

# Friends

## of The Vietnam Center

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

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### VIETNAM CENTER EXPLORES ALL SIDES OF CONFLICT

by Randy Sanders, *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, July 2, 2000

**A**s a person ages, it's hard to believe that one's life experiences move from current events into the realm of history. But if you live long enough that's what happens. In this case, the current event that has become historical in the lives of most people between the ages of 45 and 60 is the Vietnam War. It seems as if that war occurred only a few years ago. James R. Reckner, a Navy veteran of the war and historian, realized early on that it had moved into the history arena when he asked a group of 100 freshmen students at Texas Tech if they could "name the general you most closely associate with the American involvement in Vietnam." To his surprise, only one student said Gen. William Westmoreland. In the early 1970s, this would have been the \$100 question on "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?"

It was from that simple question and response that what was to become the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech were to spring. Reckner, a man of no little enthusiasm, successfully asked Tech's board of regents to establish the Center for the Study of the Vietnam Conflict to help guide and fund the development of the Vietnam Archive, as well as to encourage the study of the American experience in Vietnam. The greatest achievement that is taking place at the center is that not one particular viewpoint is being taken. The war sharply divided this nation during the '60s and '70s, and even today some of the wounds that cut deeply into our society have not healed completely. But Reckner, a real historian and not a revisionist historian, is careful to warn his students that every person who was involved in the war and the surrounding turmoil has his/her own perspective.

Toward that end, Reckner and his associates at the center are committed to gathering records from a wide array of sources. The archive already houses several million pages of original documents. But researchers continue to seek additional materials that will help future generations understand the war and American society. In addition to personal correspondence, pictures, diaries, etc., that were created by the men and women who fought in Southeast Asia,

researchers under Reckner's direction also are interested in receiving original materials from war protesters. The center has only recently received and cataloged information from a war protester at Columbia [University] in New York City. Because of the nature of the anti-war movement, protesters' records are few and far between. But the peace movement and those people involved in it were big players in forming Americans' opinions on the war.

This fall, Reckner is arranging two special classes on the Vietnam War. As part of the class, students will have the opportunity to hear several speakers who were actively involved in many of the events of that not-too-long-ago time. Reckner has an informal acceptance from Daniel Ellsberg. For those too young to know, Ellsberg was a high-level government employee who leaked classified information to the news media that had an impact on the attitude of Americans toward the Vietnam War. At some point, the Tech historian hopes to bring into his classroom the likes of Lt. Gen. Hal Moore, former South Vietnamese Premier General Nguyen Khanh and other high-level former and current Vietnamese diplomats.

For those students of the war, Texas Tech has become world-renowned. It's too bad that the people of Lubbock aren't as familiar with it. What began in the Math Building at the university is now consuming a tremendous amount of space at the Southwest Collection near the Tech Library. Reckner

hopes it won't be too long before he is able to move the center to just south of the International Culture Center on Indiana Avenue, south of Fourth Street. When that facility, expected to cost about \$20 million, is completed, it will provide easier access to visitors and bring even more fame to the center, Texas Tech and the South Plains.

**Editor's postscript:** Dr. Ellsberg was unable to participate due to deadline pressures. He has agreed to speak at our 2002 Symposium. General Nguyen Khanh and Lt. Gen. Hal Moore spoke at Texas Tech on September 26th and October 24th, respectively.



This is a great Vietnam photo. How much more meaningful it would be if either of these men had recorded an oral history! The Vietnam Archive needs your memories now!





## GENERAL NGUYEN KHANH PRESENTS A LIVING HISTORY

General Nguyen Khanh, former Prime Minister of South Vietnam, visited Texas Tech from 23-25 September. He presented a lecture to students in "The Vietnam War" class that covered the periods from 1945-1955 and 1955-1975. During a subsequent public lecture, he gave a quick overview of his presentation to the students and then discussed his thoughts concerning "Vietnam in the Beginning of the XXI Century."

