

# TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

## THE VIETNAM CENTER

Box 41045 / Lubbock, Texas 79409 - 1045 / (806) 742-3742, 742-8663 / Fax: (806) 742-8664 / E-Mail vietnam.center@ttu.edu

### Memorandum

August 16, 1999

To: Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.  
Vice Admiral Emmett H. Tidd  
Colonel Roger Donlon  
Mr. Phil Price

From: James R. Reckner

**Subj: Report of Trip to Vietnam**

Enclosed please find copies of my report to Chancellor Montford of the trip to Vietnam and also a journal in which I recorded the more detailed notes I took during various meetings which occurred during that visit, as well as some observations about Vietnam, and particularly our hydrofoil trip to Can Tho from Saigon.

encl: Trip Report  
Trip Journal

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THE VIETNAM ARCHIVE  
Texas Tech University  
Lubbock, Texas 79409-1041 (806) 742-9010  
Fax: (806) 742-0496 • E-Mail livna@ttu.edu

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## **Journal of Vietnam Trip**

**29 July – 9 August 1999**

**Participants: Chancellor John T. Montford, TTUHSC Associate Vice President James Laible, TTUHSC Director of Managed Health Care Lynne Hudson, Vietnam Center Director James Reckner, and Vietnam Center Staff Member Khanh Le**

### **31 July 1999 (Saturday)**

After a long trip from Lubbock, via Los Angeles and Taipei, our party finally reached Vietnam on the morning of 31 July. As we approached the coast of Vietnam, the cloud cover lessened and we were able to get generally good views of the Red River delta and the villages and patchwork of rice paddies that make up the Vietnamese country side. Beautiful green. We had excellent views of Hanoi as we approached, and actually spotted our hotel (which is quite prominent) though we were not certain of it till later.

Landed at Noi Bai airport around 10:00 a.m.. Taxied past about 8 or 10 older Russian-built Air Vietnam aircraft – obviously no longer operational. Probably spare parts support is no longer available. The terminal itself was virtually unaltered from my 1998 visit, though major construction near by indicates a new terminal probably will be operation before my next visit.

Once I cleared customs, looked out for our “gang” and was much relieved when I saw Curtis Peoples waving. He and Khanh Le were waiting outside. All of our luggage came through promptly and we passed through customs without difficulty. Khanh had leased a minivan and a small sedan (+ drivers) for transportation. Therefore, there was no difficulty in handling all of our luggage.

Noi Bai is about 30 kilometers from the city, along a reasonably modern 4-lane highway which passes through very rich farming land, mainly rice, but some manioc and also some corn. The most noteworthy aspect of the fields is that they are alive with people working industriously – unlike American farms which are completely mechanized and generally devoid of people.

We arrived at the Meritus Westlake Hotel at 10:55 a.m., just five minutes ahead of our program. The hotel itself is a stunning building – all rose and black marble. Magnificent. The four of us plus Khanh who has now joined us, were assigned rooms next to each other on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor.

After settling in, began our tour of the city with a visit to the Temple of Literature. This was my second visit to this remarkable site, which commemorates the men who passed the highest level of the traditional exam system in Vietnam. The exam system began in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century with the last exam in 1919. Every successful candidate from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries is commemorated on a series of stele. As per last time, Khanh looked up Mrs. Huong, who gave a quite lucid description of the exams.

We then visited the Museum of History, which focuses on pre-historical artifacts. It is one of the many beautiful French colonial buildings. Aside from the expected collection of primitive tools, the museum also had a very interesting collection of statuary from Champa.

The next stop was the Jade Mountain Pagoda, right in the heart of the city. This is the pagoda in the center of the lake dedicated to a turtle, which, it is alleged, pulled a sword out of a stone. Selections of totally tasteless replicas of the turtle, with sword, are available for purchase, though I passed up the opportunity. The official brochure indicates the temple itself was dedicated to Tran Hung Dao and dates back to the Tran Dynasty (1225-1400). Its latest renovation took place in 1865.

We toured the temple, which, not unlike the temple at the heart of the Temple of Literature, was ornately decorated with red Buddhas and other images and symbols, all carefully trimmed in gold paint. Elsewhere all of this would be very garish; however here it seems appropriate. Outside the temple, I took some photos, and managed to capture two Buddhist monks who were posing for some friends.

In the late afternoon, we were joined by Dr. Ron Frankum, who briefed us on his trip thus far – with some basic comments about libraries, etc., along the way. In essence, he has been met with friendliness and willingness to share information just about everywhere, and is preparing a detailed report for presentation upon his return. As for the course he is presently teaching, he reports that he has a varying number of students throughout the day up to a total of about 30. The university is providing an interpreter to assist him, which frees up Khanh to stay close by our party. We discussed the need to offer such a course in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) and Can Tho, and I have proposed – and Ron agrees, that the Chancellor announce that this will occur in 2000.

### **1 August 1999 (Sunday)**

This is Sunday morning, and our plan is to visit “Uncle Ho.” Our first step, upon arrival at the mausoleum, was to be organized into a group, mainly of foreigners, which a guide then inserted about halfway up the queue.

The queue itself was worthy of note: it extended the full length of Ba Dinh Square, then snaked down a second block at right angles to the original, then, at the end of the queue, turned to parallel the head of the queue, but fully two city blocks away. The Vietnamese people waiting to view Ho were clothed in their ordinary clothing—with many small children accompanying. The people in the crowd chatted with each other, but in relatively quiet tones.

The queue moved quite steadily and rapidly toward the mausoleum, which is guarded by PAVN soldiers in dress white uniforms. They are, I suspect, the equivalent of our own guard detachment for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Entering the air-conditioned coolness of the mausoleum, we ascended three flights of stairs under the watchful eyes of yet more young PAVN guards, this time fitted out in the standard brown uniform. In this area I noted that one couple in front of us who continued chatting was quickly and sternly rebuked.

At the top of the stairs we entered the room in which Ho Chi Minh is on display, and walked quickly in a U-shaped route around him. I noticed, too, that just inside where we walked was a narrow, elevated walkway for small children, which enabled them also to view their Uncle Ho. Ho himself looked remarkably well preserved, given the fact that he died in 1969. The thought crossed my mind that it could be a complete dummy. But that, of course, is sacrilege.

It was a very moving experience, and as we began to descend the stairs at the other end of the viewing line, a young lady was overcome with emotion. In an instant, one of the ubiquitous PAVN guards was at her side and supported her down the stairs to a small room off the exit where she could regain her composure. The manner in which the guard reacted suggested to me that this was not an uncommon occurrence.

Once again outside, our party walked through the park-like grounds, past the presidential palace to Ho Chi Minh's residence, which is a beautifully-built two room home on stilts. The woodwork was exceptional. Like the mausoleum, we again had to queue up to view this, but unlike the mausoleum, the atmosphere was much more like a holiday.

From the house we proceeded to the Ho Chi Minh museum. En route, it struck me that the crowds of people were going through essentially the same experience as the vast crowds of people who daily visit the National Mall in Washington to see the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, Smithsonian Institution, etc.

The Ho Chi Minh museum itself, though of a heavy Soviet architectural style on the outside, was a most remarkable facility on the inside. It was both artifact rich *and* interpretive and I was very much impressed with it. Pham Quang Minh advises that VNU Hanoi history faculty had a hand in its design and it is truly worthy of note. I understood, too, that its design concept, which is sophisticated, was the cause of considerable complaint as it was too sophisticated, too symbolic, for the ordinary Vietnamese citizen. There also were complaints that the cost of it was excessive. I wonder what Ho would have thought about it all.

At this point we modified our plan of the day as we had finished the museum ahead of schedule, and proceeded to Bat Trang Village—the ceramics center. The village is about 15-20 kilometers east of Hanoi and is reached by crossing the Red River and then following a road along the top of a dike. The dike is perhaps 10 or 15 meters high, with villages on the north side built closely in areas very clearly below the water level on the other side of the dike. They seem comfortable with the arrangement, but it is one that would give me more than a little concern. In due course, we reached the village and did the mandatory shopping. We were unable to view the process of producing the ceramics, as it was Sunday. However, I did go through this in 1998, and was somewhat surprised to discover that much of the art work on the pieces is produced by very young girls (ca. age 12, I would estimate) who worked with great speed and agility.

