

NOT FOR QUOTATION WITHOUT PERMISSION. 6

SVL 152

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Quang Ngai

Dear Philly Folks:

Talk about the "week that was".....Last week was a week that never shoulda been!! Wow! We may never recover from the psychological trauma of that short period. Grin... I'm kidding now but I wasn't on Sunday...or on Monday.

Welcome fellow-travelers: Before I go any further in telling how bad it was to lose Keith and Eric, I will pause to welcome them to the "Philly Folks" crew. I'm not sure whether you have been promoted, demoted or liberated but for the moment I am sure it feels good...So, congratulations! For at least the next six months I am going to have to be darned careful of what I say in these letters..."They" know too much! But after that they are going to be out of touch and I can start exaggerating like crazy again. Grin... Just be careful what you are saying back there in Philly, fellows....

The moment of truth: Began arriving rapidly about last Thursday. The fellows and gals at the QRC put together a real gala at noon for Eric and Keith. Even purchased a fat pig...Which spent it's last night on earth in the QRC with a bunch of the prosthetic techs. there as baby sitters. There was much speech making...Mr. Bich walked off with all honors for the lengthiest and most impassioned. It sounded impressive...Wish I had known what he was talking about. Grin... About the time he began coming thru clearly, he'd switch to French. Lou anderyl took some razzing about their newly married state...Trien, with big puddles in his eyes, asked me if I was going to cry like I did when Bao-Si Mai left. Grin.... Indignantly, I replied, "I should say not...Why should I cry??" I wasn't crying, I just had a lousy cold!! Eric and Keith impressed the assembled mightily by singing two songs in Vietnamese...Front to back without forgetting very many of the words.... I didn't even know they could sing.

All that farewell taking must have been tremendously hard on the fellows. I have firmly decided that when my turn comes, I am just going to disappear one day and not return. I could never go through all that.

Saturday night we had a real swinging party at the house. Irene Johnson (Russ's wife) had come to Quang Ngai on Friday and was able to be with us as was a Dr. Carlson who works with MILPHEP in Hue. Russ Johnson never made it to Quang Ngai as he just had too many interviews in Saigon. But Irene felt it a shame to come all the way to Viet-Nam and not get up to our stamping grounds. We are very glad she did. Shes an interesting and enjoyable person. Some of us made it to bed by 2:30...Can't vouch for everyone..Had enough trouble looking out for myself.

Had to rise and shine early Sunday morning to get the mess cleaned up, as at 10 am, Kuan Lan and Ngo were having the parents of Doan and 30 some odd guests here to a sort of wedding ceremony to match the real one Thu Le and Doan were having in the States. That was a wild day.. Eric and Lou had last minute things to do and talk about, Keith was feeling a mite rocky (grin), (he wasn't alone) and the rest of us trying to get things ready for the 10 am event. Or just stay out of the way. By 11:30, we were giving the guests the bum's rush and scrambled back into our old clothes and took off for Buddha mountain. Somehow, in her usual inimitable style, Lady managed to find time to put together a picnic lunch and we spent an enjoyable 2 hours up on Pierce's point. The moment of truth was almost upon us and I found myself indescribably sad. Three thirty saw us waving a very forlorn goodbye to two of our best and "oldest" teammates. After living with people so closely for so long, its like losing a part of you when they leave. Some of us had the self control to wait til we got home to weep. Grin..... That night we slumped dejectedly and tiredly around the living room table looking like a row of toads that just lost their warts. Grin....

More trauma: Our emotional reserves were even more depleted by the end of Monday...That was the day Quy and Dieu had to "go". Lou, Roger, Lady and I guess, Pete drove them out to the induction center by the airstrip. I didna have the courage and said my goodbyes to Quy right here. Sigh....Quy was very upset and we have had letters from him already that would shred the heart of a brass monkey. Sniff. He and Dieu have been separated and it seems as tho Dieu might get to stay in Quang Ngai for his training while Quy will have to go to DaNang. To start with anyway. Whatever shall we do without Quy..! Anh Canh (our amputee receptionist) has taken Quy's place at the house and will take over the few light chores that he had. All this emotional turmoil is too much for me. Dear Peter says its cause I'm getting old...Could be..Bless his

lil' heart! Growl....

Innocent (?) tragedy: Did I tell you all about our kitty? Guess I did....We had one..... once. Honest, Jill, I had nothing to do with it! That poor kitty didn't last long and the team had 'raging' debates over whether it was accidental or 'premeditated murder'. This team is clearly divided into "cat lovers" and "dog lovers" and a few team members who could go either way. Well, ole kit was mighty small but appeared of nothing and that may have proved her downfall. "Bac-Si" ignored her completely up til the "last night" but she drove Phi out of his mind. He was morbidly fascinated by this darting lil rodent that all the team members insisted that he treat with respect. It had claws...He knew that from experience but wasn't quite sure at first if he was supposed to eat it or love it. Therein lies the great debate... Did Phi love the kitty or scheme for the day when he could do it in??? I stand on the side that says Phi is but a sea of love but he loved too strongly and not wisely. Grin.. The last week of kit's life, she and Phi played together constantly. He would take her whole head in his mouth and she would stand her ground and cuff his muzzle with claws carefully sheathed. When she got tired of the play, she would leap to high ground and rest.