General Khanh spoke about his role in the Vietnam War and in the South Vietnamese government, explaining

what occurred from his perspective and what he was thinking at the time. As for today, he said "Vietnam won the war, but ironically could lose peace. In peacetime, winning the war against poverty is winning peace. This is a new challenge for the leadership of the SRV."

General Khanh has been a welcome participant in The Vietnam Center conferences since 1995.



General Nguyen Khanh

## TEXAS TECH ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS AND FUTURE VIETNAM CENTER



Chancellor John T. Montford and Mark Carpenter

As was noted in the previous newsletter, Texas Tech University's Board of Regents recently allocated a larger plot of land in a new location for the future Vietnam Center-Archive-Museum complex. More land makes possible a building that is configured for greater capacity. The new location also permits greater flexibility in the architectural style. At the previous site, it would have been necessary to conform with the Spanish Renaissance design that is predominant in areas central to the Texas Tech campus. To take full advantage of these changes, it is necessary to develop a new architectural design for the complex.

One initiative was to enlist a summer session class of senior architecture students to develop new building designs. These five students, under the able leadership of their professor, Ben Shacklette, created five very different design concepts. The students first read about the Vietnam War and then visited the archive to better understand its unique operational requirements. They also factored in comments received from the Vietnam Center director and the archivist in response to briefings done by the students as their designs progressed.

Jim Reckner told the students that he wants the building to honor Vietnam veterans and "to tell their stories in a respectful manner." The museum displays and archive holdings are to present the whole story, as viewed from all sides. According to Ben Shacklette, this project was far more complex than those normally tackled by senior students, but they did an excellent job.

The five models were on display at the

International Cultural Center following the public lecture given by General Nguyen Khanh during the evening of September 26th. On September 27th the students presented their models and drawings to Texas Tech Chancellor John T. Montford and the Dean of the College of Architecture. The students found this project to be challenging, rewarding, and an excellent learning experience. Of particular importance to them was the fact that some of their ideas will be incorporated into the final design, which will be prepared by a local architectural firm. The students' models will be on display at the Vietnam Center's 2001 Conference.



Chancellor John T. Montford, Phil Price, Ra'Nee Enright and Seth Parker

## BOOK EXCHANGE PROJECT

The Vietnam Archive loaded a 20-foot shipping container on September 14, 2000 with 467 boxes of books for Can Tho University, the Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City, the General Science Library of Ho Chi Minh City, and the University of Dalat. This shipment arrived in Vietnam on October 9, 2000 and was delivered to the General Library

in Ho Chi Minh City for clearance and further distribution. The Archive has another 30,000 books ready to go to Vietnam and eagerly awaits clearance to launch the shipment.

The books were generously donated by individuals, libraries, bookstores, and departments of Texas Tech University.



The Archive's book loading crew.



## FROM THE DIRECTOR

**S**everal very busy months have passed since our last newsletter. Many of the developments of that period have already been covered in articles contained in this edition.

Texas Tech University sent another large delegation to Vietnam in July, led by Chancellor John T. Montford, Texas Tech Regent Carin Barth, and Medical School Dean Dr. Joel Kupersmith. The party, numbering fourteen, traveled to Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, Hue, Hanoi and Hong Kong before returning to Texas.

The purpose of the trip was to visit Vietnamese universities and medical schools to examine the progress of recent joint projects, and to look toward future cooperative efforts. By the time of our arrival in Vietnam, Texas Tech's shipment of medical equipment for Vietnamese medical schools had already arrived in-country; however, the part of the shipment sent to Ho Chi Minh City experienced considerable delay before clearing all of the necessary—and often obscure—Vietnamese bureaucratic hurdles. Due to these delays we were unable to see the equipment actually delivered in Vietnam.

As a result of discussions held during the visit, we were able to send a shipment of 467 boxes of books to Vietnam after our return. This shipment, thankfully, cleared the port in Ho Chi Minh City in just a few days and was delivered to the General Sciences Library in that city for further distribution to various universities in the south.

