

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

To: Robert Metz, Dick & Cynthia Johnson, John & Laurama Pixton, Olive Rayne,
Margaret Roberts, Martha Fort, Dave & Mary Stickney, Sallie Squires,
Chris and Terry Chacos, Kees & Katie Willink, Paul & Ginny
Lappala, Jack & Jill Richards Date: March 27, 1969

From: Roger Fredrickson

Subject:

Dot Weller's Newsletter, SV-P-36, March 18, 1969

cc: Lady Borton
Charles Read
Russ Tuttle
Tom Elkinton
Corinne Johnson
Dot Weller
Carroll Collings

The most recent newsletter from Dot Weller dated March 18, 1969 arrived on March 24th and I am forwarding it on to you. The news of Co Xuan Lan's improving situation is greatly encouraging to hear. Her daughter, Co Thu Le came into 160 North Fifteenth Street this afternoon escorted by Keith Brinton. She is certainly a most charming young lady and was as curious about our Western attire as we were about her Vietnamese manner of dress. One concession to the West: she wore bows on her braids!

Jon Yager, a member of the Algeria team also is in Philadelphia for Biafran orientation, as he is going to transfer to the Quaker-Mennonite Service project in Abiriba, Biafra later in May.

KEITH SINGING PRAISES OF
SNOW ~~STAIRS~~ SLOPES OF
VERMONT — /

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WARM REGARDS /

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18 March 1969

11:30 pm

SV-P #36

MAR 24 1969

Dear Philly Folk:

Been sitting here staring blankly at this typewriter for at least 15 minutes now. Not like me, really. There must be something to say. Grin.... Sure I sat down here for some purpose. More than anything else, I want to get a letter off to you to reassure you rather than transfer any outstanding information....

Poor Jud is daid: Not only Jud has succumbed to the perils of life but so has our nutty pet, Charlotte. She breathed her last on a chair in the office and left 3 pitiful lil orphans and 3,645 fleas; all of which are now residing in Carroll's hairy chest! (Or so he says) Don't know what happened to her. Could have been distemper, poison or any number of other fatal things. For one horrible moment I thought maybe we had been responsible for doing her in as we had dusted her and her 3 flea ridden kittens with some kind of powder a bit before but she apparently had been sick before that. Survived all that war just to die of some disease. Tsk... Well, shes better off at that. Since Jill left, life just hasn't been the same for Charlotte. Rick, Marge and I spent a good part of two days trying to get the fleas off the kittens so we could give them away. Now that they are clean and flealess.... They still don't look like much..Grij..But two are gone (one with Ba Nuoi and one to VNCS.) and the last one is waiting to go home with Xuan Lan. Once it gets its "tail out the gate", there will be NO MORE pets around here if I have anything to say about it!! (Grump)

Medical Bulletin on Xuan Lan: The news is good..She is much, much better..Going to and from the bathroom on her own and coming over to the main house to take her meals with us. Shes a little weak generally and some dizziness remains but only when she gets up from a reclining position. Marge has told her she can return to her own home tomorrow if she has no headaches or dizziness. (With that sort of ultimatum in mind, I'm sure Chi Lan won't think of having any such symptoms tomorrow. Grin...) She wants to try staying in her home during the day and going to Ong Lai's home at night. It will be awhile yet before Marge will let her go back to work, however,...

Military situation: Currently very quiet in this immediate area. Quang Ngai is getting a much needed respite from the fighting. The last big move the NFL/NVA made was in the area of La Ha, about 4 miles from here. That was early last week sometime. Other than that there are the usual rattles and bangs of distant battles and of nervous soldiers shooting at dogs and shadows.

Wanderer: Roger finally got away on his vacation Saturday after much delay and confusion. Seems his passport was in Saigon with Clark and Roger was in Quang Ngai....Roger had planned to go out to Hong Kong thru Da Nang but couldn't do that without the passport...All kinds of confusion led to his changing his mind about vacation plans despite the fact that his passport arrived at the last possible moment. He headed toward Saigon, planning on going on to Singapore and then he intended to set out with pack on back tramping the hills and dales of Malaysia. The family of a good friend of his lives there and he will try to find them.

Renovation of Prosthetic Shop: Things are changing so fast over there that each time I walk in, I think I am lost! Joe is pouring a tremendous amount of hours and effort into that job and enjoying every minute of it. He has torn down the wall between the old office area and what was the machinearea and opened up the largest portion of the room. The old wire store room has been changed into the power machine room and I think he is installing some kind of blower system to draw out all the dust, etc...The wall at the opposite end of the shop (where the old physical therapy "whirlpools" used to be) has been knocked down and now opens into an enlarged store room where Sdn holds court each day and issues tools and supplies to the boys. Then there is the brand new store room right behind that with access only from the first store room. (Thats the one that came a sandbag away from being blown to smithereins a week or two back when a shell landed on the roof!) New and additional work benches are being built, new parallel bars, new wiring for the heavy machines...etc...Joe is getting so carried away with knocking down walls, every time he comes near my dept. with a sledge in his hand, I age ten years! Heaven help the NFL (or ARVN) if they so much as dislodge one stone of Joe's shop after he finishes! Grin.... Hes not a man to be trifled with, e' isn't.

Try, try, and try again: I have once again hired a fellow to help me with the chores about the

P.T. dept. and with any luck at all, he will start with us tomorrow morning. This is really quite a fellow and I have high hopes he is going to be a real "member" of the team. His story is an interesting one.....

