went there, only to come back to a country that gave up on us. We were there when our country needed us, so now we have to fight again to get the help that we need and deserve.

I have read all the past newsletters, Winds of Peace, and I have to tell you I am very impressed. I think Mike and everyone that is involved with this project is doing a wonderful job. Keep up the good work. Building the Peace Park at My Lai is a great healing device for the people of Vietnam, as is the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. We all need to heal and to move ahead. Building schools so the children can get an education is a good way for them to learn from our mistakes. Children all over the world should have the right to learn. The Winds of Peace, I think, are on the right path.

As Vietnam Veterans, it has been a long road of healing, and I am sure it has been that way for the people of Vietnam too. I only hope that in the years ahead we can all find some peace and be at peace with everyone. The Vietnam War was a long and difficult war. So many people suffered and still do to this day. No excuse, just fact. So, in closing, I hope the very best for Winds of Peace and may all your dreams for these projects have a happy ending.

Thank you for your time,
God bless,
Scotty

Dear Sir!



Photo by Mike Boehm

Children selling gum and quail eggs at My Khe Beach.

Hi,

My name is Linh Nguyen. I'm a Vietnamese girl, living in Germany.

I'm very interested in Vietnamese nom.

And I wanted to ask you whether you know where I can learn it or whether

you know how to write "Nhu Y" in Vietnamese nom.

I was never in Vietnam, but I really wish to visit it one time. I have got no father; he died when I was 4 years old. His biggest wish was to learn nom, too. He was always proud of his country.

Now I want to fulfill his dream.

I really hope that you could help me.

Thanx a lot for spending your time for reading my Email.

Bye,

Linh Nguyen

(See Winds of Peace #1, for an article on Vietnamese nom.)

My name's Artem Sheinin. I'm a Russian TV-journalist. I found your e-mail at one of the sites connected with My Lai case. The reason I'm interested in it is that to me it has a lot of similarity with a case which is being actively discussed in Russia in connection with Chechen war. Colonel Budanov strangled 18-y.o. Chechen girl. He admitted the killing, but says he thought that she was a sniper who killed several of his soldiers. He became a hero of many people; they think he should be released and call him a hero. Others consider him a criminal, but find it hard to judge him because of the cruelty of war.

As far as I know, Lieutenant William Calley of US Army was sentenced to life imprisonment, but just 3 days later President Nixon intervened, and he was released. I couldn't find any details about why Nixon decided this. How did he explain it to the public, if he did at all? What was general public reaction?

I'll be very grateful to you if you'd advise me any sites where I could find out more about it. Thank you anyway, best regards,
Artem Sheinin.

ORT (Russian Public TV)

More Letters

Dear Mike,

That morning (September 11) I was at work. The T.V. was on, and CNN was broadcasting the news of the “twin tower and Pentagon attacks.” A fellow employee walked up to me and asked what was going on. After a brief discussion she asked me why would anyone do such a thing? I told her that we were hated (underlined) by a lot (underlined) of people in the world, for some of the things you mentioned in your article, by coincidence. So I guess we’re on the same page, so to speak.

But what I really agree with is what has been said over and over again by this, that, and the other talking heads/experts from such and such smart tank stating that our “forcing our culture on the rest of the world” is what is truly detested, resented (and American troops on Holy Saudi Arabian soil...). You know what I’m talking about, Mike. Our obsessively greedy, self-centered, hedonistic way of life.

The McDonaldization, the Disneyification, laugh, laugh, laugh, party, party, party. America is seen as one big, fat, sweaty smelly, smutty orgy of hedonistic decadence. All this shit is just kinda boring to me. What I deplore is the mindlessness of it all, the aimlessness of it. Like we’re stuck in a “time loop” of a constant, never ending attempt to satisfy sensual desires. Just gotta be happy all the goddamned time. Pathetic!

