

# Winds of Peace

Newsletter for Madison Friends Projects in Viet Nam  
July/August 2000



Issue #4

## Going Back

by Mike Boehm

I would like to apologize for the delay in getting this latest issue of *Winds of Peace* published. I took a nine week intensive Vietnamese language course this summer, and I thought that I could be a full time student and still take care of my other responsibilities, such as publishing this newsletter. I learned the hard way that being a student at age fifty-two, especially learning a new language, is much more daunting, challenging, and time-consuming than when I was in my twenties. But now the course is finished, and I can catch up.

One of the highlights of my trip to Viet Nam earlier this year was that my sister, Valerie Kuehl, came to Viet Nam. The work I am doing in Viet Nam has divided my family, mostly along gender lines, with my brothers disapproving of what I am doing and my mother, sisters and sisters-in-law supporting me. My younger brother, who is also a veteran, will not speak to me now because he thinks this work is aiding the enemy. So having Val there to see first hand what we have been doing in My Lai and elsewhere was very satisfying. You can read about her visit and her contributions to our projects in this issue.

The war in Viet Nam was not only a war involving the Americans, but also a civil war among the Vietnamese themselves. And, as in our civil war, families were quite often divided with brother fighting brother. Phan Van Do, our project partner in Viet Nam, lost all of his family, except his older sister, during the war. Every other member of his family was killed by different factions in that war. Do says that what happened to his family is very typical of Vietnamese families during the war.

The divisiveness that I have experienced in my family mirrors the divisiveness that still exists in this country concerning the war in Viet Nam and especially the massacre at My Lai. In the past I have been condemned by other veterans for helping the villagers in My Lai, even though I present the work we are doing in as positive a way as I can. The very mention of My Lai makes many vets assume that I must also be dragging vets through the mud, condemning the guys who committed the massacre, for example.



Photo by M. Boehm

Members of the My Lai Women's Union admire the quilt made for them by my mother. She made this quilt for the women who are working so hard for the poor women and the widows of My Lai. I wanted to give this quilt to the women there on behalf of myself, but also as Mike's mom.

As I have said before, I worked in a minor branch of intelligence with the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during the war and never fired a gun. I'm very aware of how lucky I was then (and now) not to have been in combat. I am also very aware that had I been at My Lai the day of the massacre I might have been right in there killing with the rest. So I don't make judgements about the guys who were in combat.

On the other hand, I also feel that we cannot walk away from the consequences of our actions in Viet Nam. And so, I have dedicated my life not only to providing material aid to the people of My Lai and elsewhere in Viet Nam, but also in trying to create new relationships between the people of our two countries.

By taking responsibility for our actions, by providing aid to the people of My Lai, who so desperately need it, we can begin to find peace for ourselves. The people of My Lai are ready for a new beginning between our countries.

When I asked my sister what she expected when she got to Viet Nam, Val said, What I expected was animosity. What I found was open arms.



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

Contact: The Video Project

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# Letters

Photo by Kate Jellema



Mrs. Tuyet receives the stone given by the women of El Salvador to the women of My Lai.

Dear El Salvador Women,

Quang Ngai women live in a region that was damaged heavily during the past war with many slaughtered villages such as My Lai (Son My), Binh Hoa (Binh Son), Truong Khanh (Nghia Hanh)

The past years, with the help of the government, Women's Union had many practical and helpful programs to help poor women to overcome war consequences, stabilizing the life. One of which is granting loans, creating work, and increasing the income for poor women. Mr. Mike, representative of Madison Quaker organization, is so zealous in helping poor and single women, who worked hard and used the loan effectively. Thanks to it, many women escape hunger and poverty.

We depend on Mr. Roy Mike Boehm's introduction. Quang Ngai women see that we and you, El Salvador women, have many similar problems, one of which is that you passed through war like us. Especially, Mr. Roy Mike Boehm presented us a stone picked up in the village where many El Salvador people were slaughtered. The stone is taken care of as a valuable souvenir with the blood and tears of El Salvador women. We understand your suffering and loss, and we believe that you will try to overcome every difficulty in the life.

Mr. Roy Mike Boehm let us know that El Salvador women are enthusiastic for an opportunity so that Quang Ngai women could visit, communicate, exchange the experience in the work, and establish the friendship with El Salvador women. Thanks for that idea. We are looking forward to meeting with you and believe that, with that meeting, Quang Ngai women and El Salvador women will sympathize and understand each other more.

