



FRIENDS OF THE VIETNAM CENTER

Spring 2007 Vol. 14 No.1

Speakers To Gather For March 2007 Culture Conference

By Steve Maxner, Ph.D.

The Vietnam Center is very proud to include in this issue of the Friends of the Vietnam Center Newsletter the agenda for the March 2007 Conference: The Impact of Culture, Ethnicity, Race and Religion in the Vietnam War. As you will see on page three, we have assembled an interesting and eclectic set of presentations covering a wide range of topics to include soldiers' experiences, the impact of religion in the United States and in Vietnam, Mohammed Ali's impact as he resisted military service during the war, and much more. The luncheon speakers include Dr. Larry Berman of the University of California at Davis who has just completed the definitive biography of the late Pham Xuan An. Based on extensive research and many personal interviews with An, Dr. Berman tells the remarkable life story of North Vietnam's most famous and accomplished spy. Dr. Berman's presentation will focus on An's time attending college in California from

**"...How important
was culture during
the war?"**

1957 to 1959 and the impact of American culture on him as he traveled throughout the United States. Our second luncheon speaker is Mr. Charles Long of Raleigh, North Carolina. Mr. Long has the distinction of having served in Vietnam as a missionary from 1958 to 1974 and spent most of his time working with ethnic minority groups, especially the Jarai. Our keynote banquet speaker will be Dr. Keith Taylor and he will address, "Collateral Cultures: Wartime Congruencies, Differences, and Indifferences." The aim of his presentation will be to ask, "What is culture? How important was culture during the war? What were the Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese cultures involved in and affected by the war, and how? Do cultures really matter in how we remember the war?" Please join us on March 23 and 24, 2007, in Lubbock, Texas, for what promises to be a very lively examination of these important and timely topics. ★



Top: Keith Taylor presenting at the 2005 symposium. Bottom: Larry Berman answers a forum question at the fall 2006 Intelligence Conference.



What's Inside...



*Letter from the Director,
James Reckner, Ph.D.*



Conference Agenda



*Conference Registration
Available Online at
vietnam.ttu.edu*

Letter From The Director

By James Reckner, Ph.D.

As the new year begins, it is gratifying to look back on progress in the nearly eighteen years since a group of Vietnam veterans gathered at Texas Tech to discuss what we might do, in a positive way, about our Vietnam experiences. Over those years, I have been exceedingly fortunate to meet a great many interesting people, former enemies from the communist side of the war, former American opponents of the war, academics of every point of view, and particularly former comrades-in-arms of both the US Armed Forces and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam. Working together, we have been able to collect and preserve a remarkable amount of material relating to the American Vietnam experience.

Donate Records. There is so much more material out there in need of preservation! Each of you who read this newsletter and have a box (or boxes) of Vietnam-related material stashed away in the attic or in the garage that you haven't even looked at in the past decade, *please* consider donating those materials to the Vietnam Archive. You really don't have to do anything but contact the Vietnam Archive [(806) 742-9010]. We will provide pre-paid FedEx labels. You can then take the materials to a local FedEx office and hand them over. We will do all of the sorting and arranging of the documents for you. You don't even have to worry about that!

Here's my point: For those of us who are of the Vietnam generation, face it, we aren't getting any younger. What will happen to your materials, should you unexpectedly pass from the scene? Will your grand-kids look at your precious materials, say, "That's just Grand-Dad's junk," and throw them away? Will we thus lose some materials that might provide future generations with an insight into our Vietnam experience? I hope not. Contact us and make arrangements today!



Khanh Le traveling down the Perfume river in Hue during the Summer of 2006.

Indochina Institute, George Mason University. One of the Vietnam Center's latest donations was five pallets of material (80+ boxes) from Dr. Nguyen Manh Hung's now-defunct Indochina Institute. We particularly thank the leadership at George Mason University who agreed to this transfer of materials to Texas Tech University, where they will be appropriately housed and greatly appreciated.

Cooperation with Institute for International Relations. On 11 January, I returned from a very short trip to Vietnam. While there, the head of our delegation, Dr. John Borrelli, Dean of the Graduate School of Texas Tech University, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Institute of International Relations (IIR). The MoU establishes the framework for a cooperative program in which a number of graduate students from IIR will come to Texas Tech for the second year of a master's degree program that will focus on American international relations and American studies. We are delighted with this new cooperative opportunity that will enable these students, many of whom are future Vietnamese diplomats, to gain a better insight into the United

States, our history and our culture. Two other Vietnamese universities have now expressed an interest in this agreement as a possible direction for future graduate student education at Texas Tech.

March Conference. The Vietnam Center's annual conference is just about upon us. I look forward to seeing many of you there, examining aspects of race, religion and culture during the Vietnam War. That conference is March 23rd and 24th, at the Holiday Inn Park Plaza.

Planned Seminar in Washington, DC. Looking a bit further down the line, we are beginning planning for a one-day seminar to be held in Washington, DC, in October, at which leading academics will compare and contrast the Vietnam War and the current war in Iraq. We will have more details about this event at the conference in March, and most certainly in the next newsletter.