Well, one night kitty went outside to play. (Her first mistake...and last) She had rarely been outside the house as yet. That afternoon I had caught Bac-Si playing with her like a loving bull moose. Where Phi had always treated her with the utmost gentleness, BS knocked her sprawling with his love pats and at one point, lay down on top of her. If I hadn't rescued her, she would have, no doubt, smothered. Grin... I remembered that Bac-Si was absolutely wild that night. I was sitting up in my room working and I could hear him thundering from one end of the yard to the other, crashing thru the bushes with Phi in hot pursuit. They were having a gay old time. I set the scene for you as we don't really know what happened that night. Neither of the dogs were talking later. In the midst of all this noise, I remembered (later) hearing a short, rather strangled squawk out of kitty. At the time, I just chuckled to myself and mused that kitty sounded as if she were in a bit of trouble. Never gave it another thought til around midnight when Eric came out of the house and found kitty lying dead and the two hounds desperately trying to get her to get up and play some more. Sniff.. Strangely, both dogs were very disconsolate for the next two days. They really were! Some of us (more charitable, level headed, cool, logical and dog-lover types) decided that poor kitty had simply been caught between the madly dashing juggernauts and got her fragile skinny neck broken. An accident, pure and simple...But the cat-lovers rose in wrath with other more sinister theories. 1) That Phi had been plotting all along to exterminate this lil' pest and this time when he took her head in his mouth, he clamped it shut and shook her like the little rat she was... Ugh.. Horrible tho't... or 2) that Bac-Si was secretly jealous since his big brother, Phi, had been paying more attention to the cat of late, and gleefully killed her. Grin...Well, we may never know. As I said in the midst of one debate..."For all we know, some outside dog may have come into the yard and done the dastardly deed."

Chi Mai: In a radical switch from the light to the serious...Marge, I guess this will be mostly for you...As you are the only one that knew Chi Mai...Early last month, she came back into the center to have new legs made. She obviously had been using the old ones a lot. She seemed happy and all indications were that she was making perhaps the best adjustment at home of all of our severely handicapped people. She got her new legs, bid us a happy goodbye and two days later, killed herself. As usual, we have gotten conflicting stories on the reasons for this but the one that seems to be most believable is that her husband (who had never been to see her while she was in the hospital) finally openly rejected her. One story says that he had, or was going to, take a new wife. It was really a shock to us....

Bill was saying this afternoon that the male quad (he was here while, you were still with us, Marge) was also talking of suicide. In fact, his wife was even talking about it as the most sensible thing. Previously, she had inquired about the possibility of Chuck's amputating both his arms and legs. Guess she felt he would be easier to care for that way. It would not surprise me a bit, if he took the same route as Chi Mai. And who could say that he might not be much better off if he did.

New P.T. Aide course: This first class is rapidly galloping to a close with me frantically trying to stay ahead of the three lovely stus. Its a real race, I'll tell ya! Keep trying to impress them that they'll still have a lot to learn as "graduate PTAs". I hope to be able to spend at least three afternoons (or mornings) a week with them in clinical supervision after

the new class starts sometime in October. Would you believe that we have already had 35 applicants for the next class and would have had a lot more if we hadn't leaked word that from now on we were going to be very selective about accepting anymore. Now, I'll interview any new applicants and on the basis of that ~~talk~~ talk, decide if its worth letting them fill out an application or not. Getting choosy aren't we? Remember how we worried about finding any applicants before? Well, those days are gone forever. Thats not to say, however, that we have 35 "cream of the crop" applicants panting at the gait. Some of them are pretty dubious prospects but out of that group, if we can but choose wisely, should be some good ones. We were just plain lucky last time. I'm not confident that we can do so well again. Grin.... There are a sizeable group of these new applicants that have already had nurses training at the Quang Ngai hospital or have had training elsewhere and worked at the QN hospital. At first, we thought these people might be the ideal choices but then upon reflection, decided they might just be the last people we would want. For one thing, some of the new PTAs are going to have the job of doing P.T. on the hospital wards and if they have already established the usual "do as little as possible, sleep as much as possible and steal as much as I can" philosophy of the typical nurse here, we are in for trouble. Think we would rather start with a bit of "raw material" even if it means harder and longer hours teaching them the things they need to know. We would like to have a male in this new class but so far have only two applicants..One of them looks good and undraftable..So is the other, as a matter of fact, but he's pretty young and I think his father (a male nurse in chinh binh) wants him to study more than the boy does. It definitely wasn't the son's idea.. Grin...

