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SV-P #209

NIGERIA
VIETNAM

SUBJECT :

ADMINS

3 October 1970

T137A

CIRCULATE :

Dear Kathy/Roger:

Thus begins the final report from thy faithful servant (2) out in the jungles of Viet-Nam. The year of study has passed and although not all of us survived, the survivors certainly far exceed the deceased. All of us have aged; some more than others, however. Grin. I am fairly sure the rattle I hear in my lungs is simply smoker's hack and not an ominous death rattle. It was an up hill fight all the way but I feel sure the "hamlet evaluation computers would show that "we" won decisively! I am programmed to collapse into proper vacation exhaustion at precisely 12:01 tomorrow morning but I do believe that before we reach that deadline, I can bat out a summary of the graduation ceremonies.....

The final examination: Was a real bear apparently and served well to sort the girls from the women, the boys from the men. It took place over two full days and consisted of three main portions. The written exam was given on the 28th here at the house. It consisted of 40 questions of varying types and each one was selected from a different subject that the students had studied during the year. Some of the questions were ones that they had had before on their weekly exams but I re-worded them so that the students would have to combine their knowledge with logic or judgement. They could not get by by simply parroting their lesson plans. That was a bit of a blow to them. The second part of the test consisted of doing a complete evaluation on a new patient (one they had never seen before) and designing a special program of exercise to suit that patient's physical needs. Once they had decided upon the program of exercise, they were required to put the patient through it while I observed. The third requirement for the final exam was to write up a report on their patient and to give an estimate of this patient's potential for the future. A fourth factor that influenced their final grade was their performance over the past year of study. How well they did in their weekly exams and how they had performed with patients. Mr. Ry was also required to take the same final exam and although we had planned to keep this somewhat of a secret to help him "save face", it was an impractical thought. The girls wasted no time in asking me point blank whether ~~he~~ he had to do this and I have never been a very successful liar altho a practiced one!

The results: Sigh.....There is a saying that, "You can't win them all." and I guess that's as good a thing to say as any to let you know that one of our three lovelies didn't make it. It made for a very buôn graduation (buôn=sad), I can assure you. Cô Tuyết failed miserably, both in the written and practical exams. There were no extenuating circumstances that could have saved her. She did so badly that I am still wondering what I have been doing all year! Obviously not a good job of teaching Cô Tuyết. She has not been the one of the three to "choke up" on tests...That fate belongs to little Cô Vân...But Cô Tuyết was obviously frightened by the finality of the testing. Nevertheless, it was very clear that she is not ready to be turned loose on the poor unsuspecting patients nor deserving of a diploma. Flunking her was one of the hardest things I have ever done. It took all the power I retain to resist making allowances and to maintain objectivity. I wanted her to pass so much that it would have been easy for me to see plus factors that just weren't there. The news of her failure was as hard on the three of the girls as it was Cô Tuyết, herself. Frankly, it spoiled their joy over their own hard-won victory. But so it goes.....

It will come as no surprise to those who know Cô Nguyệt that she surpassed the others by a mile. She even outscored Mr. Ry but just.... She is the real "pro" in the class and shows it in her performance. Following her exam I talked to her briefly about the possibility of there being a professional school of physical therapy soon in Saigon and felt her out on the subject. Cô Nguyệt has taken the 1st Bac test (This test follows the 11th grade in school and if they pass it they take the test for their 2nd Bac the next year) twice and failed it twice. She is determined to study on her own this coming year (as she did last year) and try it again in July. I told her if she can do it, we might be able to get her into the school in Saigon. I personally feel she has what it takes and of course this years course will give her a wide headstart over the other students in Saigon if she does go.

Another factor in her favor is that if she does go, she will have had one or more years experience with actual patient treatment with us first. This is an idea we are nurturing for the future... If we can find a few of our P.T. aides that we know have real potential and ability, I think it would be a worthwhile investment in the future of Việt-Nam to consider providing living and whatever tuition (think there is no tuition in Việt-Nam..Simply cost of books, etc.) would be necessary. But that is a budgetary consideration for the future. I haven't actually seen any professional school of Physical Therapy in this country for all the talk there has been about it.