During our visit, Chancellor Montford signed memoranda of understanding with Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho University, and Hong Bang University (in Ho Chi Minh City). We had earlier signed memoranda with Vietnam National University-Hanoi, and the

Universities of Social Sciences & Humanities of VNU Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Among other things, Texas Tech has agreed to receive a number of faculty members from Can Tho University for upgrading of their academic qualifications. Additionally, a faculty member from VNU Hanoi will enroll in a graduate program in American history at Texas Tech in 2001.

In meetings with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Vice Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development, and Deputy Prime

Minister, Chancellor Montford discussed a number of Texas Tech's Vietnam initiatives, including a proposed major plant genetics project and a paleontological project. The next senior delegation from Texas Tech is scheduled to depart for Vietnam on 18 May 2001, and will include the Deputy Chancellor of Texas Tech and the Chief of Staff to the President of Texas Tech. Tentatively, this group will visit Phnom Penh, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, Hue and Hanoi. An additional trip to Vietnam is planned for December 2000, when CDR Diane Oliver of the Vietnam Center, accompanied by Mr. Khanh Le, will conduct doctoral research into the organization of Vietnamese universities.

As we go to press it appears that Texas Tech University will receive \$100,000 in federal funding to begin our "Virtual Vietnam Archive" project. The goal of this

project is to put on-line, in a searchable format, all noncopyrighted materials currently held in our archive. I wish to extend our sincere thanks to Congressman Larry Combest of Lubbock and Congressman (and former POW) Sam Johnson of Denton, Texas, for their strong support for the project. Additionally, I would like to thank the many Vietnam vets in Congress who expressed their support and encouragement of this important project. Our goal is to make all of our records, documents, and photos accessible to all Vietnam veterans and, indeed, to all researchers worldwide, without the expense of travel to Texas Tech to conduct research. Dr. Ron Frankum of the Vietnam Archive will head this important project.

Finally, a word about our upcoming conference. For those planning to present papers, please send proposals as soon as possible, to assist us in organizing the program. We would appreciate, too, early registration and, for catering planning, we must have reservations for the conference banquet before the conference begins; therefore, it is essential that you advise us of your plans as soon as possible. For those academics interested in the advisory effort and the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam, this conference will afford an excellent opportunity to meet many of the men who served as advisors, as well as some of the former senior officers of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam.

*Indochina Chronology* - A journal on current events in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Individuals wishing to receive this journal should contact The Vietnam Center.



Vietnam National University - Hanoi President, Dr. Nguyen Van Dao and Chancellor John T. Montford, July 2000.



## THE VIETNAM CENTER NEW PROJECTS & PROJECT UPDATES

### Medical Project:

The medical projects branch of The Vietnam Center has been very busy over the past few months and we have exciting news regarding the medical equipment shipments to Vietnam as well as our current projects.

### Medical Equipment

The medical equipment was shipped in two parts. The first shipment was delivered to the Hanoi Medical University and the medical school at Hue University during the latter part

of July. The second shipment arrived in Ho Chi Minh Port on July 19th but encountered numerous regulatory obstacles, which required intensive coordination to surmount. On September 28, 2000 we were notified that the equipment was finally delivered to the Medical & Pharmacology University in Ho Chi Minh City and the medical school at Can Tho University. A great deal of thanks goes to Colonel Jim Laible, USA (Ret.), Vice President for Managed Care, and Lynne Hudson, Director of Managed Care Operations, of the

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, who were the driving force behind this project from its inception. Additionally, Chancellor John T. Montford was instrumental in backing The Vietnam Center's initiatives that ultimately led to successful project completion. Chancellor Montford received a letter of appreciation from the Rector of Cantho University who said that the equipment arrived in excellent condition.

### New Projects:

With regard to new projects, let us begin with the website that we just developed. It can be accessed from the "Medical Project" link that was recently added to The Vietnam Center web page ([www.ttu.edu/~vietnam](http://www.ttu.edu/~vietnam)). This site includes the latest information on The Vietnam Center's medical projects. Additionally, the site has an information form that can be completed by healthcare practitioners and organizations working on Vietnam related projects and who would like to develop a relationship with the Vietnam Center.

