

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

September 28, 1970

Mr. George D. Jacobson
Assistant Chief of Staff for CORDS
Headquarters, MACV
APO San Francisco 96222

Dear Jake:

In late 1968 or early 1969, I was totally surprised to receive from General Hoang Van Lac a Revolutionary Development Medal. Apparently, it occurred to him one day that he wanted to make a gesture towards certain Americans with whom he had worked in Viet-Nam for many years and whom he thought the GVN should recognize. These individuals were Len Maynard, myself, John Vann and Mark Huss, as I recall. Of the entire group, only Mark Huss was actually working on Lac's program at the time. In any case and as regards me, it was Lac's way of acknowledging help given to him and the GVN in 1964 when I was in charge of the USAID Rural Affairs operation throughout Viet-Nam. As you can imagine, this struck me and Len Maynard as a particularly sentimental and touching gesture. The value of the award lay precisely in the fact that it represented a spontaneous feeling on Lac's part, and was not a routine thing in recognition of any services rendered to the RD program as such. Medals in Viet-Nam have become so ridiculously inflated, particularly on the military side, that they have little of their former value. Conversely, Lac's gesture was all the more meaningful.

This morning I received a verdict from the USAID GVN Awards Committee, headed by a Mr. Pinckney, indicating that the Committee was disallowing the medal as not having been merited, etc. I don't think the Committee really is in a position to determine what Lac's reasons were in honoring me, Len, John Vann and Mark Huss. It is anomalous that the award would have apparently been approved if recommended in the first instance to the GVN by my American supervisors, but was considered uncalled for as being the result of a spontaneous GVN initiative! I suspect the reverse should be the rule. While the medal, as such, means nothing to me, the validity of Lac's gesture does, as a souvenir of much work that was done together in 1964, when the only GVN presence in the Provinces after Diem's demise was the Rural

Affairs/GVN joint program. This evidently meant something to Lac, even after five years, and it still means something to me. In this context, the USAID Committee's decision is a bureaucratic judgment which I find regrettable and uncalled for. Do you agree?

Please let us know when you expect to be in the Washington area during your forthcoming visit. Of course, we very much want to have you bring us and our students up-to-date on Viet-Nam developments.

With best regards.

Sincerely,

Ogden Williams
Coordinator
Viet-Nam Training Center

Enclosure