

# Winds of Peace



Newsletter for Madison Friends' Projects in Viet Nam

October, 2000

Issue #5

## Going Back

by Mike Boehm

I had the opportunity to witness, once again, the spectacle of our country's mainstream media and "parachute journalism" this year during the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reunification of Viet Nam. On April 30, 1975, the Sai Gon regime fell to the North Vietnamese Army and National Liberation Front forces and ended the American war in Viet Nam, celebrated annually by the Vietnamese government as the day Viet Nam was finally reunified. This year's anniversary was recognized around the world.

There are probably fewer than a dozen permanent offices in Viet Nam for newspapers, such as the L. A. Times. When anniversaries like this occur, hundreds of journalists from around the world, most of them from the U.S., fly to Viet Nam for a day or so, usually no more than a week. They find their stories, file them, and then immediately fly home. These reporters are looking for ease in reporting. They don't come to Viet Nam open to new stories, and in fact, they usually have in mind the stories they are going to write and the kind of film footage they want. They "parachute" into Viet Nam only for details and visuals.

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre at My Lai, March 16, 1998, was another example of a major media event involving "parachute journalism." During the preceding weeks and on March 16<sup>th</sup>, I was interviewed about our projects by reporters from 60 Minutes, Time, AP, People Magazine and others, until they blended into one another and became just a blur. When I returned home to the U.S., I found that the editors of each of these publications and TV programs had removed any reference to the work we are doing in My Lai. New schools for the children of Viet Nam, loan funds to impoverished women, dental clinics, peace parks, and the goodwill felt by everyone taking part in these projects held no interest for the powers that be in the major media of the U.S.

The Vietnamese media, on the other hand, learned of our projects in My Lai through the Vietnamese documentary, *The Sound of the Violin in My Lai*. Vietnamese newspapers, magazines, and TV have given extensive coverage to the work we are doing in My Lai, and their reports reflect the hope these projects give not only to the people of My Lai, but also to the people of our two countries.

I used to think that our projects in Viet Nam needed coverage from



Photo by Phan Van Do

Mike and friends play foosball in My Lai.

the mainstream American media to succeed. I thought that the media was the only way the people of this country would be able to find out about and be encouraged to help support these projects. So, to me, the lack of interest by the media was an insurmountable obstacle to the success of our work in My Lai. Now I have learned that we don't really need the mainstream media to spread the word about our work. Each year, more and more people hear about the projects in Viet Nam through word-of-mouth. And because of it, each year, we are able to begin and carry out more projects to help the people of Viet Nam. We, the people, are moving beyond our institutions and are learning how to lead the way toward peace, healing and reconciliation, not only in Viet Nam, but around the world.

This is the lesson anthropologist Margaret Mead was teaching us when she said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."



Copies of the film *The Sound of the Violin in My Lai* are now available for purchase.

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Thank you!

## Hugh Thompson Update

On March 16, 1968, when Hugh Thompson, Larry Colburn and Glenn Andreotta were flying over My Lai in their helicopter, they spotted more and more bodies on the ground and realized a massacre was taking place. Then the crew saw ten villagers fleeing as American soldiers chased them. Hugh landed his helicopter between the fleeing villagers and the American soldiers, got out unarmed, and placed himself between the villagers and the soldiers that were pursuing them. He radioed for two Huey helicopters to land and carry the villagers to safety. Later while flying over a ditch of bodies of massacred villagers, Glenn thought he saw a movement in the ditch. Hugh landed the helicopter, and Glenn rescued a little child covered with blood but unwounded. (See related story on p. 3.) As they flew to Quang Ngai city, Larry looked over and saw tears streaming down Hugh's face. He knew that Hugh had a son in the states about the same age as the child they had rescued. After leaving the child at a hospital in Quang Ngai city, they flew back to base, where Hugh informed the base commander of the massacre taking place and demanded that it be stopped.

Finally, after almost 30 years, Hugh Thompson, Larry Colburn and Glenn Andreotta were awarded the Soldier's Medal for their actions that day. (The Soldier's Medal for Glenn Andreotta was awarded posthumously because Glenn was killed in combat just three weeks after the massacre.) Less than two weeks after being awarded the Soldier's Medal, both Hugh Thompson and Larry Colburn were back in My Lai, Viet Nam, to attend the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre and to participate in the ground-breaking ceremony for the My Lai Peace Park. The most moving experience Hugh and Larry had was being reunited with two Vietnamese women they had rescued 30 years before. Mike Wallace and 60 Minutes produced an emotional twenty-minute segment about this visit.

Since 1998, Hugh Thompson and Larry Colburn have travelled around the country to present talks about their experiences to