After lunch, we once again took up tourism. First destination was the People's Army Museum. We did quite an extensive tour of the museum—nothing changed from last year, though still very interesting to visit. One of the most striking features is a large pile of pieces of US aircraft shot down during the war. There are many interesting exhibits, simple in execution

and reflecting a relatively low level of expenditure on the museum. There are two large panoramic displays which are accompanied by videos and narratives: one examines the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954; the other the fall of Saigon in 1975.

Dinner that night was at the Van Xuan Restaurant, hosted by the University of Social Studies and Humanities—the two vice rectors (Phu is ill), Minh, Khe, Ninh, and particularly Phan Huy Le. Excellent meal, of course. I sat beside Phan Huy Le, the Director of the Center for Vietnamese and Intercultural Studies (CVIS) and had an engaging conversation with him, in English. He spoke English very well, though last year he spoke it not at all when I visited. Chancellor was extremely charming in conversation with our hosts—and they responded in kind. In all, it was an excellent evening, and set a very positive tone for tomorrow's more formal meetings.

## **2 August 1999 (Monday)**

### **VNU Hanoi**

At 9:00 a.m. we arrived at the main campus of VNU Hanoi where we were met by our constant assistant, Pham Quang Minh, who took us to the third floor meeting room, where we met with Prof. Dr. Dao Trong Thi, Vice-President, and Vu Ngoc Tu, Director of International Relations.

After mutual exchange of greetings and introductions, Chancellor Montford said the goals of his visit were to encourage the exchange of documents and exchange of students. Chancellor Montford would be delighted to host a delegation visit to Texas Tech University. Regarding the Memorandum of Understanding which I signed with the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in 1998, Chancellor Montford proposed to expand it, expanding terms of exchange of information, faculty, and students and to apply to the entire Vietnam National University. He also expressed our interest in records/documents to allow students to study.

Thi responded that TTU/VNU can expand contacts beyond humanities.

Chancellor Montford indicated TTU was eager to expand areas of exchange. He wants reciprocal hosting of VN faculty at TTU and sending TTU faculty to VNU.

Thi then gave some background information on VNU. The University was formed by merging four already existing colleges: Science, Social Studies & Humanities, Pedagogy, and Foreign Languages. VNU has 3000 staff and 50,000 students, half of whom are full time. VNU offers degrees in 98 different disciplines. VNU is the first autonomous university in Vietnam. It has authority to work directly with ministries other than the Ministry of Education and Training. VNU reports directly to the Prime Minister, and it has authority to work directly with foreign universities. Other universities must go through the Ministry of Education.

Vu Ngoc Thu, Director of International Relations, added: VNU has agreements with 96 universities, beginning with the CIEE (Council for International Educational Exchange) and also the University of Hawaii. Now there is cooperation with many others, including the University of

Oregon (Eugene), the University of Connecticut, and Smith & Robert. VNU receives most US students for Vietnam studies of all the Vietnamese universities. As you can appreciate, VNU is in the process of formulating models for all Vietnamese universities.

Thu then proposed an exchange of faculty.

Chancellor Montford indicated that he would sign on behalf of TTU and added that the Board of Regents of TTU is very committed to the Vietnam project, and TTU will be expanding its curriculum and facilities.

Thu: VNU will be happy to cooperate. We can sign MOU, then continue cooperation.

Chancellor Montford then indicated his desire to sign MOU while he was in Hanoi.

Thu invited the party to dinner tonight at which time we would sign the MOU. Dinner at 6:30 p.m. at the Bao Son Hotel (where Khanh and I stayed in 1998).

The Chancellor then presented a book on TTU, plus a guide to the Vietnam Archive, and other gifts.

Thu then reviewed areas of possible cooperation: English instruction, natural sciences, teaching, foreign languages, technology.

Chancellor Montford: English is a very popular field. We could organize a rotational program of teachers to come to Vietnam National University. TTU also has a good package of teacher training. And we should examine the possibility of incorporating distance learning into our program. Chancellor Montford again said he was very excited about this opportunity. There are also additional programs we can work on together, but we cannot do without your faculty.

The meeting concluded with an agreement that VNU would produce a draft MOU while we were at the next meeting, so Chancellor Montford could read it and then agree to sign in the evening. It was to be drafted on the model of the one Reckner signed with the University of Social Sciences and Humanities last year.

### **Meeting at University of Social Sciences & Humanities**

This meeting began at 10:00 a.m. in a very formally arranged room, with microphones at each seat, VN flag on one side, US flag on the other. After mutual introductions, apologies were offered for the Rector Phung Huu Phu, who was taken ill. 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Rector Phan Xuan Hang said that last year we had the chance to sign an MOU with TTU in the following areas:

1. Exchange of Academic Matters
2. Exchange of Scholars
3. Exchange of Students
4. Joint Research Activities
5. Participation in Workshops

Hang then presented the agenda:

1. Brief introduction to University
2. Phan Huy Le, Doan Thuan Thuat, Center for Vietnamese and Intercultural Studies
3. Faculty of Oriental Studies (Nguyen Quoc Hung)
4. International Studies (Vu Duong Ninh)
5. History

### **Brief Overview**

This university, along with three others of VNU, is a university of the first level. The advantage of this designation is that they get more budget. Our focus is on social studies and humanities. Our training program offers BA, MA, and Ph.D in literature, law, philosophy, economics, journalism, sociology, international affairs, psychology, library, archives, Vietnamese language for foreigners. Some students progress to the MA and Ph.D programs. They have a large number of relations with overseas universities in Asia, Australia, Europe, and the U.S. For example, UC Berkeley is sending a group of students to study for four months.

They receive researchers and professors from other countries and students from Vietnam, Indochina, Asia, and elsewhere. Recently, a Thai student defended his dissertation here.

Now he would like to refer to the MOU points.

1. Vietnam Studies
2. American Studies
3. Exchange of Statements/Scholars
4. Exchange of Materials

Chancellor Montford then gave an overview of TTU, that TTU has the best collection of Vietnamese documents outside the Library of Congress. The Board of Regents is very excited about our collaboration with Vietnam and with VNU Hanoi. They will support expansion of this collaboration. Chancellor Montford also thinks that VNU faculty can benefit us by coming to TTU, and he expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet with distinguished faculty today.

Phan Huy Le: Center for Vietnamese and Intercultural Studies (CVIS). The Center's main task is to coordinate professors teaching Vietnamese studies at VNU and at other universities. We also conduct interdisciplinary programs of international studies. The Center wants to highlight these important research topics:

1. Transition of economic/social life since Revolution
2. Ethnic Groups
3. History and Culture
4. Exploration of Vietnamese Sources in Vietnamese Studies: Special sources, land registers, imperial records, etc.

Le then presented Vol. 2 of Nguyen Imperial records to Chancellor Montford and Reckner and observed that he now has the cooperation of VNU to translate this into English; probably will be published by the end of 1999.

The CVIS's second task is to cooperate with Asia researchers around the world.

--Conduct large research cooperation dealing with Vietnam studies throughout the world

--The Center regularly receives students/professors to do research.

The Center maintains good relations with overseas researchers. Last year the Center held the first Vietnam conference in Hanoi. Now the SRV government has directed the Center to set up an international committee for Vietnam studies.

Le expressed happiness to know Reckner and the other US professors.

All Center for Vietnam and International Studies are members of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities.

He hopes for continuation of cooperation with VNU/TTU.

VNU Dean of History apologized for the absence of Ngoc—is ill.

The History faculty is one of the biggest in VNU. Faculty have training in archives, archaeology, Vietnamese history, etc.

500 regular students and 200 in-service.

100 graduate students, including some from Thailand, Korea, U.S.

45 faculty.

Over the past year VNU History has cooperated with many foreign universities: Australian National University, Paris, Cornell, Harvard. Two students received scholarships for the Ph.D in the U.S. Expressed willingness to have more contact with TTU, especially the VNC.

Vu Duong Ninh (International Studies): Faculty of International Studies developed from history and have been separate faculty for six years.

400 regular and 300 in-service students.

20+ faculty, some graduates of US universities.

