

MEMORANDUM AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE, Incorporated, 160 North 15th Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102

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Dick and Cynthia Johnson, John and Laurama Pixton, Olive Rayne
To: Margaret Roberts, Martha Fort, Mary Stickney, Sallie Squires **Date:** 12/27/68
From: Jenny Guberman *JG* **cc:** Dot Weller

Subject: Dot Weller's December 15 Newsletter

Enclosed is Dot Weller's Newsletter of December 15, 1968. It arrived on Christmas Eve and she wanted you to receive it before Christmas. Please accept it as a belated Christmas gift and with high hopes for the new year.

Roger is en route to Hong Kong and Vietnam so things are relatively calm in the Overseas Refugee department, although he does keep in constant touch.

Warm regards and Happy New Year!

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Dear Philly Family:

Its been just short of a month since I last wrote and I see aft hav-
ing just consult l y Snappy alendar that I have fallen so low. I have
missed both Roger and Dave. However, I console myself by rememb ring that
I can soon wish them a happy Christmas and give them the best news f. co
to face. Haven't quite adjusted to the fact that one must start about 3
wks. earlier to do this than one wouldordinarily do in the States.

Before too long you will all be getting a numbered and general newsletter
but I feel that the Philly nice people and the "special twelve" deserve
something better than that. After all, much of what is in the general news
letter, you have heard before.

Breath of fresh air: A breath of fresh air blew into Quang Mai about the
4th of Dec. by the name of Roger Marshall. He wasted no time finding his
niche with the Quak team and has already been totally absorbed. Joe has
left for his England vacation and Roger starts tomorrow on his own. Hope
the boys are extra good to him for a few days at least. (Grin.) The Ameri-
cans on the team are getting a few good chuckles out of watching Jack, Jill
and Joe struggle with Roger's accent.

Good fortune & tragedy: Once again we have seen how often good fortune &
tragedy travel hand in hand over here. The third of our prosthetic trainees
has fallen victim to the fates of war. Quy, our favorite and the boy that
lives with us, was shot on the 7th of Dec as he rode his bicycle on a road
behind the hospital. Roger was prowling around the hospital buildings that
Saturday afternoon, getting oriented to his surroundings when he discovered
Quy lying on a table in one of the small operating rooms. Roger came flying
over to the rehab center where Joe and I were checking off and stacking
up supplies that had just come in, to tell us and I went back with him to
see Quy. He had been shot in the thigh and was in a lot of pain at the
moment but his wound had been bandaged at least. A young medical techni-
cian brought in an x-ray they had taken. It wasn't too bad but showed that
the bullet was still in his leg, and hadn't touched the bone. Did a quick
muscle test to reassure myself that he hadn't suffered any motor loss altho
he did turn out to have some minimal sensory loss. Being a Saturday after-
noon, things were at their usual confused and unstaffed level. No one
seemed to know which Vietnamese doctor was supposed to be on call nor where
he could be found so we did find out. Consequently, Roger scooted back
to the house and got Marge. She came right over and within an hour & a
half or so, Quy was in the operating room with Marge assisting Dr. Cung (the
best Vietnamese dr. here). They removed the bullet with little problem
and four days later we brought Quy home with us to recover. Marge is going
to let him start back to work tomorrow part time as he is now hobbling
around without his crutches and getting very restless around the house.
Quy has no idea of who shot him or where the shot came from. He says he
heard three shots and was only hit by one. Marge thinks the bullet was
nearly spent when it hit Quy as there wasn't much tissue damage. We can
thank God for small favors, I guess. Just going out the front door can be
a little like playing Russian Roulette for these people over here! To my
good fortune, while having Quy around the house so much I discovered that
he is an excellent teacher! So Quy is now my new Vietnamese language teacher.
He teaches me on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday nights and I teach
Quy English on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. My nights are now as full as the days. Leaves so precious little
time for the usual junker debauchery..(Grin)

