



FRIENDS OF THE VIETNAM CENTER

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Speakers Discuss Impact of Culture in the War



Presenters (left to right) Vietnam Veteran Helicopter Pilot Eddie Randle, Ron Milam, Ph.D. and Marc Jason Gilbert, Ph.D., listen to questions from the audience after their presentations.

By Steve Maxner, Ph.D.

On March 23 and 24, 2007, the Vietnam Center hosted its annual Vietnam Conference. The topic of this year's conference, the Impact of Culture, Ethnicity, Race, and Religion in the Vietnam War, provided some very insightful presentations and resulted in some lively discussion and debate.

Mr. James Bruton, a Vietnam veteran and graduate of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, helped launch the conference by examining Vietnam within the framework of Edward Stewart's Cultural Trilogy. Bruton's interesting delineation of how this trilogy affected American wartime understanding, or lack thereof,

of Vietnamese culture helped lay a solid foundation for the conference.

The conference sessions that followed examined a range of topics to include the impact of religion in South Vietnam and in the US. Dr. Geoff Shaw provided insight into what he concludes was the subversion of the Buddhist movement by communists and argued that self-immolation so violated the tenets of Buddhism that "true" Buddhists could never do so as a form of political protest. For example, Shaw stated that Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc, in particular, engaged in this act not to protest the government of Ngo Dinh Diem but instead to fulfill a moral obligation incurred years before. Dr. Carmen Steigman examined

the impact of the sects during the early years of the conflict in South Vietnam and concluded that much can be learned from Vietnam that might be applicable to current and future conflicts that also involve sectarian violence. Additionally, Dr. David Settje discussed the reactions of several American Christian denominations to the war in Vietnam

At lunch, Dr. Larry Berman of UC Davis discussed his newest book, *Perfect Spy*, the biography of North Vietnam's most celebrated agent, Pham Xuan An. Berman focused on the powerful impact of American culture on An as he attended college in California. Berman's remarkable access to An, his family, and his collection of personal materials and artifacts provided insights into An as both an intelligence officer and a man. Of equal importance, Berman's research revealed the high priority the North Vietnamese placed on understanding American culture in order to gain an advantage in the war.

The sessions that followed examined
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A Historic Agreement*



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Heritage for Future
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Conference Call for Papers

Letter From The Director

By James Reckner, Ph.D.

In a simple ceremony at Texas Tech on 25 April, the Deputy Director General of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Institute for International Relations (IIR), Dr. Vu The Hiep, and Tech's Provost, Dr. William Marcy, signed an agreement that will enable Vietnamese student diplomats to undertake graduate study at Texas Tech. After an initial year of master's level courses at IIR, students will complete a second year at Texas Tech and earn a Tech master's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with focus on international relations and American studies. The agreement was the result of two years of discussions between Texas Tech's Graduate School and the Institute for International Relations. The basic outline of the agreement was laid out in a roundtable discussion in Hanoi in January of this year.

After signing the document, Dr. Marcy described the agreement as "a unique opportunity for Texas Tech University and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" to establish a cooperative master's program. Dr. Marcy concluded that "these are the kinds of programs that really reach across thousands of miles and establish relationships that last for a lifetime." We look forward to the opportunity to provide these students with an educational experience that will help them better understand American history and culture.

In other developments, the Vietnam Center, working closely with Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) will offer a seminar at SAIS in Washington, DC, on 8-9 November that will examine similarities and dissimilarities between Vietnam and Iraq. Additional detail is contained elsewhere in the newsletter. For regular updates on this conference, please consult our web page (<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu>).

With the Spring Semester now behind us, we look forward to a busy summer at the Vietnam Center. Dr. Steve Maxner and Mr. Khanh Le will conduct a series of



Texas Tech Provost Dr. William Marcy (right) signs an agreement while Deputy Director General Dr. Vu The Hiep (left) of the Institute of International Affairs looks on. Photo: Caity Colvard, Daily Toreador

recruiting seminars in the major cities in Vietnam during the second half of June. They then will meet a delegation of Texas Tech students who will spend a month touring principal historic and cultural sites in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, interacting with university students in the major cities of the three countries. The delegation also will award the Vietnam Center's annual scholarships in Vietnam and Cambodia. Funding for these scholarships is provided through generous donations by Friends of the Vietnam Center like you. And 100% of all donations reaches needy and very grateful students.

