

# Friends of The Vietnam Center

<http://www.ttu.edu/~vietnam>

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## VIETNAM CENTER BUILDING PLANS (PAGE 4)

### THIRD TRIENNIAL VIETNAM SYMPOSIUM

The Vietnam Center hosted its 3rd Triennial Vietnam Symposium, 15-17 April, with a concurrent visit of the moving Vietnam Wall, "The Wall That Heals," to the Texas Tech campus, 14-18 April 1999. In conjunction with these events, The Vietnam Center mounted two art exhibitions at Texas Tech University's International Cultural Center, and Texas Tech University Chancellor John T. Montford unveiled plans for a new, \$20 million Vietnam Center building to be built on the Texas Tech campus, near the university library. Recognizing the significance of these events, Lubbock Mayor Windy Sitton proclaimed the week of 12 April "Study Vietnam Week" in Lubbock, Texas.

The Vietnam symposium was attended by a remarkable range of US and Vietnamese officials, Vietnam veterans, and academics. Principal amongst the

American military participants were General William B. Rosson, USA (Ret) and Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., USN (Ret). Representing the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were Lieutenant General Nguyen Dinh Uoc, the Director of Hanoi's Military History Institute and Senior Colonel Vo Dinh Quang, the military attaché of the SRV Embassy in Washington. The former Republic of Vietnam [South Vietnam] was represented by former South Vietnamese Prime Minister General Nguyen Khanh, former Ambassador Bui Diem, ARVN Brigadier General Tran Van Nhut and others. Academics representing all political points of view also participated.

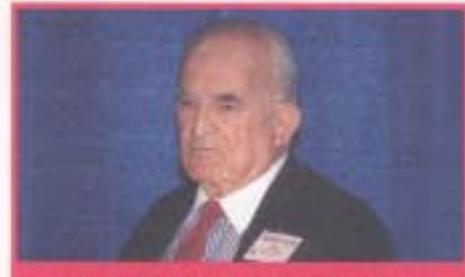
Some seventy papers were presented over the three day period of the symposium, which closed on Saturday night, April 17, with an evening of West Texas entertainment.

### PEOPLE'S ARMY OF VIETNAM PARTICIPATION

For several years, The Vietnam Center has invited officials of the People's Army of Vietnam to participate in our meetings. This year we were pleased to have the participation of Lt. Gen. Nguyen Dinh Uoc, an officer with more than fifty years' active duty,

General Uoc was accompanied by Senior Colonel Vo Dinh Quang, the Vietnamese defense attaché in Washington, and Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Hong Quan, from the Office of External Affairs of the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense.

### DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS OF THE WAR



General William B. Rosson, USA (Ret)  
photo by Neal Ulevich



Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. USN (Ret)  
photo by Neal Ulevich



Senior Colonel Vo Dinh Quang (left) and  
Lieutenant General Nguyen Dinh Uoc  
photo by Neal Ulevich

## Vietnam Symposium, Memorial Stirs Contrasting Reactions

KARA ALTENBACHER, LUBBOCK Avalanche-Journal

**O**n one side of Lubbock on Thursday [April 15], emotions were held in check as a Vietnamese general criticized the actions of the United States in the Vietnam War, referring to "American aggressors."

Across town at Texas Tech, emotions flowed freely as local residents gathered at the traveling replica of the Vietnam Memorial, some looking for the names of friends and family, others reflecting on the 56,000 [58,000] names etched into "The Wall that Heals".

During the opening panel discussion at Tech's third triennial Vietnam symposium at the Holiday Inn - Lubbock Plaza, three top military officers —two of whom fought against each other in the same battle— compared their perspectives of the war.

As Lt. Gen. Nguyen Dinh Uoc, an active-duty North Vietnamese officer since the early 1950s, delivered a paper on the history of the Vietnam War, retired U.S. Gen. William B. Rosson scribbled notes, his face showing his distaste for what he was hearing. Retired U.S. Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt sat back listening, his face showing no reaction to Uoc's statements.