We wish you healthy and happy; wish our relationship fully satisfactory in every respect. We are looking forward to meeting you soon.

On behalf of Quang Ngai provincial Women's Union  
 Nguyen Thi Anh Tuyet, Vice-Chair

April 20, 2000

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Dear Mike,

We got your letter and newsletter. We also listened to you on radio, and watched you on television. We are so impressed with what you are doing. Also, we are impressed with what you as an individual have accomplished. I know you would say you haven't done it alone. But, I doubt any of it would have happened without your effort.

I like the way you express the actions of the U.S. soldiers. It could have happened to anyone. I wrote a textbook which I used for teaching psychology (I am retired now). The title tells the main point of the course I was teaching. Without You There Is No Me. That is to say that one of the greatest determinants of human behavior is the social situation at the time. In fact, I used Calley as an example, twice.

I envy your ability to pick up violin playing as quickly as you did. I have tried very hard to play *anything*, with extremely poor results. I was very touched by your music.

I am enclosing some of the write-ups that followed the visits to Central America. They don't give much for details, but give the general flavor of what was experienced.

I am also enclosing a short work of Mark Twain's, *The War Prayer*. I thought of it while watching *The Sound of the Violin*. It strikes me as amazing that people's behavior has changed so little since he wrote it. I hope your efforts will bring about some of the needed change.

Keep up the great work! We are very proud of you and of what you are doing. I hope we can get together sometime, because I know there is a lot more you have to say.

Keep in touch,

Lloyd Dlack

## 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**

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Visit our Web site on the Internet at:

**www.mylaipeacepark.com**

# 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 Mr. Mike Boehm,

You are very nice man, why I said that? It s not mean you are good looking, but you are really a good person, with kindest heart. We are just the human, but some kind of peoples like you can do many thing so greats to help people. Which I can t do even in my dreams.

I need to say thanks for all the things you have done for My Lai, small village, one part of my country. Your Violin never be forgot in my heart, in my peoples who living My Lai.

I am so proud to be your friend, wishing your Violin continues send its sweet messages to all kindest heart who living on the earth.

With best wishes,  
Yours truly,  
Ngoc Phuong



Dear Mike,

Enclosed is a donation to the My Lai Peace Park. This donation is made in honor of the memory of the grandmother of Brian Standing. Please send an acknowledgment to Brian.

Thanks,  
The Perlman Family



June 26, 2000

Mike,

As a vet of the U.S. Army during the 1960 s I shall feel guilt and shame for the events of that era as long as I live. Please add my contribution to the loan fund. Micro loans to poor people are what is needed in so many developing countries. America s funding of big shot politicians and third world armed forces is a very destructive practice.

In search of World Peace I remain,  
Sincerely,  
John Carr



*Children enjoy the beach near My Lai.*

February 25, 2000  
Greetings, Mike—

As I sit reading January 2000 s *Winds of Peace*, I m transported to Viet Nam as two persons, in two eras. Some feelings blur, some blend, others greatly contrast. This time of year intensifies it all.....those anniversaries, you know. The good ones now dilute the bad ones.

Thirty-three years ago this month, a land mine explosion in the region we called I Corps became the catalyst for a long personal journey of pain, reflection and change.

A solo revisit to Viet Nam in March of 1995 provided a transfusion of harmony, close affinities and new-found hope.

Then in early March 1998 came the opportunity to join the wonderful PeaceTrees Vietnam group, working on an extended phase of their ongoing land mine clearance projects. During a bus ride between Hanoi and Ba Vi, you and I had a memorable conversation. We swapped writings, and I learned of the Madison Friends many admirable accomplishments in Song Mai village and in several villages of Quang Ngai Province.

Thanks to your superb newsletter, I can follow the continuing good work being carried out jointly between the Vietnamese people and the Madison Friends. True reconciliation and mutual respect are deeply felt as each page unfolds—this soothes the soul and illustrates the positive capabilities of humankind. May the winds of peace forever gently blow .

Best wishes,  
Paul Nichols

## USA Cardboard

**Outside the Danang PX  
Vietnamese kids  
slide down mudslick embankments  
on tattered scraps of USA cardboard.  
Shout number one, number one,  
sport grins of delight.....  
Simple happiness.**

**Feelings I recall,  
skimming down sparkling,  
snow-crested New Hampshire hills  
in my American youth  
on scraps of USA cardboard.  
How number one those days wer e.  
How small the world can be.**

**By Paul Nichols**

## Val Kuehl s Project and Visit to Viet Nam

My sister, Valerie Kuehl, is an emergency room nurse at Sauk Prairie Hospital in Sauk Prairie, Wisconsin, and Hess Memorial Hospital in Mauston, Wisconsin. After hearing about my projects and trips to Viet Nam, she became very interested in collecting and delivering medical supplies to the people of My Lai in the south of Viet Nam and Song Mai village in the north.