With the slower pace of summer approaching, why not make a personal resolution to use some of your spare time to check your attic for your Vietnam papers and artifacts, and donate them to the Vietnam Archive for permanent preservation? Our Vietnam Archive staff will be pleased to provide advice and assistance. If you have 8 mm film from Vietnam you haven't been able to view for the past thirty years, why not send it

to the Vietnam Archive? We will digitize it for you and give you CD copies so you will be able once again to view the film. For information about how to donate materials, contact the Vietnam Archive at 806.742.9010. ★

New Website Design

In the coming months, visitors to the Vietnam Center & Archive website will see a new look to the site. This redesign will affect all sections of the website. It conforms to the Texas Tech Identity Guidelines and provides a more consistent and streamlined look across the Project pages. Existing pages and URLs will remain the same and users will find a number of new pages, including pages giving tips on conducting research in the Virtual Archive, and new "Browse the Collections" and "Browse the Oral History Interviews" pages. You can preview and comment on the redesigned site by visiting <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/newsite.php>. Links on this sample page are inactive. Please feel free to comment on the redesign by sending an email to vawebmaster@ttu.edu, or by using the online comments form. We hope that users will like the redesign and find it easy to use.

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such interesting topics as the challenges of creating an authentic and sustainable system of elected government in South Vietnam (Mr. Ta Van Tai). However, none of the first day's presentations adequately prepared the attendees for the outstanding dinner remarks provided by Dr. Keith Taylor of Cornell University. Dr. Taylor ultimately turned the entire conference question on its head by asking, "Does culture really matter in war?"

garg to drug use in Vietnam and the important role of misinformation in inflating the perception of widespread soldier addiction. Gerald Waite rounded out the session describing the challenges of integrating and supporting military forces from other countries fighting in Vietnam, effectively creating mercenary armies.

Additional panel discussions on the second day examined the impact of race in the American army (Dr. Ron Milam and Mr. Eddie Randle) and the use of

include Heather Stur (University of Wisconsin), Jack Lorenzini (University of Memphis), and Quan Manh Ha (Texas Tech University). All are PhD candidates. Stur examined the important issues of imagery and identity of South Vietnamese women during the war. Lorenzini provided an impassioned reminder of the tragedy that occurred at Jackson State College. Quan Manh Ha examined the literary work of Tran Van Dinh, a remarkable postwar Vietnamese



Top left: Charles Long asks a question to presenters. **Top center:** A group of Vietnamese-Americans come together for a group photo. **Top right:** Meredith H. Lair, Ph.D., answers a question from the audience after her presentation. **Bottom left:** Larry Berman, Ph.D., discusses his new book during the Friday luncheon. **Bottom center:** Tien The Nguyen and Heather Stur write notes during a presentation. **Bottom right:** Neil H. Olsen, Ph.D., answers a question.



Taylor concluded that it might not be as important as it seems and suggested alternative courses of action the US might have taken to help secure South Vietnam against communism that might have negated concerns about Vietnamese culture or the cultural impact of the American presence there.

The second day of presentations developed into a very lively and important discussion as Dr. Meredith Lair presented her research on the culture of conspicuous consumption developed for Americans serving in Southeast Asia through the military base and exchange system. Dr. Jeremy Kuzmarov joined the panel and discussed his findings with re-

racial identity in North Vietnamese propaganda efforts targeting American soldiers in the field (Dr. Marc Gilbert). The afternoon sessions examined wartime and postwar Vietnamese policies toward ethnic minorities (Dr. Neil Olsen and Mr. Lap Minh Siu). The final conference session examined a number of literary works to include those of H. Bruce Franklin (Dr. Samuel Hoff) as well as the idea that South Vietnamese culture now pervades modern Vietnam (Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Bich).