Draft; Vietnam style: Another of the prosthetic trainee boys "bit the dust"
the same day that Quy was shot, but in quite a different way. This one
was Quyen and is 17 years old. He is 180 lbs and 6' 4" in height...it
a rarity around here. Most of our boys are very tall and hoping themselves
as anywhere from 14 to 17 and from 40 on up. (rare) Quyen has been making
every legal effort to get a settlement from the regular USA forces so he

can complete his prosthetic training course with Joe & Roger. There is local military force here somewhat similar to our national guard. They continue to live in their own homes and work at their regular jobs but are on call in case of local threat by "outside aggressors". He has repeatedly requested (and so has Keith and Jack through formal channels) to be assigned to this group and has pointed out how much more useful he will be to his people on completing this training. How true! While his friends were in prison, he would have been safe from the draft but even that burr occurs in Vietnam. It's a little different than it is back home and poor old Quynh was snatched off his bicycle the morning of the 4th and rounded up for "draft dodging". He was in the boys and then released but as far as I know has learned nothing yet about the disposition of his case. A day or two later another trainee was picked up (nam Danh; the boy that was badly wounded about two months ago) and detained for the same reason. They let him go after a few hours. Jack has written a formal letter to the authorities here in Hanoi, protesting Quynh's arrest and the constant threat of arrest to all the trainees. He again applied for draft-exempt status for them except for service in the local militia and cessation of the harassment of them as they come and go from work. We're on pins and needles most of the time wondering when we're going to lose most of our boys to the draft. That would really cripple the prosthetic program and that is the appeal Jack is making but don't know how much the authorities are impressed.

Giao-Su Weller: "Giao-Su", that there means teacher or some such animal. I conducted my first class ~~done~~ entirely in Vietnamese two weeks ago. That's not easy, my friends! (Grin) I was up till about 2 a.m. the night before sweating over a very detailed lesson plan translation. During the class I had Joe's interpreter in the room but didn't use him except for a question to make sure I had gotten through. I was determined to carry through on my own even though in several instances this meant actually reading brokenly from my lesson plan. The class was on stump bombing....Reasons for and techniques of....and I was giving it to Joe's 22 prosthetic trainees. I was really quite pleased at the way things turned out. I gave the same sort of presentation to the boys when John P. was still here in August but at that time I had to depend on the interpreter three-fourths of the time. This follows this time I went at my struggles with some of the newer words and phrases but they obviously appreciated the effort I was putting forth and paid close attention to what I was saying. (They had to understand my Vietnamese! Grin.) Early in the morning I spent an hour with Ong Ry, teaching him the same material. When the class started I had him write the reasons for stump bombing on the blackboard and explain them to the boys. He really did quite well for his first lesson teaching. Hard as it is, this teaching business is the most important part of our efforts over here and the part that will ultimately leave the most lasting effects.

Once more with feeling: The above mentioned Ong Ry started work with me on the 2nd. Think I told you his background in a previous letter. Now since learned that he has been a village chief in his time. You might think being a PT aide would represent quite a comedown for him but if it is he doesn't show it. As I embarked on training the 4th side trainee I drew a deep breath and thought, "here we go again". I hope Ong Ry will be the one to make it all the way thru the years course. In as much time allows I am spending till an hour a day in formal instruction with Mr. Ry and we will have an examination every Saturday; sometimes or 1, 2, 3 times written. By the end of the year's time, (IF he makes it that far!) he will have covered most of the majority of material that a PT Aide trainee will receive in the states. With some changes in emphasis for reasons of practicability, of course. Hopefully, ~~he~~ he would continue to work for us and assist in the training of future PT aide trainees. That's the why its supposed to work but what happens in actuality here is oft times a very different "swing of the axe". Grin..This is our faith becomes a crucial part of our program....Yeah..Sigh....