Another new initiative is the volunteer project. The Vietnam Center is in contact with four organizations that operate bi-annually in Vietnam: (a) Social Assistance Programs of Vietnam (SAP-Vietnam), (b) Vets With a Mission, (c) Project Vietnam (California), and (d) Project Vietnam Inc. (Australia). Project Vietnam (California) is requesting volunteer physicians from Texas Tech to teach and give treatment in Vietnam during the organization's November 2000 mission. This proposal is currently being worked by Dr. Joel Kupersmith, Dean of the Medical School and a participant in the July 2000 trip to Vietnam.

The goal of The Vietnam Center's medical projects branch is to serve as a center of information and coordination for the disparate organizations conducting medical missions in Vietnam. Many of these organizations are not aware of each other's activities. They may be able to leverage their resources through coordination of schedules, activities, and geographic area coverage. The development of contacts will take time, but we are optimistic that the need is real and the goal is important.

## TAIWANESE SCHOLAR TRAVELS TO THE VIETNAM ARCHIVE TO CONDUCT HIS RESEARCH

**K**ara Altenbaumer covered this story in the July 22, 2000 Lubbock Avalanche-Journal newspaper. "Instead of traveling to Vietnam to research the Vietnam War, Taiwanese scholar Wei Liang-tsai trekked halfway across the globe to spend his summer at Texas Tech's Vietnam Archive. 'Here is one of the best, if not the best, resources on the war in Vietnam,' Wei said Friday. 'I think they've got a treasure here.'

Wei, a researcher at the Institute of European and American Studies at [the] Academia Sinica in Taipei, is about halfway through his three-month stay in Lubbock. He will finish his work Sept. 5. He spends about seven hours a day, six days a week researching in the archives and has covered several thousand pages of material. Wei said he set out in the mid-1980s to write a book about the United States and the Vietnam War. His interest in the American perspec-

tive on the war stems, in part, from the fact that his major in college was American history. 'The Vietnam War is just not a major issue (in Taiwan),' he said. 'I'm one of the very few scholars who do systematic research on Vietnam. I found out I did not have enough materials, so I went to Berkeley as Fulbright Scholar, but there were still not enough materials.' He put the project aside for a number of years when he became assistant

director and then director of the Institute of European and American Studies back at the university where he continues to work.

After he stepped down from his leadership role, he began researching again. By that time, Douglas Pike – a professor he met at Berkeley – had joined the Vietnam Archive at Tech. The archives at Tech are so extensive, Wei said, that he has had to narrow his study to only a few topics, including bio-

chemical warfare, war atrocities and popular opinion and media reaction to the war. He plans to use the research he gathers at Tech to publish a number of articles. 'They run a very good place here,' he said. 'When I go back to Taiwan, I will recommend that anyone who wants to do research on the Vietnam War should come here.'





## "WHERE DID WE GET SUCH MEN?"



Lt. Gen. Hal Moore

Lt. Gen. Hal Moore, co-author with Joe Galloway, of the book "We Were Soldiers Once... And Young", presented two stirring lectures during his visit to Texas Tech. On the morning of 24 October, the General presented his lecture, "Ia Drang—The Battle that Changed the Vietnam War," to students in Jim Reckner's Vietnam War class. He stressed three principles: (a) always go into difficult situations with confidence that you will win; (b) when there are set backs, don't give up; and (c) trust your instincts. General Moore, who was the Battalion Commander during this engagement, exemplified these three principles as he analyzed and recounted what occurred during the battle. The slides and quotes of the men who fought

there conveyed a tremendous sense of dedication, courage, deep concern for one another, and the pain. "Where did we get such men?"