For a year prior to her visit to Viet Nam, Val began gathering medical supplies and soliciting funds for a new well for the Song Mai Maternity Clinic. She started all this on her own. Never having done grassroots fund-raising for Viet Nam before, Val wondered what kind of reception her project would get. She was overwhelmed by the response she got from her co-workers and her community! Starting as just one individual, she developed this project into a community effort involving family, friends, co-workers from the two hospitals she works at, Sauk Prairie Hospital and Hess Memorial Hospital, and even strangers. Val attributes the positive response to the fact that people realized this aid was going directly to help the people of Viet Nam.

Val s trip to Viet Nam in February of this year was her first trip overseas, and it did not begin very auspiciously. Because of delays in processing my visa, my trip back to Viet Nam was canceled twice, so I was not able to be in Viet Nam to meet her. Val missed every airport connection on the way to Viet Nam due to late flights or cancellations. United Airlines also misplaced her luggage, so she wore the same shirt and pants for six days in Viet Nam. In spite of all this, when I finally arrived, Val remained cheerful and excited about being in Viet Nam.

When Val and I finally met in Ha Noi, we first went to Song Mai village, site of the Vietnamese-American Peace Park. We met with Mrs. Tong Thi The, Vice-Director of the Song Mai Maternity Clinic, to deliver the funds for a new well for the clinic and some of the medical supplies Mrs. The had requested. These supplies included gynecology equipment, nurses uniforms, a warming sheet for newborn infants which was donated by the ambulance crew from Sauk Prairie Hospital, sterile gloves, etc. Val also delivered to Mrs. The a quilt made by her and our mother and signed by her co-workers as a symbol of the personal relationship developing between the staff from Sauk Prairie Hospital, Hess Memorial Hospital and Song Mai Maternity Clinic. Val and her co-workers

were inspired to make this quilt by the friendship quilt made by our mother for the women of My Lai and by symbolic quilts made for AIDS and other victims.

A new well had been requested by Mrs. Tong Thi The the year before because 1998 and 1999 had both been very dry years and the existing well, a hole dug in the ground with a rope and bucket for dipping up water, had dried up. The clinic depends heavily on traditional medicine and cures, so they have a large herbal garden in back of the clinic. Whenever the well dried up, they lost many of their medicinal plants. With a new well, they would have a

secure source of water year round.

The projected cost for the new well was \$700, which included drilling to 70 meters. Because water was reached at 50 meters instead of the predicted 70 meters, enough funds remained to build a new bathroom with the savings. Before this, the clinic bathroom consisted of a wall, in the back of the garden, behind which people went when they needed a bathroom. The new bathroom includes tile walls and floor and running water.

The next week we traveled to My Lai,

where Val delivered more medical supplies. We then visited the Quang Ngai General Hospital to deliver medical supplies and to begin the process of developing a relationship between Hess Memorial Hospital and Quang Ngai General Hospital. After visiting My Lai, Val and I visited Truong Khanh village, site of the Truong Khanh massacre in April, 1969, where we have established our latest loan fund. Because of the isolation of this village, when the children first saw me, they ran away screaming, Monster! Monster! Val was able to overcome their fears by handing out candy (a kindness children around the world understand) that she had brought from Wisconsin for the children of Viet Nam. Being a mother and grandmother, Val was drawn to the children of Truong Khanh, as they were to her. At the same time, it was difficult for her to hear the elder survivors stories of the massacre at Truong Khanh and of their struggles afterwards. Val came to realize that these struggles how the Vietnamese balance their present lives with what they have gone through in the past are the reality of Viet Nam today. Val returned to the states the following week, exhausted but satisfied. She vowed to return, and the next time, I m bringing my husband!



Photo by M. Boehm

Mrs. Tong Thi The, Vice-Director of the Song Mai Maternity Clinic, with Valerie Kuehl.

