

Friends of The Vietnam Center

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J U L Y 2 0 0 0 • V O L U M E 7 I S S U E 2

VIETNAM CENTER CONFERENCE 2000 - A SUCCESS

The 2000 Vietnam Conference, held on March 31st and April 1st, was well attended and the quality of papers, particularly from young Vietnamese-American graduate students, was especially impressive. These students were very sharp and the older Vietnamese who attended were quite proud of their younger generation's achievements.

Panels were organized around seven topics: US-Vietnamese Relations, Politics of the Overseas Vietnamese, The Vietnamese-American Community, The Houston Vietnamese Community, Records of the Overseas Vietnamese Experience, and Problems of Acculturation. Jeff Brody, California State University Fullerton, provided an excellent photo exhibit titled "The Vietnamese: Self Portrait of a People."

The keynote speaker at the banquet was Ms. Le Ngoan, a senior official of the Illinois Department of Human Services. Ms. Ngoan is a past Executive Director of the Vietnamese Association of Illinois and Special Assistant to the Governor of



Dr. Jeff Brody, California State University Fullerton
and Dr. Keith Taylor, Cornell University



The younger generation of Vietnamese-Americans



Caroline Kieu Linh Valverde and Ambassador Bui Diem

Illinois for Asian American Affairs. Her eloquent and informative presentation focused on Vietnamese communities in the United States. Ms. Le provided insight into the perspectives and accomplishments of Vietnamese Americans by blending anecdotal, social, economic, and statistical information.

A primary objective of this conference was to network with overseas Vietnamese from around the world and promote support for preserving the record of the Republic of Vietnam and the experiences of the overseas Vietnamese. Ambassador Bui Diem reinforced the importance of this effort during a luncheon speech by saying that, if the older generations of Vietnamese overseas did not help to preserve the records, they would condemn future generations of overseas Vietnamese to "a future without a past." We hope the Vietnamese American community will seriously consider the importance of preserving their records and join Texas Tech in this effort.



CONFERENCE 2001 - CALL FOR PAPERS

The focus of our next conference, scheduled for 20-21 April 2001, is "The Advisory Effort and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam." Its purpose is to examine the South Vietnamese Armed Forces and the role and outcomes of American advisors in Vietnam during the war. As with every Vietnam Center conference, papers representing all points of view and all aspects of the theme are welcome. Active participation by graduate students is particularly encouraged.

Individuals interested in presenting papers should submit a one-page out-line proposal to Dr. James Reckner, at the Vietnam Center, by e-mail, fax, or regular mail.

E-mail: vietnam.center@ttu.edu
 Fax: (806) 742-8664
 Phone: (806) 742-3742
 Address: The Vietnam Center
 Texas Tech University
 Box 4105
 Lubbock, TX 79409-1045



SSG Aubrey Batts, USA, one of two military advisors assisting an ARVN Infantry unit during combat operations. Here he is resting during a lull in the fighting.



Tom O'Keefe, district Senior CORDS Advisor, with Bui Linn, a social welfare assistant, meeting refugees as they return to their village in Binh Dinh Province in September 1969.



Clifford Gant of the USAF volunteers as an instructor teaching a young Vietnamese student to use a bow saw at a technical school near Saigon.



US Navy LT Joseph Fox and Vietnamese Navy LT Nghiep Phoi discuss the needed supplies and procedures for ordering them for the USN Repair Ship, YR-24, in August.

VISIT BY VIETNAM'S AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S.

Vietnam's Ambassador to the United States, the Honorable Le Van Bang, and his First Secretary visited the Vietnam Center, 10-12 May 2000. He paid calls on Texas Tech University Chancellor John Montford, and Deputy Chancellor Jim Crowson. Other activities included a tour of the Vietnam Archive and International Cultural Center as well as briefings on Texas Tech - Vietnam related

paleontological, book exchange, plant genetics, and medical projects. He also spoke with the Texas Tech Board of Regents and enjoyed a dinner with Lubbock civic leaders. The Ambassador was enthusiastic about Texas Tech's projects and feels that the Vietnam Center is a key element in building good relations between the U.S and Vietnam.



Dr. Idris Traylor (Executive Director of International Affairs at Texas Tech), Ambassador Le Van Bang and First Secretary Tran Quy Thang

FROM THE DIRECTOR

There comes a time in the natural development of an organization when the procedures adopted as the organization was first formed no longer fit, when some change is necessary to accommodate growth. Such is now the case with The Vietnam Center.