The public lecture given on the same evening was compelling and emotional. There was a full house of about 160 people, a number of them Vietnam veterans. One man had been a Private at Ia Drang and said of General Moore, "I still call him Colonel." Instead of slides, the General used two film clips that transported the audience to the battlesite. The first was footage taken by



Lt. Gen. Moore and Texas Tech Army ROTC Cadets

army photographers during the battle. The second was part of a 1993 documentary in which the lone M-60 gunner, who saved the



The Archive's book signing

entire left flank, was back in the Ia Drang Valley recounting a few moments of his experience. This was filled with intensity and emotion. "Where did we get such men?"

Following a question and answer session, General Moore received a standing ovation. He signed copies of his book and spoke with the many people who were anxious to meet him, including several cadets from the Texas Tech Army ROTC unit. Media coverage of his visit, including interviews, was carried in the newspaper, on television, and over the radio.

## MAJ. GEN. MICHAEL C. McMAHAN VISITS

Maj. Gen. Michael C. McMahan, USAF, served as guest speaker for the September 15th POW/MIA ceremony that began a 24-hour vigil by Texas Tech's USAF ROTC cadets. The ceremony also included a fly over by a B-1 bomber and a C-5 cargo plane. As part of his visit, the General received a briefing on the status of current

Vietnam Center and Archive projects. The General indicated that he was quite impressed and willing to help by getting the word out about the center and archive.

Maj. Gen. McMahan started his military career as a U.S. Air Force ROTC cadet at Texas Tech University, went through pilot

training in 1971, and served as an OV-10 forward air controller in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. He is currently assigned as director of personnel force management, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.

### New Hires

We are pleased to announce that the Vietnam Archive Oral History Project has doubled in size. Student Assistant Reccia Jobe was hired in early September to assist in the administrative requirements for the project and Research Assistant Kimberly Sawyer joined the staff as the oral historian for the Lubbock Area Vietnam Veterans Oral History Project. The Archive has also welcomed Michelle Jackson who was awarded a research fellowship from the Honors College at Texas Tech University. Michelle is compiling a database of information on military operations during the war.



## FRIENDS OF THE VIETNAM CENTER MEMBERSHIP FORM

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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.

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Member \$5,000  
(1,000 per year x5)

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

## "VISIONS OF VIETNAM: HISTORIAN PRESERVES MEMORIES OF WAR"

**S**teve Maxner, the Vietnam Archive's oral historian, was featured in an article written by Kara Altenbaumer that appeared in the Sunday, August 6, 2000, Lubbock Avalanche Journal newspaper. "Steve Maxner spends his days listening to people tell war stories. As an oral historian for Texas Tech's Vietnam Center, Maxner's job is to preserve not the documents of the war, but the thoughts and spoken words of the men and women who served in Vietnam. 'It was a natural outgrowth of the archive's activities ... to record the recollections (of Vietnam veterans). What did they think at the time? What do they think now?' he said recently. 'It adds the human factor to the record. It adds another dimension to the archives - a human face.'

Maxner has conducted more than 50 oral history interviews with combat infantrymen, senior officers, pilots and female nurses, as well as people from both sides of the conflict. He has even interviewed a former Viet Cong leader. "We look at every aspect of their Vietnam service - what their first impressions were of Vietnam, what it was like when they returned to America," he said. "We talked about the war and how it affected them. Many of the men and women I've interviewed have simply integrated Vietnam into their life experiences and tried to turn it into something positive."

Despite the stereotypes that Vietnam veterans do not like to talk about their expe-

riences, Maxner said that while it was difficult for some of them, the soldiers he's interviewed have been glad to share their stories. "I think it's a story that needs to be told because there's a lot of bad information out there," said Al Childs, one of the veterans interviewed for the Tech oral history project. "The newer generations don't even know about Vietnam unless they had a family member who was involved or killed."

