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160 N. 15th STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19102

American Friends Service Committee
160 N. 15th Street
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Here are two recent letters from Dot, which she asked us to pass on to you.

Martin Teitel

Martin Teitel
Assistant to the Director
Overseas Refugee Program

19 October 1969.

Dear Philly Folk,

Military situation: Very quiet. Almost nothing going on that we know of.

The hospital is very low in census at the moment; partly due to the lack of fighting in the area and partly due to the fact that the "powers-that-be" seem to be putting the screws on Dr. Long to shape up or ship out. Some of his methods of shaping up leave much to be desired but the place is much cleaner and neater.

Hospital clean up campaign. There has been a big improvement in cleanliness in both grounds and wards over the last month.

Most of the wards are being (or have been) painted, the beds have sprouted relatively clean sheets and for the most part, there is only one patient to a bed. There seem to be more nurses on duty and we are told that there is 24 hour nursing care now on the main wards. However, we had one incident last week that makes us doubt the latter fact. The old provisional ward (Tam Tru or Katie's ward) has been turned into a medical ward for prison patients. The surgical ward (Hau Mo) has been moved upstairs thereby displacing a great many of our amputee patients who were there before. They have been either sent to our new temporary hostel, to one of the outer wards (such as NTB, NTG, NTD), or just plain kicked out and told to go home. Where Hau Mo was is now the post-operative recovery ward. The old post-op ward is closed due to architectural difficulties. One of Dr. Long's more bizarre reasons for kicking patients out seems to be that if the patient is up and around all day, although not finished with his rehabilitation, he feels that the empty bed is hard to explain to visiting firemen and looks "messy". For this reason some of our more handicapped people have been ousted from their beds. Chi Tu, a paraplegic, was one and Chi Duoc, a double amputee was another. But they are now in our own temporary hostel.

Just this past week we have begun to have the problem of large numbers of our patients being told to leave their wards and they had no place to go again. Our newprovisional hostel will only take 25 with reasonable comfort and one night last week it had 40. Once again we have patients sleeping on QRC porch. At last count I think it was 7 patients sleeping there. Yesterday afternoon Mr. Bich and I talked to Dr. Long about this recurring problem and I think it has been resolved to everyone's satisfaction. That's the trouble with "problems" around here; they don't seem to stay settled for long. Dr. Long

promised us that the new QRC provisional hostel was for our patients only (once last week we found the nurses were sending their long term patients over there just to get rid of them) and that he would speak again to the nurses about using our hostel as a respository for unwanted patients at times of inspections. He further said that he didn't like the idea of patients sleeping on our porch as it made things dirty and didn't look good. We heartily agreed with him and said that if we had a choice they wouldn't be there. He accepted this and said that since we were trying so hard to help him, he would try to find another building for us to use for our patients until the hostel is finished. I suspect that if he does this, it will be one of the old plague wards which will be very adequate and useful to us.

Food poisoning vs Beri-beri: Last week three patients died abruptly on NTA ward. One of them was one of our amputees who had been very healthy as far as we knew just the afternoon before. He had had a very bad stump and Eryl had arranged for him to have surgery but he died before Dr. Francois could get to it. The neighboring patients said that the three people got sick very suddenly and their abdomens swelled up rapidly. They said that they searched all over for a nurse or doctor to help but could find no one. This was at night. To my knowledge it has not been decided if these people died of Beri-beri or food poisoning. There was some talk of both diagnoses. If it was food poisoning, it must have been from some food that they bought outside the hospital gate as the illness was limited to those few patients.

Physical Therapy Aide Class: We received your cable confirming your agreement to proceed with the class just a few days after we had actually started. Classes started on last Monday for the three students and the first day went off exceptionally well. I muddled my way thru about 20 minutes of opening remarks in Vietnamese and following that, Mr. Bich gave an enthusiastic speech about Quaker Service, its history and services; philosophies and principles, etc.. You should hire him for your public relations department. If he said once that Quakers don't discriminate, he must have said it a half dozen times.

I had invited Dr. Khai (Medicin Chef) to come to the classroom at 11 am to greet the students and talk to them a bit but he was so unenthusiastic when I asked, that I never thought he would do it. But at 11 am sharp, he walked in the door. He sat and listened for awhile and when I introduced him to the students, they snapped to attention like a platoon of Green Berets. Guess the title of Medicin Chef carries a lot of prestige around here. Had another example of that when I gave the girls a short quiz last Friday. I asked who had responsibility for writing a prescription for physical therapy (hoping they would answer, the doctor) and the answer I got from them was a bit more specific..Dr. Khai. He is so shy and retiring that the imagine doesn't fit him and I found myself embarrassed for him when the girls all stood up and contemplated their toe-nails while he was talking. He made a few remarks.. Indicated that the girls were very fortunate to be receiving such new and progressive training and that they should make the most of it, so that later on they could contribute to the efficiency of the province hospital.