The Vietnam Center was also proud to host some very promising graduate students who traveled from around the country to make presentations to

novelist. We look forward to watching these young scholars as they complete their degrees and continue to contribute to our understanding of the history of the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam Center wishes to express their profound thanks to all of the presenters, panel chairs, and audience members who contributed to the success of the March 2007 Conference. Presentation videos are being digitized and will be online soon. Please check the Vietnam Center website for updates or subscribe to the Vietnam Center email notification system by visiting www.vietnam.ttu.edu. ★ *Photos by Victoria Lovelady and Humberto Martinez*

PRESERVING VIETNAMESE HERITAGE

New project archivist strives to preserve Vietnamese collection that provides first-hand view of post war conditions in Vietnam

Story By Victoria Lovelady
Photos by Humberto Martinez

Ann Mallet sits at a long table overflowing with documents of various types of paper, covered in handwritten Vietnamese narratives. She examines a set of letters suffering from water damage and improper storage.

Across from her sits two Texas Tech students from Vietnam who process and sort another set of the documents, removing staples and paper clips and placing attached pictures in archival storage sleeves.

Mallet is a new full time project archivist working at the Vietnam Archive to process the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association portion of the Vietnamese-American Heritage Foundation collection which was donated to the archive in June 2005. Work on this collection is funded in part by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the grant-making affiliate of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Mallet said that the grant covers her work for a year, in which time she will process as much of the 135 linear-foot collection as possible. Processing the collection involves organizing the documents into acid-free folders, placing those folders into acid-free archival boxes, and storing them in a temperature, humidity, and light controlled environment to keep any further deterioration from occurring. This process will also allow the materials to be much more accessible to researchers than they are currently. "Right now, we are preserving it, which is why you re-fold it and put the pictures in plastic [Mylar sleeves] and organize it to make it accessible...we are going to create a finding aid so people can look up names of loved ones and also [learn] the history of this organization and the people's histories."

The Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation (VAHF) was established in 1992, as a reorganization of the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association (FVPPA). According to VAHF's website, the FVPPA was founded by Ms. Khuc Minh Tho and some of her close friends. Ms. Khuc worked for the Vietnamese Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1961 to 1972. In 1972, she became the Administrative Officer to the Vietnamese Embassy in Manila, but she resettled in the U.S. in 1977 after the fall of South Vietnam. The primary goal of the FVPPA was to obtain the release of all Vietnamese political prisoners of war.

The organization



also assisted those being released to prepare for their resettlement. The FVPPA was instrumental in initiating the 1989 American-Vietnamese agreement allowing the resettlement of former Vietnamese political prisoners and their families in the United States. Almost 300,000 Vietnamese have made their home in the U.S. since 1990 thanks to the agreement.

Nancy Bui of the Vietnamese American

Heritage Foundation said that the VAHF was looking for a professional place that could store, preserve, and digitize the documents which is why the collection was donated to The Vietnam Archive. Bui explained that she has a good relationship with the Director of the Archive, Dr. James Reckner and Deputy Director, Dr. Steve Maxner, and she feels very comfortable having the collection here. Bui believes that preservation of the collection is very important because of its historical significance. As Bui put it, "There are almost two million Vietnamese living here in the United States...the history of almost two million people cannot be ignored."

Mallet explained that the VAHF collection contains Orderly Departure Program applications which allowed the organization to systematically and safely relocate former political prisoners out of Vietnam and into the U.S. The applications contain detailed information about who they were, why they wanted to gain entry into the U.S, and who they wished to bring with them.

Mallet explained that the collection is historically significant and quite valuable to researchers because of the amount of primary sources it contains. "There is an amazing amount of first hand primary sources, just an incredible amount because each [application] either has a letter in their own handwriting or has a letter from their sponsor about them." Mallet believes there are approximately 10,000 applications contained within the collection and she explains that to have that many first hand documents is an incredible and rare resource. "I wasn't expecting so many handwritten letters and the depth they went through explaining their situation because they didn't write just a short little blurb, they wrote pages and pages – just these long letters" Mallet said. She was also quite surprised at the length of time some of them spent in the reeduca-

AGE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Ann Mallet, Project Archivist at The Vietnam Archive, stands next to a table filled with boxes of Orderly Departure Program applications. The applications are currently being organized alphabetically and placed into acid-free archival boxes to prevent further deterioration.

tion camps – 10 years or more in some cases. Nearly every application contains photographs of the applicant and their family which puts a face to every story. Mallet described her frustration in not being able to read Vietnamese, but she is confident that her student assistants will make up for this by providing useful translations and other insights into the intricacies of Vietnamese language and culture.