Ninh then resented written proposal for American studies project; initially three objectives:

1. Provide general knowledge in field
2. Worldwide expert in US/VN for joint research in US/VN relations
3. Expand knowledge of US for people as a whole

USSH hopes to achieve these three tasks in the first year, then they can develop further. To achieve the second point, he would like to mention the content of the special project. 10-15 students special course for deeper study of America. After graduation they will become researchers and lecturers in universities. They plan to invite a voluntary lecturer to give lectures here, and hope to be able to send the best students to the US for further studies. The problem is, they are still lacking a close relationship with the university in the US, and we hope TTU will show interest in this project.

Nguyen Quoc Hung (Oriental Studies): Four major areas of study: China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia. Also setting up Department of Indian Studies. 1900 students. Suggests exchange of material, books, and especially scholars in Chinese, Korean, and Southeast Asian studies.

Concerning other fields: literature, law, economics, College of Social Sciences and Humanities will provide further information for study.

Chancellor Montford: Several Ideas:

1. Many TTU professors are eager to come to Vietnam to study.
2. TTU keenly interested in paleontology, particularly dinosaurs. Professor Sankar Chatterjee has discovered six new dinosaurs. Paleontology/Archaeology are open for discussion.
3. English. TTU can bring high quality professors, Ph.D students immediately. We will be particularly careful that the ones we send don't have Texas accents.
4. American Studies: TTU will make expeditious response. We want to receive a delegation to examine TTU distance learning. Currently we offer MBA in China via distance learning. Delegation to study what we can do with distance learning in a number of fields.
5. VN/TTU determined to have largest US collection of Vietnam documents. We don't want classified documents, rather documents of historical significance, and copies of documents in the Ho Chi Minh Museum.

JR invited to speak:

1. American Studies. Already have agreement to cooperate from TTU Political Science and English departments.
2. Have funding to begin translation of modern US History text for Vietnam.
3. Prepared to cooperate; the History Department at TTU is interested to receive a history professor to study how we teach US history.  
The most effective approach is to teach the teacher, who then will teach in Vietnam for many years. But also can send some professors to Vietnam.
4. Cooperation with Vietnamese Studies Center of Dr. Le. We will be delighted to cooperate in every way with Dr. Le.

Hang then summarized:

1. Vietnam Studies: TTU could cooperate with Le in exchange of material and programs.
2. Speed up student exchange.
3. Books pre-1975—difficult to find—in private collections.

The Vietnamese side strongly supports the Vietnam Archive at TTU. Le will do his best to support and help. Need to continue exchange of information.

Pham Quang Minh assigned mission to draft proposal for further cooperation.

Chancellor Montford then proposed to proceed by expanding the existing MOU this evening. JR will remain the TTU liaison, but Chancellor Montford will always be responsive. Chancellor Montford looks forward to hosting you all in Texas.

### Meeting at Army Central Library

Met by Dr. Sr. Col. Mac Van Trong (Director) plus Sr. LTC Nha(?) and one LTC—all in uniform. Col. Trong expressed his pleasure to meet with us. Mentioned trading agreement: before we were enemies—now friends.

Background: The military library belongs to the Ministry of Defense. Col. Trong doesn't know if the U.S. Department of Defense has a similar library. The library is the center for books and materials for the MOD. It was established 15 November 1957. The collection now contains some 300,000 books and about 1500 newspapers and magazines. It has a staff of 25, including one Ph.D, two MA; remainder BA. The library provides services to all MOD officers and soldiers. It recently expanded its services to civilian professors and students. Collection 60-70% not military. This is a time of high tech, but the library has poor technological facilities; only 10 computers. Range of services include that researchers can read books here, have materials photocopied, and also take books home to read. At present there are about 10,000 library card holders. Others from the provinces can receive the same services. Now we have reading rooms for books, newspapers, references. In the future we hope to have a computer room.

Chancellor Montford sought Col. Trong's advice on strengthening collaboration, and suggested an exchange of documents.

JR: Described holdings of VNA, willingness to photocopy, send anything requested.

Col Trong: Our mission is to keep documents for future generations. Important development—establishment of US-VN relations two years ago. Trade agreements now; both sides can benefit from the relationship. The library is very interested in books, etc., that the US published about the war. The library pays attention to the work of US professors and *also Mr. McNamara*. The library also can provide anything requested.

Col. Trong expressed interest in two areas:

1. Material Exchanges
2. Methodology/Technology for the Library

Old Vietnamese saying: "One hundred times to hear is not as good as one time to see."

The Chancellor then invited Col. Trong to visit TTU. There ensued a detailed discussion of procedures for invitation. One formal official letter to MOD; send letter to Ministry of Defense via Embassy.

Chancellor Montford then asked about procedures for requesting copies of materials from the library.

1. Send letter to MOD. 2. Copy to Trong.

Regarding exchange from our side. They request that we mail direct to them at 89 Le Lam De, Hanoi.

They have exchanged books with other universities. Procedure:

1. Submit request to MOD
2. MOD approval
3. Then index of books
4. Then what books we would like to exchange

Chancellor Montford: We will respond to whatever request you might have. They are interested in technical books; military, medical, etc.

### **Visit with Lieutenant General Nguyen Dinh Uoc**

The meeting took place in the MOD official dignitaries meeting room: an ornate affair with Persian rugs on the floor and very fancy furniture, with a portrait of a very benign looking Uncle Ho beaming down upon us all. Uoc's party included two colonels and LTC Quan, who attended the April symposium in Lubbock with the General.

Uoc: He was very impressed with his visit to TTU.

Montford: It seems that General Uoc has opened doors for us, and thanks him for doing so

Uoc: You have opened many doors for us. Now we see good features of US-VN relations. Achieved an important point in the trade agreement.

Montford: Hopes Gen. Uoc can return again and be our guest.

Uoc: If there is a chance, would be pleased to do so. When he returned he reported about the conference to the MOD. He would be pleased to come back.

Montford: Did you get a chance to use the spurs? (laughter).

Uoc: Gave to new director to speed up cooperation.

Re: Battle of Duc Lap—Uoc has corresponded with author. Also has sent letter to Jean Fallon, the wife of the POW with whom he spoke in Lubbock.

Concerning proposed conference of general officers: the correct procedure to follow if we want such a meeting is through diplomatic channels, either US Embassy in Hanoi or VN Embassy in Washington—if we want active duty general officers to participate. However, if we want retired officers, then it is a simple matter of contacting the Vietnam Veterans Organization,

which is headed by a retired general. Further, few active duty Vietnamese general officers know much about the war.

**Other issues discussed:**

1. Colonel Mike Haas' request to interview a PAVN soldier for his book. I cast this request in the context of American soldiers presenting the bravery of former enemy soldiers for the American people to understand. I will follow up with new director upon my return.
2. Sending PAVN officers to Texas Tech. Concerning this issue, the general said they do not yet have a set time for this, as he must first complete his English language training. General Uoc again emphasized that in addition to practicing English, he wanted this officer to conduct research in the Vietnam Archive.

Having completed our discussions, we left, though I am a bit perturbed that I did not get cards from any of the PAVN officers present. I must ask Pham Quang Minh to get the name of the new Director of Military History.

**Meeting with Professor Phan Huy Le (Center for Vietnamese & Intercultural Studies)**

From the MOD, I returned to the hotel to meet with Phan Huy Le. Present for this meeting was Phan Huy Le, Doan Thien Thuat, and Vo Minh Giang, all from the Center for Vietnamese and Intercultural Studies of VNU. Le and Thuat discussed a number of issues and actions as follows:

1. Important for Le to understand what the VNC needs—he will satisfy our requests. Concerning pre-1975 books—this is difficult, but not very difficult.
2. Archaeology: CVIS can organize workshop—CVIS also has record of past cooperation with other countries. CVIS can connect Professor Chatterjee with the appropriate paleontologists in Vietnam.
3. Collection for Vietnam Archive; post-1975 work no problem at all; Government documents very hard, but he will find some way.

**Joint Projects to be Considered:**

1. Situation of Vietnam studies worldwide. As a result of the 1998 conference, CVIS was tasked to assess the situation of Vietnamese studies worldwide, including extant organizations for Vietnam studies in the world, researchers worldwide, and catalog their research projects on Vietnam:  
Concerning the state of Vietnam studies in North America, VNC should study after (1) above.
2. In the field of linguistics, Thuat proposes:
  - a. Cooperation with Khanh to perfect a Vietnam for foreigners textbook
  - b. Work to establish a standard measurement of skill, i.e, a TOEFL for Vietnamese
  - c. Research to determine needs for textbook, then marketing.
3. CVIS more research than training. Many research collections. Need list of suggested research topics; exchange of faculty/research.