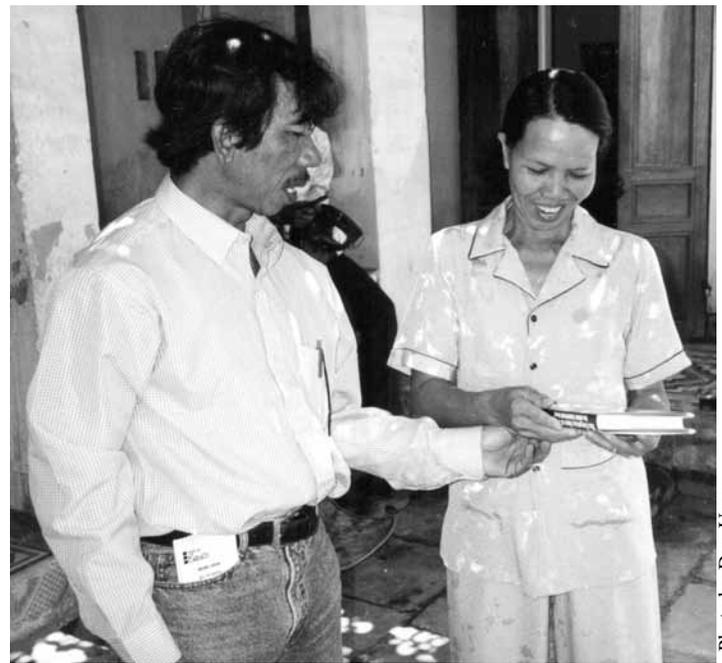


Photo by Don Unrau

Phan Van Do presents Mrs. Pham Thi Nhung with a copy of Hugh's book.

university students and civic groups. Hugh gives lectures on battlefield ethics to almost every branch of the military. He has lectured to the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Quantico Marine Base, West Point, the infamous School of Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, and the Australian Red Cross.

The biography of Hugh Thompson and the story of his actions in My Lai, *The Forgotten Hero of My Lai: the Hugh Thompson Story*, written by Trent Angers, was published in August, 1999. This spring when I was in My Lai, I presented (on behalf of Hugh Thompson) autographed copies of the book to the two women Hugh and his crew rescued and to the director of the My Lai Memorial, another survivor of that day.

This year Hugh was honored with a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize for his actions in My Lai. Songs have been written about Hugh and his crew, and there is talk of a movie being produced.

Both Hugh Thompson and Larry Colburn are hoping to return to My Lai next March 16 to help dedicate the My Lai Peace Park.



Photo by Don Unrau

Mrs. Pham Thi Nhanh with her copy of *The Forgotten Hero*.



Photo by Don Unrau

Mike with Mr. Phan Van Cong, director of the My Lai Memorial.



## The Boy From The Ditch

When Hugh Thompson and Larry Colburn returned to My Lai, in March, 1998, to attend the ceremonies for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre at My Lai, they were reunited with two women they had rescued 30 years before. It was an emotional and uplifting meeting for them, but they had also wanted to meet the boy they had rescued from the ditch that day.

The boy, Do Ba, (a 38 year old man in 1998) was not there that day because he was in a jail camp, Camp Z30 in Xuan Loc, Dong Nai province, serving an eight year sentence for stealing electrical wire from the Unification Palace in Ho Chi Minh City (Sai Gon) in 1992. "If I could see them, I would thank them and try to live up to their act of saving me. I can't remember the face of my savior. I wish to see him again, at least once," said Do Ba, weeping, in an interview for a Thanh Nien newspaper.

Do Ba, was born in 1959; he was eight at the time of the massacre. He described what happened that day—when he and his family were herded into a ditch with other villagers and the American soldiers opened fire—in a Thanh Nien newspaper article published March 16, 1998.

"After the first and the second rain of bullets, my mother and my brothers were not yet killed. They died because of the third shooting. I was small so I was buried among the dead bodies of others, my whole body was soaked with their blood. Suddenly I saw a helicopter landing. Frightened, I thought more people are coming to kill me, so I pretended to be dead. An American picked me up, then maybe he thought that I was dead, so he put me down. He walked away and then looked back. I pretended to be dead for the third time, and saw that he did not kill like the others, and also because I didn't have enough air for too long, I started to wiggle. He saw that and picked me up to his helicopter, then transferred me to the Quang Ngai hospital. A few days later, I decided to run back to my village to see if anybody had buried my mother and brothers. My grandparents on my mother's side were overwhelmed with joy when they saw me on the way back, since they thought I had died. They brought me home to live with them and sent me to school. My mother and brothers were buried by my grandfather on my father's side. My father joined the revolution, was arrested and sent to Con Dao (the infamous island prison with tiger cages administered by the southern regime). After the country was liberated, he came back from prison but died soon after that due to his hard days there. I was left with no family."

According to the newspaper article: "The camp guard said that none of his family has come to visit him. He tells his story to fellow inmates, but they don't believe him. Do Ba has said, 'My memory and my nervous system are deteriorated largely because of the trauma that day. If my friends raise their voices to me, I can lose my temper quickly, and, not being able to control myself, I will hit them right away...' On the former foundation of his house is the My Lai Memorial. The village has built him a new house. His aunt is taking care of it for him. 'When I finish my term, I will want to go back to my native town to rebuild my life and home,' he said."

Do Ba is not alone anymore, though. After reading about Do Ba in the previous article in the Thanh Nien newspaper, the manager of an electrical and cooling company, Thanh By, Duc Hoa, Long An, sent a letter to the editors offering some help. The manager has agreed to offer Do Ba a job after he has served time in the camp and also will give him a chance to learn in the vocational school.

This last article about Do Ba in the Thanh Nien newspaper ends by saying, "It is hoped that with this help Do Ba would not feel lonely and could forget about his past misery, when he, without a family, had to run away from his village and wandered in Ho Chi Minh city and did the bad things there."