Uoc commented on the significance of sitting next to Rosson, a battlefield foe. "That means the world has changed," he said.

"Time is passing," Uoc said, "and it offers an opportunity to look at (the Vietnam War) much more objectively, truthfully and

deeply. The most important thing I think is to focus on the goals of [the] war on both sides."

His talk went on to criticize U.S. support "of a rotten (South Vietnamese) administration."

"Was it just wrong United States policy?" he asked.

Audience members, many of whom were Vietnam War veterans from the United States and South Vietnam, were conspicuously quiet, heeding the warnings by Vietnam Center director James Reckner that this week's symposium was to include no demonstrations. Information would flow freely and easily, he admonished.

Uoc's half-hour presentation went on to list what he said was the only correct American decision: President Lyndon Johnson's decision not to commit additional troops in 1968.

Uoc said U.S. war objectives were unclear and that "if the United States truly believed in the ideology of democracy" it would have accepted a 1956 election in which Vietnamese people were to vote whether they wanted a unified communist country.

"Vietnam truly desired peace," he said. "The United States truly enforced war."

After Uoc's presentation, Zumwalt said, "What history has to begin to understand is that our concept (of the war) and that of the North Vietnamese were like two tectonic plates that collided."

Uoc pointed out the ability of a small country like North Vietnam to defeat a superpower such as the United States. Zumwalt said that although the United States may have failed in Vietnam, its anti-Communist strategy worked.

"Our overall grand strategy has been successful," Zumwalt said. "Eastern Europe is free. The Soviet Union is no more."

Rosson said, "Our goal was an independent, non-communist South Vietnam. I think we have to concede they (the communist Vietnamese) pursued (their) goal fully and successfully."

Across town at the traveling wall,

Pete Chavez Jr. said he didn't mind Uoc's presence in Lubbock.

"You can't blame (the Vietnamese) people. They had a job to do just like those people," he said, pointing to the names on the wall, one of which was his cousin's.

Chavez acknowledged that he didn't support America's war position more than two decades ago, "but now, you look at all those names," he said, wiping a tear from his eye.

"You think we were wrong by being there, but these guys couldn't protest," he said. "We could. You have to give them tribute. When Uncle Sam called, these guys answered."

James Barner, an Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War who is now a corrections officer, lamented what he called "a waste".

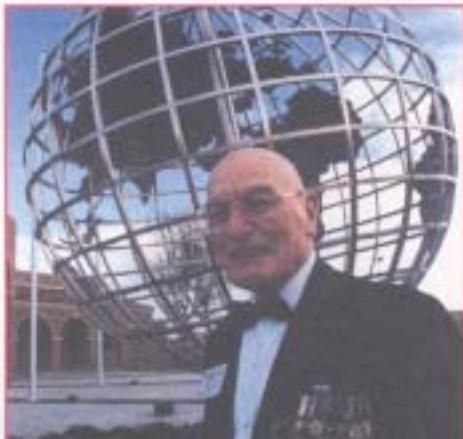
"56,000 people died, and we didn't prove anything. We came home losers," he said. "We went there for a good cause and forgot what that cause was."

Harold Broadstreet, a retired career Marine, came to reminisce about friends whose names are on the wall. He was stationed in Okinawa, Japan, during the war because a military family provision prevented him and his brother from both serving in Vietnam.

"It's emotional because you remember these individuals and their families," he said. "This wall is impressive."



Left to right: Major General Milton Adams, USAF (Ret); Lieutenant General Nguyen Dinh Uoc, PAVN; General William B. Rosson, USA (Ret); Vice Admiral Emmett H. Tidd, USN (Ret)



Brigadier General Ted Mataxis in front of Texas Tech's International Cultural Center  
photo by Neal Ulevich

## ARCHIVE RECEIVES MAJOR COLLECTION OF RVN RECORDS

**T**hanks to the efforts of former Ambassador Bui Diem, The Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University has received a major collection of materials related to the Republic of Vietnam.