We closed with agreement that Phan Huy Le would develop an MOU for VNU-CVIS to see on Tuesday evening. [This did not happen, and might occur in Lubbock at a later date.] We discussed the possibility of VNC/CVIS joint letterhead for worldwide survey of Vietnamese studies.

That evening Vietnam National University hosted a dinner at the Bao Son Hotel, hosted Prior to the meal, Thi and Chancellor Montford signed the TTU-VNU MOU in a nice little ceremony, then a thoroughly enjoyable meal. I sat beside Thi.

### **3 August 1999 (Tuesday)**

While walking before breakfast this morning, Chancellor Montford discussed Phan Huy Le, whom he liked, and directed me to get him over to TTU "sooner rather than later." I have in mind that we will get our survey set up, then have him co-sign with me in Lubbock, then get the survey form out to the whole mailing list. Therefore, our goal must be to work out an appropriate survey form, design joint letterhead, and get everything organized in relatively short order, then have Le out to TTU, if he agrees.

### **Visit to Ministry of Education & Training**

At 9:00 a.m. we arrived at the Ministry of Education, where we were met by Prof. Dr. Tran Van Nhung and Dr. Le Duc Long. Nhung is Director of International Relations and Long, "Senior Expert" in International Relations.

Nhung opened by emphasizing that the Ministry of Education strongly supports cooperation with overseas universities. At present they have a big project to send Vietnamese students overseas. The SRV government will spend US \$10 million to send 500 students overseas. 1/3 undergraduate, 2/3 graduate.

Nhung therefore requests information about TTU and which fields at Tech are most strong. In addition to above program, each year SRV sends about 1000 students abroad on long-term scholarships from foreign funds.

Chancellor Montford will forward enthusiastically information about TTU. Emphasized extensive VN studies program. TTU particularly strong in business, engineering, medicine, and many other fields. TTU grants undergraduate degrees in 143 fields and graduate degrees in 156 fields.

Nhung also asked please show cost for overseas studies.

Following the Ministry of Education visit the party traveled to the US Embassy where we were met by the Deputy Chief of Mission, Dennis Harter, in the absence of the Ambassador, who is in Washington for the Jackson-Vanik Hearings.

We held an extended and pleasant discussion with Harter, who provided names of appropriate Embassy staff to contact regarding public health issues, plant genetics, and also the name of the new military attaché, LTC Frank Miller. I will contact him later about our interactions with PAVN.

### **Meeting at Ministry of Health**

After lunch, we went to Ministry of Health where we were met once again by Dr. Tran Trong Hai, Deputy Director of the International Cooperation Department (Hai is in charge of cooperation with USA).

Chancellor Montford introduced party and made general comments about the Health Sciences Center. LAIBLE then provided more detailed information about medical issues: rural health care and telemedicine.

Hai said the following health priorities have been set by the MOH:

1. **Primary Health Care;** 85% of population live in rural areas, some remote; MOH trying to improve accessibility; very important policy in Vietnam now—service for poor people.
2. **Train doctors and nurses;** standard ratio of nurses/doctors 4:1; however in Vietnam, 1.5:1. Need to train many nurses. By 2008 the government wants 40% of commune health stations to have a doctor. Top priority is to train physicians for commune level.
3. **Improve quality of service.** Hai witnessed telemedicine in Burlington, VT. Vietnam needs this, but Vietnam also needs basic equipment and people trained to use it. More than telemedicine, need health education: examples, psychiatric, traffic/home/labor injuries. 6000 KIA, 25,000 WIA annually on Vietnamese roads. This is a bigger problem even than AIDS, where 1200 have died.

Japanese Encephalitis is increasing in Vietnam:

- 300,000 doses of medicine produced annually in Vietnam
- But Vietnam needs 2-3 million doses.
- Children are at high risk

Prenatal: MOH wants expectant mothers to have three visits with a doctor during pregnancy, but in the back country women do not want to be exposed to a strange man.

**Greatest Priority: Manpower and some basic equipment.**

### **Problems:**

Doctors are too interested in business; too concerned for money, with the result that most doctors want to practice in the big cities, and none want to go to the countryside.

Chancellor Montford complimented Dr. Hai on the general health of the populace. He had seen no obese people, and exercise seems to be a national program. This launched Dr. Hai into a discussion of how best to communicate the "good health" message to the people. He said that MOH would act as the Center of Communications, but that the post office also will help broadcast to the communes. He cited the "3M" formula for success:

1M—Mind; 2M—Money; 3M—Manpower.

Laible asked if there were some specific areas in which we could help, and also that Hai put his ideas on paper so we can discuss them in detail.

Chancellor Montford then asked for proposals in writing.

Hai responded that Dr. Bach at the medical college had set up a computer information center for the college, and that maybe we could set up a pilot Internet program. Hai also mentioned that at present he is without a modem because it was hit by lightning. Hai proposed that a doctor or pharmacist be trained at TTU—either MA or Ph.D level, but first people must be trained in English.

## Medical University

Met with Dr. Ton That Bach, Dean of the Medical School

Background: This is Vietnam's oldest Medical School, founded in 1902.  
 1902-1945: School for French; 1945: Independence; 1946: School moved to Viet Bac; 1954: Returned to Hanoi. After reunification in 1975, medical university sent professors to the medical schools in Hue, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho.

Two types of medical schools: one, where associated with a university (Can Tho, Hue, Tai Nguyen, and two others, etc.) responsible to Ministry of Education. Medical schools independent of universities (Hanoi, Haiphong, HCMC) are under the Ministry of Health. Hanoi has no teaching hospital, therefore must use all Hanoi hospitals (about 8 used).

--350 new students each year (2600 candidates for 350 slots)

--six year course

--Avg. student body: 1700

--Avg. 1500 postgraduate students

Problem of new doctors: they want to stay in the cities. There are too many in the cities, and too few in the rural areas.

Vietnam's health budget is about \$5 per year per capita. Parents/students therefore must pay. Students tuition about \$100 per year.

Hanoi Medical University has just established three new faculties: Public Health, Dentistry, and Traditional Medicine. They need help to train people in public health, dentistry, and nursing. Of the latter, they need help to improve teaching methods.

They have about 60 foreign medical students each year, and will be happy to receive students and experts.

Training: need retraining for the doctors who have already been in the countryside for some years. Need to know the latest information.

Foreign Language Skills: about 75% are English language proficient, and 25% are French proficient.

At the medical university they teach only physical science. After three years, students go to a hospital to practice for an additional three years.

In summary, Dr. Bac suggested that they need the following:

1. Basic Science: they have no close cooperation with any country in this field and would very much like to establish a relationship.
2. Public Health
3. Nursing Training

He suggested that TTU have specialists come out and analyze the situation and then think about how to help.

Dinner that evening was at the Press Club at 7:00 p.m. It was an excellent western meal. Topping the guest list was LTGEN and Mrs. Uoc and Dr./Mrs. Phan Huy Le

#### **4 August 1999 (Wednesday)**

At 4:45, assembled in the lobby, checked out, and departed for the airport. At 5:30 checked in for flight to Hue with no difficulty, despite growing stack of luggage. Arrived at Hue at 7:40, met by Dr. Huynh Dinh Chien, Vice Director of International Relations, with minivan, and were transported to our hotel, the Hotel Saigon-Morin, which is located right by the Perfume River.

#### **Meeting with Hue University**

10:00: meeting with Hue University staff, Vice President Le Viet Ngu, Dr. Huynh Dinh Chien, Prof. Dr. Le Van Thuyet, Director of International Relations.

Chancellor Montford: Looking forward to increased cooperation with Vietnamese universities. Advanced medical school; satellite linkages; opportunities to bring medicine all over the world; interested in opportunities for cooperation between Hue University and TTU. Faculty interested in study and teaching in Vietnam, and want Vietnamese to study/teach at TTU.