Organizing the collection is challenging and tedious, but it is obvious while speaking with Mallet that she is excited about the process. “We have to make sure we have the right name order because Vietnamese name order is different from American...if there is English on the paper they might have the name out of order so you have to always double check.”

Another major obstacle for Mallet and her student assistants is the poor condition of many of the documents.

According to Mary Saffell, Associate Archivist at The Vietnam Archive, a portion of the collection was stored in large, plastic tubs before The Vietnam Archive received them and moisture built up inside the containers and couldn't escape causing mold damage on some documents. In addition to this, Mallet said that many of the documents are made of onion skin paper which is thin, weak, and brittle and most of the applications were attached with staples or paperclips which have left dark rust marks on the paper and especially the photographs. “You really wish that the collection you get is in better condition, nothing is really ever preserved that ideally and nothing is ever going to be pristine” Mallet said. She explained that this is why it is so important to properly store the collection now because proper storage should keep any further damage from occurring.

The collection not only contains ODP applications, but also documents from

the FVPPA office, including correspondence with U.S. and Vietnamese officials. Mallet explained that it is still too early in the process to know what specific office documents are contained within the collection. She and her staff have only processed a portion of the ODP applications thus far, but Mallet plans on beginning the organization of the office documents this summer.

The VAHF collection is a valuable source of information about Vietnamese history and gives insight into life in Vietnam after the war. Personal information from each application tells the story of thousands of former reeducation camp detainees. This information is so important to preserve because in doing so Vietnamese history can be told first hand to future generations of researchers and to the Vietnamese people as well. ★

Upcoming Conferences

The Vietnam Experience and Iraq: Lessons Learned, Lessons Lost

November 8 & 9, 2007

Washington, D.C.

The Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, and the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University are pleased to announce a conference on "The Vietnam Experience and Iraq: Lessons Learned, Lessons Lost." The purpose of this conference will be to examine and discuss comparisons between the American War in Vietnam and the current War in Iraq to determine whether such comparisons are accurate and/or appropriate. The conference will focus on lessons learned from Vietnam that appear to have influenced US policy decisions in Iraq. Presenters will

also discuss lessons from Vietnam that appear to have been ignored by policymakers but perhaps should be influencing cur-

rent policies. Discussion topics will include "The Fate

of Facts in a World of Men: The Use and Abuse of Intelligence"; "The Media in Wartime";

"Defining the Objective: What Does

'Winning' Mean?"; Know Yourself, Know Your Enemy, and Know Your Ally; "The

Unity of Development and Security"; and

"The U.S. Army—A Casualty of War?".

We hope you will be able to join us in Washington, D.C., for what promises to

be a stirring discussion of these important and timely issues. Please check the Vietnam

Center website for updates regarding dates, times, registration information, and the conference agenda. ★



Sixth Triennial Vietnam Symposium Call for Papers

March 13-15, 2008

Lubbock, TX

The Sixth Triennial Vietnam Symposium will take place on March 13-15, 2008, and will be held at the Holiday Inn Park Plaza in Lubbock, Texas. The Center has already begun preliminary planning and has issued a number of invitations for key speakers for the program.

A key Vietnam-related anniversary in 2008 is the 40th anniversary of the Tet Offensive and all of the remarkable events that unfolded in 1968. This included a shift to more critical and biased media coverage of the war, a progressive shift in American public opinion, the political fallout and President Johnson's decision not to seek reelection, the

Presidential election of 1968 and emergence of Richard Nixon, etc...

Our symposia are open for papers examining any aspect of the American involvement in Vietnam and we encourage anyone interested in presenting a paper to submit a one-page proposal to the Vietnam Center. This anniversary, however, suggests a range of topics that participants might wish to explore. As always, graduate students are strongly encouraged to submit proposals.

