

Robert Metz, Dick and Cynthia Johnson, John and Laurama Pixton, Olive Rayne,

Margaret Roberts, Martha Fort, David and Mary Stickney, Sallie Squires,

To: Kees and Katie Willink, Chris and Terry Chacos, Paul and Ginny Date: March 21, 1969

Lappala, Jack and Jill Richards

From: Roger Fredrickson

cc: Lady Borton, Dot Weller

Corinne Johnson

Charles Read

Russ Tuttle

Tom Elkinton

Carroll Collings

Subject: Most recent newsletter from Dot Weller, 12 March 1969

The attached letter from Dot Weller reports another chapter in the life of Quaker Service-Vietnam, including some detailed exposition of Ba Xuan Lan's recent accident when she was struck by a Honda. Dot's report of the incident is the most up to date we have of the incident though at this point the news is at least one week out of date. I feel confident that had Ba Xuan Lan not continued to make satisfactory recovery we would have received word of this immediately. I will of course share with you any future word of Ba Xuan Lan's situation.

Several of you have either called or written asking about the team's situation in Quang Ngai in wake of the current heightened military action. Heretofore I will attempt to keep you up to date as reports from the field permit, relying heavily on the excellent reports of Dot, Roger Marshall and others on the team.

During my time in Quang Ngai during January, everyone on the team was of the opinion from conversations with their Vietnam friends that major military action was in the offing though the situation during my visit was one of relative calm that even permitted a Sunday picnic at Buddha Mountain--an idyllic spot for the moment in a country at war.

After my visit with the team in Quang Ngai, I traveled on to Jordan, Algeria, and West Africa where I visited the newly established Quaker Service refugee relief projects in Nigeria and in Biafra. Like Vietnam, the Nigeria/Biafra situation is another where the civilian population is paying a terrific price in favor of military objectives.

It is good to be back in Philadelphia and I look forward to renewed contact with you and I trust that you will either call or write as your concern for the staff in Vietnam leads you to want an up to date report of their situation.



# QUAKER SERVICE - VIETNAM

American Friends Service Committee

160 North 15th Street  
 Philadelphia, Pa., 19102  
 United States

END HPO

12, Phan Đình Phùng  
 Hộp Thư (Box) 67  
 Quảng-Ngãi, Việt-Nam

MAR 18 1969

12 March 1969

Dear Philly Folk:

Time again for another communique...No, past time. But the pace is hectic and I make no excuses. Round and round she goes and...we're back to Saturday night again. Or ahead, depending on how you look at it. Somehow the days have a sameness that makes it a bit hard to distinguish one from the other. But in a way, it is good to have life set off in neat, easily identifiable little segments; like weeks and months. Just taking it "one step at a time" or "one week at a time" and not worrying about the next one or the past one, makes it easier.

I shouldn't have waited a week to write as I haven't been taking time to write in the journal either since the last time. Now I'm not sure I can catch you up on all that has gone on around here. We don't tell time by the clock anymore around here, we number the crises and relate things to them...Grin "Pre-Crisis #117 and post-crisis #145....I'll never be able to live in the US again...I'd be bored to death. (Although I would like to try a little of that "boredom" for about 24 hours!)

That explosion on Tuesday: Don't ask me which Tuesday...Yesterday a week I guess...We have since found out the details which are interesting if not down right hair raising.. Seems a young student (NFL cadre) had planted a plastic bomb in the jeep of a couple of ARVN soldiers right outside Dr. Connelly's house. Both the soldiers were seriously injured. But the story gets even more interesting. The student was picked up and interrogated; this leading to identification and pick up of other members of this Viet Cong ring. The lad who was caught first lived right across the street from Dr. Connelly and near the Canadian house. The plan had been to plant the bomb in Dr. Connelly's vehicles but something happened to frustrate this plan so for some unknown reason, the student decided to blow up a couple of soldiers instead. Further investigation and arrests disclosed that also on the list for destruction was the house and vehicles of the new German relief team, Dr. Connelly's house and the other nurses house. Whether, in fact, they have picked up the entire ring and aborted all the sabotage is not known.

Crisis #10002 occurred when Rogers Vietnamese language teacher, a young 17 year old girl, was arrested by the local security police on suspicion of being involved in NFL activities. Roger, Marge and Lou made several trips to the interrogation center to assure themselves of her decent treatment (guilty or not guilty) but it is hard to exert any kind of influence in this direction. It is when you are caught in the middle of just such situations that it comes home hard to you how difficult it is to tread "that neutralist path" with good friends on both sides.