Mr. Ry also "cooled" the exam with ease (Whew! That was a relief!). Although he scored $1\frac{1}{2}$ points lower than Cô Nguyệt, his answers displayed a much greater ability to reason out new problems and to think on his feet so to speak. His total grade was brought up much higher than Cô Nguyệt on the strength of his performance in the practical exam. I am more convinced than ever that this fellow "has it". He is another one that deserves consideration for going on to study more in Saigon. His large family might prevent this but the desire is there. He apparently has it on his mind as he confided to me that he also was going to study on his own this coming year and take the 1st Bac test along with Cô Nguyệt.... Mr. Ry has had the first 11 years of education but has not yet passed the final exam. In Việt-Nam this is no indication of lack of ability on the students part particularly (altho it could be)...In passing the certificate exams over here, money is of infinite more value than brains. If you get what I mean.....

Cô Vân has earned my undying respect for her unflagging efforts over the year. She passed the exam on a wing and a prayer and her practical exam grade brought her up to a fairly respectable level. This course was just plain grueling for this little gal. She (like Cô Tuyết) has had only five grades of schooling and reading and writing is not the easiest thing in the world for her. On the basis of the struggles I have observed in her and Cô Tuyết, I would never again accept a 5th grader in this course. But Cô Vân learned and is retaining her learning but it was perhaps the hardest thing she has ever done. Her performance with the patients is very good in most respects. She is going to need this second year of clinical instruction under Bill & Deryl's guidance but following that I feel she is going to be a very dependable P.T. aide.

What happens to Cô Tuyết: Well, the last time I talked to her (yesterday) she wasn't sure that she would come back to work after her 2 weeks vacation (All the girls and Mr. Ry start their vacation tomorrow) but I think that was extreme sadness, disappointment and most important, tremendous "loss of face" talking. We are such a small organization and are so close to each other and to the patients...You can imagine how she feels. Everybody knows that she did not pass. All her fellow workers and the patients are sure to be gabbling about it a mile a minute. I plan on going to her home to talk to her again tomorrow morning before I leave on vacation and give her some moral support. We talked for almost an hour when I told her she had failed but she took it hard. If she will come back, she will work in the P.T. department at least half time under Bill and Deryl's guidance and study the rest of the time. If I can find the time I plan on tutoring her and/or including her in some of the classes with the new students. The first part of February, she can take the final exam over again. If she again fails it, she will have just one more chance after another 3 month period. If she fails the third attempt we will have to let her go. In the meantime she will continue on her student salary until she earns her diploma. Sigh.....

The best laid plans of mice and men....: Like Avis, "We try harder" but sometimes it just ain't worth getting up in the morning....With such elaborate advanced planning, one could have expected our big graduation ceremony to have gone off without a hitch but.....

Several weeks ago we sent out individual written invitations (in Vietnamese, che) to all the doctors, all the head nurses, the chief of hospital education and various and sundry others who are "big men or women in town", like Mr. Lê Sam and Xuân Lan....Out of that august group, we managed to corral Dr. Khai and Dr. Khai alone! I confess to being very disappointed at the lack of showing. For one thing it indicates the continued lack of interest in the Rehab Center as an integral part of the hospital. We still haven't managed to establish any meaningful kind of rapport between us and the staff of the hospital. Perhaps, after all, it is impossible and I shouldn't fret over it but it represents a big failure to me. Xuân Lan had a good excuse..

She had been invited to the VNCS graduation which was at the same time and she obviously couldn't be in both places at once. Mr. Lê Nam may have been out of town or if not, I'm sure he had a thousand ~~and~~ one other things he had to do. It was raining but that can hardly be held responsible for keeping the hospital people away as (theoretically) they were already at the hospital. Oh well.... Lets see what else went wrong....

I had asked Dr. Khai at least four weeks back if he would present the certificates and give a speech and he agreed willingly. About a week ago I sent him a written invitation and again reminded him about presenting the certificates. I may have forgotten to also remind him about speaking (I'm not sure)...At any rate he did present one of the certificates but spoke only briefly saying as he did that he hadn't expected to speak and therefore was not prepared. Sigh..... He spoke so softly that he couldn't be heard anyway above the rain so I guess it didn't matter! Anh Lou and Erly didn't get back in time for the ceremony which was a disappointment....But Lady stepped into the breach at the last moment like an old pro. Never saw anyone write a speech (in Vietnamese, natch) and get it down pat so fast. She spoke well as the acting Chairman. I pulled a swifty on Mr. Bich by asking him at the last possible moment to be our master of ceremonies but as usual he was equal to the occasion (by borrowing a clean white shirt from Bill)... He is truly our "Man for all seasons"....In five minutes he had torn my proposed schedule of events to shreds and substituted his own, more in keeping with Vietnamese traditions. He decided that Anh Ry should be called on to speak and put Ry into a panic...But Ry went off in a corner and scribbled like mad and came up with a statement...SUE, then Mr. Bich forgot to call on Ry to speak...THEN Ry's feelings were slightly bruised. SIGH.....