JR then resume of contact projects:

--Meeting with Dr. Do Bang in 1998

--Phan Huy Le

- Genetic Resources Project
- Dinosaurs
- Libraries
- American Studies

Laible: medical school briefing

Vice President Ngu greeted delegation. Hue University founded in 1957; now 42 years old. After much modification Hue is now the most important training center in Central Vietnam. Five colleges, one faculty.

1. College of Hard Sciences (only one in Central Vietnam)
2. College of Pedagogy (prepares teachers for all of Central Vietnam)
3. Medical School (very proud of this college; many doctors have graduated)
4. Agriculture and Forestry
5. College of Arts (trains sculptors, painters, singers; special department for traditional music and music of the royal court)

Faculty of Economics: administration, tourism administration, agricultural economics

#### Six Research/Training Centers

- Center for Physical Chemistry Analysis
- Center for Resources and Biotechnology
- Center for Eastern Learning
- Center for Defense Sciences (National Security)
- Center for Physical Exercise
- Center for Social Sciences and Humanities

And to be established September 1999:

- Center for Clinical Investigation

Hue has 1700 staff, including 1200 teaching staff, and 35,000 students, including 12,000 full time. They grant degrees in 54 undergraduate, 24 masters, and 9 doctoral branches.

Overall quality of the university is increasing step by step. They appreciate international cooperation, including cooperation of institutions in Europe, Asia, and America. They already have established very effective collaboration with universities.

After 42 years they still have some difficulties, concentrated in these fields of work at Hue University:

1. Information and Archives for students and faculty
2. Quality of young staff. They would like to improve this by sending faculty abroad to study. Quality of Staff—very important.
3. Research: They are trying to fund research projects that would serve the community.

Ngu expressed the hope that today's meeting would be a beginning step for further cooperation and that hopefully we could get something started.

After this meeting, lunch at the hotel, then Liable and Hudson went to the medical school. Chancellor Montford, Reckner, and Khanh went to Hue University's social sciences library, where we met with Miss Ngo Thi Hien, the director. The library itself was much like the libraries I had toured in the past: housed in an un-air conditioned former French colonial building, comprised of narrow shelves loaded with books, all of which seem to be in poor condition.

In our discussions, Miss Hien highlighted her need for shipment of books to Hue, and also material for restoration of books. The Chancellor advised her that Dr. Ron Frankum would organize a course in Hue next year.

After lunch, the Chancellor, Khanh, and I toured the Citadel. Touring the Citadel was an exciting experience. Walking the long, walled lanes, I at one point felt a similarity in atmosphere with the ruins at Pompeii, though they date from two millennia earlier. Each of the surviving structures is, in itself, a relic of world stature. However, the concentration of so many within the walls is truly remarkable. There was so much it was difficult to take it all in, particularly in the short period of time available.

#### **5 August 1999 (Thursday)**

##### **Phu Xuan Private University**

At 8:00 a.m. we went to the Phu Xuan Private University, where we were met by Dr. Dung Dinh Khoi of the university and Dr. Nguyen Diem Ngo, the founder, and Do Quang Thuyen, one of the board members of the university. Ngo explained that the university was being established to meet the needs of the great majority of students who are unable to gain admission to state-run universities. Indeed, about 85% of applicants are turned away by the major universities.

Everything relating to the establishment of the university has been difficult, Ngo says. However, now they have two facilities in downtown Hue—the one we visited, which covers 360 square meters and included a four story building, and another campus one kilometer away that was 1400 square meters; almost two acres of land in total.

Ngo reported that they have received great support from the local government because their goal was to meet the needs of the people. Local government assisted with paperwork for establishment and now they anticipate that the central government in Hanoi will formally approve of the university. They would like assistance from the rest of the world to get the university up and running, and in that context the TTU visit was very good.

Chancellor Montford introduced our delegation, which he said was here to explore collaboration with Vietnamese universities. TTU is interested in exchanging faculty and students and is interested in dramatically expanding its program of Vietnamese and Indochina studies.

Ngo discussed the establishment of an admission test for students. These tests are set by the Ministry of Education and Training. There ensued an extended discussion of admission exams and the need to consider other factors, such as student motivation, when admitting students.

Ngo said that as Phu Xuan will be the first private university, their needs were many:

1. Need facility (material) to train students
2. Need library, examination rooms and other means of education
3. Need qualified teaching staff

As for fields of teaching, Phu Xuan has not yet received a license from the SRV government. When the university is approved it will teach English, French, Nom (classic Vietnamese in Chinese-type characters), Finance, Accounting, Business Administration. Later, Phu Xuan will have other fields, including Vietnamese studies, Vietnamese History, and the History of Hue.

Chancellor Montford: I will send considerable information about distance learning. From time to time it might be possible for Dr. Reckner to station a faculty member to teach English. TTU is serious about this offer to help.

Ngo then requested advice concerning the best way to conduct admissions tests.

Chancellor Montford: TTU examines a number of factors. For example, whether a student is serious or not. Serious students often do better than those with high examination scores.

Dr. Dung Dinh Khoi: Welcomed the delegation. Contacted JR a year ago by mail. Now he is happy to talk directly. Mentioned European universities with which they had contact. TTU first U.S. university they have welcomed. Today, on behalf of the Board of Directors of Phu Xuan, I have the following suggestions:

1. Concerning the library, we request your assistance in acquiring three kinds of documents:

Textbooks in all fields;  
Magazines relating to technical sciences;  
Books/magazines relating to public education.

2. Phu Xuan would like to apply the model of US universities to its organization. Khoi had visited the University of Illinois at Carbondale in 1973. Now he expressed the hope that in the very near future the university would enjoy cooperation with TTU. Closing thought: Khoi would like to establish a center for American studies.

Upon completion of our meetings, we returned to the Saigon-Morin Hotel where we met Vo Duc Tam, who acted as our guide for the remainder of the day. Tam (pronounced "Tom") spoke reasonably good English. He is the son a former ARVN NCO who was the clerk of a court-martial board. As with all children of former ARVN soldiers, Tam has been discriminated

against, and has not been permitted to travel abroad for education. He is very keen to get a scholarship for graduate study in the US. I told him to send me his c.v. and academic records, and we would see what we could do.

### **Visit to Tombs of the Nguyen Emperors**

The rest of the day was given over to visits to the three of the tombs of the Nguyen emperors who ruled Vietnam from 1802 to 1945. The first of these emperors, Gia Long, unfortunately employed the French to help him overcome his internal rivals, and thus sowed the seeds for Vietnamese eventual domination. By the mid-1880s, the French were in complete control and though they permitted the royal court to continue, it had no actual power. Visiting the tombs had been an ambition of mine for many years, though one I had never before been able to realize. We began with the tomb of Tu Duc, which is located about 15 kilometers or so from Hue. In order to reach it from the highway, we had to take a small passenger ferry across the Perfume River.

The site itself is very well preserved, constructed in the traditional Vietnamese style, and spreading over several acres. It was an impressive monument; one obviously built with much labor, probably all of it forced. Beautifully engineered moats filled with lotuses surrounded the main site, while in one of the water features was a small artificial island where, I am told, the imperial staff stocked animals for the Emperor's pleasure whenever he felt like hunting. As the island is little more than an acre in size, I assume it would take little skill and even less effort to actually hunt the critters down.

The structures on the site are most beautiful, and in the main court in front of each of the tombs we visited, stone soldiers, elephants and other members of the imperial retinue stand in permanent attention, presumably awaiting the orders of their deceased emperor.

Our next stop was the tomb of the Emperor Khai Dinh, who died in 1919. This tomb is remarkable particularly for the architectural style, which is a combination of European and Vietnamese, perhaps reflecting the fact that by this period the French had already dominated Vietnam for more than 30 years. The tomb is situated on a high hill, giving it a most commanding position. Once again, stone soldiers, elephants and other retinue stand in permanent guard.

After lunch, we visited yet one more tomb, and then the Te Dam Pagoda, where we had an interview with the head monk, the Venerable Thich Chi Mau. While a young monk—hardly more than a boy—served tea, we engaged in a discussion about religious freedom in Vietnam. Thich Chi Mau began by asserting that they did have religious freedom in Vietnam: that people were free to worship. However, he then went on to report that while the people were free to worship, the religious leadership were severely restricted. He was not permitted to go beyond the village in which the pagoda was located. And other head monks were forbidden to visit with him. Additionally, some of his young monks, who had been sent off to Hue University to study, had been involved in a protest there. That was several years ago. They remain in house arrest in their family homes, and have not been permitted to return to the pagoda.

