

Công-Tác Xã-Hội Quaker Tại Việt-Nam



QUAKER SERVICE - VIETNAM

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QUANG NGAI

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Dear Philly Folk:

Bet you don't know what tomorrow is.....Sunday? Yes, but..... Easter Sunday? Yeah, but you don't..... Land to the Tiller Day? No, ya goof.. That was day before yesterday... A birthday? Yeah, but.....Something special? RIGHT.....

A Weddening Day (sic): Poor ole Easter Sunday has been completely upstaged by Bob and Marge's wedding. At least in the minds of those of us out here, it has. We are envisionaging (?) in minutest detail the last minute agonies, frustrations and comic opera...and enjoying it very much. Grin.... Hope the team cable arrived in time and in readable form. Wedding gift follows..Wouldn't you know that we'd come up with something so unique (shall we say weird?) that we couldn't possibly have it to the newlyweds in time. Well, we've only had since last September! In all seriousness, we all regret not being able to sit in on this big event. But at least we had the dam hoi out here. We'll be thinking of you, Bob and Marge, and wishing you all the best luck in the world for a very happy and satisfying future together.

Speaking of weddings:No, guess I'd better not. Later... Grin.

Medical bulletin: In glancing over the last Philly Folk letter, I see there were a lot of people ailing or in the process of recovering. All at the moment are well...Bev is feeling like her old self tho some pounds lighter; for which shes not complaining...There has been no solid evidence that Anh Ry's wife (Chi Dai) tumor was malignant tho it has been equally impossible to prove it otherwise. Nothing to do but wait and see what happens. The last time I saw her, she was 'bone-thin' and looked very tired. Ry, himself, is much better. Would you believe that he presented himself back at work two weeks to the day after major abdominal surgery in Chu Lai? They did a vagotomy and a pylorectomy (did I spell those right, Bac-Si Mai?) on him. Since the 16th of this month he has been working just in the mornings and teaching, translating materials or studying only. In the afternoons he was supposed to go home and work at resting. What he actually did, I don't know. Grin...At any rate he is feeling a lot better since the surgery and is gradually learning what he can eat and how much at any given time. Monday, he leaves for Saigon where he will be working at NRI for the months of April and May with Judy Danielson. I just hope the experience is worthwhile for him. He is sort of the advance man for us and the impressions he comes back with will help us decide if we want to do the same thing with our girls when they finish their years course here. I'm really going to feel his absence.

Nha Trọ Quaker: The Quaker dorm is essentially finished! Therce LAWD cheers for Lou and crew please! Its a beaut. The shutters are made of reddish brown wood and will be left a natural color. Much nicer looking than the horrible blues and greens around the other buildings. Its really quite a place. Two 20 bed wings, each with two toilets and two showers. The nursing office is bigger than we expected with plenty of room to house the new social workers desk as well as the nurses. Big windows (lovely view out the back of sunsets), wide veranda with sturdy railing so the patients can walk or use wheelchairs in safety. Two bunkers at each end of the wings....Patients have metal cots, sleeping mats, mosquito nets and blankets...Soon won't need the latter... Lou is even putting in a fish

pond in front. Honest! Now, if we can just convince the patients that it isn't a trial, we are in business. Grin... At the moment, Mr. Bich is in charge of the hostel-dorm in addition to his other thousand and one jobs. But that will soon change as....

We gotta nurse: Just today, Eric and Mr. Bich chose a male nurse from a large group (11?) applicants. The name is Vo Dinh Phi and he will be starting with us on Monday next. He apparently has part of one hand missing, comes from Mr. Ry's refugee camp (Tu Lo) and has impressed Mr. Bich. Haven't yet met him. More details on him in next letter. The process of selecting the nurse was involved and not without its traumas. Grin....Those of you who have been involved in hiring over here will understand. The announcement that the Quakers were looking for a nurse, went out and the applicants began to flood in. Mr. Bich wrote up a written exam (mostly essay questions) which was given to the applicants a few days ago. As you would expect, many of the applicants were "friends" of our employees or "friends of friends" and the usual pressures were brought to bear! Even before the test was given, Mr. Bich told of one bribe already offered him for extra consideration for the job. Not more than an hour after the exams were completed, a complaint had been registered with Roger that Mr. Bich had given the test answers to one of the male applicants. (Answers to essay questions?) That story was all over the QRC in 10 seconds flat and such a hulabaloo! It got so involved and complicated and disgusting, it was hard not to either laugh at it or let yourself get angry and tell them all to go jump in the river. But that's just the way things are done over here. Pressures for favoritism, lying, distortion of truth, bribing...All part of the dog eat dog struggle for jobs and salary. Sigh....Fortunately, the man that was selected was not the one that was accused of having the test answers ahead of time.

Also gotta social worker...sort of: Since I last wrote, we have hired a social worker. A woman somewhere in her 40s. Married to a teacher who is now in the army and has some kids but how many escapes me right now. You really don't want to know, do you? Grin...Her name is Ba Ty and I am sorry to say, Mr. Bich is not impressed. In his words, she is "weak". Meaning, I presume, that she is not forceful enough or is not showing initiative. I see very little of her and none of that is when she is at work so I have no basis to judge from. She is still in her trial period so she might not be retained at the end of that period. Recruiters are still out for a better one.