The affair was scheduled to start at ten am...We waited until 10:30 for guests that never came but then got the show on the road...We had a fair sized audience with all of our employees, a few patients and usn's....Dr. Khai presented one certificate, Chuck another and Lady the other. I gave my little speech (enclosed both in Vietnamese and English for your edification) first, then the certificates were presented, then Dr. Khai spoke briefly and then Lady spoke... Or at least I think that is how it went. By that time, I was unraveling at the seams and in a rather unaware condition.. Grin....

One could say that the graduation of our first class of P.T. aides was something less than successful but the year of study was a success so that is all that counts. Maybe next year, after our students have been working on the wards and hopefully have established some kind of rapport, the hospital staff will have more of an interest.

Entrance Exams for new students: This has been quite a week, Friends....Complicating everything has been the expected arrival of the monsoon season with heavy rains. We have had our usual "first of October" flood which has resulted in the usual amount of damage to people's mud and straw homes and loss of some property such as rice stores. But the crest of the water came the night before our entrance exams were to be given. Groan.... That night water flowed into the front rooms of the Quaker House as well as Anh Canh's little shack...No harm done, thanks to Peter's vigilance throughout the night (the rest of us slept well...ignorant of the threatening lapping waters) in keeping damagable things above water level.... That next morning the rain slackened a little but in some places on the hospital grounds the water was up to the knees (Vietnamese knees, that is)...

The flooding was apparently severe in some areas and consequently only 13 out of 30 student applicants managed to make it in for the 10 am exam... They were a drowned lot but we wrung them out and gave them the exam...Anh Ry and Cô Nguyệt making very good proctors! It was storming so hard that the majority of our employees couldn't get in so the Rehab center closed down about 11 am....Hoping that some of the other applicants might be able to show up, I went back in the afternoon and sure enough, two more straggled in. Mr Ry had also come back so we gave the test to those two. This was all done on the 1st of October..The next morning (yesterday!!?? Yeah..) six more showed up and took the test. This afternoon, another came in and she has taken the test. So in total, 22 people out of 30 have taken the exam... I would enclose a copy of it but I don't have one written in English and I'm too lazy to do it now. There were five parts..It wasn't hard but was designed to get some idea of their literacy level and some of their thought on the subject of rehabilitation and the place for severely disabled people in the future of Vietnam. Mr Ry and I have gone over all of the test results (except for the one that came this afternoon) and have come up with 4 that we know we want and 5 more that we could accept if we can't find anyone better qualified. We are having a team

meeting tonight and two of the subjects that we will discuss will relate to the selection of the new students. I will keep this letter open and tell you what we decide (providing we can come to a decision...Grin). The subjects are these;

1) A big question in our minds is whether we should simply accept the best 8 students of the ones who have taken the exam or to keep open the possibility of taking the exams longer in hopes of getting more students that we'd really like to have. In the first instance...If we accept the best eight...we are going to end up with a troublesome gap between the good ones and the "acceptable" ones. Similar to the gap we have had this year between Cõ Nguyet and the other two. Are we wasting time and money to struggle to train people who probably make mediocre aides at best? Would it be better to go ahead with a smaller class (than 8) of good ones if we cannot find 8 of equal caliber? At the moment I am tending to think we should only accept those of the caliber that we want. To do this we could accept the top four and then announce by radio that we would accept more applicants in the next few weeks...We would possibly stipulate this time that we would not accept anyone with less than 9 years of schooling. (That's the lowest level of those we will accept in this first group).. The entrance exam is no problem to administer; this could be done while I am gone and then we could make our final decision the last week in October when I get back. It also would give a few of the original applicants a chance to get in here if they have been stopped by water levels.