Promotions. I cannot close this newsletter without congratulating Dr. Steve Maxner for his successful defense of his dissertation at the end of October, and Mr. Khanh Le, for his promotion to Associate Director for Vietnamese Affairs. Congratulations to both for very well-earned advancements. ★

THE IMPACT OF CULTURE IN THE VIETNAM WAR

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Thursday March 22, 2007

1200–1700: Open Registration at the Holiday Inn Park Plaza
 1730: Reception – Cash Bar with heavy hors d'oeuvres – Holiday Inn Park Plaza

Friday March 23, 2007

0800: Opening Remarks

- Kent Hance, Chancellor, Texas Tech University (tentative)
- James Reckner, Director, Vietnam Center

0830: Session 1 – An Introduction to Analyzing Culture

- “A Framework for Analyzing Vietnamese Culture: Applying the Cultural Trilogy” James Bruton, Independent Scholar

1000: Session 2 – The Impact of Religion in the US and Vietnam

- “The Buddhists & Ngo Dinh Diem”, Geoffrey Shaw, Ph.D., American Military University
- “Sects and Violence in Diem Era Vietnam: Overlooked Lessons For 21st Century Conflict.” Carmen K. Steigman, Ph.D., Independent Scholar
- “Crucifers and Crusaders: American Presidents, Christianity, and the Vietnam War.” Ken Millen-Penn, Ph.D., Fairmont State University
- “Denominations and Vietnam: A Comparison of Foreign Policy Resolutions From Lutheran Denominations, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the United Church of Christ” David E. Settje, Ph.D., Concordia University

1200: Lunch

1230: Lunch Speaker

- “The Impact of American Culture on Communist Spy Pham Xuan An: Why Can't We All Be Friends?” Larry Berman, Ph.D., University of California, Davis

1345: Session 3 – The Impact of Antiwar Activities on American Culture

- “Muhammad Ali and Vietnam: A Challenge and Transformation With Regard To Sports, Race, Religion, And The Law.” Devissi Muhammad, Ph.D., University of Detroit Mercy
- “Lest We Forget: Reactions to the Jackson State College Shootings of 1970.” Jack Lorenzini, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Memphis

1530: Session 4 – American Visions of Vietnam

- “Democracy in action, with American influence: The 1970 Senatorial Elections in South Vietnam and the opinions and behavior of voters.” Ta Van Tai, Harvard Law School
- “Images of Vietnamese women as symbols of America's vision for the Republic of Vietnam.” Heather Stur, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Wisconsin

1645: End of first day presentations

1800: Reception with Cash Bar and light hors d'oeuvres

1900: Banquet

1945: Special Remarks by James Reckner, Ph.D., Director, The Vietnam Center

2000: Banquet Speaker

- “Collateral Cultures: Wartime Congruencies, Differences, and Indifferences” Keith Taylor, Ph.D., Cornell University

2100: End of Banquet

Saturday March 24, 2007

0830: Session 5 – Soldiers' Experiences In-Country

- “The Addicted Army:” Drug Use in Vietnam in Historical Perspective” Jeremy Kuzmarov, Ph.D., Bucknell University
- “Armed with Abundance: Soldiering in the Vietnam War Zone.” Meredith H. Lair, Ph.D., George Mason University
- “Outsourcing a War: What you get for your Mercenary Dollar,” Gerald Waite, Ph.D., Ball State University
- “Race, Ethnicity and Nationality in Vietnamese Communist Propaganda.” Marc Jason Gilbert, Ph.D., Hawaii Pacific University

1030: Session 6 – Race and Class in the American Military

Chair: Justin Hart, Ph.D., Texas Tech University

- “Overcoming More Than Gravity: Reflections of an African American Helicopter Pilot's Vietnam Experience.” Eddie Randle, Vietnam Veteran
- “Project 100,000: The Transformation of Subterranean Poor to McNamara's Boys, 1966-1972.” Isaac Hampton, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Houston
- “Skin Color and Blood Color: African Americans in Vietnam Combat Roles.” Ron Milam, Ph.D., Texas Tech University

1215: Lunch

1245: Lunch Speaker

- “An American Missionary in Vietnam, 1958-1974.” Mr. Charles Long

1400: Session 7 – Minority Culture

- “Ethnic Minority Policies of the GVN and NLF: Promises and Practices.” Neil H. Olsen, Ph.D., University of Utah.
- “Jarai Culture in Vietnam in the Aftermath of War” - Lap Minh Siu, Undergraduate, Department of Anthropology, Texas Tech University

1530: Session 8 – Culture as Reflected in the Literature of War

- “Leading the ‘Global March’ to Communism: The Viet Cong in Tran Van Dinh's *Blue Dragon, White Tiger*.” Quan Manh Ha, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English, Texas Tech University
- “A review of *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* by H. Bruce Franklin.” Samuel B. Hoff, Ph.D., Delaware State University
- “Post 1975 Vietnamese Culture: The Triumphant South.” Nguyen Ngoc Bich, Ph.D., Independent Scholar

1630: Conference Wrap-up

1700: End of second day presentations

1830: Barbecue Dinner (venue to be determined)

Registration information can be found on
 The Vietnam Center's website:
<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/vietnamcenter/>

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TET 2007

On February 16, 2007, the Vietnam Center hosted a celebration of the Vietnamese new year in the Southwest Collections Library on the Texas Tech campus. Photos feature attendees enjoying traditional Vietnamese food, music, and clothing.



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