Following that the students were formally presented with their name tags and Quaker patches. We made a big production out of it as seems to be expected here and everyone was impressed. An awesome beginning! Mr Ry took the students on a tour of QRC and saw that they were introduced to all the staff and then they

Philly Folk letter - page 3

went with Mr. Bich to be oriented to the hospital grounds. This past Friday, they had the opportunity to visit the CDCC with Mr. Ry and Lady.

They helped decide their own uniforms and they look very neat; and different from the hospital nursing students, something I was very desirous of. They are wearing black quans, white over blouses with the Quaker patch on the sleeve. Quite in keeping with Quaker simplicity, wouldn't you say?

Mr. Ry has been a very pleasant surprise over the past week. The change in his attitude and behavior (always good) has been phenomenal. He comes to work with his shirt tail in and his hair slicked back. His mustache has come off tho one can't predict for how long. He is serious and dignified and he hasn't once put his feet up on the medicine cabinet to cut his toenails. He very definitely feels an elevation in his status and is playing the part to the hilt. He is doing a beautiful job as "assistant professor." As a result, the students have respect for him and I doubt that he will ever have any trouble in commanding their attention. I took the first four hours of lecture and Mr. Ry sat in and deftly supervised. He would watch the students as they listened to my fractured Vietnamese and if they really looked puzzled, he would silence me with a delicate wave of the hand and re-explain to the students in terms they understood. Then he would nod to me discreetly and I would continue. He was very much in command of the situation. Since then he has been teaching most of the classes and I am very much impressed by the job he is doing. He has the lesson plans in his hands early and we go over it to make sure he understands everything included; from then on he is in charge. So far we have been covering subjects that he already had and understands. Later when we get into things he isn't so far ahead on, I may have to do more of the teaching but in every area I am going to try to let him do the teaching, if possible.

Bill and Eryl are well on the way to finding a solution to the gait training need for the amputees and as soon as the system is under way, I will detail it to you. For the most part now, they are in charge of the main department and need little advice from me. They have adapted very quickly. I spend my time partially in supervising and teaching the students and partly here at the house trying to keep a couple of lesson plans ahead of them.

Other changes: The children's parallel bars have been torn out and the three new treatment tables are in use. A new employee has been added to the QRC to keep the grounds and buildings clean. His help has made a big difference around the place. In fact, we have had to curb his enthusiasm a bit when it came to conscientiously hoeing up all the grass we fought so hard to grow.

Team. All healthy as new born colts on the Vietnamese diet..Most went to Chu Lai to enjoy a rare warm autumn day swimming in the sea today. Keith still in Hong Kong as far as we know and Eric still off on vacation. Have Dick Berliner and Jerry Liles of COR and John Clark of the British medical team in Saigon with us tonight visiting.

George Gaines, postscript: Roger picked up an interesting bit of information last night and I pass it on altho I cannot vouch for its authenticity. The story is that the night that the NFL blew up George's house, they asked him to go with them as a prisoner several times. George

apparently refused to go and after a conference, the NFL troops decided they had no choice but to kill him. If true, it takes the incident out of the intentional assassination category.

Weather. Rains have dried up this week and we have had three successive days of clear and hot weather. Beginning to wish it would rain a bit more. Some feel that this dry spell means that the flood threat for the year is over. Hard to tell, we will see.

Mien Phi. Sorry to report his eye is not better and it looks like we have a half blind pup on our hands. However, it seems to bother him none at all. He is fat and healthy and normally fractious.

Xuan Lan: Has generously agreed to come help me with my lesson plan translation two nights a week since we lost the services of Duong who has decided that the job is too much for him on top of a full day's work. I certainly don't blame him. She will come for dinner and was planning on spending the nights here on those two occasions but now that Tuy Hanh has gone back to school in Saigon, I'm not sure she will want to stay all night. She has been here once already and she is the perfect person to help with these lesson plans as she is familiar with all the medical jargon, she is a superior teacher and she speaks so clearly, that even I can understand here.