The materials, the gift of Mr. Mai Trung Ngoc of Paris, arrived in 98 boxes, and include a near complete set of *Cong Bao Viet Nam Cong Hoa* [Official Records of the Republic of Vietnam]. The materials received run from 1948, while Vietnam was

still under the French, up to just a few weeks before the fall of Saigon, and include approximately 1800 issues. Over the summer the archive staff will process and preserve this invaluable record of the Republic of Vietnam.

Also included in the collection is an extensive run (59 linear feet) of the RVN's official press releases, *Vietnam Presse*, in French, and some smaller holdings.

## PRESERVING THE RVN RECORD

**T**he arrival of this important collection again highlights the need for an ongoing effort to preserve whatever has survived of the record of the Republic of Vietnam. The day most certainly will come when the descendants of those who fled Vietnam after the war will seek to understand the actions of their parents and grandparents.

We of the "Vietnam generation", Vietnamese and friends of Vietnamese alike,

must work together to ensure that all aspects of this record are professionally preserved. If we do not do this we will leave future generations of Vietnamese-Americans without keys to understanding their past. For a people with such a proud and rich history, that would be most unfortunate. In such a case, I suspect those future Vietnamese-Americans would condemn us for our failure.

## WEB DESIGN

**T**he Vietnam Archive will begin a summer update of its website to reflect a number of changes to its collection and its archival staff. We encourage readers to visit the site and learn more about the archive and also to comment on the appearance and quality of information provided.

The Archive website address is: <http://www.lib.ttu/vietnam>. It also can be accessed through The Vietnam Center's website: <http://www.ttu.edu/~vietnam>.



Texas Tech President Donald Haragan greets Admiral J. Paul Reason, USN, and Mrs. Reason during their visit to the Vietnam Archive, 11 May 1999.

## VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

**T**he first VHPA collections have now arrived and have been processed. We are pleased to report that The Vietnam Archive will serve as the main repository for this organization. Vietnam Center Director Jim Reckner is slated to address the VHPA during its annual reunion at Nashville on 4 July 1999.

Former Vietnam helicopter pilots who have not been in contact with VHPA and wish to do so are encouraged to contact The Vietnam Center to get further information.



The *Vietnam Presse* collection awaiting processing

## NGUOI VIET NEWSPAPER COMMENTS ON RVN RECORDS PROJECT

**I**n its 20 April edition, *Người Việt* highlighted the significance of the RVN records project:

"The collections in the archive of the Vietnam Center will become the most important memory of the Vietnamese community, especially the refugees. Fifty years from now, many Vietnamese Americans will come to Lubbock to research their origins. Many Vietnamese from Vietnam will fly to Lubbock to find the letters of their parents, grandparents, [letters a] North Vietnamese soldier wrote while passing the Truong Son Mountain Range [the Ho Chi Minh Trail]. These letters which never arrived to their wives, parents, and children, are being preserved in the boxes of the Vietnam Archive, the Vietnam Center."