Dr. Long's Botanical Gardens: I don't know how his patients are doing but you should see his flowers grow! In old Boston Compound, we now have the loveliest marigolds, dahlias and unknowns that you'd ever want to see. Very nice to look at from the QRC.

The paraplegic ward: Sigh....This next topic not guaranteed to make Marge or Sister Johanna happy. Things are rapidly falling apart apparently. Sister J. hadn't been out of Quang Ngai 10 hours before Ba Minh (head nurse) had issued the edict that "now that all the paras have wheelchairs, they can go home". By the time we had pulled Bill and Eryl down off the ceiling over that one, Ba Minh had gone one further and decided....That if they can't go home they can go over to the Quaker hostel-dorm. Growl.... I'm not quite sure how Bill and Eryl handled it but neither threat was carried out. The patients are still on the paraplegic ward. But the next thing that was done, was that on a Friday, all the catheters were pulled out of the patients. And with a weekend coming up, no one around to check for bladder retention, etc.... Bill got ahold of this one like a bone with a dog....Went and asked head nurse (No longer Huong, Marge...) why no catheters? Nurse replies, "No catheters in hospital". Bill goes to Pharmacy and asks, "Got catheters?". Reply is "Phai, got lots".... Bill returns to para ward and tells, "Pharmacy got lots". Nurse says no...And shows Bill her order blank which was marked with "no got"....Bill goes back to pharmacy and asks, "Sure you got?" Answer was still affirmative and this time Bill got a written and signed statement to the fact which he gave to the head nurse. She still insists they have had no luck getting them. Somewhere we got the story that the catheters were being pilfered from the pharmacy and sold on the market downtown. Don't even know where that rumor came from! Bill and Eryl felt this might be just another piece of harassment to get rid of the paras. I don't know! The paras are not being bathed and are seldom getting decubiti dressed. Care definitely going down hill. Sad....

Last of the mohicans: Chi Xuan went first, then much later Chi Tu. Then just a week after Chi Tu, went Chi Duoc. And she didn't go gracefully! Grin...Of course, she had been here longer than either of the other two and had the additional handicap of having her husband (Triem) work for us. In the process she has become very spoiled and domineering with Triem. She also had become very adept at working us, one against the other, to get her own way. In the past month or so we had gotten together and denied her this privilege. She was told she could not take home sheets, mattress, bed pan and a lot of other little items that we have (and need) in the center and that sent her into a good pout. At one point in her last week, she sent us word (deviously and via the grapevine) that if we didn't give in to her on a lot of these points of negotiation, she was going home to Binh Son and take Triem with her. Well, of late we haven't been too satisfied with Triem's work and would not have wept salt tears if he had quit. So (also via the devious grapevine) we sent she and Triem our blessings and a fond farewell if that was what they wanted. We've learned to play the game the Vietnamese way! As we were fairly sure, she was bluffing and we heard no more about his quitting. They found a comparatively nice house right behind the CORDS warehouse...Cement floors, tile roof and in a neat cluster of homes. I haven't seen it yet so can't give you too good a description. Will later. Want to visit her tomorrow.

Visited Chi Xuan a week or so ago and she is well. Putting on a good bit of weight but still able to get into her legs. She says she is walking every day and she says she is still carrying on a small selling business from her house. I'll have to see it before I believe it very strongly. When Chi Xuan tells me good morning, I wonder if she is telling the truth. Grin...Gettin cynical aren't I?

My three lovely stus: Are doing fine, thank you. Tuyet about as pregnant as one can get. It looks terrifying and irreversible! They are managing to digest some pretty complicated material these days. Blood circulation, the respiratory system.....You know, when I was in college I was appalled when the teachers told us we should put in four hours of study at home for every hour of class time. "Not likely, Teach!" But I have just sat down and figured out that it is taking me ~~14~~ hours here at this ~~self~~ ~~self~~ desk to prepare an hour lecture for the gurus!! I'm not sure what the message is therein but what ever it is, I don't think I like it!

Em Dau has gone...: Finally! Out of the blue and unannounced as before; papa showed up and said he was ready to take her back to the home. "Sure you are, Dad" we tho't cynically to ourselves and fully expected to see Dau on the porch the next day. But lo and behold, he took her. Sob.... It seems that there has been made money available for her to study in Quang Ngai so she may come back at a later date for that purpose. Don't see why she can't study in her home area. We miss her cheerful little face around the QRC.

Sad news: Doug Beane and his Vietnamese wife, Chi Mai, have lost their baby. The little girl was 14 months and died in Saigon of disentary (?). Fortunately we hear that Chi Mai is pregnant again. Hope all goes well for her.

Anh An: He did take the job with Asian Christian Service, half time and i understand is not liking it at all. He is serving as an interpreter for an Australian girl and An's command of English is not all that good. Poor guy. Still going to school but must make some sort of decision re the Army come this June.

GRI leaving?: Thats a new rumor to us, Marcy... Haven't heard a thing about it... Hope not; they just got here....

Country garden in England: Jack & Jill! What are you trying to do to us!? Oh the sound of those birds and bells in your backyard. Sigh.....That was a wonderful tape. You can be sure I will go home via the Richards avairy. Whats August like in England? We'll do our best to get all those messages delivered but you are right..It will be difficult. You'd never know Bich's daughter...Tall and so lovely...Grown up now and looks like a real Co tho she doesn't like us to call her anything but Em...Bich should be having his 8th youngun any day now.

And for this 28th day of March 1970....Enuf said. Love to all,

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