

Here is some long overdue
background information about
some of the items that I have
donated to the Vietnam Archive

BALANCE POLE & BASKETS

BINH THUAN PROVINCE was a major producer of solar evaporated salt. When it was ready to be gathered from the small plots, it would be scraped into piles, put in the baskets - one on each end of the shoulder balance pole and carried by the women along the narrow dikes separating the salt pans to the nearest collection point to be picked by truck or cart. Phan Thiet as a busy fishing port was a major producer of Nuoc mom fish sauce along with Phu Quoc island so a lot of the salt was used in making of the sauce.

To view the ladies from a distance as they carried the salt - they seemed to bounce along as the carrying pole flexed up and down with a loaded basket suspended from each end. The pole is a design unique to Phan Thiet. I tried to use it as a magazine holder by fastening it in a rigid position on a stand but it never really functioned well that way.

I was the U.S. Senior Advisor for Binh Thuan in 1966 when I acquired the pole and baskets - I added the brass chain and stand later.

In 1970 when I was the Economic Advisor for Region II, three engineers

from Japan.

A came to Vietnam to look into salt production as Japan needed salt for their industries. They brought detailed maps of the Binh Thuan salt fields that had been made by the Japanese during their occupation of Vietnam ^{in WW II}. A surprising thing was that the salt fields had remained almost the same during the intervening thirty years so that their maps were still correct even to showing pathways and small canals. The Japanese import thousands of tons of salt for their industries - but to reduce the costs of refining it even for industrial use, they want it at 99%+ in purity from the solar evaporation pans. But the salt produced in Vietnam was in the 95-96% purity. Even today Vietnam hasn't restructured their salt industry to produce a high grade - though it could be done, they even have to import salt as many of the former salt pans have been converted to shrimp farms.

THE PAINTING

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This may seem to be a round-about ~~and~~ ^{overly} detailed account about a painting but in relating how it came into my possession ^{there} presents an opportunity to provide background ~~for~~ information about one of the most significant organizational decisions in Vietnam - "The Senior Advisor concept".

The early ^{U.S.} advisory structure for the provinces consisted of a U.S. Operations Mission Provincial Representative (Prov Rep) - a civilian; a MACV military advisor - usually a Lt Col and a CIA or other intelligence operative. They each operated independently even though the overall objective was increased security and pacification for the villages. The lack of close ^{coordination and} cooperation among the U.S. agencies often confused the provincial officials but also gave them the opportunity to play one advisor against another. Province and District Chiefs were ARVN officers and with support, training and operations of the Regional Forces and Popular Forces a major concern and activity. This ^{part} ~~made~~ the MACV advisor in a more dominant position which often overshadowed the development activities.

When the decision was made to test a concept that would designate one person as the Senior Advisor, the trial run was to involve three

provinces. A MACV officer was assigned to a province in the Mekong Delta, a USOM man, ~~was~~ Chet Richardson, was designated for Binh Thuan and an embassy political officer was appointed for Darlac but he became involved with the wife of a local rubber plantation owner and was relieved from duty and sent out of the country. He was not replaced. That was just as well because Darlac was quite different from the normal situation. There were three Special Forces camps, A Special Forces B TEAM, AN ARVN DIVISION HQS and a regular MACV province advisory team which would make it difficult for any civilian senior advisor.

Chet Richardson was a retired U.S. army artillery major. He and I had both been assigned to MAB Japan in the mid 1950s and often traveled together on advisory-training visits to the newly formed Japanese Ground Self Defense Force where I doubled as an infantry-range-aviation advisor.

On a home leave visit to the U.S., Chet took his ~~annual~~ physical exam. His x-ray indicated a shadow in a lung and he underwent surgery which meant a prolonged delay of his return to Vietnam. When word came of Chet's delayed return, I was dispatched to Phan Thiet from the Field Operations office at USOM Headquarters to be the senior advisor in Binh Thuan to

complete the test of the concept. 3.

In my frequent meetings with the Province Chief, LT COL DINH VAN DE, I would sit in a deep leather chair facing his desk. Hanging on the wall ~~to~~ behind his desk was the painting of the traffic circle in Phan Thiet. My house was about a block from the circle and I would drive around it going to and from my office.

We completed the concept evaluation and it was expanded to designate senior advisors in all provinces. Whether they were to be a civilian or military person would depend on the severity of the security situation.

When I was leaving the province on completion of my assignment, the province chief came to see me off ^{at} the ^{airfield} with a package under his arm. He said that "you have admired this painting so much that I thought you should have it".

LT Col De had been mayor of Dalat and Tuyen Duc Province Chief before ~~as~~ his Binh Thuan assignment. As Saigon fell in April 1975, he was one of their senators. ~~He did not~~

The painting has survived travels from Phan Thiet to Saigon to Nha Trang back to Saigon then on to Washington state and to Norman Okla where it has hung in my home for 29 years. Now that we

have moved to a new home, it was a good opportunity to send it on to the Vietnam archives.