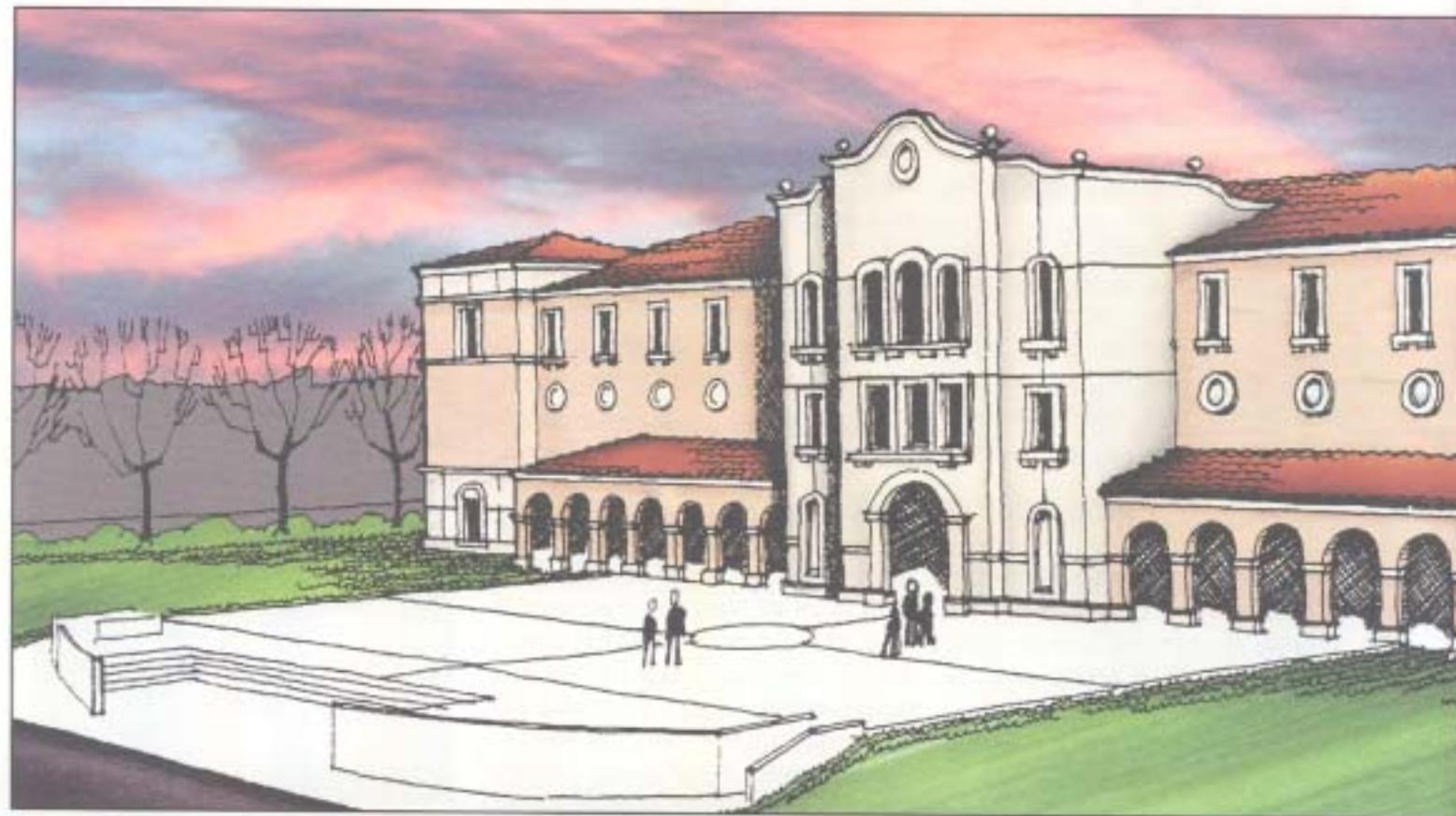


A portion of the *Cong Bao Viet Nam Cong Hoa* collection - official RVN records

## ARCHIVE GUIDE

**T**he Vietnam Archive published its second annual guide to its holdings at the beginning of April. The guide, which now comprises 76 pages, reflects the continuing growth of the research collections and also the extent of the processing work undertaken by the archive staff.

Individuals desiring a copy of the guide should contact The Vietnam Center.



## Vietnam Center Building at Texas Tech University



John T. Montford  
Texas Tech University  
Chancellor

**P**ictured above is the architect's rendition of the \$20 million building the plans of which Texas Tech University Chancellor John T. Montford unveiled on April 14, 1999. Appropriately, the plans were unveiled

at a dinner attended by North and South Vietnamese officials, US military officers, and academics representing virtually every point of view, in the course of which Chancellor Montford presented Texas Tech silver spurs to former South Vietnamese Prime Minister General Nguyen Khanh and People's Army of Vietnam Lieutenant General Nguyen Dinh Uoc.