## A Song of My Native Village

For Chua, my native village

by Nguyen Quang Thieu

**I sing a song of my native village**

**When everyone is deep in sleep  
Under wet stars, under wild winds  
Finding their way home.**

**Somewhere a man speaks in his sleep  
Beside a woman's streaming hair;  
Somewhere the smell of a mother's milk  
Flows into the night;**

**Somewhere the breasts of girls of fifteen  
Rise from the land like shoots.  
And somewhere the coughs of old villagers  
Fall from branches like ripe fruit  
And grass wakes up lonely in the garden.**

**I sing a song of my native village  
In the light of the oil lamp  
Left by my ancestors  
The loveliest and saddest of lamps.  
When I was born my mother placed it  
Before me that I might look and learn  
To be sad, to love, and to cry.**

**I sing a song of my native village.  
I sing through my navel cord  
Which was buried there  
And became an earthworm  
Crawling under the water jar  
Crawling by the edge of the pond  
Crawling through my ancestors' graves  
Crawling through the paupers' graves  
Pushing up red earth in its path like blood.**

**I sing the song of my native village,  
Bones lying in terra-cotta coffins  
Where mine will lie someday.  
In this life I am human;  
In the next I will be an animal.  
I will ask to be a little dog  
To defend the sadness.  
The jewel of my native village.**

Translated by the author and Martha Collins.

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# 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.

Madison Friends Meeting  
c/o Joseph Elder  
Madison, WI

Dear Friends,

When we stepped off the Reunification Express onto the platform in Quang Ngai, we didn't have any trouble recognizing Mike Boehm: he's twice the size of the average Quang Ngai'er. Over the next few days, however, we learned that Mike looms large in many ways.

We had made the trip from our home in Hanoi in order to take part in the commemorative ceremonies marking the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the My Lai massacre, and to visit some of the sites where Mike has been carrying out work on behalf of the Madison Quakers. Along with another Vietnam Veteran and a retired science teacher, we spent two days with Mike and his local counterpart, Phan Van Do. On the first day we drove up to Truong Khanh village in the highlands west of Quang Ngai city. There we visited the houses of women who had recently received money through the Quaker revolving loan fund. We spoke with their families, admired their loan-fund calves, and said prayers for the victims of an American army massacre committed in the village in 1969. The second day was devoted to three ceremonies in the My Lai area: a memorial ceremony at the massacre site; a ceremony inaugurating the My Lai Peace Park, at which Mike presented the local women's committee with a gift from the women of El Salvador; and a ground-breaking ceremony for the new My Lai primary school. It was only two days, but the time we spent in Quang Ngai taught us lessons that we could never have learned in Hanoi.

We've worked in and around Non-Governmental Organizations in Uganda, Hong Kong, China, the USA, and Vietnam enough to have a strong sense of the vast distance that usually stretches between good will and money, on the one hand, and humane and effective assistance, on the other. Precisely because of this awareness, we were inspired by the work that Mike is doing in My Lai. Mike stands out from the development herd for three reasons.

First, Mike has his hands in the paddy. Though other NGO's subscribe to the ideal of getting down to the grassroots, few directors can match Mike's enthusiasm for building relationships with local counterparts. Mike is committed to spending the necessary time in the field, year after year, to develop trusting friendships with the people without whom the projects would never bear fruit. With Phan Van Do, in particular, Mike has developed a partnership that stands as a model for cooperative work in Vietnam. His respect for Do generates respect on the part of the local people for Mike, for Do, and for the work they are doing. Mike also has a gift for making his very serious work into something to be celebrated and enjoyed. Whether this means drinking beer with village headmen, playing reels on his violin, or taking a turn driving the bulldozer around the Peace Park site, Mike brings a infectious joy to the twin tasks of promoting economic development and achieving human reconciliation.

Second, for all of his obvious passion for the bridge-building process, Mike is willing and able to step out of the spotlight – another rare talent amongst directors! This skill was most evident on our second day, during the ceremonies in My Lai. Both at the memorial

site and at the school ground-breaking, Mike slipped comfortably into a supporting role. This humility, an expression of his faith in the people he is working with, fosters the self-confidence of the local leadership.

Third, in a place which witnessed the darkest depths of human cruelty, Mike works with a stubborn faith in human potential, which he inspires his local collaborators to match. He expects the best of other people, and they usually deliver. Seen at the largest level, this faith means that Mike, while he never forgets the war, doesn't live in the past. Instead he uses the rage that history provokes in him to push forward the on-going process of recovery. At a more quotidian level, it means that when the local women's committee broke the news that the amount of money needed to carry out a building project had unexpectedly doubled, Mike, rather than throwing up his hands or seeking a scapegoat, looked for ways to economize on construction so that the project could move forward. Mike's positive attitude stands in stark contrast to the prevailing mood of cynicism and discouragement in NGO circles.

Perhaps the secret to the success of the Madison Quaker projects is that Mike sees recovery as a process both internal and external to himself. His commitment to Vietnam is both personal and professional in a way that transcends the distinction between these categories. The Vietnamese, for their part, see that Mike has a personal stake in the projects' success and respond to that investment in kind.

At the end of each day we spent in Quang Ngai, Mike took pleasure in the thought that a few more doors had opened between Vietnamese and Americans, between veterans and survivors, between My Lai as it is today and as it hopes to be tomorrow. Mike's passion is the key to those doors!

In admiration—

We are yours sincerely,

Seth Harter and Kate Jellema

Graduate students, University of Michigan

Internation Post Office Box 126

Hanoi, Viet Nam

April 9, 2000



Photo by M. Boehm

A local woman fans Kate and Seth during a meal on a hot day in Truong Khanh village.