His wife, Chi Được (Phan Thi Được), is a patient of mine and I think I have mentioned her before briefly in some of my letters. They are from Binh Són area, have two young sons (11& 6 approx.) and he had no work prior to his wife's injury other than sea fishing for a few spare dongs here and there. She is about 27, he in his early 30s somewhere. One morning while she was walking to the local market with a number of other women, a government mine was triggered killing 13 and wounding 22. From the number of casualties it sounds more like they stumbled into a series of mines or booby traps. Chi Được was flown to Chu Lai with both legs gone (one above the knee and one below) and ~~1~~ thumb gone from the right hand. She had a piece of metal penetrating the pericardium, the right humerus and right femur had compound fractures. And as if all that weren't enough, she had developed a large abcess in the left thigh by the time we received her as a patient at QRC. She was pregnant when injured but miraculously, the baby survived and is due to be born somewhere in the next month and a half or so. The remaining fingers on the right hand were frozen in a claw position and useless when we started with her but now they are showing fair progress. Joe has started to construct an artificial thumb for her while I try to restore enough motion in the fingers to oppose the thumb when it is finished. This should give her a relatively functional hand on the right. She had severely limited range of motion in all the joints of the right extremity but by now, other than the fingers, the joints are near normal and the strength is returning to the muscles. Despite her progress with us, she faces a long term of rehabilitation plus having a very difficult pregnancy to complicate things. The humerus is healed and no longer a problem. The femur has healed but at a 35 degree angle which makes it impossible for Joe to construct a decent leg for it. The left leg is refusing to heal on the distal end due to bad scarring primarily. She is going to have to return to Chu Lai sometime after the baby is born for further surgery on both legs and possibly the middle two fingers of her hand. A rough guess would make it six months at the least before she is ready to go home. She is a pitiful study in both stoicism and depression. A good looking girl, a loving mother and wife....and she knows full well that although she may walk again and be able to take care of her immediate needs, she is never going to be the helpmate or wife she was before to her husband. She knows that she will need help in many ways in caring for her children. In this Vietnamese society, she feels she is going to be a burden to her family....And, she is right. But she has one advantage that she fortunately doesn't overlook and that is an utterly practical and devoted husband, Lê Triêm. The two sons are still living in Binh Són with Chi Được's mother. Được and Triêm's house burned down subsequent to her injuries so now they have nothing to call their own but a small boat. When we first talked to Triêm, he had planned on taking his wife back to Binh Són to live on the boat....Its hard to imagine her living under such conditions!

Triêm has been at her side here ever since she was transferred down from Chi Lai and he has constantly worked at helping out in the hospital in once place or another. As he puts it, he wants to pay in some way for the care she is getting. He feels very greatful for any attentions to her and feels obligated to contribute something in return. One day not long ago, he sold a bag of bulgar he had received from the welfare office and the next thing I knew he was trying to give me the money for Xa Hôi Quaker....Saying he wanted us to use it to help others as we had helped Chi Được. Triêm is one of the few people I've seen at the hospital be decent to Việt Cong prisoners or to the monteguards. He has a truly compassionate spirit that encompasses more than his immediate sphere of activity or involvement. Several times he has come over to the department on a Saturday afternoon and helped me in cleaning up. While he is waiting around the department for Chi Được to finish her exercises, he sits quietly making nylon fish nets or encouraging the rest of the patients ^{and} reinforces what I have been telling them to do. He will see things to be done that he has seen me do before and will get up and do them....

I originally wanted an amputee for the job and still do but I've given it a lot of thought. I think any job with QRC involves more than just finding an amputee. To hire a man or woman solely because they have lost an arm or leg is doing them an injustice. If I could have found an amputee with the other attributes that Triêm seems to have, of course, I would have selected the amputee. Seemingly, Triêm has many of the things we are looking for...Understanding thru first hand experience with the handicapped, compassion, patience, ambition, and selflessness. I'm sure he has some faults (grin) somewhere and I may come across them

soon enough but right now he looks like the best thing we've seen on the horizon for quite awhile. And if any family ever deserved an opportunity...its this one. His plans are to move his family down here from Binh Sơn and remain in Quang Ngai.

Receptionist: Still no one to relieve Mr. Bich and Eric who are doubling and tripling in brass to cover this positon as well as Keith's duties. Have some possibilities, however. Both lovely Cô-s, much to Joe's delight. I'm not so sure what that would ~~do~~ ^{do} to the rate of production in the prosthetic shop, however,...Again, we'd like an amputee for this job but we are finding that amputees with the skills necessary for the job ~~and~~ rare birds.... Its that old familiar story of, do you hire the man or try to fill the job description....

CDCC: Cô Tra filling in ably for Xuân Lan in her absence altho I'm sure they feel the loss of Chị Lan's presence very much. Quite a number of kidlets there now...Think the last nose count was 85.

Pat and Earl Martin: Old timer VNCers leaving Vietnam on Monday next. We will have them over for a get together on Friday to bid them bon voyage...We are really going to miss those two people here in Quang Ngai. They don't seem to know if they are going to be replaced or not.

Slides: Corinne or Roger...Have the slides of the burned out MILPHAP warehouse been sent to my Mother yet? Would hate to see those get lost.

Good night all: Nuff said..Not really any news, was there? But wanted you to know we are still here and in good shape...Our one casualty (Xuân Lan) mending rapidly and business going on as usual..Nhu' thường..... Take care...See you in a week or so...

Love,

Dot