When this building, for which funds have yet to be raised, is completed, it will be home to what we believe will become the largest research center on the Vietnam War anywhere in the world. When completed it will bring together under one

roof archival, artifactual, research and educational functions relating to the Vietnam War and Vietnamese history and culture.

The West Wing of the building will be a major state-of-the-art museum embracing Vietnamese history and culture, the French War in Vietnam, and detailed treatment of the American Vietnam experience. In its basement we intend a full-scale mock-up of some of the Cu Chi tunnels, and also an actual river patrol boat (PBR) on permanent patrol in a full-scale diorama. We hope to gain support from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for regular exhibitions of important Vietnamese cultural artifacts, as well as materials relating to their interpretation of the war. The bulk of the displays will provide interpretations of the American Vietnam experience following a generally middle-of-the-road interpretation. Installed technology will permit presentation of alternate viewpoints.

The East Wing will be devoted to archival activities, administrative offices and class rooms. One floor will be given over to facilities to accommodate the Vietnam Center's regularly scheduled conference/symposium series. These spaces will

be available to Vietnam veteran groups for reunions, during which the Vietnam Center staff will provide specialized presentations on the war, assist veterans to research specific questions in our archival holdings, and enable them to enjoy—and comment critically upon—the exhibitions in the museum wing.

The Vietnam Center building will support important academic research and teaching. It also will remain firmly focused on supporting the needs of American Vietnam veterans, regional primary and high schools' educational needs, and the desire of the general public to re-examine and understand more deeply the American Vietnam experience. And it will function as a central point for growing interactions between Texas Tech University and the people of Vietnam and their institutions of higher learning.

Our long-term goal is to establish within this building an interdisciplinary School of Indochina Studies, with faculty members across many disciplines: history, political science, economics, anthropology, language, etc., specializing in this area. We believe this interdisciplinary approach





will result in multi-faceted graduate research of a type generally limited by a single discipline approach.

Numerous naming opportunities, including a "Hall of Heroes" meeting facility, exist for potential

donors to this building. Additionally, a promotional brochure which provides details of the building plans is available upon request. Contact The Vietnam Center for further details.



The Symposium featured a panel on wives' experiences. Jean Fallon, President of National League of Families of POW/MIA, foreground. Background, Mrs. Muggs Todd (left) and Mrs. Norma Donlon.



Warrant Officer Lewis Rocco speaks at Vietnam Symposium  
photo by Neal Ulevich

## Viet Kieu Study

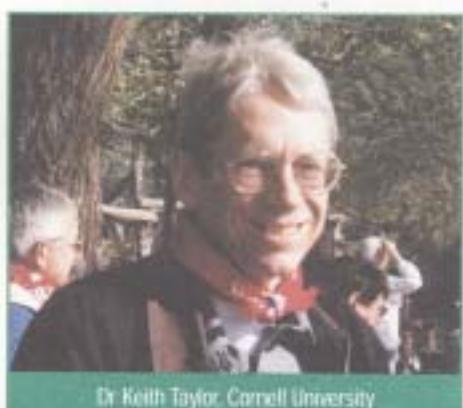
Professor Douglas Pike has completed a revised edition of his study of the Viet kieu in America. Copies are available, gratis, upon application to The Vietnam Center.



Great opportunity for Graduate students to meet the historic participants. Here Texas Tech doctoral candidate Richard Verone meets General Nguyen Khanh. Author John Prados looks on.

## COLBY 1996 KEYNOTE SPEECH

**A** transcript of Ambassador William E. Colby's keynote speech from the 2nd Triennial Vietnam Symposium, April 1996, in which he enumerated what he thought were the turning points in the war, is now posted to the Vietnam Center's web site under "Conferences and Symposia". For those wishing a hard copy or lacking access to the Internet, a copy may be obtained by contacting the Vietnam Center. The Vietnam Center extends its thanks to Mr. Steve Sherman for producing the transcript.