## Another New School for My Lai

Because the funding for a new 20 room primary school for My Lai (\$100,000+) was too much for the Madison Friends to take on at one time, we, the My Lai People's Committee and the Madison Friends, decided to build the school as a series of smaller buildings. The photos on this page show the first eight room school under construction. To complete this school in time for the school year, the construction crew worked night and day in August. By the end of August the rainy season had started, so the crew was also working in the rain during September; because of their hard work, this eight room primary school is finished.



Photo by M. Boehm



Photo by B. Froemming

The next important step which was begun before the school was finished was to build a retaining wall so sand from construction, etc., would not wash into the nearby rice paddies. The My Lai People's Committee mobilized every family in the village (except for two hundred families who are extremely poor) to raise money for this wall. But because of the poor harvest this last summer, the villagers could not raise all the funds needed. So the Madison Friends will supply the rest of the needed funds. This is an example of a "joint venture" in the best sense of the word.

Mr. Phan Van Do, our project partner in Viet Nam, said in a recent letter, "...this new school and other projects are very good examples of peace-making in the world, between two countries formerly being enemies, now with tolerance and understanding, coming closer together as friends. This can be clearly seen by both the Madison good friends and the people of My Lai. This is a new start which will involve other people in the U.S. for the best of mankind. And this will be another example for other people who formerly were enemies now becoming friends in the true meaning of friendship and peace and tolerance."



Photo by Phan Van Do



Mike meets with women who are representatives of CCR to discuss the Sisters Meeting Sisters project.

## Sisters Meeting Sisters

On December 4, I will be visiting the women of El Salvador again to firm up plans for the meeting between the women of Viet Nam and El Salvador scheduled for September, 2001. We have received letters from the women of both countries expressing their enthusiasm for this project. Now it is time for us to sit down with the women from El Salvador to receive a specific agenda for next year's meeting. I will forward their agenda to the women of Viet Nam so they can respond with their ideas. Between the two groups of women, we will have a detailed agenda by the beginning of next year.

After spending a week with the women of El Salvador, I will catch a bus to Guatemala City, Guatemala. Lynn Haanen, a long-time activist from Madison, Wisconsin, has lived in Guatemala for years, working in the schools there. When she heard about Sisters Meeting Sisters, she contacted women leaders she knew in Guatemala and told them about the project. These women then asked if I could visit Guatemala to give a series of presentations to the women there about Sisters Meeting Sisters because they are very enthusiastic about also being involved.

We had envisioned the meeting between the women of Viet Nam and El Salvador as a pilot project. Keeping this first meeting between the women from just two countries makes the project manageable. It will also be a learning experience for all of us from which we can expand the project to include meetings between women from other countries. The enthusiasm from the women of Guatemala, and representatives here in Madison of women from Chiapas, Nicaragua, and Honduras, shows us that this is a project whose time has come.

Lynn Haanen also took on the incredibly difficult task of translating the documentary film, *The Sound of the Violin in My Lai*, into Spanish. She had seen the film while visiting Madison last summer and was moved by its message of reconciliation. She feels the people of Guatemala, and elsewhere in Central America, will also be moved by this film.

We have located native Spanish-speaking people here in Madison who have volunteered to speak the script onto the video. When this is finished, I will bring a number of copies of the film to El Salvador and Guatemala to show and leave behind afterward for others to view.

### An Overview of the Association of Communities for the Development of Chalatenango (CCR), Province of Chalatenango, El Salvador Women's Secretariat

#### Women's Secretariat of the CCR:

Work is oriented towards all women organized together in the Women's Secretariat of the CCR. Among them are women of different ages, from 15 years and up. There are women without family support systems, single mothers, heads of households, widows, and many others.

#### Objectives of the Women's Secretariat:

- To orient and develop the consciousness of women to help integrate them into a productive political and social life.
- To develop workshops in self-esteem, gender sensibility, leadership, the administration of projects, interfamily violence, and literacy circles.
- To promote productive projects that can generate an income. For example: day care centers, bakeries, cafeterias, tailoring workshops, handicraft production, corn mills, potable water, improved stoves, stores, agro-ecological cultivation, among others.
- To promote and develop commemorative activities, such as International Women's Day (March 8); Day of No Violence Against Women (November 25); Day of Rural Women (October 15); and Mother's Day (May 10).

Included in these activities are programs of reflection and consciousness-building, concerning the life of women in the past along with present-day problems.

Within this context, artistic talents are developed. Women of the communities organize the presentation of videos, expositions, and theatrical works concerning justice. Members of the National civilian police, the ombudsmen of human rights, judges, mayors, churches, and other social actors participate.

#### Results of our organizing activities:

- We have a total of 5,800 directly affiliated in the Women's Secretariat. There are 40 Women's Committees to organize the activities of women in the communities.
- More women participate in different spaces that open up for decision-making, such as Municipal Councils, community directorates, and the different committees.
- 2,000 women leaders have been trained with support from different institutions.
- We have been able to provide literacy training for 400 women. Many women as a result have overcome illiteracy.

#### The most critical problems that we are confronting in the development of our organization are:

- Difficulties in overcoming the trauma brought about by the armed conflict.
- The lowering of self-esteem among many of the women.
- Interfamily violence.
- Growth of poverty (high cost of living).