You know I don’t need to cite examples: The “Mall”. The mom/mini-van with the “My son/daughter is on the honor roll” bumper sticker, full of kids, running red lights on her way to wherever. And retired folks, with their savings invested in Prison Industries, Inc., thanks to draconian drug laws that lock up their grandchildren because these kids look at their parents, who set the example: “I don’t give a damn about anything except ME”, so these kids have no hope and escape via “illegal drugs.”

This is why I’m grateful to you and Madison Quakers for giving me the opportunity to do something, anything constructive with, what else, my money. What else do I have? Nothing, really. A conscience, a sense of responsibility, duty, a bit of compassion? Yeah, and I don’t mind saying so.

Thanks.

Sincerely,

John

Western Washington State

P.S. Sorry about the “rambling on” bits, but, to me, it’s the “Big Picture” view that helps me make some sense of Sept. 11.

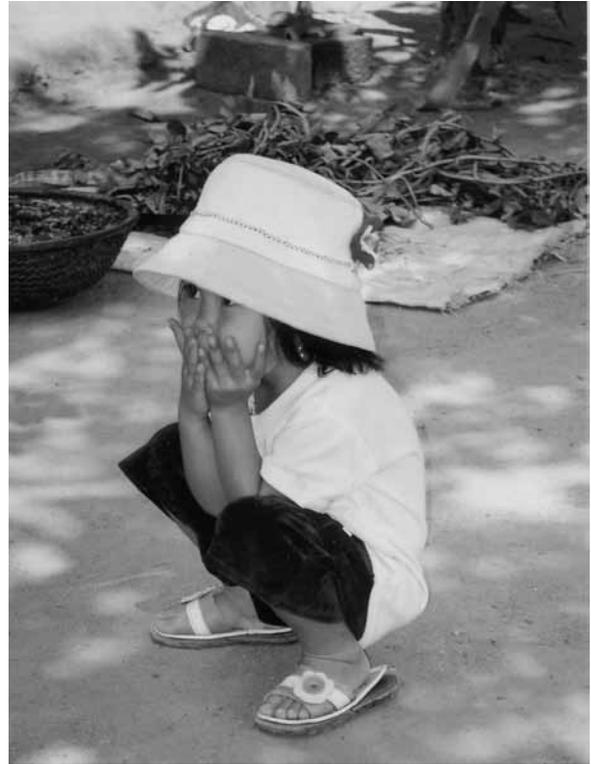


Photo by Mike Boehm

Dear Mike,

Just received the latest issue. As usual I couldn’t wait to begin to read it. Your stories of peace, hope, reconciliation and forgiveness contrasted with those of the devastations caused by war to the individuals and to the land on which they live are both inspirational and heart-wrenching. I have one little story to tell you which is a reflection upon how one’s feelings about war can change over time.

In the early 1970s, Wicky and I became friends (and still are today) with a couple our age whose experience with war was totally different than mine. I was a conscientious objector doing alternative service, and he was a returning helicopter pilot from Viet Nam. He has only talked briefly about what happened in VN, but it appears from what he has told us, he could be described as a true war hero, for he was apparently shot down 11 times and rescued 7 times in helping to evacuate his buddies and often volunteered for this type of duty. We became friends mainly through our wives and children.

There have been many times during our get-togethers over the years where our differences about war have made it very difficult for us to be together in one another’s presence. Shortly after the Sept. 11 event, we met at a restaurant and did our best to not discuss too much what had recently happened, for it was all too overwhelming for all of us. Towards the end of the evening, my friend, out of the clear blue sky, stated that if Harry Truman had only listened to the pleas for help from Ho Chi Minh to unite his country, then the war in Viet Nam never would have happened.

I was not startled by this comment, but rather surprised and caught unawares. I thought his comment did not require a reply but only an acknowledgment. It is truly sad that each generation needs to relearn the awful truth about war.

Ken Woerthwein



Photo by Frank Corcoran

Beer report

By Glenn M. Clark

Just a short report to tell everyone about my annual trip to the Blessing of the Bock in Milwaukee. This year John Zutz offered to cut off his pony tail if the donations in the can on my table reached \$300.