I was rather surprised by the openness of this discussion. The restrictions are a reflection, I suspect of the government's concern about the political potential of the Buddhist leadership. They had shown, in 1963, that they were capable of mustering mass support and destabilizing the government of Ngo Dinh Diem. Therefore, I suppose, the current government must view the leadership as a potential threat.

To cap off our afternoon, we made a visit to Tam's family's home, to meet with his father and mother. It was a thoroughly delightful opportunity to experience village life in Vietnam. The family home was small, but surrounded with fruit trees, and in the back was a small pig sty with a sow who had recently had a litter of twelve. The home seemed quite comfortable by Vietnamese standards, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to meet the former ARVN soldier, though the discussion never reached the issue of his treatment after the end of the war.

### **6 August 1999 (Friday)**

Checked out of the hotel at 7:45. En route Phu Bai airport and trip to Saigon. At 9:55 we arrived at Saigon after an uneventful flight. Happy to see Phu Van Nguyen and Khanh's brother-in-law Phuong there. Fortunately, all luggage arrived safely and we proceeded to the Renaissance New World Hotel.

Saigon was, as usual, very much alive and bustling, and in many ways far more engaging than Hanoi and Hue. Familiarity, I suspect, is part of the cause. We drove past the headquarters of the former ARVN joint general staff and along streets with which I have been familiar for thirty years. Thong Nhut is as graceful as ever, though now renamed Duong Le Duan. On the way in we also drove past the former presidential palace, Le Cercle Sportif, and the park beyond, where, in 1969, I recollect watching Vietnamese Boy Scouts camping. But there is more to it than just familiarity. Saigon is more alive. It is cleaner than it ever was during the war, and it is more bustling and aggressive than all the other Vietnamese cities.

### **Visit to Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City**

After lunch we went to VNU Ho Chi Minh City, where we were met by Professor Tran Chi Dao, President of VNU-HCM, Prof. Nguyen Ngoc Giao, VP for Research and International Relations, and Truong Quang Duoc, Vice-Director, International Relations, and Vice Rector Nguyen Quang Dien.

Professor Dao introduced his officials and observed that he had visited Texas A&M in 1996 and was interested in the US model of universities.

Chancellor Montford introduced TTU party and said he was interested in expanding relations with Vietnamese universities. He is interested in placing additional students and faculty in Vietnam and receiving students and faculty from Vietnam. He is interested to have grad students visit Vietnam to gain first hand experience. It is possible they could teach English in Saigon.

Chancellor mentioned TTU "distance learning" capabilities and that we are running an MBA program via distance learning in China. Chancellor Montford is interested in exploring opportunities mutually beneficial to both universities.

Dao: There will be a lot of challenges.

**Vietnam Studies.** Here it is possible to cooperate. VNU-HCMC has been working for four years with UC Berkeley. Their exchange of documents/faculty is well developed. I believe we can develop the same thing with TTU.

**Student Exchange.** It will be easier to get U.S. students here than to get Vietnamese students to the U.S. Visa application procedures much easier to get U.S. students to Vietnam.

**Finance.** This will be more difficult for Vietnamese. And there is the issue of the TOEFL.

Additionally, it is very costly to attend a 4 year college program in the U.S. Dao would like to develop a degree program with a U.S. university in which 2 years of the program could be completed in HCMC, then 2 years in the U.S. Of course, the first 2 years would have to be up to U.S. standards.

Dao suggested the possibility of mutual accreditation so Vietnamese students can go to the U.S. with credits from Vietnam. They are working on such an arrangement with UC Sacramento.

One difficulty for Vietnamese students is that in the application process they must give evidence of ability to support themselves financially. This is very difficult. Or relatives must give proof they are able to support the student.

The English language requirement also is difficult. Must pass TOEFL with score of 500 even 550 depending on institution.

**Proposal:** That we develop a program so we can have TOEFL test here: for example, twice a year. This would greatly reduce the cost for students. University of Wisconsin at Madison is offering a sort of international TOEFL—but this test is only recognized by the University of Wisconsin.

Concerning the distance learning program: This is quite possible. VNU HCMC is already developing Internet connections. But it would be important to calculate the cost for students. This would include all fees, even Internet use.

At the beginning, Dao thought this would not attract many students, but that it was promising. Certainly the faculty are very interested, but we are challenged, re: equipment.

Nguyen Quang Dien then spoke. He welcomed Chancellor Montford and the party, and especially James Reckner, who is very close to us with his Vietnam program. Two years ago, two VNU-HCMC faculty members went to TTU for a conference, and thus we know about TTU. The Vietnam Center has a large collection of documents. Our two institutions should collaborate in research on Vietnam—past, present, and future.

VNU-HCMC will welcome TTU/VNC students interested in our history, culture, etc. We have already developed cooperation with Harvard.

JR then spoke about the American Studies project.

Professor Nguyen Ngoc Giao then expressed the hope that, as TTU has “technological” base implied by its name, it would find ways to cooperate in engineering and technology.

Jim Laible then presented explanation of telemedicine, and Chancellor Montford spoke of distance learning.

Dao expressed considerable interest in distance learning, then discussed the establishment of VNU, and the difficulties of melding seven universities into one. He observed that VNU needs to find partners to help them.

Dao then discussed libraries. He had visited the University of Kentucky’s William Young Library in April 1999 and was very much impressed. But Vietnamese universities cannot afford such facilities. The issues most important to VNU-HCMC are organizational structures and management systems that would enable them to provide the best service to readers.

### **Visit to University of Social Sciences and Humanities**

At this point, Jim Laible and Lynne Hudson departed to visit the medical school. The remainder of the delegation crossed over to the VNU University of Social Sciences, where we were met by Vice Rector Nguyen Van Tai, Le Van Quang (History), Tran Dinh Lam (International Relations) Nguyen Ngoc Linh (VN Studies) and the librarian, Dr. Bui Loan Thuy.

JR gave a report on VNC programs and studies.

Tai introduced the officials and thanked TTU for undertaking projects. They would like a counterpart exchange with TTU. And although (or because) JR highlighted cooperation with Phan Huy Le, they wanted a “special approach” for VNU-HCMC. They want to conduct their own research, though they have a good relationship with Phan Huy Le.

VNU-HCMC has more contact with foreign countries than VNU-Hanoi. The proposed American Studies project is very interesting to them as they would like to expand their American studies and through this they would cooperate. Scientists also could find some cooperation on scientific projects.

Chancellor Montford: We are very appreciative of this hospitality extended to us today. My presence demonstrates the strong dedication of the TTU Board of Regents to expanding collaboration. We are here to listen to your needs and explain our needs. TTU has the largest collection of Vietnam documents in the United States. I am firmly committed to further expansion. I ask you to “keep the heat on” Reckner for American Studies.

Tai: We would like to focus on American Studies. In the past, we have had no American Studies, but now we want to establish a major department of American Studies in this university. Currently we teach American history, geography, and culture, but they are taught in different departments, and we need a US-VN relations course, which would focus on the present day. If we are to establish such a department, we will need more professors and some assistance.

We already have a Memorandum of Understanding. From here we can build up our relationship in the future. I believe we will succeed in this field, but we will need help to establish American Studies. We will need books and documents.

Chancellor Montford: How are you fixed for English professors?

Tai: Not enough. We plan to send staff abroad for further training.

Chancellor Montford: Has idea to send Ph.D students to study Vietnamese and teach English.

Quang: Expressed appreciation of TTU, especially our invitation for him to attend our conference. After that visit to TTU, he had an idea to open American Studies at VNU-HCMC. He submitted a proposal to Tai and hopes the project will be supported by TTU. He added that students were interested, and wrote many theses about the United States. He was supposed to learn about all of the documents at the Vietnam Archive when he visited, and he would like time to explore the Archive. The library and the history department has many documents TTU needs to have. One of the most important projects at this point, he thought, was for the Vietnamese to learn English and for Americans to learn Vietnamese.

That evening we attended a dinner hosted by VNU-HCMC at a local seafood restaurant. The meal was excellent and the atmosphere of genuine friendship markedly different from Hue.