# Letter from the Women's Secretariat Organization in El Salvador

To the Women of Viet Nam and the United States,

The Women of Chalatenango organized in the CCR send out fraternal greetings to the women of Viet Nam and the United States. We would like to begin with a brief description of our country. El Salvador is located in the center of the American continent. It is one of the smallest countries in Latin America with a landmass of 20,000 square kilometers and a population of six million inhabitants. In comparison to Viet Nam, El Salvador is sixteen times smaller. The major part of the population dedicates itself to the production of basic grains.

Our province, Chalatenango, is located in the northeast section of the country bordering the Republic of Honduras. Chalatenango itself has an area measuring 2,016 square kilometers with a population of 180,000 inhabitants. The department is essentially rural with more than 80% of its population dedicated principally to the production of corn and beans. Furthermore, there is production of coffee, sugar cane, sorghum, as well as a variety of fruits.

El Salvador shares a common history, having suffered very bloody wars in which US imperialism played very important roles. Viet Nam was victimized by a massive enemy invasion. In El Salvador, the US financed and supported the Salvadoran army in its drive to massacre peasants and workers.

Peasant, worker, and student organizations developed their struggle during the 70s in order to fight against social and economic injustice suffered by the most dispossessed nationwide. Successive governments responded with repression, giving rise to the first of many collective massacres in Toluca, province of San Vicente. Among the unarmed, dispossessed, many lives were lost. They were forced to take up arms to defend themselves against repression. At the beginning of the 1980s, a guerrilla movement had come into being. This movement had the capacity to confront, for more than a decade, the forces that were financed and militarily advised by the United States.

The army located in the province of Chalatenango launched a brutal military offensive, since the guerrillas already gained the support of the peasants within the province. On May 14, 1980, at the shores of the Sumpul River, more than 600 men, women, children and the elderly were massacred. All those killed were unarmed defenseless civilians. The repression forced thousands of Salvadorans to escape their homes and seek refuge, both inside as well as in neighboring countries. In 1986, the return of the civilian population displaced by the war began with those who had taken refuge inside and outside El Salvador.

The same population that had returned felt the need for an organization that represented them and their interests. As such, the CCR was born on June 20, 1988, given the need for protection from the Armed Forces and the need to defend basic rights in

the communities. With that initiative, the first efforts designed to search for a solution to our basic problems were launched in the communities. These problems included: housing, latrines, potable water, electricity, education, health, etc. Afterwards, the principal task of the CCR was to fight for the fulfillment of the Peace Accords, a task and a struggle that continues to this day.

The armed conflict ended in 1992 with the signing of the Peace Accords. Reaching this stage required a very active role of civil society and the international community. The CCR of Chalatenango has organized 59 communities, which are divided into 6 sub-regions. There is a regional directorate elected in the General Assembly of the Communal Directorates. Moreover, commissions have been structured covering specific sectors such as: women, youth, war-wounded, sistering, education, and health.

Work oriented towards organizing rural women is coordinated overall by the Women's Secretariat. This Secretariat is directed by

the person in charge of work of women who belongs to the regional directorate and has been elected for this work. The Secretariat is composed of a team of women who are elected in the women's assemblies in their respective sub-regions. The situation of rural women in Chalatenango is characterized by women who have suffered, and who have been tremendously battered by the armed conflict. Many of the women are survivors of massacres launched by the Armed Forces.



Maria Serrano with 'Los Miguelitos,' Mike Hoffman and Mike Boehm. Maria, a heroine to the women of CCR, was a comandante with the El Salvadoran guerrillas and is featured in the documentary Maria's Story.

By way of Mr. Mike Boehm, the Women's Secretariat had the opportunity to gain knowledge of the fact that in Viet Nam there are organizations composed of women who have also experienced an armed conflict similar to ours in El Salvador. Based on this conversation with Mike, we would like to promote the initiative of organizing an encounter with the women of Viet Nam, together with the Secretariat of Women of the CCR, as well as a sister organization, CORDES. The purpose of the encounter would be to promote an interchange of experiences, and to come to know gains, projections, and how we have dealt with the principal problems that we have been forced to confront.

So that this encounter does not remain only as a dream, we would like to propose: that economic support be provided for the trip, including costs for food and hospitality for 6 women; and that the encounter takes place between December 11 to 19. Bearing in mind that the encounter will be tremendously helpful for the continuity of development of our projections, we would like to express our deepest satisfaction for your valuable support for this effort.

May God bless all of us. Together we advance in this struggle.

Most sincerely,

Adela Rivera Castillo

Secretary General of the Women's Secretariat of the CCR

# Children Helping Children

Kids for Peace, an organization based in Madison, Wisconsin, recently sent a contribution to the Madison Friends' Projects in Viet Nam. Receiving this contribution reminded me of the growing involvement by children here in Madison in supporting the poor children in Viet Nam. Children have tremendous interest in, and empathy for, children in other parts of the world. Once the children here in Madison understood the living conditions of children in Viet Nam (unimaginable to them previously), they acted immediately to try to help. On the next few pages are profiles of some of these children and how they have made a difference in the lives of children in Viet Nam.

## Molly

Molly Minden, age 10, attends meetings of the Madison Friends (Quakers) with her parents. Her parents recently held a garage sale, and Molly gathered some of her possessions to sell also. Shortly after the garage sale, Molly saw a slide show on the Madison Friends' Projects in Viet Nam and decided to donate the proceeds of her sales to the children of Viet Nam. She told us, "I chose to donate money to Viet Nam because I saw slides of the people having to ride places sharing a bike or not being able to go to school. I also do not think it's fair to have the people there get hurt by buried bombs when they are innocent. People in Viet Nam don't get much to eat, and the meals are mostly made of starchy products. I thought people in Viet Nam needed more food, and that's why I decided to donate my money to Viet Nam."