Childs, who served as an adviser in a headquarters location with South Vietnamese soldiers, said he enjoyed doing the interview. "I felt good about going away to Vietnam," he said. "I just felt it was my duty to go. ... Right or wrong, we served our country." Maxner said it's becoming "increasingly rare" for Vietnam veterans to remain close-lipped about their experiences. "A lot of Vietnam veterans haven't talked about their experiences because they were faced with hostility when they returned home," he said. "Many of them thought talking about Vietnam or mentioning they were a veteran would have adverse consequences for them. We as a society did not want to confront that we didn't accomplish our goal in Vietnam." Now that many of them are speaking up, they don't question the original reason they believed they served for - "to stop the spread of communism." "They don't question that," he said. "They question whether we went about it the right way."

Lynne Hudson, who served as an Army nurse in Vietnam in 1967 and 1968, said talking about her Vietnam experience helped rid her of the burden she felt to preserve her memories of a woman's perspective of the war. "It was very helpful to me to discuss this with other women who experienced the same thing," she said. "Because somebody else shared these memories, I didn't have this burden to preserve these thoughts. I don't have to carry the memories all by myself." Hudson, who spent the majority of her time in Vietnam taking care of civilian women and children who were injured, said the structure of the oral history interviews at Tech was "a very provocative, a very stimulating way" to deal with her thoughts on Vietnam.

Transcripts of the interviews Maxner conducts are available at the Vietnam Archive for professors, researchers, students and anyone with an interest to review. A number of the transcripts will be available on the archive Web site by the end of the summer.

**Editor's postscript:** Oral history transcripts are being posted to the web as soon as editing is completed. Currently, there are approximately 60 transcripts in the editing phase. The web site address is <http://www.lib.ttu.edu/vietnam>.

## 2001 CONFERENCE PAPERS RECEIVED

Thus far, The Vietnam Center has received outlines for two conference papers:

- U.S. Army Advisers in Vietnam During the 1961-1964 Period (Charles Anderson)
- Examining South Vietnamese Armed Forces and the Roles/Outcomes of Advisors (Robert Bayless)

## REGISTER NOW FOR THE 2001 CONFERENCE

Name (As it is to appear on your name tag):

Title (check one): Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐ Prof. ☐ Other ☐

**Name:**

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**Are you with COUNTERPARTS?** Yes ☐ No ☐

**I want my name and information to appear on the Conference Roster** Yes ☐ No ☐

**If yes, please check information to appear on the Conference Roster:**

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Make all checks payable to: Texas Tech Foundation, Inc., Attn: Vietnam Center  
Mail to: Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University, Attn: Conference Processing, Lubbock, Texas 79409-1045

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Banquet  
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\$50.00

\$25.00

\$20.00

Total Paid: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of guests (including yourself)

## PLEASE MAKE HOTEL RESERVATIONS BY MARCH 30, 2001

Conference Schedule: A detailed conference agenda will be mailed to each registered participant after April 1. Conference Hotels for Counterparts Group: Lubbock Fairfield Inn, 4007 South Loop 289, Lubbock, TX 79423, 806.795.1288; or The Hampton Inn, 4003 South Loop 289, Lubbock, TX 79423, 806.795.1080. Kristin Ferguson can make the necessary reservations and answer any questions you may have regarding the Hampton and Fairfield Inns. The Lubbock Inn is available for

all other conference participants: 3901 19th St., Lubbock, TX 79410, 806.792.5181. Cathie Way can help you with reservations and any questions you may have regarding your stay at the Lubbock Inn. The Vietnam Center has reserved 70 rooms at each hotel; however, we urge you to contact the hotel directly and make your personal reservations as soon as possible. If you wish to be included in the conference banquet and BBQ dinner guest lists, please register for the conference by April 6 to

allow us to make the necessary arrangements with the caterers. If you will require pick up service at the airport, please provide our office with the Airline, flight number, dates and times of arrival and departure by April 16. If you have any special audio/visual needs or wish to display materials, make your requests no later than April 1, 2001.

## CALL FOR CONFERENCE 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 outline proposal to Dr. James Reckner, at the Vietnam Center, by e-mail, fax, or regular mail. Deadline for submissions is March 15, 2001.

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