Paddling down the ole Sông Vé: Those of you reading my letters so oft sh ld be getting to know the language fairly well..(Grin..apologie to those who ready speak it as good as I do..) as you know by now the Sông Vé means river...So this, then, is the Riv'r Vé..Grin.. We didn't call it that although such an event is pleasant to calculate. Dec. 1st, Lou, Keith, Quy, Marge and I piled into the van and drove down to a village on Sông Vé. The village is a tiny one and is situated around the bridge to the big bridge crossing the Sông Vé about 10 miles from here. Security round these parts seems to have limbered up a bit from time to time or at least until ourselves it has and have ventured a little further and more often.. I was like a kid on the way to circus during the whole trip. It was the first time I had been down there but the others had been there at least once. It is absolutely beautiful countryside. Had a trip that so ever except for getting stuck in the knee deep (no exaggeration) mud for a short while on the way home. Keith and Quy rolled up their pants, took off their sandals and waded us out in no time while Lou sat dry and cool behind the wheel. (rir)

This is transplanting time for the rice here in Jun. The rice and the fields were a study in dirt. The grain is all in short rows in dry ground such like that. It is a civil matter. The rice is inch high now. The farmers were pulling the plants up, washing the roots off (some of the peasants I saw were just neatly cutting the root to get the excess dirt off...Not sure why they do this.) and re-planting them in the flooded paddies. Noticed that the paddies were traced into different levels. Must be so the water can drain from the uppermost one to the lower ones. Won't work the other way tho unless they get their "rice dipper system" going. Kids were out paddling around in the field. Pulling mud like to form new paddies. Its obvious why so many of the people here have worms! Saw a lot of w+ & Buffaloes at work in the fields. Its a wonder they can get these monstrous animals out of the mud of the paddies. They sink clear up to their bellies in the tall mud around pulling a wooden plow behind them with the upper riding the blade portion to hold it down in the mud. I've never known what mud was until I came to Viet-Nam! Part of the highway (#1) from Quang Ngai south to S. Vé is "minimally" paved but most of the 10 miles are in deep, thick, glue-like mud. The Vietnamese solve the problems by going barefooted or just wear sandals or plastic sandals as they do, along. A common and amusing sight you see often here on weekends is the Vietnamese down in the rivers laboriously washing off their bikes and motor scooters. By the time they go 20 feet from the river the vehicles will be as dirty as they ever were but they have a "thing" about clean conveyances here as they do in Hong Kong.

Two of the three bridges between here and Sông Vé village have been blown out by the Viet Cong & we crossed on "jerry built" affairs or in one case, a mud dike that had been thrown across. Here there was quite a little hill to negotiate & the road had ruts 2 ft. deep....The mud slippery & gluelike. The lambretta buses stopped at the top of the hill and all their passengers got out & ran down the hill. Then they all helped push the last rattas up the other side & hopped back in....mud up to their knees but it didn't faze them a bit.

Sông Vé village itself rests atop a very strategic spot at the entrance to a major bridge and it isn't a particularly healthy spot to live. The main street showed signs of having been shelled more than once. Some of the huts & shops had been sprayed with bullets & shrapnel. The underneath of the big bridge across the Sông Vé had been circled with barbed wire & suspected mines had been laid to keep the VC from getting near enough to blow the bridge. We walked half way across to get some pictures and no one paid any attention to us. Heck, we could have blown the thing off the map. (rir)

We all noticed that the people (and particularly the children) were not so hostile & insulting as they are in Quang Ngai. Not once were we yelled at with the usual YOU, YOU, You or Number #1 or worse, Number 10....Grin. They were curious and amused & followed us in packs as we walked along the muddy paths of the village but they never bothered us. We were looking for clay pots for plants in our compound. Found a big clay place that guy knew of where they

tdrr. out all sorts of pots, etc. Bought 8 of them & saw a fantastic display for native gen-
uily. Regret that I couldn't get a picture of it. The man & wife team who made the pots, I
on a demonstration for us while we were there. Twas enough to make an O.T. jump for joy....
Kees & Olive would have been estatic. The wheel was down at floor level and right in front of a
waist high work bench. The man sat on the floor straddling the wheel & his wife stood at the
work bench with her right foot on the wheel. There was a large supply of clay on the bench at
her left elbow. She spun the wheel with her right foot, kicking the wheel forward rather than
backward & at the same time was slamming new clay into snake shapes for the next pot. Man, what
powerful quads & hip flexors she must have developed. And what rhythm & coordination of move-
ment! She never lost a beat nor even looked at what she was doing. She was looking to see if
we were going to pay her some money for putting on the demonstration...that is what she was
doing! We didn't do anything so crass as all that but we did buy some of their products. We
watched and talked to them for a long time and then reluctantly headed back towards Quang Ngai.