We did a survey of the patients in the hospital in May and concluded that at that time, at least 1/6 of the population needed P.T. services that were not getting them. Better than half of this group would have needed ward treatment to forestall secondary disabilities and to increase activity and general strength. The rest could come to the department but lack of referrals, lack of P.T. personnel and lack of space in the P.T. department made that impossible for the most part. A tentative conclusion was that we weren't beginning to meet the P.T. needs of Quang Ngai hospital and to do so effectively, we would have to train more P.T. aides and assign them to work on the particular wards most in need...Such as Chinh Binh, WTC, WTB, WNC, etc.... Consultation with Dr. Long, showed him to be very much in favor of the idea and he felt there ~~was~~ would be little doubt that they would be retained when the center was turned over to the government. To get the ward program started right, we felt it would be necessary to retain control of the aides, so would continue to pay their salaries. Most likely we would rotate all of our aides through ward duty as well as in the QRC department. We estimated we would need at least 6 more aides to do the job. That presumed we would not lose any along the way to marriage, moving to new locations or illness or injury. To anticipate that large possibility, we felt the new class might be as large as 9 with the understanding that we would hire the 6 best and the others when needed.

It was a good idea but good ideas need money to get off the ground. That would almost triple the costs of our training program and of course, salaries will take a big jump for the graduates. It just doesn't look like our budget can possibly be stretched that far and even if some lovely donor walked in the door of AFSC to make it possible, we would have to look ahead to the tremendous increase in salaries with 6 new employees in October of 1971..Sigh...

So where are we....At the moment we are trying to decide just where the budget can be squeezed to extract a few more dollars for this new extension of program. I'M not sure we can. Perhaps we will be able to add a student or 2 to the anticipated 3 and bring the new class up to five. That would be a start anyway.

We are again hearing rumors that NRI has decided to start another P.T. Aide course and this time, a years course. However, I have heard so many conflicting stories about that, that I'll believe it only when I see it with my own eyes. If they did, it is possible that we might think about hiring some of their graduates but most likely they will be placed in gov't assignments. It is said that these proposed aides are destined for the provincial hospitals. If so, more power to them. They certainly need them. Another rumor floating about is that Dr. Thach (head of NRI currently) is very worried about the Ministry of Veterans Affairs* taking over the NRI for military use exclusively. This apparently a move (if true) to mollify the wildly protesting Vietnamese veterans. Pity the poor civilian; they inherit the hindmost part of the prize again!

* possibly

Anyway, come next October, we anticipate the P.T. department will run somewhat along the following lines....

The three current students will be graduates and, as such, will begin to carry full patient loads but still with much clinical supervision and instruction. This will free Bill and Eryl ^{Do} enough to give them time to start moving in on ward work. We feel it best to have them ~~do~~ the initial work and setting up of routines on the wards as they certainly will wield more power (power to the Quakers!) and can get things off to a more professional start. This means they will be spending part of their time on the wards and part of the time in the department. Mr. Ry will continue to carry a partial patient load but will share teaching duties with me and also will be continuing to do translation work. One possible plan might be that he would work in the clinic in the mornings with his own patients as well as supervise the 3 recent graduates. I would spend the morning (sleeping??!! Grin..) in the classroom with the new students. In the afternoon Mr. Ry could supervise the students in classroom assignments or actual teaching and demonstrations. That would free me to give clinical instruction to the 3 recent grads and do the necessary paper work at home...Correcting papers, preparing additional teaching materials, etc... All this should make it possible for Bill and Eryl to ease up a bit as they have been carrying a really heavy load of patient treatment this year. I've been no help to them at all. Besides, now Eryl has housewifely duties to take care of, as well...Grin..... So much for the P.T. department...

Not much exciting: Getting boring around here for our guests who come to see the Quakers slaving away in a war zone. Getting harder and harder to find old blown up tanks and freshly burned down houses (damn people keep ~~rebuilding~~ re-building em!) and even the ole ARVN's are letting us down by conserving ammunition at night. Grin... Like quiet, man! We did manage to get off one big explosion while Irene Johnson was here tho. Think some obliging dog tripped a mine or something. The dan-bao keep laughing and looking happy. Looks like future guests might have to look a little deeper to find the real "sufferings" of the people here. Until they come over to the hospital, that is..... There it still hits you right between the eyes.

Pulling out: The town is gradually losing its foreigners. The policeman in charge of keeping track of us foreigners (Mr. Thiep) was at the house a few days before Keith and Eric left to see if my passport was up to date. I showed him it was but then told him that he could remove his dossier on Keith and Eric soon. He seemed happy (Grin...What'd you guys do to Thiep!) and told me that many others were or had left. The Amer. Red Cross is all gone now, the two Canadian nurses are about to go (if they haven't already) and have been replaced by only one. Our two are gone and replaced by none (yet), Marcy Weber and Doug Jones of VNCS have just pulled out. The Saigon gov't has taken over financial control of the Canadian TB hospital (how much of it, I'm not sure..But they are paying all salaries now) and we may be losing the Canadians before too much longer. The gov't is paying salaries so much lower than the Canadians were, that the hospital has had to close down one ward to preserve quality of care.

And that's the way it is in Quang Ngai tonight, Folks.....

Love,

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