Molly Minden



New well and holding tank for My Lai Primary School.

## Blackhawk Girl Scout Council Cadets 50

The Blackhawk Girl Scout Council Cadets 50 of Madison, Wisconsin, also saw slides of the children of My Lai, Viet Nam. When they saw the living conditions of the children in My Lai and heard that their school needed a well, they immediately wrote, under the guidance of Mary Beth Plane, a grant proposal for \$500 to fund a new well for the My Lai Primary School. Their grant proposal was approved, and I delivered this money to Mr. Chien, the Principal of the My Lai Primary School. When construction was finished Mr. Chien contacted me and said there was money left over. He wondered if he could use it to build a bathroom which the school had lacked up until then. I contacted the Girl Scouts and told them the situation, and they donated another \$250, raised from selling Girl Scout cookies. The school now has a bathroom along with a new well.

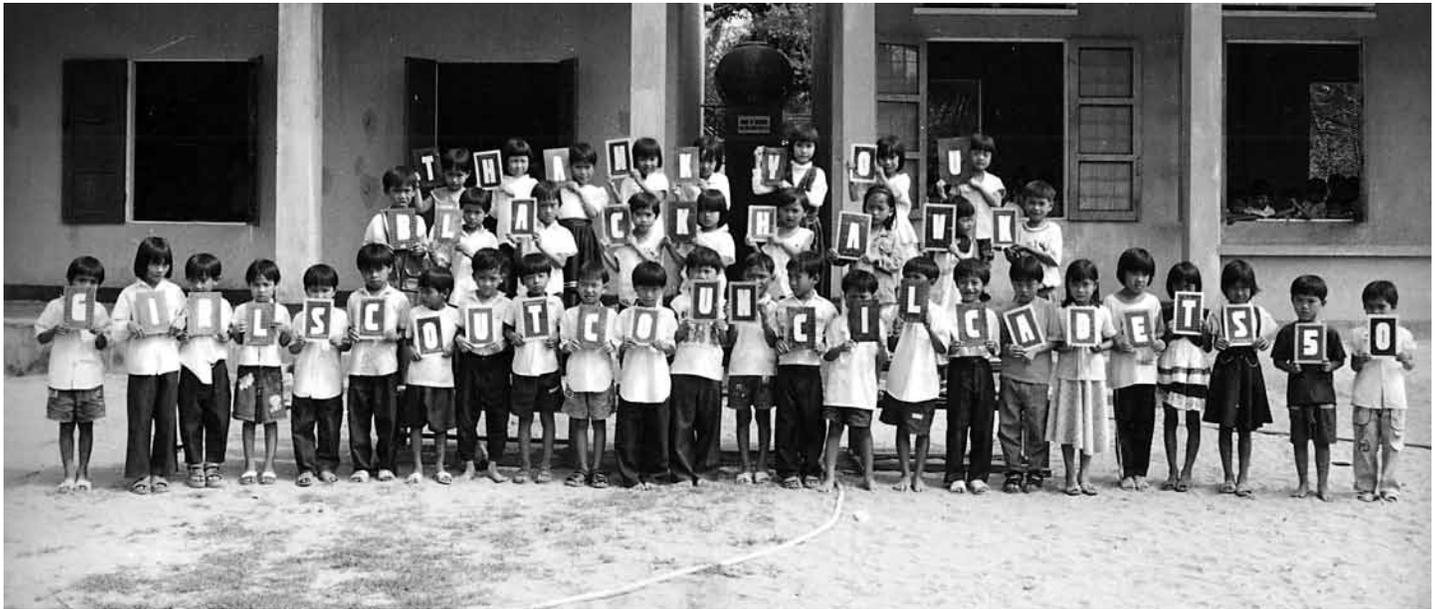


Vietnamese masons constructing the new bathroom.



The completed bathroom is painted a cheerful yellow color.

# Children Helping Children



Children at My Lai Primary School hold up letters that spell out "Thank you Blackhawk Girl Scout Council Cadets 50" in front of their school.

Here are comments from some of the Girl Scouts in Troop 50 about their project:

Brenna Farrell said she was surprised there were children in Viet Nam with no running water at their school. She was happy to be able to help.

Amy Pearce said she likes to help others. When the Girl Scouts heard about the need for fresh water, they wanted to help with the well.

Molly Spivey remembers that her mom, Pat Jens, the leader of Troop 50, told the girls about the school and the opportunity to help.



Mike with Blackhawk Girl Scout Troop #50 in Madison.

Claire Bible said it is amazing that Girl Scouts in Wisconsin can help children on the other side of the world in Viet Nam.

Kathryn Ulrich used to have bad feelings about grants because her parents were always crabby when they were writing theirs. But she really liked learning how to write one as a Girl Scout with the help of Mary Beth Plane. She felt great knowing she could help school kids in Viet Nam.

Tenzin Dhanze said that when the troop heard that they could also give the school a bathroom for \$250, they gave the money they'd earned selling Girl Scout cookies.