# Well Project at Song Mai Clinic, Bac Giang Province



*Val and Mrs. The look at the existing well, which had dried up because of excessively dry weather. Behind them was the clinic's bathroom.*



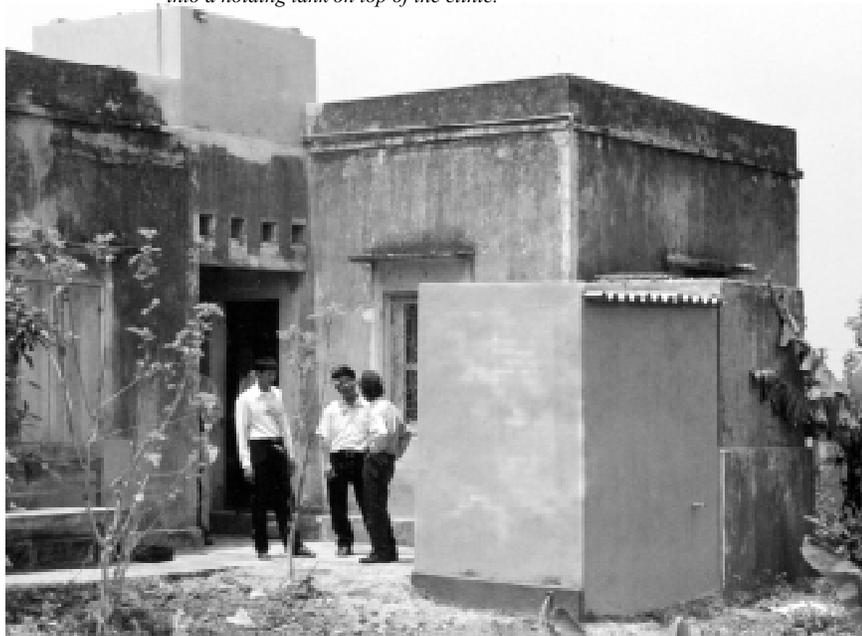
*Workers begin drilling the new well.*



*The new water pump pumps water from the well into a holding tank on top of the clinic.*



*Brick masons build the walls for new bathroom.*



*The completed well, holding tank, and bathroom.*



*Mr. Bao, Chairman of Song Mai village, uses the sink in the new bathroom.*

*All photos by M. Boehm.*

# Projects in Viet Nam sponsored by the Madison Friends (Quakers)

*The Madison Friends (Quakers) projects are located in two provinces in Viet Nam:  
Quang Ngai Province in the South of Viet Nam and Bac Giang Province in the north of Viet Nam*

**The Vietnamese-American Peace Park**, in Song Mai, consists of mostly Lichee and Custard Apple fruit trees. More than 80 shade and ornamental trees have been planted on top by Vietnamese and American veterans, visiting Vietnamese delegations, the U. S. Ambassador to Viet Nam, and others. A museum will be constructed in the near future. Total investment to date is \$23,000.

Bac Giang, Madison's sister city in Viet Nam.

**The Da Mai Revolving Loan Fund** was established in March 1999 with an initial investment of \$5,000. 50 women have received loans for chicken raising.

*Bac Giang Province*



**The Binh Minh Revolving Loan Fund** was established in January, 1999, with an initial investment of \$5,000. 50 women have since received loans through this fund. Binh Minh village Binh Son district, is located in the mountains of Quang Ngai province, about 30 miles northeast of My Lai.

**The Tinh Hoa Revolving Loan Fund** will be established in 2001.

**The My Lai Projects:**

**The My Lai Revolving Loan Fund**, our first loan fund, was established in January, 1994. Total capital invested since then is \$15,250: \$13,000 for the loan fund itself and \$2,250 for a motorcycle and five bicycles. Currently the fund is in its fourth loan cycle. 412 women have received loans since its beginning.

**A new dental clinic for the Son My (My Lai) hospital** was established in March, 1999, with an initial investment of \$2,000. This clinic began operation on April 17, 1999, and will serve 60,000 people. A new water pump was installed in January, 1999.

**A new three-room addition to the existing Son My (My Lai) Primary School**, built of grade 3 construction (less expensive) was completed in October, 1998, providing immediate relief for the severe overcrowding at the primary school. Cost for these three rooms was \$8,500.

**A new 20 room primary school, with an estimated cost of \$100,000.** The first eight room building for this new primary school is nearly complete. Investment for this segment of the 20 room primary school has been \$40,000.