Dr. Keith Taylor, Cornell University





## Vietnam Conference 2000: "The Overseas Vietnamese Experience"

**A**t its May meeting, the Vietnam Center Advisory Board set the dates for the 2000 Vietnam conference: 31 March - 1 April. The theme for this conference will be, "The Overseas Vietnamese Experience."

We hope to have more details about our plans for this important meeting for our next newsletter. In the meantime, though, our general idea is that speakers at this meeting should focus not on refighting the war, but rather on the challenges the Vietnamese people faced and overcame as they adapted to the cultural and linguistic environments of their newly adoptive homes. In retrospect, it is a record of great difficulties and also remarkable achievements. We look forward to learning more from conference speakers and participants.

Among other things, it is anticipated that there will be an exhibition, "Life in Little Saigon," in which Vietnamese-American students use photography to interpret their daily lives in "Little Saigon."

## Texas Tech Chancellor to Visit Vietnam

**T**exas Tech University System Chancellor John T. Montford will pay a visit to Vietnam, 29 July - 11 August. The Chancellor will be accompanied by Vietnam Center Director James R. Reckner and Mr. Khanh Le of The Vietnam Center. The trip will take the party to Hanoi, where the Chancellor will meet with U.S. Ambassador Pete Peterson, the President of Vietnam National University, Hanoi, and other academic officials. Subsequent stops will bring the party to Hue, Ho Chi Minh City and Can Tho, where meetings and discussions will be held with academic leaders. The goal of the trip is to strengthen connections between Texas Tech University and Vietnamese universities, and to discuss future cooperation between the institutions.

## Texas Tech Vietnam Archivist to Offer Course in Vietnam

**T**exas Tech Vietnam Archivist Dr. Ron Frankum will spend nearly a month in Vietnam studying the library systems of Vietnam's principal universities. Toward the end of his tour of the country, he will offer a five day course on archival management at Vietnam National University, Hanoi. He will be accompanied by Mr. Khanh Le of the Vietnam Center and Mr. Curtis Peoples, a Chancellor's Fellow beginning graduate study of Vietnam.



Left: Colonel Roger H.C. Donlon, USA (Ret) and Warrant Officer Lewis Rocco



Thanks to a great effort by Mary Ann Harrison, symposium registration went very smoothly.

## Photograph Collection

**M**r. James Kidd recently donated his photograph collection to The Vietnam Archive. Mr. Kidd served as a Navy Intelligence Officer in Vietnam, 1965-66. The collection consists of over 1100 color and black-and-white photographs of unique quality. We thank Mr. Kidd for his generosity.

## Vietnamese Librarian Visit

**I**n April, The Vietnam Center and Texas Tech Libraries co-hosted a two week visit to Texas Tech by Ms. Diep Kim Chi, the director of libraries of Can Tho University. During her visit, Ms. Chi studied Texas Tech's library system, updated her knowledge on computer cataloguing systems, and had the opportunity to attend a convention of librarians in Dallas. She returned to Vietnam shortly after the Vietnam symposium, promising to "create a revolution" in her library.

## Co Van Project

**T**he Co Van Project was designed to identify, collect and preserve the record of those who served in an advisory role in Vietnam, military and civilian, during the First and Second Indochina Wars.

The Vietnam Center and Counterparts organization recently sent an open letter to all members of "Counterparts" advising them that the organization has designated The Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech as their "home of record." Early returns from this letter have been very positive, with ten collections currently deposited at Texas Tech and several more on the way. We thank all donors for their consideration in ensuring their records will be preserved.

Former advisors who have not yet "connected" with Counterparts and wish to do so are encouraged to contact The Vietnam Center for further details.



The Vietnam Center's Three Amigos  
Left to right: David Shelly, Vice President; Jim Reckner, Director; Phil Price, President.





## —VIEWS FROM THE 3RD TRIENNIAL VIETNAM SYMPOSIUM—



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## VIETNAM SYMPOSIUM WEST TEXAS STYLE

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