## Children Helping Children

Pat Jens, one of the driving forces behind the Blackhawk Girl Scouts, Teri Thomas, and Peter Plane, the 4th/5th grade elementary school teacher at Crestwood Elementary School in Madison, talked to students about the living conditions in Viet Nam and the work we are doing. After watching slides about this work, they decided that they would like to do something for the poor people of Viet Nam. They raised \$150, mostly from car washes, and decided to fund a loan for one family in My Lai.

Like the Girl Scouts, the lives of these 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders are fairly comfortable, so they could scarcely comprehend what they saw in the slides of the living conditions of the Vietnamese people.

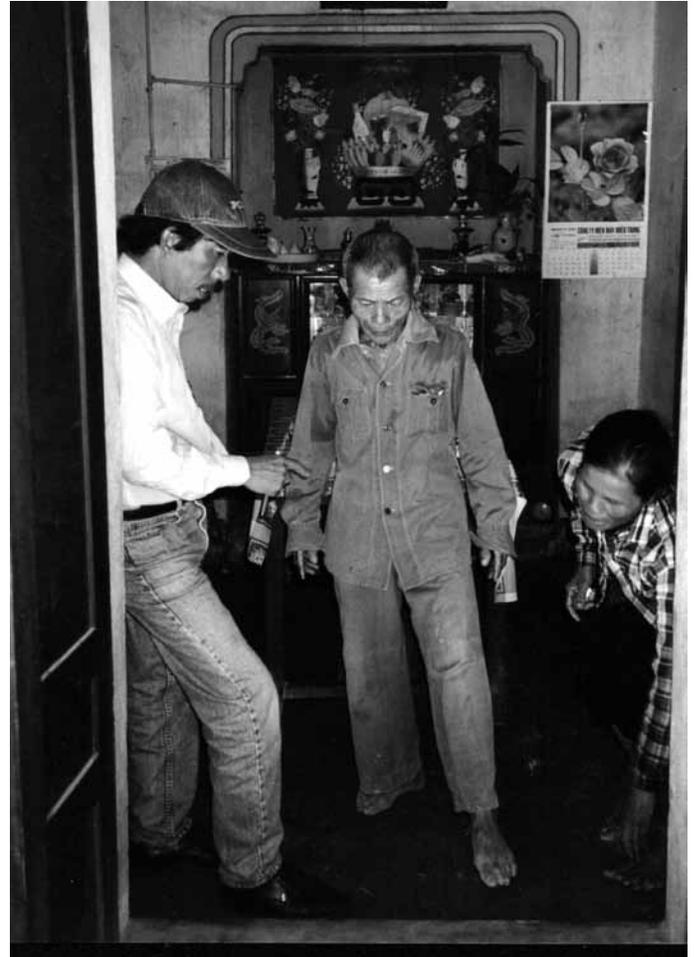
As Ali Bartol put it, "They make all their stuff themselves by hand, and they make all their mats out of reeds. It would be cool to live like that for awhile, until you realized how much work it took to live like that."

Lucas Turpin said he was "shocked that they had only one outdoor bathroom. I don't think that's very cool."

When I returned to Viet Nam this past spring, I told the Women's Union in Quang Ngai province about the decision of the students from Crestwood Elementary School to fund one family's loan in My Lai. The Women's Union suggested one particular woman, Mrs. Truong Thi Hien, who had already been approved to take out a loan when the next funding cycle began (October, 2000). Mrs. Hien and her husband have three children, two girls and a boy, all of whom attend the My Lai Primary School. Mrs. Hien's husband is more than 20 years older than she is and is in very poor health. So she, with the help of her children, takes care of all the work of the family. She and her oldest daughter plant and harvest the rice. The younger children help plant and harvest other food crops, such as sweet potatoes, and help care for the cows, pigs, and ducks. When the chores are finished the children do their school work and then play. The cows, pigs, and ducks Mrs. Hien owns are being raised to be sold later. The family is too poor to be able to keep the animals for themselves for food. The food staples for the family, then, are rice and sweet potatoes when they are in season. All the activities of the household are very labor intensive. For example, preparing sweet potatoes requires slicing them into the shape of French fries and then spreading them on a bamboo mat in the sun. They are kept in the sun for at least three days. The family's daily activities were filmed for us by the Quang Ngai city TV crew.

Mrs. Hien and her family live in a low-lying area and so are one of the families that are hit hardest when the yearly floods occur. Their house is filled with two to three feet of water every flooding season, and the house was becoming so damaged that she had reached the point of being forced to sell her two cows to pay for alterations on the house. Because of the loan, Mrs. Hien can keep her cows and use the funds from the loan to make the alterations. She will repay the loan with the sale of calves and piglets.

The Quang Ngai television crew took excellent footage of this family for us to use. We are now in the process of editing this footage to produce a short video to show children here in Madison how a rural Vietnamese family lives.



Mrs. Truong Thi Hien, right, and her husband show Mr. Do how they plan to modify their house to prevent it from flooding. They will raise the floor and every entry way two to three feet to prevent the water from coming into the house. Then they will cut the roof loose and raise the walls of the house a corresponding two to three feet

### Winds of Peace

Newsletter for Madison Friends' Projects in Viet Nam  
 "The people of Viet Nam are looking forward to the winds of peace blowing from America."