2) The second subject concerns Anh An....Realizing that An would make a really good prospect for our class, we worried this one around until we decided to ask him if he was interested. He was....So we told him that if he wanted to take the test and if he passed it, we would do what we could to get an extension of his student deferment. But we also warned him that if he could not get that extension then we couldn't take him on as a student as the chances of his being drafted right out from under us would be too great. He did take the test and he did pass. He at the moment is our best applicant... Now, we will try to get a deferment for him... The question for tonight is...Do we feel we should ask Dr. Khai and/or the Province Chief to intercede for us by writing a letter of recommendation? We feel fairly sure that we could get the deferment with this kind of Vietnamese "arm-twisting", without it, we are not so sure. If we can get the deferment and he is able to complete the course, then we could apply for him to be returned to us after basic training in the army just as we do with the prosthetic trainees. We will let you know what we decide on that one. Sure wisheryl and Lou were back to tackle it with us.

News of general interest: Neither Quy or Dieu have been returned to us by the Army..Both are now off in fighting units somewhere having finished their basic training. Gulp! Dieu had a four day pass following the completion of basic and came home to sit at our breakfast table one morning and tear us apart with his sobbing. He was one scared boy and was pleading for us to help him get out. Quy hasn't been back but the letters flow in constantly asking us not to forget him and to HELP him get OUT. He obviously also is panicked. All possible steps have been taken and we are waiting on action by the ministry of Defense. I understand the Ministry of Health has done their part and sent a letter of recommendation ahead to the Ministry of Defense.. But there it lies...in somebody's file basket. In the meantime, we could lose our boys...

The remodeling of the prosthetic shop and the P.T. department ~~are~~ well underway..The office cubicle of the P.T. department is down and already built up again in the place of the washtubs at the west end of the room. It gives a lot more space for treatment tables. Part of the east end will be curtained off so that we can use that portion for class demonstrations. No time now but perhaps Bill oreryl can send you a rough sketch of how the P.T. side will look when finished.

The animals in the Quaker Zoo are fine....Hõ Chi Linh is being outgrown by his (her?) buddy, Mao Tse Tung but they really groove on this rainy season. Quack, Quack....Bác-Sĩ bốn chân (Dr. 4 legs) is growing like a mule. Soon we are going to have to requisition sacks of dog food from George Gre!! Rice, he scorns and scraps from the table are meagre. Hõ doesn't eat yet, so we don't have to worry about him (or her)...Bev can take care of that. (Grin)

Bev (not meaning to imply she is part of our Zoo...) is looking great...Its true what they say about pregnancy making a woman beautiful... I'm afraid lady and I aren't going to nail it back in time for the big event. Blast! At least Bev hopes it won't be that long..Shes a bit tired lugging this wee lump of protoplasm around.

Tomorrow morning I'm off for Saigon - Singapore and Bali. Yippee!! I'll try to find the time to drop you all a note from the south seas... Plan on being back in Saigon by the 23rd

and then may spend a day talking to people at NRI and visiting their new P.T. aide class. If I do that tho, I think I'll come back a day or two earlier as I want to be back in Quảng Ngãi on the 25th. That will give me a full week to get ready for the new class.

Later.....

We have concluded said meeting and arrived at the following decisions.... We will accept the top 4 or 5 student applicants and reject the rest. Monday, Peter and Lady will make contact with three high school teachers that we know as well as the fellow who runs an orphanage for disabled children to see if they can put us in touch with any likely candidates. If those efforts turn up nothing, then perhaps a radio announcement will be used. Any applicants that come in while I am gone will be given the test by Bill or Eryl. We will chose another 3-4 from that group if they are as good as the already accepted group (or better). This may mean that we will end up with a smaller class than 8 if we cannot find 8 good solid students.

, About Anh An....We have decided to do the best we can and Monday, Peter will go to Dr. Khai and explain the situation to him. Depending upon the advice or help that Dr. Khai can give, we may also go to the Province Chief for help. If we cannot secure a deferment for An by the end of November (the first month of the class) we will have to drop him and hope to replace him with a "back up" we hope we can find in the bushes somewhere. If other applicants show up with Anh An's potential and draft problems, we will make the same efforts for them. Thats providing they show up soon enough to give us time to secure a deferment before the dead line of the end of November. When we have the completed list of new students, we will not only send you a list but vivid descriptions of all. Grin..... Right now, I am simply relieved beyond words to have all the decisions over and done with.

Must be off...Still have a lot of odds and ends to tie up and packing to be done.... Take care of yourselves back there in icy Philly..... Bali Hai calls me...La la tra la.....

Love,

Dad

copy of Co Dat's speech
at graduation

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T-137		Ang Ngai	

Formal greetings to honorable guests, etc.....