Those interested in presenting papers (either individual or as completed panels) should provide proposals as soon as possible. The deadline for submitting proposals is November 1, 2007. Please format proposals to resemble an abstract to include the author's name, title/affiliation, and contact information, along

with proposed title, thesis/purpose, and main points. Please limit proposal length to a maximum of 500 words and submit them to:

Stephen Maxner, Ph.D.
Deputy Director
The Vietnam Archive
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX 79409-1041.

You may also submit proposals via email to steve.maxner@ttu.edu. If you make an email submission but do not receive notification of receipt within five days, please call 806-742-9010.

Thank you and we look forward to you joining us for this important event! ★

Additions To The Archive

Aikens, Ken ★ Arapakos, Deme-
tra ★ Arnau, Robert R. ★ Atchi-
son, Richard ★ Banerian, James
★ Berger, Rolf ★ Billings, Alan J.
★ Binckley, Allen ★ Bowra, Ken-
neth R. ★ Bruton, James K. ★
Burbank, Howard ★ Chambers,
Clint ★ Cirincione, Dominick ★
Clapes, Leonard A. ★ Clayton,
Paul ★ Cook, Michael ★ Crosby,
Ben G. ★ Dang, Hoi Bach ★ Da-
vidson, Van Michael ★ Denney,
Steve ★ Detra, Dick ★ Diem, Bui
★ Draper, Ronald ★ Eads, Wil-



Photo from the Jim Stanitz Collection
(VA050199) featuring a scene from Operation Babylift

liam F. ★ East, Malcolm P. ★ Eichler, Thomas ★ Evans, Penni ★ Flanagan, Lawrence M. ★ Fletcher, Larry
Elton ★ Fortin, Noonie ★ Foulke, William ★ Games, Ben R., Ph.D. ★ Garza, Rene A. ★ Goode, Michael Ray
★ Gower, Dan ★ Gregory, Stephen E., Jr. ★ Haldeman, David ★ Harder, Richard C. ★ Harlan, Juanita ★ Har-
rison, Donald F. ★ Hauge, John ★ Holschuh, Howard ★ Hood, Jonathan ★ Hung, Nguyen Manh ★ Huong,
Yen ★ Igoe, Michael W. ★ Jablonski, Frank ★ Jestes, Gary D. ★ Jestr, Gary ★ Keeton, Perry ★ Kirkland,
Billy ★ Kirkland, William E. ★ Kondratiuk, Leonid ★ Kraft, Ed ★ Lan, Lu ★ Larsen, Gary ★ Linn, Dan M.
★ Marshall, Robert E. ★ Martin, David C. ★ Martin, Virginia W. ★ Maxner, Stephen F. ★ McMahon, Gary
★ Minert, Paul ★ Minert, Paul H. ★ Moffett, Roy E. ★ Nguyen, Quang D. ★ Nguyen, Tien ★ Nguyen, Tien
The ★ Parkinson, Rick ★ Pelley, Patricia ★ Peoples, Curtis ★ Perry, Sherry ★ Phong, Nguyen Ky ★ Quant,
Harold E. ★ Rivers, Greg ★ Rollins, Peter C. ★ Rush, Larry ★ Sailsbury, Kevin ★ Scurfield, Raymond ★
Scurfield, Raymond M. ★ Shanus, Joel M. ★ Singer, Robert F. ★ Siu, Lap Minh ★ Sluis, Ken ★ Smith, Don-
ald E. ★ Smith, Homer D., Jr. ★ Smith, Spencer H. ★ Snider, Trish ★ Spearman, Carey J. ★ Stanitz, Jim ★
Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Brotherhood ★ Thomas, Joseph ★ Thomas, Phillip F. ★ Thompson, MacAlan ★
Thomson, Don C. ★ Tidd, Emmett H. ★ Tran Cung, Thuy-Tien ★ Underwood, Brennan ★ USS Richard B.
Anderson (DD-786) Association ★ Vallieres, Carolyn D. ★ VanPuymbrouck, Arthur J. ★ Verrone, Richard
Burks ★ Vezeau, Keith ★ Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation ★ Vogel, Carl ★ Whitlock, Franklin
S. ★ Wilkerson, Joy ★ Willbanks, James H. ★ Wiren, John C. ★ Wood, Tom ★ Worley, Philip M. ★ Young,
Jennifer ★ Zorthian, Barry ★

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