Mike Boehm, Project Co-ordinator  
 Phan Van Do, Project Assistant in Viet Nam  
 Terri Smith, Newsletter Design

For this newsletter to fulfill its potential we need your feedback. Please send any 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](http://www.mylaipeacepark.com)

# Art Exchange Greeting Card Project

by Christina Morrison

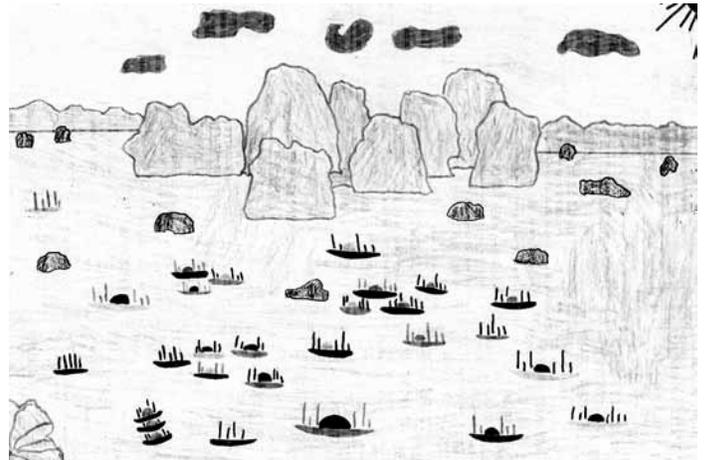
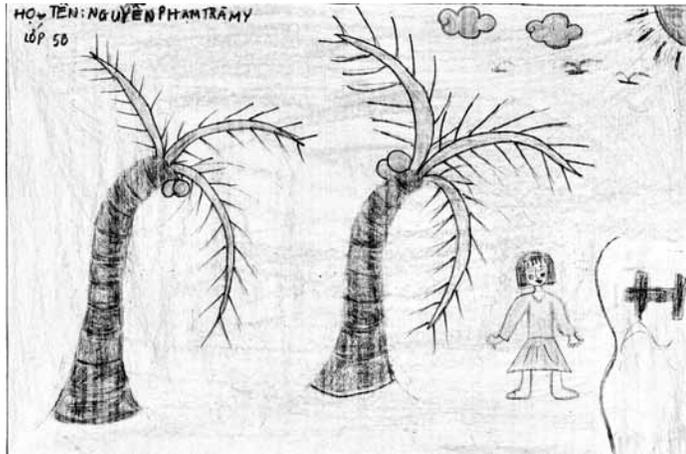
I have always felt a special connection to the children of Viet Nam. As a young child, I was very aware of their suffering due to the war. My father died, in part, to help alleviate their suffering and while his death was very painful to me, I knew their pain must have been even greater. In the spring of 1999, my family and I spent two weeks in Viet Nam. (See story in issue #2 of Winds of Peace.) The highlight of the trip for me was seeing many beautiful, joyful children who live in a land at peace. Mike gave us some of their incredible, delightful pictures from the art exchange project, and on the trip home I realized that this art deserves to be shared more widely!

Thus the greeting card project began...and the challenge of selecting a few pieces out of many wonderful ones. We ended up choosing pieces that depict a Viet Nam that few westerners get to see—a colorful, bountiful country full of vibrant culture and natural beauty. I hope you enjoy them.

For more information, or to purchase greeting cards, contact Mike Boehm by phone at 608-244-9505 or by e-mail at [vapp@igc.org](mailto:vapp@igc.org).



Christina Morrison, center, looks at the children's artwork with her mother, Anne Morrison Welsh, right, and her sister, Emily, left, at the My Lai Primary School..



Examples of the children's artwork. The greeting cards will be printed in color.

**I/we would like to subscribe to Winds of Peace! 4 issues for \$20**

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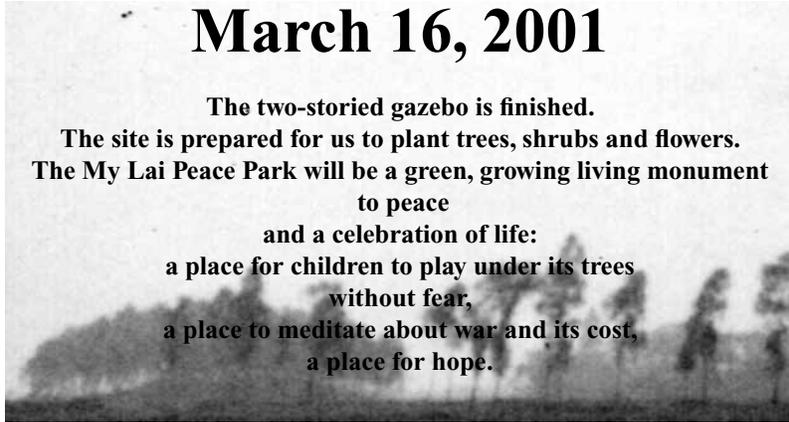
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Donations are tax deductible. Thank you for your generosity.

# An Invitation to Celebrate Life!

## My Lai Peace Park Dedication Ceremony

### March 16, 2001



The two-storied gazebo is finished.  
The site is prepared for us to plant trees, shrubs and flowers.  
The My Lai Peace Park will be a green, growing living monument  
to peace  
and a celebration of life:  
a place for children to play under its trees  
without fear,  
a place to meditate about war and its cost,  
a place for hope.

The Madison Friends (Quakers) and the people of My Lai, Viet Nam,  
invite all people of peace and goodwill  
to join them in My Lai on March 16, 2001,  
to help usher in a new peaceful millennium by dedicating the My Lai Peace Park.

Join us in Viet Nam next year. If you are unable to do so, please consider a generous donation for the  
My Lai Peace Park Project.

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