With the generous and continuing support of the State of Texas and of Texas Tech University's senior leadership, The Vietnam Center/Vietnam Archive staff and missions have expanded in recent years. We now employ ten full-time staff members and ten to twelve student/graduate assistants.

Part of the necessary growth process has been that I must hand over much of the routine operation of The Vietnam Center in order to focus on fund-raising and other projects that will ensure the continuing well-being of the project. Until this point, I have personally written virtually everything contained in our periodic newsletters. With this issue of The Friends of the Vietnam Center Newsletter, though, I have assigned that mission to the new Vietnam Center Administrator, Cdr. Diane Oliver, USN (Ret.). From this point onward, I intend to contribute a column to the newsletter and have the remainder of the staff make contributions reflecting developments in their respective fields.

In recent years, The Vietnam Center has become involved in a number of cooperative programs with Vietnamese universities and research centers. That development, however, must not detract from our primary mission, which remains preservation of the record of the American

Vietnam experience, and encouragement of continuing study of all aspects of that experience. The appointment of a full-time oral historian and the very active program of visiting Vietnam veteran reunions highlights our continuing commitment to collect and preserve the record. Two recent Texas Tech dissertations, Les Cullen's biography of Admiral Zumwalt and Jim Ginther's biography of USMC General Keith Barr McCutcheon, highlight progress in the field of research and encouraging continuing study. Others are in progress.

I would like to congratulate Dr. Ron Frankum of The Vietnam Archive, on the pending publication of his manuscript, "Silent Partners: Australia and the United States in Vietnam, 1954-1968." Ron's book, forthcoming with Edwin Mellen, tells the story of the complex relationship that developed between the United States and Australia as the two nations sought to extract the maximum benefit from a relationship from which each nation sought different goals. A second forthcoming publication is Major Dave Toczek's "They Did Everything but Learn from It: The Battle of Ap Bac, 1963," with Greenwood Press. Toczek, a Texas Tech grad, skillfully recreates the setting of the battle and its actual conduct, using American and Vietnamese sources. In the process, he provides a detailed and accurate account of the battle. The most important contribution of this book, though, is Toczek's scathing analysis of the aftermath of the battle. The failure of the MACV Commander, the Commander in Chief, Pacific,

and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to appreciate the significance of the ARVN failure at Ap Bac, and conversely, the importance of the PLAF victory, set the stage for future misdirection of the war effort.

The Vietnam Center has now set the dates for the 4th Triennial Vietnam Symposium: 12-14 April 2002. We will begin planning this event soon, with the goal of exceeding previous efforts, both as to quality and scope of papers presented, and also in the area of social arrangements during participants' stay in Lubbock. I might add that when we began all of this eleven years ago, it would have been impossible to conceive of the day when we would be planning our 4th triennial symposium.

Welcome aboard to our new staff. I have mentioned CDR Oliver. One other important change: Alison (Honig) Watson, Professor Pike's secretary, got married late last year, and departed The Vietnam Center at the end of April to move to Dallas with her new husband. We wish her well in her new life. Alison has been replaced by Nicol Rincon-Blanco, whom I am pleased to welcome to the Center.

Jim Reckner
Director



Jim Reckner

NEW VIETNAM CENTER STAFF



CDR Diane Oliver, USN (Ret.), Vietnam Center Administrator: a native of Northern California, Diane served in the U.S. Navy from 1971 to 1995. She joined the center's staff in early May. She is a graduate of the Naval War College and has masters degrees in public administration, national security and strategic studies, and international relations. She is currently working on a

Ph.D. in education, with an emphasis in international education.



Nicol Rincon-Blanco, Assistant to Professor Pike: a native of Lubbock, Texas and the daughter of a World War II veteran, she graduated from Dunbar High School and the American Draghon's Commercial College. She worked for the Muscular Dystrophy

Association for six years as well as volunteering her time in support of fund-raising events and the patients. She also did volunteer work at the Jerry Lewis telethon. Nicol brings to the center a combination of non-profit organization experience and strong secretarial skills. She works with Professor Pike on the production of the Indochina Chronology and manages his voluminous correspondence.

THE VIETNAM CENTER PROJECT UPDATES

Medical Project: In April, \$500,000 worth of used medical equipment was shipped from Texas Tech University to four Vietnamese medical schools. This project grew out of a visit last summer by Texas Tech officials.