Phan Thiet, like several cities along the coast has experienced significant changes so that on a visit here in January 2006 I could not find my old house which was just a couple blocks from the circle. The same was true when I couldn't find my old houses in Nha Trang and Ban Me Thuot.

THE BENCH

As the U.S. OPERATIONS MISSION (USOM) Provincial Representative for DARLAC PROVINCE (APR 1964 - APRIL 1965), I was a frequent visitor to many of the hamlets as many of our programs were directed toward them - primarily in agriculture and public health - but that would be a much more detailed account to be provided in the future. I was often invited to enter their longhouses. One of the interesting things I observed was that along each wall was a long bench that had been carved from a log. The benches were used mainly as a place to lay things such as sleeping mats, clothes etc. when not in use. As a visitor - I sat on the floor.

Later when I was the Economic advisor for Region II (1967-1972) and based in Nha Trang, Darlac was one of the provinces I visited on a frequent basis. During one of my visits, I expressed an interest in having a smaller model of a bench to one of my former staff. I didn't think much more about it until one day I received a call from the Air America office in Nha Trang to pick up a bench they had brought from Ban Me Thuot on one of their C-46 planes. I quickly discovered that it would not be easy to move as it wouldn't

fit ⁱⁿ ~~it~~ my I.H. scout. It was in my house in Nha Trang then was moved to Saigon then on to my small house town in SE. Washington when I left Vietnam in July 1973. I stored it there, then brought it to Norman in a U Haul trailer ^{in 1977}. It was part of our home for 29 years here in Norman but now that we have moved to a new home - it was a good opportunity to offer the bench and several other items from Vietnam to the archives. I will ^{miss} these things that represent some great experiences and that have been part of my life for nearly forty years but they come to you with the hope that they will be of interest and will add a bit of variety to your displays.

THE SHIRT

AS THE U.S. OPERATIONS MISSION (USOM) PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVE (PROVREP) FOR DARLAC, ~~I~~ I WAS ~~AL~~ ~~THAT I WOULD~~ BE CLOSELY INVOLVED ON AN ALMOST DAILY BASIS ~~WITH~~ ^{IN} SOME ACTIVITY ~~WITH~~ ^{IT} WITH ~~VAR~~ Kahle groups or hamlets. Since the Kahle were a major part of the population of Darlac, many of our development and assistance programs were directed toward them.

There were many occasions - ceremonies and other gatherings where the men ~~wore~~ and women wore their traditional clothes. During one of those occasions I was presented

We operated an agriculture training center, well drilling rigs and other programs in the hamlets.

There were ~~many~~ four Kahle on my staff, so there were many occasions - ceremonies and other gatherings where the men and women wore their traditional clothes. During one of those occasions I was presented this shirt. I have actually worn it once - to a Halloween ~~party~~ costume party. But ~~it was~~ since it does not stretch ~~it was~~ made without any measurements made to be sure it was my size - it is ~~hard~~ difficult to get on even though I

am still about the same weight
as I was in 1965.

Our new home does not
have a suitable place for its
display so I will make a good
addition to your collection along
with the bench.

THE CANE

THERE WAS ~~A~~ CONCERN ABOUT THE EROSION OF THE BEACHES ALONG THE CENTRAL COAST FROM DANANG TO HUNG TRU and the search began for a way to stabilize the sand and ~~halt~~ ^{stop} THE EROSION. The U.S. Forest Service had ~~furnished advisors~~ been furnishing advisors ^{to Vietnam} for several years * ~~and~~ as the Economic Advisor for Region II, I had been working with the U.S. forestry advisors and the Vietnamese Forest Service on several projects involving upgrading the lumber industry and salvaging

* primarily ~~for~~ concerned about ~~the~~ utilization and ~~the~~ long term preservation of the forests.

the logs from the U.S. Army defoliation operations along the roads throughout the central highlands.

We learned of a small ^{project} beach on Con Son (Con Dao) island that involved the planting of casuarina trees to stabilize the beach. Jack Skumate, (now retired in Mesa, Ariz) the Senior Forestry advisor ^{of} flew to Con Son with Air America to see if the beach erosion control project would be applicable for other coastal areas.

This was during the time when the charges were being made about

the mistreatment of viet cong prisoners
and the so called Tiger Cages -
~~holes~~ where prisoners were
being kept in holes in the ground
covered by ^{an} iron grid. I believe
the initial alert was made by
Don Huce, the International Volunteer
Service (IVS) coordinator in Vietnam.
I went back up country and
~~didn't~~ was busy, so don't re-
member what the outcome was
of the whole affair.

~~The~~
While on Con Son we visited
the prisoner area but only to ~~try~~
pick up some items from the
shop that collected the items
carved by the prisoners. The
cane was one of the items I picked
up.

I am presently involved with
two groups in Vietnam working on
plans to develop Con Dao island as
a tourist resort.

The black lacquer painting of deer was given to me as a gift by some officials from Darlac Province as I left to move to Saigon.

The crossbow was given to me in Ban Me Thuet - it is a Kalide model.

The cone-straw hat was given to me by one of my staff when I left Phan Thiet in 1966.