Needless to say there was no problem in reaching that amount. People were pooling their money and bringing it to the table. People were running through the crowd begging. John's father even threw in \$50!

A nice buxom woman from the crowd volunteered to cut John's hair. When she got started, people saw that John was shaving his head not just cutting off the pony tail. A shout went up from the crowd that they were getting more than their money's worth, so the can was again passed through the crowd with much money being stuffed in.

The final count—\$508.87 Donation can
 \$88.00 Greeting cards
 \$596.87 Total from display table

In Peace...Glenn M Clark



Photo by Thomas Gradel

First the ponytail...



Photo by Pat Kettenhofen

...then the rest!

Winds of Peace

Newsletter for Madison Friends Projects in Viet Nam

Mike Boehm, Project Co-ordinator

Phan Van Do, Project Assistant in Viet Nam

Terri Smith, Newsletter Design

"The people of Viet Nam are looking forward to the winds of peace blowing from America."

Please send letters, questions, or written contributions to:

Winds of Peace c/o Mike Boehm

2312 E. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53704

Phone: 608-244-9505

Fax: 608-255-1800

e-mail: vapp@igc.org

Visit our web site on the Internet at:

www.mylaipeacepark.com

I/we would like to support Madison Quakers Projects in Viet Nam!

\$ _____

Optional—Please earmark my donation for:

_____ Loan funds

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Madison Friends Meeting

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Madison Wi 53711-2029

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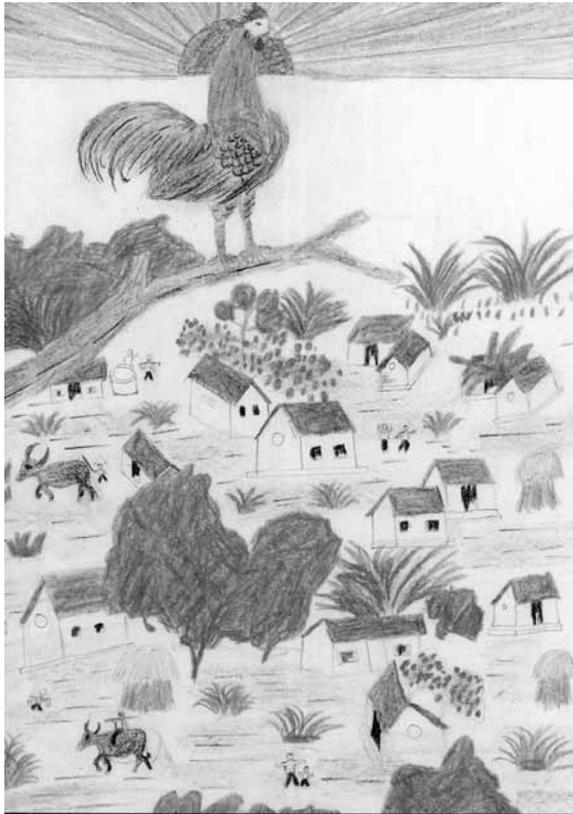
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City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please specify Projects in Viet Nam, or one of the options on your check. Donations are tax deductible.

Thank you for your generosity.



Greeting Cards

featuring the artwork of the children of My Lai

These drawings were made by the children in My Lai as part of an art exchange with children in Madison, WI.

Sets of six different drawings, in full-color on 5 x 7 inch recycled stock, with envelopes: \$8.00
Shipping and handling: \$1.50

Payment should be made by check to:

Madison Friends Meeting
1704 Roberts Ct.
Madison WI 53711-2029

Please write "My Lai Greeting Cards" in the memo part of your check.

To view all the cards, in color, visit www.mylaipeacepark.com/greetingcards.htm
If you know of a retail outlet for these cards in your area, please contact Mike Boehm 608-244-9505 (vapp@igc.org).

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