We appreciate your coming to share this happy occasion with us as we know that you are very busy. However, we felt that the graduation of this first class of physical therapy aides is of significance to you as doctors, nurses, employees and patients of the Province Hospital.

At every opportunity we want to emphasize that Trung Tam Chinh Hinh is not separate from the hospital but just another vitally important part just as the lab, the x-ray room of the surgical suites. We depend on the doctors to refer their disabled patients to us and to give medical guidance just as we hope you depend on us to restore your patients to the highest level of function possible. For maximum efficiency and effect, we need to work as a team... Each of us maintaining an interest in the patient's rehabilitation and contributing to it by our special skills. The patient is central to our very existence. It is for them that we are here. It is for them that we work.

For these reasons, we want to share our happiness in introducing these three new physical therapy aides to the Quang Ngai medical team. They have studied and worked long hours over the past year. They have learned about bones, muscles, nerves and functions of the body as well as the numerous techniques used in treatment of the disabled patient. They have studied the philosophy of rehabilitation and have learned much about the psychology of working with patients and the need for continuing social work with them. This morning our students will receive their diplomas and have finished their formal training. But they will continue to learn for years as they gain more experience with a wide variety of patients.

Tomorrow they will go on a well deserved vacation but will be back in two weeks to start work as full time physical therapy aides. At this time we will be able to increase the numbers of patients we treat in a day and will be able to improve our patient services due to the addition of three more pairs of hands.

Mr. Ry will continue to help me teach the new class of aides scheduled to start on the 1st of November. We ^{will be} accepting 8 students in this new class. We plan to gradually start doing some patient treatment on the wards in a few months from now and probably will start on MTC or Chinh Hinh. When the new class graduates in November of next year, we hope to have them working in other wards such as MTC, MTD, MEG, etc. There are two main reasons for beginning to do limited patient ~~the~~ treatment on the wards.

The earlier a patient begins to exercise and resume self care after illness or injury, the better are his chances for a good recovery. The longer he lies inactive in bed, the weaker he becomes. Decubitus ulcers and muscle contractures develop quickly in such a patient and we waste many hours in the physical therapy department correcting these unnecessary problems. If we start work with the patient early, we save time both for us and the patient and we save money for the hospital as the patient will be able to go home much sooner.

The second reason is that our rehabilitation center is not large enough to receive and treat all the patients in the Province who need such treatment. By doing some of the early and simple treatments on the wards, we can increase the total number of patients being treated. At the present time, because of the war, Quang Ngai Province's need for rehabilitative care is enormous. All of us hope that in the near future peace will come and restore some kind of normality to life in Viet-Nam. When it does, fortunately the hospital census will drop. But for many many years to come the people who have been disabled by the war will continue to need rehabilitative care. Those who have lost arms or legs will need new prostheses every 1-2 years. Children need new legs or braces every 6 months due to their rapid growth. This need will continue for the rest of their lives. In the case of a very young child, we can see that he may be needing rehabilitative services for 50-60 years into the future. Quang Ngai has thousands of such children.

Now I ask permission to speak directly to our graduates for a few minutes.

Co Nguyet, Co Van.... You have done what you promised to do a year ago. You have applied yourself diligently to both study and work and have done your best. The remarkable thing about this class is that we have seldom heard you complain although we have expected you to work very hard and every week I presented you with a formidable test. You rarely missed a day of work and regretted it when you did. The very best personal trait you have shown us is your interest in and loving concern for your patients. This attribute is vital for all

who are involved in medical care.

Bill and Deryl are looking forward to your help in the coming year and are anxious to help you improve your skills. You have learned a lot but have much more to learn yet. Make the most of this coming year and learn all you can from Bill and Deryl before they must leave for home.

I personally thank you for being so patient with me although I did not always understand nor speak clearly in Vietnamese so that you could understand. You have taught me more than I have ever taught you. I will never forget this first class and the struggles we went through together.

Mr. Ry...You should have had your diploma long ago. But because we were always so busy treating patients, and because we always needed ~~your help~~ your help so much, you never had the time to be purely a student. You have been very patient and understanding under conditions that have often been uncomfortable for you. Your value in helping me learn the language, the customs and the polite ways of doing things has been inestimable. You have never been afraid to tell me when I have made an error and that has helped tremendously. I am counting on your continued assistance in the coming year as my advisor as well as assistant teacher.

Now I would like to ask the Honorable Dr. Khai (grin) to present the diplomas to our students.....

(Here Cô Dot drops dead from fright)