**The My Lai Peace Park**, now under construction, was inspired by the Vietnamese-American Peace Park, located in Bac Giang Province. When finished this 7 acre park will be, as the Memorandum of Understanding states, a place for children to entertain and a place to remember the past and to hope for the future. This park will be composed of fish ponds, paths winding through fruit and nut trees, flowers and shrubs. At its center will be a beautiful two-story gazebo. \$38,000 has been invested to date.

**The Art-Pen Pals Project.** Since 1996 the children of My Lai and Madison, Wisconsin, have been exchanging art in an effort to get to know each other better and become friends.

**The Truong Khanh Revolving Loan Fund** was established in March, 2000, with an initial investment of \$8,000. 60 women have received loans in the first loan cycle. This village also suffered a massacre like that in My Lai about a year after the massacre in My Lai.

**The H re ethnic minority community development project** includes removing existing houses to more fertile land, providing villagers with fruit and nut trees, digging wells for all families, improved health care, night classes for the mostly illiterate adults, and more. \$5,500 was delivered in February, 1999, to begin the first phase of this project. \$2,500 will be needed in the year 2000 to complete this project.

*Quang Ngai Province*

**The Pho Khanh Revolving Loan Fund** was established in September, 1997. A total of \$8,000 has been invested in this fund. 120 women have borrowed money through this fund since its beginning. Pho Khanh village, Duc Pho district, is located on the coast about 30 miles south of My Lai.

**The Nghia An Revolving Loan Fund** was established in May, 1998, with an initial investment of \$2,000. 40 women have received loans through this loan fund. More funds need to be invested in this loan fund soon. Nghia An village, To Nghia district, is located just across the Tra Khuc river from My Lai.

# Loan Fund Profiles

By Mike Boehm

*In each issue of Winds of Peace, we profile the lives, struggles, and triumphs of women who have received loans through the loan funds established by the Madison Friends (Quakers) in partnership with the Women s Union in Viet Nam.*



Photo by M. Boehm

Mrs. Lien, holding the net, and her son, in the water; dug this pond by hand. She used her loan, to stock the pond with Tiger prawn.

**Mrs. Doan Thi Lien** was one of the first women to borrow money through the My Lai Loan Fund in January, 1994. With her loan of \$100 she started a business raising Tiger prawn, a kind of shrimp that grows as large as ten inches. She and her oldest son dug a one acre pond by hand, and with funds from her loan she stocked the pond with one-inch prawn. She had a very successful and lucrative harvest. With the profits from that harvest, she paid back her loan and bought prawn for another crop. She also bought a cow from the profits and hired her neighbor to care for it.

We thought, the Women s Union and I, that she was on her way to more and more success and greater improvement in her life. But then a series of calamities occurred. Her husband developed a long-term terminal illness, her younger son who had a history of mental problems began to get worse, and the second crop of prawn was lost to disease. She lost everything except the mud-walled house she lived in.

When I met her in March of this year, Mrs. Lien had just taken out another loan to start a mat-weaving business. Her husband had died and her son was still having problems with mental illness, but she was determined to succeed.



Photo by M. Boehm

Mrs. Lien weaves a fishing net.



Photo by M. Boehm

Mrs. Doan Thi Lien has now started a mat-weaving business.

**I/we would like to subscribe to *Winds of Peace!* 4 issues for \$20** **\$ 20.00**

(January, April, July, October) Stay informed about Madison Friends Projects in Vietnam; learn more about the history and culture of Viet Nam and Viet Nam today.

**I/we would like to support Madison Friends (Quakers) Projects in Viet Nam!** **\$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Optional:  Please earmark my donation for the Vietnamese-American Peace Park

Please earmark my donation for My Lai Peace Park, My Lai Hospital and My Lai Primary School

Please earmark my donation for the My Lai Revolving Loan Fund

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Madison Wi 53711-2029

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Please specify *Winds of Peace*, Projects in Viet Nam, or one of the options on your check.

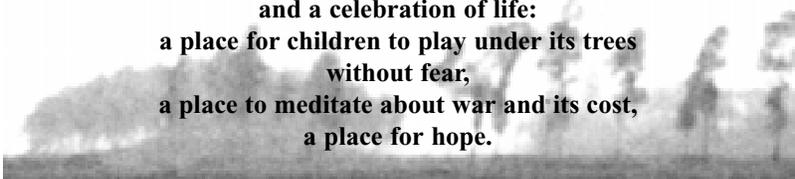
Donations are tax deductible. Thank you for your generosity.

# *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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1704 Roberts Ct.  
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