Mail. Coming thru very sporadically and a number of us have had letters from our people indicating that much of our mail is slow in getting out. Don't know what the hang-up is but we are getting to feel very deprived around here without the usually good mail service. Just wait til we lose our APO privileges when the army pulls out. Then will we howl...

25 October 1969

This has been another week of crises, minor and not so minor, but we seemed to have weathered the onslaught and I will try to recount most of them for you here.

Uncle Thieu needs you! While the military fighting seems to have been slight in our immediate area this week, there has been a new kind of "operation" sweeping the province. Apparently the Vietnamization of the war goes badly as we had a unit of military police move into Quang Ngai the first of this week...Their objective: To hunt down all the draft-dodging lads of military age in the area. The "telegrapeline" ran a little ahead of the Saigon headhunters and there were a few dozen hours of desperate scrambling to find reliable hiding spots, valid papers and fresh excuses. Panic was obvious among our boys and even "old man" Ry who is married and safely burdened with 8 chilluns. The day we heard of the arrival of the MPs, we offered to let any of the boys who wanted to, to sleep at our place. However, none of them took us up on it. As a result, the next morning we were missing two. Du (a prosthetic trainee) and Cu (our new plastics man who was just recently released from prison). It was reported earlier that Suong had also been picked up but that turned out to be a wild rumor. Much to our relief, as he was on the threshold of a marriage and we would have hated to see anything disrupt that. It seems

like such a more worthwhile endeavor than shooting other people.

Lou and Roger did yeoman duty, with worried and persistent mother of Du spurring them on, and have managed to secure the release of Du. Cu was freed the following day, presumably as he was an ex-prisoner and probably too old and scrawny to come up to ARVN "standards". Lou had taken Cu to his home the night before he was arrested and had promised to come get him the next morning to escort him through the expected roadblocks. Lou did go after him bright and early but even so the MPs beat him to the door. As Cu walked up the path to meet Lou, the headhunters moved in. Cu hesitated as Lou tried to talk him out of trouble but when the MP nearest offered to bash Cu's head in if he didn't move, Lou wisely counseled him to go with the gentlemen. The first attempts at freeing Du ended in failure but later Roger and Lou met with Col. Khien (Province Chief) who freely gave permission to release Du and any other of our boys who might find their heads in the noose. I'll leave the details of the meeting with Khien to Lou to describe. Du, at the moment, is in the hospital suffering from some disease contracted by being caught in a "draft". Or did he say wind? Anyway that is Du's diagnosis and he is not gravely ill. So, as far as I know, this 25th day of October 1969 at 8:06, all of our employees and trainees safe at home. But I wouldn't count on such a stable situation for long. Such is not to be had around here. We have heard (strictly rumor and we have no confirmation) that the "Operation Thieu needs you" has resulted in the capture of 235 young men in Quang Ngai. I suppose by tonight they are wearing the patch of the ARVN's finest the 2nd Battalion (or whatever size unit they have here.) We also have heard that the group of MPs have moved on. Perhaps to more fertile grounds.

Political tug-o-war drains patient's larder: We have become so used to Mr. Hao's (hosp. administrator) harrassment that most of us paid no attention earlier this week when we received a message that the hospital had no more funds for feeding the patients. We greeted the news that Thursday would be last day any of the patients got food with a shrug and an "Oh sure!" When the axe fell this morning, we were totally unprepared but after a busy afternoon of decision making and talking with Dr. Long (The hospital chief), I think things are clearer and we at least know what we are going to do tomorrow. This new edict affects all the patients in the hospital, not just ours. Today was the last day any of the patients will receive food from the hospital kitchen. As soon as Eryl brought us this word this morning, Lou and I sought out Dr. Long and had a pleasant talk with he and Dr. Khai (medicin Chef) who just happened to be making rounds with him. He told us that usually the hospital has a 3 million piastre rotating fund to work with. Lou figured out that this meant when 1 million of that was gone, then applications were made to The Ministry of Health in Saigon for replacement. While the maddeningly slow wheels of bureaucracy were grinding, they still had 2 million to run on. Dr. Long said (and I quote as closely as I can) that the funds were not understood and therefore mismanaged for the former medicin chef (Dr. Tuan) and the present hospital administrator (Mr. Hao) and were gone. Drs. Long and Khai have been working on this for better than a month now with no productive response from the Ministry of Health in Saigon. Dr. Long went down for a consultation and couln't even get an appointment with the Chief of M of H. Someone told Dr. Long that when they can account for the missing 3 million piastres, they will get some more. Dr. Long has already borroed 8 thousand piastres on two occasions from local agencies but they refuse to lend more unless he can guarantee them a return of the funds. This he doesn't seem to be able to do. We asked him what they were going to do to get food for the patients and he laughed