Batangan Refugees: Flotsam on a raging sea of war is what they are and one gets the impression they were "born to die". Larry Colbert (American advisor to LeDam) had dinner with us one night last week and was telling us that the returning of the refugees to their home areas had begun. (These are the refugees in Tien An camp that Lou has written so eloquently about) I forgot how many he said they had taken back ~~that~~ that first day but I think it was in excess of 1000. They took them by truck like cattle down to Phu Tho junk basin and from there went by boat with armed naval escort around to Batangan where the first beach head was established. With them went so many sheets of galvanized tin roofing for new buildings to be built....A fair trade for total loss of homes, animals and crops!! Larry was saying that it was really dangerous out there. The place is heavily booby trapped and apparently ~~the~~ the US marines and the popular forces, that are helping to return the refugees, have lost a number of men. We

asked him, "If this is true, what about the safety of the refugees you are returning...They don't know where the booby traps or mines are either." He acted rather as if he hadn't thought of that and admitted that there might be a lot of civilian casualties in the next few weeks in that area. We also were unkind enough to ask him; if the Batangan Peninsula had been swept clear of VC, who was laying all the mines and setting up the booby traps. He just laughed at that. He knows what a farce the whole operation was although I think he is far from where he would admit that it was a stupid and ill-conceived plan that turned out to be a mass tragedy for many. More of these refugees will go back each day until they are all back in...Their homes gone (Larry said that a great many of them had been living underground at the time they were taken out and had no above ground structures.) they will be grouped in about 12 new villages fairly near their former land so that they can go back to farm their own fields. Units of Vietnamese Popular Forces will be left with them; presumably to help them re-build their lives and to protect them from re-infiltrating VC. What they don't know or choose to ignore is that the VC they are going to be "protecting" the people from are the brothers, fathers, husbands, etc.....Sp the closing of Operation Bold Mariner is at hand but this is far from the closing chapter of the Batangan Peninsula story. There will be many more deaths out there yet.

The most recent blow to the Thien An refugees came on last Sunday. The camp was shelled by the NFL and some 20 refugees were killed plus a few of the soldiers guarding them. So the insanities compound more insanities and the war goes on and the deaths mount ever higher.

Casualties: Tet 1969: Dr. Cung has told us some of the appalling figures of the past few weeks. Quang Ngai has had many many more dead and wounded during this Tet offensive than it did in 68. There have been over 150 Vietnamese soldiers killed to date in the first 16 days of this new offensive and over 300 wounded. The first day of attacks brought 89 civilian wounded into the provincial hospital and the second day there were over 50. Of those, we don't know how many died subsequently. They have continued to come in every day since then but in varying and steadily decreasing numbers. Dr. Cung remembered that in 68 there were only 60 soldiers killed here. I know the papers are trying to play down the impact and importance of these new attacks but if Quang Ngai is any example, they are really distorting the picture for those of you back home. In 68 the Saigon government said that they were totally unprepared for the offensive...many of the troops being off on Tet leaves...but this year they were prepared to the teeth and knew positively that "something" was coming...And they took even more casualties; at least in Quang Ngai.

And crisis follows crisis in Quaker life-Quang Ngai: There has been a continual procession of such events this week and as I sit here trying to remember them I find that some of the earlier happenings have been blotted out by succeeding ones. But the most devastating was the serious injuries to Xuan Lan.

Oh Lord, I don't even remember the day now...Think it was last Thursday morning...We had all gone to work...Marge was making rounds in the hospital..Ry and I were trying to work our way thru the mob of patients, when Lou came running in with blood on his hands and shirt. Said he had Xuan Lan outside in the volkswagon badly hurt...And indeed, he did, although the injury was not as serious as he thought. She had just come from the home of a friend near the old AFSC house #1 and was struck by a yongster on a Honda. Ong That happened to be passing and saw it and came racing up to our house for help. Lou and Carroll took off and went down and picked her up. She was conscious when she was brought in to the QRC but in a lot of pain and face and hands were covered with blood. We carried her into the P.T. department and sent Mr. Ry running for Marge. Turns out she had a fair sized scalp laceration, bruised head and hip. For awhile Marge thought the hip and skull could have been fractured but the x-rays were negative. However the skull film was a very poor one and it is possible that she could have had a posterior linear fracture. The most serious result was a bad concussion and she is exhibiting all the usual symptoms...Headaches, dizziness, double vision, nausea.. Marge sewed up her scalp and we cleaned her up and brought her back to the house on a stretcher. Eric was in DaNang at the time so we put her in his room. Poor guy has come back since and is homeless but in true "Rick-like fashion", he hasn't complained..Bless him. Rather than put her in that cruddy hospital on the floor, we are keeping her here with us and will continue to care for her here until she can go home. Its been about a week now but she still hasn't been able to stand or sit up...Marge won't let her! But the real problem is the persistent dizziness and nausea. I imagine it will be sometime yet before she can get out of bed. Marge and I have been taking turns taking care of her and its no problem at all really. Its a real

pleasure to see so much of her but we could wish it were under happier circumstances. A friend is taking care of the kids and of course, Minh Quang is old enough to be responsible for them during the day. She is going to be okay but it will be some time before she can go back to work. We were really lucky (again!) to get Xuan Lan back out of this one with no more injury than she has! In the meantime Co Tra is carrying on ably at the CDCC. This might be a really good opportunity for her to learn the ropes at the CDCC more intimately altho this is a traumatic way to get experience. Grin