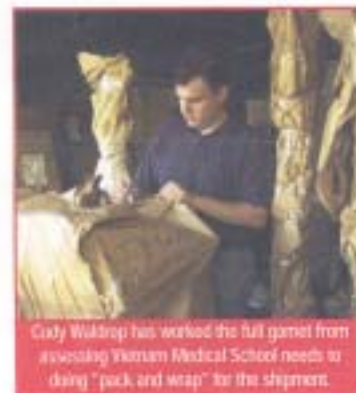
An article in the Lubbock Avalanche Journal newspaper, dated April 26, 2000 and authored by Kara Altenbaumer, tells the story.

"More than half a million dollars worth of medical equipment is on its way today from Texas Tech to four Vietnamese medical schools. The supplies, which go before a shipment of books to universities and medical schools in Vietnam, came about after Tech officials visited Vietnam and witnessed the lack of resources in the country's higher education institutions. 'When we visited the medical schools, they were really very poorly equipped,' said Jim Laible, associate vice president for managed care and hospital relations at the HSC [Health Science Center]. 'Their medical schools were in really bad shape. We were in shock.' Laible, who is a retired U.S. Army colonel and was a hospital administrator in Vietnam during the war, said one med school had a single microscope for the entire campus and sometimes two patients share a single bed. There were no gurneys, wheelchairs or EKG machines - some of the basics in American medical facilities, he

said. 'We are probably doubling their equipment,' Laible said. Much of the equipment being sent from Tech comes from the former Southpark Hospital at Quaker Avenue and South Loop 289, which was bought by Tech in 1998 and turned into a surgery center. 'We found a lot of equipment that's obsolete by U.S. standards,' he said. 'We wouldn't use it, but it's state-of-art for Vietnam. This is stuff that we would have scrapped.' Equipment being sent includes hospital beds, wheelchairs, EKG machines, surgical instruments, and IV poles. It's most of your hospital equipment you'd find in a hospital room or surgical suite,' Laible said. James Reckner, director of Tech's Vietnam Center, said Tech is particularly interested in helping out medical schools that train doctors to work in the country's poor villages. 'We want to have that kind of positive effect,' he said. 'This was a great way to help out the medical schools in Vietnam, but it also projects a positive image of Texas Tech in Vietnam.' Because of Tech efforts like teaching archival methods to Vietnamese librarians, exchanging faculty and students as well as

the book and medical shipments, the university is already gaining greater access in the country. Reckner and other Tech leaders already have at least two visits scheduled with deputy ministers during their trip later this year. Reckner guessed that some medical equipment is left from American supplies brought over during the Vietnam War, while Laible said some is left over from the French occupation of the country during the 1940s.

'The more of these projects we do, the more it helps U.S. relations with Vietnam' Reckner said. 'I don't want to leave the scene ultimately with a legacy of bitterness.'"



Cody Waldrop has worked the last games from assessing Vietnam Medical School needs to doing "pack and wrap" for the shipment.

Book Exchange Project: The Vietnam Archive and Texas Tech University Health Science Center collected and boxed over 30,000 books for the exchange project with major universities in Vietnam. Shipment is pending receipt of clearance from Vietnam Customs and the Ministry of Culture and Information.

We would like to express our appreciation to all the individuals and organizations that donated to this project including: Dr. Robert Bell, Bruce Cammack, Dr. Robert Carr, Dr. Robert Carr Orthopedics, Al Childs,

Dickens County Library, Ellen El-Domeri, Patti Freeman Hester's Bookstore, Dr. Jorge Iber, Lovelace Respiratory Research Lab, Mahon Library (Friends of the Library), Joyce Moore, Larry J. O'Brien, M.D., Ph.D.,

Pedro Ruiz, Texas Tech University (Business Administration Department, Health Science Center, University Libraries, and Phi Alpha Theta), Varsity Bookstore, and Dr. Cheryl Weber.

Plant Genetics Project: Texas Tech has proposed a 5-year, \$15 million plant genetics project designed to improve the plant genetic stock of Vietnam's principal food crops. The project will be conducted in conjunction with the Agricultural Genetics Institute in Hanoi, Can Tho University, the Cuu Long Rice Research Institute, and the Southern Fruit Research Institute. Dr. Henry Nguyen, a distinguished plant geneticist, will be the lead researcher for the project at Texas Tech University.

Paleontology Project: A Texas Tech researcher has proposed, pending funding from the National Geographic Society, to conduct dinosaur excavation in Vietnam. Although no dinosaur remains have ever been discovered in Vietnam, Dr. Sankar Chatterjee, a world-renowned expert in the field, has examined preliminary geological data that suggest a high probability of dinosaurs in the northernmost part of the country. This project will be conducted under the auspices of the Vietnam Center and the Geological Museum of Hanoi, and will offer an excellent field research opportunity for participating U.S. and Vietnamese graduate students.