### **7 August 1999 (Saturday)**

My 59<sup>th</sup> Birthday! I note that also spent my 29<sup>th</sup> birthday here, as well as my 31<sup>st</sup>. I just missed spending my 24<sup>th</sup> here, at the time of the Tonkin Gulf Incident—and would have had I not received orders to OCS.

At 5:30, we all went for a short walk through the town—down Tu Do Street to the waterfront then past the statue of Tran Hung Dao and the Vietnamese Navy HQ, and then up to Thong Nhut, past the old US Embassy site. Last year the old building was in the process of being torn down. This year a new US Consulate stands on the site, occupying only a small portion of

the land. The original wall, with round guard boxes remains, freshly painted. The gun slits in the guard stations, however, have been filled in with cement. We continued on to the palace, where a Russian-built tank is on display, then around past the monument to revolutionary film makers. A sign with Marilyn Monroe displaying her ample figure remains in delightful juxtaposition, somewhat overshadowing the revolutionary fervor implied in the monument.

From there, we walked through the park and made our way down Le Thanh Ton, past the market, back to the hotel. A short word about the market: the area facing Le Thanh Ton specialized in flowers, flower arrangements, and fruit, with each stall, though humble, exquisitely arranged, with fruit stacked on precise pyramids and flowers in perfect order.

### **Visit to General Sciences Library**

After breakfast we went to the General Sciences Library, where we were met by Huynh Ngoc Suong, the director. Mrs. Suong is a woman of 65, petite even by Vietnamese standards, but I suspect she is a pretty tough boss. Suong apologized because the library was closed for the summer and thus we couldn't see it in use. Also, everything is now disorderly, as considerable work was underway.

The library is the oldest one in HCMC, having been established in 1868. At that time there were many small libraries along the same street on which the library is now located. The current building was begun in 1968 and completed in 1972, with U.S. assistance. All equipment, books, and furniture are from the U.S. After "liberation" they tried to preserve and use the facility.

The library houses many books and magazines from previous times. In 1954, at the time of the partition of the country, the main source for books and magazines, however, was from the South. The library also has a collection of very rare books, including one written by Alexandre De Rhodes in 1607, early twentieth century magazines, mainly in French, and all kinds of film.

The library has connections with 40 organizations in 16 countries. It houses 700,000 volumes, including 1500 magazines and maintains 650 current subscriptions. It is the largest library in the country.

Chancellor Montford: Do you have problems with preservation?

Suong: We have lots of problems. We have a lot of valuable early twentieth century works but do not know how to preserve them—French, Vietnamese, English. Social Sciences and Humanities students would like to conduct research but we cannot accommodate them all. We have only one microfilm reader, for example, and only one scanner. They have nothing on microfilm and need a microfilm machine.

Chancellor Montford raised the possibility of a joint microfilming project.

Suong: This is a very good idea, but we would need the permission of the Ministry of Education and Training.

Chancellor Montford: TTU would be very interested in helping to preserve some of these documents.

Suong: We have from 800-1000 readers daily. It is difficult to preserve books for readers.

Chancellor Montford: It would be very good to put these books and magazines on microfilm. If we could make copies, TTU will pay to do it and make copies for the General Sciences Library.

Suong: Requested listing of books in the Vietnam Archive and of dissertations.

### **War Remnants Museum**

After departing the library we proceeded to the former presidential palace and had a rather thorough tour of that facility, and then continued on to the War Remnants Museum.

The Director of the War Remnants Museum, Ms. Nguyen Tuyet Van, had corresponded with the Vietnam Center inviting a visit. The exterior of the museum includes a collection of US military vehicles, aircraft, and guns. Inside the museum is the so-called "Hall of Truths" (should be called the "Hall of Half-Truths") was a collection of photographic displays and statistics regarding U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Not the slightest effort to present the other side. Subsequent rooms contain photos of Americans allegedly committing atrocities. My Lai much highlighted. Again, no effort at balance. One room contains all U.S. weapons, but not a single communist weapon. Then there was the Agent Orange display, which included actual deformed fetuses, etc., etc.

At this point, the director, Van, arrived and we visited with her in her office. JR explained our interest in building a museum, but that we were seeking balance. Therefore, while we would portray My Lai, we would also address the communist massacre at Hue (at this point, Ms. Van's face had grown very long). We emphasized that we seek all points of view, spending thousands of dollars annually to preserve materials from Hanoi, but also other opinions.

Chancellor Montford indicated an interest in exchanging documents with the War Remnants Museum. Van, in return, expressed an interest in our anti-war collection.

Chancellor Montford: Perhaps we can work out an exchange of documents.

The evening's meal was an event at the Rex, hosted by the Chancellor. Dao and Thai arrived with their wives. The meal itself was excellent, with a menu prepared in advance for "Texas University", which caused quite a bit of good humor. Once again, we were entertained by

bright young folks who have mastered the traditional musical instruments of Vietnam. The atmosphere of the dinner was extremely cordial and we felt quite pleased with our guests.

### **8 August 1999 (Sunday)**

We boarded the hydrofoil at the waterfront about 7:15 and at 7:30 got underway, sailing down the Saigon River. The merchant ships moored along the riverfront were a reflection of the SRV's orientation. They flew the flags of Iran, the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (North Korea), Myanmar, the People's Republic of China. A few others flew flags of convenience, most notably the Panamanian colors. The ride was remarkably smooth, despite the fact the boat was already on its foils and proceeding with considerable speed.

Interestingly, the route followed—in part— was a route I took in December 1969 when the USN handed over 60 River Patrol Boats to the South Vietnamese Navy, which then went on a tour of the Mekong Delta. Therefore, it was familiar ground.

We sailed south past the Nha Be fuel storage farms whose security was part of my responsibility at the end of 1969 when I was Senior Advisor to the Naval Command of the Capital Military District (Hai Quan Biet Khu Tu Do). Then past the former US naval base at Nha Be, where I met then-Commander Jerry Wages in 1969. Nha Be is still in use, with two large minesweepers moored there, along with a small floating dry dock. Also noted a small boat up on a slip. Managed to get photos as we passed by—should be interesting to Admiral Zumwalt and a few other naval types.

From Nha Be we sailed down the broad Soi Rap, keeping Can Gioc District on our right hand, and in due course entered the Vam Co (I can imagine how my old PBR sailors would recognize the route). At the appropriate point we made a sharp left turn into the Cho Gao Canal and then barreled our way through at high speed, kicking up a wake which set all smaller craft to dancing.

Traffic was heavy along the canal, but the skipper maintained speed, relying on his air horn just about as much as a normal Saigon taxi driver would. Many children gathered along the shore in various villages to wave at the passengers, or to run along as we passed by. Apparently, we provide a form of entertainment for them even as they were entertaining us.

By this point I had taken station on the cabin roof aft, where I could get a clear view of our progress. However the speed was so great that I was reluctant to look too far to the left or right for fear that the wind would whip my glasses off.

By 9:30 we reached My Tho on the Mekong River, where we stopped very briefly to discharge and pick up passengers right in the center of town. I looked in vain to spot some of the fine seafood restaurants we visited in 1969, but the scene has changed much and while they most likely are still there, I couldn't spot them.

From My Tho we sailed upriver and then transited the Mang Thit Canal and then the Nickolai, which brought us to the Hau River (Bassac) quite near to Can Tho. We moored at Can Tho promptly at 1130. The mooring point, conveniently, was quite near the floating restaurant where we had scheduled lunch.

We were met at this point by the Can Tho University delegation, which included the Rector, Tran Thuong Tuan, and Diep Kim Chi. Also present were Drs. Nguyen Minh Chao from the Southern Fruit Research Institute (SOFRI) and Bui Ba Bong from the Cuu Long Delta Rice Research Institute. Dr. Pham Hung Luc of Can Tho University Medical School was also present as was Dr. Le Quang Minh, Vice Rector and Dean at CTU, and a member of the National Assembly..

We had a delightful lunch sitting outside the restaurant. There was a breeze sufficient to make the situation quite pleasant. After lunch we drove through Can Tho to CTU, where Dr. Luc gave us a short guided tour. During this tour, Dr. Luc raised a number of issues with the Chancellor:

He would like to have someone do a Ph.D in public health at TTU.

He needs to establish a clinical epidemiology unit at CTU.

His basic lab lacks equipment for research, including physiology, pathology, etc. He lacks equipment and also needs an expert to help CTU improve.