Staff attrition: Sometime last week Són, (the storeman in Joe's shop) didn't show up for work and even his brother didn't know where he was. This is the same guy who was missing with his brother during some of the heaviest fighting. A little later in the morning the message came through that Són had been drafted by ARVN troops. Groan...Carroll and Lou drove down to the military compound and sprung him with not much trouble but it was just one more thing to worry about. The story turned out to be that Són had been taxi-ing people around on his motorcycle (for money and illegal) and unfortunately picked up a soldier who decided he would turn Són in for his trouble. Són had his Quaker ID papers with him but the military officials wouldn't believe him until Carroll and Lou showed up inquiring about him. Són now his military status is shaky along with Quyên. We have had no answer yet to the official request for exemption for our boys other than a note from Saigon saying the request had been transferred to the "appropriate ministry". Poor Joe and Roger never know from one day to the next how many workers they will have in the shop. Now, Són has broken his little toe while dashing to the bunker in the middle of the night!!! If it ~~weren't~~ weren't for real, all this pandemonium would make a good comic opera...But I don't feel like laughing...

Tran Dieu, the fellow I hired to help me with housekeeping work in the department finally showed up a week after he was to have started work with the story that he had been sick at home. When I asked him why he hadn't sent me a note, he replied that he was at home 27 miles away. When I reminded him that he had told me he lived in Quang Ngai city, he changed his story to a new tact. Said he felt he was too weak to work...This is the typical way for a Vietnamese to turn down a job he doesn't want, so I am told. They never could just come out and tell you that the salary wasn't enough or they didn't like the type of work involved. Sigh....So I am still looking for someone to relieve Mr. Ry so he can get on with more studying and practicing of exercise routines.

Of all of us I guess Joe and Roger took the brunt of this weeks crises..Grin. Mr. Hai still hasn't been replaced, Són was either missing or locked up most of the week, and Trung, the interpreter, was away on vacation...Marge has given up Mr. Bich for the most part, temporarily, so he can help out in the prosthetic shop as receptionist-social worker. Then Bich, himself, threw the QRC crew into utter panic by considering taking a job with the German team that paid more than we could have ever offered him...Ui Cha!!! After what I guess was a terrific battle with necessity and conscience, Mr. Bich has decided to stay with the Quakers...Whew! I certainly appreciate the sacrifice he is making!

It has been heart warming, however, to see the Vietnamese staff take the personnel problems and overload of work as personal responsibilities (both at the CDCC, QRC and the house) along with the foreign staff. We may not have "arrived" over here but we have gone a long ways down the road toward unity in efforts to solve common problems. These days when I tell the Vietnamese staff or patients that this "is their center" and not ours, I sincerely mean it. The patients are reflecting this change in attitude more and more by accepting responsibility towards keeping the place in order and not stealing or destroying.

Vacations: Lou and Anh Quy have taken off together for an in-country vacation and Roger was scheduled to head for Macao tomorrow but since Clark K hasn't shown up here with his passport, it looks like poor Rog isn't going anywhere yet.

NFL schedule of activities: They aren't over working these days but most nights bring an attack of minor to moderate size somewhere in the city. The military compounds have been hit rather frequently. Nothing too dangerous in our area this week but sleep sure as heck ~~has~~ has been a hard item to get ahold of!! Wonder if the armies have ever considered putting mufflers on their weapons...

Patient load scaring: Hostel, hostel, where fore art thou!!! The hospital itself is overflowing. Tam Tru has em stacked to the ceilings...The last five amputees to come in have been set up on the porch of QRC despite the administrative rules of the hospital forbidding it. Its either there or in the middle of Phan Boi Chau...That blasted radio announcement is

still "bearing fruit"...The army surg. hospital at Chu Lai is sending em down in multiples and then we are beginning to get the ones fresh from the first days of the new offensive. Joe and Roger have some 80 legs in process right now and I think they said that 40 of those came in during the first 12 days of this current month. They are swamped! My side of QRC is no better...Daily average is creeping up close to 25 people a day and we have reached the point of having to turn a few away. Awaiting list is probably the next step unless this sudden onslaught abates...Not sure what to attribute it to other than the radio spot but I have the feeling that "doors have been opened" and this increasing flow of patients will continue as long as they are able to get in to us.

Muff said: At least for this time. Be assured that the fighting has abated in intensity here although not stopped...Don't worry, nhé? Being busy is the best medicine we've got and theres ~~plenty~~ plenty of that.

My love to each and every one of you...

*Dot*