Proposed New Vietnam Center and Archive Building: The Texas Tech University Board of Regents recently allocated an excellent plot of land, centrally located on the campus, for the new Vietnam Center and Archive. Because the new land allocation, immediately south of the International Cultural Center, is larger than the previous tract, a new building design is needed. Senior Architecture students are working on this project right now. The next step is to select a design and identify funding for building construction.

ARCHIVE ACTIVITIES

Oral History Project: The outreach projects have netted many responses from veterans around the US and overseas. As a result, about twenty-five oral history interviews have been conducted and many more are scheduled for this summer. We have increased our efforts to make person-to-person contact with the veteran community by attending association reunions. The processing of oral history interviews has also quickened with the hard work and dedication of Vietnam Archive student assistant, Tammi Mikel, who is transcribing the interviews. Check the Vietnam Archive Oral History web site for the periodic additions of completed transcripts. Dr. Ron Frankum, and Stephen Maxner, the Oral Historian, completed four visits to veteran association reunions. In April, they were

sponsored by the women who served in Vietnam at the Florida Vietnam Veterans Reunion in Melbourne, Florida. Mr. Maxner also visited with the Taildragger Association (O-1 Bird Dogs) in Atlanta, Georgia. In May, Mr. Maxner participated in the 71st Attack Helicopter Company gathering in Las Vegas, Nevada and Dr. Frankum joined him at the 9th Medical Laboratory reunion in Galveston, Texas. There were several reunion visits during June including the 9th Engineering Battalion (Washington, D.C.), Air America Association (Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania), Combat Tracker Team (New Orleans, Louisiana), The Society of the 173rd Airborne Brigade (Rochester, Minnesota), and the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (Washington, DC). Other visits

planned for this summer are the 75th Ranger Regiment Association (July, Savannah, Georgia) and the Army Transportation Association, Vietnam (August, Las Vegas, Nevada).



Steve Maxner does telephonic oral history collections when he is not at reunions. The time dedicated to this project by individual Vietnam Veterans is invaluable to the documentation of our nation's history and Vietnam experience.

Acquisitions: The archive received 30 collections in the first four months of 2000, including papers from the Ranch Hand Association Archive donated by the president of the organization, Paul Cecil. Other collections include additions to the B Troop 2/17th Cavalry Association and the 9th Engineer Battalion Association collections.

4TH TRIENNIAL VIETNAM SYMPOSIUM - PRELIMINARY CALL FOR PAPERS

The 4th Triennial Vietnam Symposium dates are set for 12 - 14 April 2002. Those interested in participating should start thinking about papers and submit proposals

as your thoughts coalesce. Particularly welcome are those participants who can organize an entire panel. Our triennial symposia are open to all topics related to

Southeast Asia, including opposition to the war. We encourage papers from scholars, veterans, and graduate students interested in Vietnam-related topics.

Website Activity: The Vietnam Archive continues to maintain a strong electronic presence and respond to reference requests over the internet. In the first four months of the year 2000, the website was visited over 8,100 times and the archive answered over 300 e-mail requests for information.

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For additional information regarding membership or to donate materials to the Vietnam Archive, please call the Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University, (806) 742-3742 or 742-8663.

Please make checks payable to:

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☐ Corporate Benefactor \$500
☐ Sustaining Corporate
Sponsor \$5,000
(1,000 per year x5)

CONFERENCE 2000 PARTICIPANTS





THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT AT THE VIETNAM ARCHIVE

It is the mission of the Oral History Project to conduct oral history interviews with as many people who served in the Vietnam War as possible. This includes Americans, Vietnamese, and people from all of the countries that participated in the Vietnam War. If you are interested in being interviewed, please complete the following brief questionnaire and send it to:

The Vietnam Archive
Texas Tech University
Special Collections Library Room 108
Lubbock, TX 79409-1041
Attn: Steve Maxner

1. Name:
2. Address:
3. Phone:
4. E-mail:
5. Branch of Service/Government Agency/Place of employment during the Vietnam War (please include all):
6. Years of Service:
7. Job Description(s):
8. Units/Agencies of assignment during the Vietnam War (please include dates, places, and positions held):
9. Major programs, events, Operations and /or engagements in which you were involved while serving in Vietnam:
10. Rank at discharge/retirement or current status:

Please feel free to photocopy this form and give it to others who served during the Vietnam War. For more information about the Oral History Project at the Vietnam Archive, visit our web site at www.lib.ttu.edu/vietnam/ or call us at (806) 742-9010.





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