Needs to improve medical English among faculty and students. About 70% of the students speak some English.

Luc recommends that a group of scientists come to CTU to meet with staff, assess the situation, and teach and otherwise work with staff.

At this point, Jim Laible and Lynne Hudson stayed with Dr. Luc while the remainder of the party toured the campus. I was most impressed with a new student dormitory, and this is the first of 12 to be built. The university, lacking funds, approached individual provinces they serve to produce the facilities for the students from their own provinces. And they have agreed to do so. The initiative displayed in this approach stands in marked contrast to the attitudes apparent elsewhere.

Also toured the new student cafeteria and experimental farm, before going on to the School of Agriculture where we met with the deans of the various faculties:

Yen: Technology

Nam: Economics and Business

Duong: Education

Than: Science

Kinh: Plant Science

Chien: Information Technology

(Full names were not given, and cards were not exchanged, so this information is incomplete.)

Chancellor Montford: TTU one of the largest universities in Texas, with approximately 27,000 students. TTU offers 142 undergraduate and 153 graduate degrees. At present TTU has

about 1000 foreign students from 99 countries. We are particularly strong in history, biology, agriculture, agricultural sciences, economics, law, and medicine. TTU also has the largest Vietnam Archive outside of the Library of Congress, and we plan to expand significantly the Indochina Studies program. Texas Tech's Board of Regents supports this program. Chancellor Montford is impressed with CTU. He hopes we will be able to establish new collaboration with faculty and students.

**New Programs:** Suggested possibility of TTU doctoral students teaching English and learning Vietnamese at CTU, and open TTU to any CTU discipline. With regard to financial problems, TTU has pioneered distance learning, and is now the best in the United States. We are here to get acquainted, and to underscore the importance of the TTU and Vietnam initiative.

**JR:** Commented on Vietnam Studies, American Studies, and Library courses.

**Tuan:** Emphasized the need for library development, development of medical training. 22% of the population covered by CTU, but resources are very limited. Tuan would like to cooperate with TTU in technology and biotechnology. "Our dream is to create an international training center for Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian students.. But we do not have enough resources.

**Chancellor Montford:** Discussed telemedicine, recommended that we bring the Dean of the Medical School to Can Tho. Currently TTU MBA in China via satellite—explained details. Technology gives us linkages. Chancellor looks forward to sending a team to Can Tho.

On the TTU side there is a hunger, an excitement to learn about Vietnam. Chancellor seeks CTU help with Vietnam program, for students and faculty. You have my commitment. We will go back home and see what we can do. I will have a meeting when I get home to discuss these issues. We will provide, too, a printout of materials in our archives.

Tuan closed the meeting by reemphasizing CTU interest in American Studies, medical education, and distance learning.

At the close of the meeting we were rejoined by Laible and Hudson and Dr. Luc.

We departed CTU at about 3:30 p.m., using CTU minivan and escorted by Dr. Le Quang Minh, who also is a national assemblyman. Thanks to Minh's presence we were able to go to the head of the queues for the ferry to cross the Hau and Mekong Rivers. As the line was incredibly long for the latter, this was a great saving of time for us.

Even with the short stops for the ferries and the good road conditions, the trip back was long. The sun was setting by the time we reached the My Tho cutoff, having stopped just one brief moment for the briefest look at the monument to the Battle of Ap Bac. The sun was at a very bad angle for photos, but I tried anyway, particularly for Dave Toczek, whose thesis examined the battle.

We stopped for a brief visit with Dr. Chau at the Southern Fruit Research Institute to get a “feel” for their organization and then continued on toward Saigon.

Darkness fell rapidly, it seemed, and we were in complete darkness by the time we reached Tan An. The amount of activity on the highway continued very heavy, with the added aspect that not all of the incoming traffic had its headlights on. Many motorcycles only flashed their lights as we neared.

Eventually, we reached Cho Lon about 7:30, with traffic incredibly heavy. Thousands of riders were out promenading and carrying SRV flags to celebrate Vietnam’s victory over the Philippines 2-0 in soccer. The roundabouts as we approached central Saigon were truly sights to behold—there were simply uninterrupted flows of motorcycles—10, 15 deep going around one another in celebration.

As an aside, enroute Dr. Minh, the national assemblyman, offered us an impromptu lesson in Vietnamese government, discussing in some detail all he had to go through to be elected to the National Assembly. He, by the way, is a former pre-1975 classmate of Henry Nguyen.

Upon our arrival at the hotel, we were met by Dr. Dao Cong Tien, who had flown down from Hanoi specially to meet us. I was very pleased to see him again, as we had gotten on well during last year’s visit. We spoke for an hour or so, principally about the current scheme to sue US tobacco companies on behalf of former ARVN soldiers who smoked American cigarettes. As this was absolutely the first expression of concern I had ever heard for the welfare of former ARVN or their relatives, I was more than a little skeptical. Frankly, at first I thought he was joking—but he wasn’t. Should he ever be successful in this enterprise, I most certainly wouldn’t hold my breath until any former ARVN saw any benefit.

### **9 August 1999 (Monday)**

Our last morning in Vietnam. At 5:30 departed for a morning walk with the Chancellor. We walked through the bus depot and down a side street to a canal, and thence to the Saigon Riverfront and along to the statue of Tran Hung Dao. From there, along Hai Ba Trung to Le Duan and thence to the palace. Then back to the hotel via the marketplace, arriving back at 6:30.

By 8:45 we are all packed and assembled in the lobby for the trip to Tan Son Nhut. Pleasant drive through the city, with final sights, sounds, and smells of South Vietnam.

The airport departure area is a mob scene. For each departing Vietnamese there are a dozen or more family members, many in tears. Great anguish at parting for an indefinite period. A great many of the travelers have only cardboard boxes to hold their belongings, on which they have carefully written their American addresses. The check-in procedure is complex and drawn out. First, we must check in with the airline, then pay an airport tax. Then there is a queue for customs, after which you take your hand-held luggage through security. Then there is someone to collect your airport tax receipt. After that, you go up a flight of stairs to immigration and

passport control, after which you are finally checked in. It is the most complex and time-consuming procedure I have ever seen.

As we began boarding, Chancellor Montford was pulled aside and told that customs wanted to check one of his bags, and so away he went. He was back in a few minutes to say it was one of my bags they wanted to look at, and so I rushed off. Back down near the starting point, I opened the bag for them. They were only concerned about the pottery I was carrying—wanted to ensure that it wasn't antique. As I had purchased everything new at Bat Trang, there was no difficulty, and I was back in time to board the flight.

As it turned out, there was no need to rush. A passenger canceled out at the last minute, after his/her luggage had been stowed on board. So it took nearly an hour to get the bags off and get underway. This jeopardized the Taipei connection, but we were pleased to learn that they were holding the flight until we arrived. Thus, after a very quick transfer, we boarded China Airlines flight 006 for Los Angeles.

En route, the Chancellor gave me some instructions to carry out: I am to write a grant proposal to the Plum Foundation for a total of \$20,000. The money is to be used as follows: 100 1 year scholarships @ \$100 each=\$10,000; Priority of scholarships to go to veterans of the war, North and South, their children and grandchildren, or otherwise excellent students who lack the financial resources to attend university. An additional \$10,000 for 100 scholarships for medical students, with the same instructions as above.

Separate from above: \$8,000 to be used as follows: 10 \$100 scholarships for each of 4 universities = \$4,000. \$1000 to each university for library improvement.

For the medical schools, we should immediately inventory South Park and send unneeded equipment, attempting to send equal amounts to each school.

For the Board of Regents: Chancellor Montford to emphasize the huge international implications of this project.

Dinner at Montfords to include: The Montfords, The Laibles, The Hudsons, Khanhs, the Reckners, the Cluffs, the Frankums, the Haragans, and the Smiths. Linda to schedule after Khanh's return from Vietnam on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Chancellor also wants to send letter, small gifts to leading people. JR to prepare list and letter.

For the next Vietnam trip, include: Kupersmith, Schmidly, Abernathy (Ag Sci). Also for the next time, we will start in Can Tho and work our way north.

The Chancellor wants to get some big federal grant for this. He also wants photos for a slide show.

Re: Tam. Check with Gary Bell to see what is available.