and shrugged. We asked what suggestions he might have to assist us in feeding our patients and he had none. We asked him if it would put him in a difficult spot or create problems with the other patients if we went ahead and saw that our people were fed. He said absolutely not and he thanked us for doing it. He also gave permission for our patients to cook in the hospital kitchen since they (the hosp.) would not be using it. With this info we withdrew to the house for a team debate on the issue. Most of us felt that some effort should be made (by us) to find out if there was any other agency in town that could help the hospital over its feeding crises. If so then we would refer them to Drs. Long and Khai. Feeding our own people wasn't an unsurmountable problem but we strongly felt an obligation to do something for all of the patients. However, reason prevailed, and we decided to approach Dr. Long again and tell him what we had decided to do about our own people and then ask him if there was any way we could help him; perhaps by talking to the Red Cross, Refugee team or MILPHAP. After lunch Lou and I once again tracked him down. This time at his office downtown (where we found him enjoying a siesta in a back room with a magazine propped up in his hands. He was very cordial and this time gave us more of the story since we were unintentionally forcing the issue with him. He was very appreciative of our desire to help him but he said that they specifically did not want any help. He stated that he had enough money to feed the patients (We are not clear whether he meant he had enough money or whether the hospital did) but if Quang Ngai kept solving this problem without the Ministry of Health's help, they would never get around to granting more funds to Quang Ngai hospital. So this sudden stoppage of food to the patients is a political armtwist to the sluggards in the ivory towers of Saigon's Ministry of Health. A bit hard on some of the patients, I'd say, but probably will be more effective than anything else that could be done. Such is political life in Vietnam. Lou and I came away very impressed with Dr. Long and in agreement that he was doing the best he could with a bad situation.

Free to concentrate on our own patients...We had Mr. Bich make up a list of patients who have no money or family to provide nourishment for them. It came to 24 or 25 patients. Starting tomorrow morning, we will give each of those patients enough rice for one day and 20 piastres to buy accessories such as nuoc man, fish, etc...It hasn't yet been decided if they will find ways to cook their own rice or whether we will appoint someone to cook it collectively in the hospital kitchen. We will keep track of the money spent in feeding our patients and ultimately bill it to the hospital. Whether we ever get it or not is another matter but we feel we should make the effort. Dr. Khai felt they would have some kind of a solution in 10 days or two weeks. If it goes on longer than that we feel we can easily get bags of rice from the refugee office or elsewhere. Dr. Long has said that he will give us a paper so that we could buy rice from government sources where it would be cheaper than on the market. So much for that crisis....

A refugee by any other name. Is still a refugee...Lady reported the new edict that will eliminate all refugees in Quang Ngai overnight. Like magic...Presto...Saigon and US governments have solved the refugee problem. Could you call that bureaucratic genocide? Anyway, we were still chuckling over this latest Thieu achievement when we got word that an operation was underway near here and several villages were being evacuated. Think the figures were that there were now 400 and some new refugees (displaced persons, nomads, fellow travelers?) created just in the past day or so. We don't really have any details on these latest operations for you but if we get any information, will pass it on to you. A good question for debate these days is, "When does a refugee stop being a refugee?"...

Philly Folk letter - page 7

Troop movements: Have had several letters from Keith so we know what his plans are. Lucky bum! Eric still on vacation but we are beginning to meet planes, not knowing exactly when he and the Henkels might be coming up. Otherwise, everyone is here on deck.

Odds and items. The P.T. course seems to be going well. The girls are enthusiastic, cheerful and at least they are in no danger of arrest. (I don't think!)...Will soon send you another packet of lesson plans to keep you up to date.

Weather dry and hot.. Nights are relatively quiet...Team all well...Hostel rising from its foundations and comes as rather a shock as you walk out the back door of QRC.. Its been in the planning stages for so long that to actually see it take shape, is really cheering. Looks good. Walls straight and strong, doors nice and wide, lots of windows. Can hardly wait. Alls well with the CDCC.. Zuan Lan giving great service as my mentor in lesson plans..Think we should strike a medal for her.

Hope all is well at home. Anxious to hear more of the moratorium of the 15th.

Sincerely,

Dot..(signed)