A CDCC first!: On the 9th of December the CDCC accepted it's first handicapped child! This is
a big step forward for the city of Quang Ngai and I feel as pleased by this bit of progress as
I do about any thing we've done here so far. Heretofore, as far as we know, children with major
handicaps were not often accepted into the schools. Doubt that it has ever been given much thought.
A handicapped youngster here is not a thing that parents are particularly proud of and they are
usually kept at home and they do what they can in the way of household chores. Seeing as how
this first fortunate child was Nguyen Thi Kim Thanh, I was especially pleased! Thanh, who is
now approximately six, had polio when she was a baby and had never walked when she first came
to the Quaker Rehab. Center in August of 67. She was also one of the firsts at the rehab. center
and carries the ignonimous label of "number 4". Grin.. You've all seen her picture on the many
handouts on the Quang Ngai project. She is the glum looking little Miss doing push ups with
her knees bent drastically backward. She has come a long long ways since those first days when
she cried copiusly but never spoke a word. Even after I returned here this past August and
she started to come in again after the Tet break in her treatment, seldom did she speak or smile.
I was firmly convinced that the girl was retarded until I made a visit to her home & discovered
that in her own environment she was as normal as apple pie (rice & fishheads here). Since then
we have finished her braces and she is completely independent. She can completely take care of
herself & walks alone (with crutches) but the remaining problem was the usual one of complete
dependency on older brother and parents....Talks with the parents assured us that they, too, were
concerned with this problem and were willing to help us help Thanh to "sever the ties" & begin
a new phase of life. We tentatively came up with the idea of entering Thanh in the CDCC but
feared to pin much hope on it. Felt that if Xuan Lan didn't reject the idea of having a handi-
capped child, the child surely would reject the school. But much to our relief & delight, such
was not the case. It was more a case of "love at first sight" for both Xuan Lan and Thanh!
The CDCC has a great deal to offer Thanh in the way of basic education & socialization but I
think she offers more to the school and the community in education for the future of this country.
As a follow up to this story....A 2nd child will start at the CDCC tomorrow morning after having
been "graduated" from the QRC. This lil one had her leg amputated at the hip joint after having
been injured by an artillery shell. She, perhaps, exhibits a different problem than Thanh by
nature of her childhood background. Where Thanh has never had a "normal" past that she can
remember, Trinh (Also 6 yrs. old) has always been active, well & happy until the day just four
months ago when an errant shell shattered her world. She has compensated for her major handicap
by becoming an absolute tyrant....In blunter terms; a "spoiled brat". Grin...But an irresistible
brat responding in the only way she knows how to a foreign and frightening situation. Again
we felt the CDCC had much to offer her in helping to readjust to life as she knew it and we feel
that having to compete with 75 other irresistible youngsters (who will give her no quarter after
a few days of sympathetic sparring) will bring her back to normal very quickly. Being so young,
she had not yet started school & now with her handicap, she wouldn't be ordinarily accepted most
likely. At age seven, these children are going to have to leave the CDCC but the hope is that
by that time they will have learned to handle their special problems in a normal environment and
& will be independent & secure enough to convince public school officials that they, too, should
be given a chance for education. Here in Viet-Nam, these handicapped children need education
far more than their unscarred peers. Trinh's mother, a widow, returned to their village of Due
Phu after Trinh was discharged from the QRC and brought her other two children to Quang Ngai
to live just so Trinh could be enrolled at the CDCC. Trinh has been fitted with a prosthesis
& while she does not have a pretty gait, she is once again able to walk on her own. A third
little girl (post polio & soon to be fitted with one long leg brace) is being considered for the

CDCC now. We may yet see the CDCC turning into a school for the handicapped which is not exactly what we had in mind. Grin... This "double exposure" of the non-handicapped to the handicapped can be lost if we don't watch out.

Y team in town: The Germans have arrived in the form of four men and a woman and they are ostensibly here to set up a vocational school. We are anxious to meet them & find out more of the details. A well run vocational school for the handicapped here would be a god-send & would certainly solve a lot of the problems we have been wrestling with rather unsuccessfully in most cases. I've seen them from a distance several times and having heard a German team was in town, knew who they were instantly. Wuff...Are they big! And blond! And decidedly German! Grin... The woman would make two of me and that is B-I-G Big...The local Vietnamese have become fairly accustomed to the big Americans but they are really going to be boggle-eyed when they see these young people.

US AID Nurses: One of the 5 US AID nurses in Quang Ngai has left & we are told that she is not going to be replaced. In fact, we understand that all of the nurses are phasing out and none of them will be replaced. That means by July of next year, we probably won't have any American (or foreign) nurses here in the hospital. GROANNNNNNN... Can hardly bear to think of it! These girls have been so much help & I doubt that the indigenous hospital nursing staff will be equal to them by next July. We all wonder what this means in terms of a general American phase out... Soldiers and all? That we are very much for but US AID does have some good medical & feeding programs here that it seems should be the last to be removed; not the first!

To fence or not to fence: Months of discussion and concern have finally culminated in the decision to fence off the QRC. We have all been reluctant to take this step in setting ourselves apart from the rest of the hospital compound but after weeks of increasing problems with Squatters, loiterers, harassers and outright thieves, the decision was made. Lou's crew started erecting cyclone fencing yesterday just across the open end of the U. (No barbed wire in the Quaker complex! Grin) I'm am sure that we will have a few problems with the fence but it can't be as bad as it was without it. It is a relatively low fence and won't deter anyone determined to enter while we are absent but it will cut down on the wandering hordes of curious patients and relatives.

Not a lov-ly war...: The past month or so had us to the point where we were about to adopt this tune as our theme song. Nights were quiet and beautiful and gunfire an occasion to remark about for a change. Thought perhaps something concrete was really going on in Paris and that the boys had picked up their "marbles" and gone home. But...sigh...it was never meant to be. The past week or so has demonstrated that the conflict is indeed heating up and once again we are going to bed on Saturday nights rather apprehensively. Rumors are flying that there will be wholesale attack on the major cities of Vietnam on the 19th of this month. We shall see..The past few rumors of impending doom have been so much hot air. However, we have it on good authority that there are still large complements of NVA and VC troops in as close as Binh Son. That crazy Bac Si and equally lunatic social worker got mixed up in that "kettle of ulcer bait" a week ago and we all aged 20 years in one day. But that's another and a long story and since I wasn't there perhaps I should let them tell about it. (grin)

Irif is emf: And sometimes that can be too much. I am going to get off the pages for awhile while this epistle is still xerox-able for the missing 12 members of our team. Speaking of team members; I realized with shame that I have yet to welcome the new members of the Philly branch of the Vietnam program. To Chris Barr, Jennifer Guberman, and to you, Christine...A very sincere welcome and thanks to you for all you do for us out here. I am looking forward to meeting you on my next trip home. A very special WHOOPEE to Lady B for the good news we have gotten about her joining us!

Christmas is coming up fast and while it is a little hard to whip up anykind of enthusiasm out here, I certainly hope the holidays are satisfying and restful for all of the AFSC-Philly family and for our 12 teammates now scattered all over the US. We miss you terribly and that is as sincere a statement as I have ever made! Take good care of yourselves...We'll write as often as we can to keep you up to date on what is going on...

All my love,

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