



# FRIENDS OF THE VIETNAM CENTER



Summer and Fall 2008 Vol. 15 No.2

## The Opening of the FVPPA Collection



The audience listens closely to the opening remarks. From left to right: An Hoang Le, Ann Mallett, Khuc Minh Tho, Nancy Bui

**By Mary Saffell, C.A., Associate Director**

On May 28, 2008, the Vietnam Center and Archive hosted a celebration to officially open the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners (FVPPA) Collection. The collection was donated to the archive in 2005 by the Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation (VAHF). With grant funding provided by the National Historical Research and Publications Commission, the Archive hired a Project Archivist, Ann Mallett, to process the collection in 2006. Ms. Mallett spent over a year arranging and describing the collection and it is now available for research. The collection contains the records of the FVPPA and document the organization's efforts to assist released reeducation camp prisoners in immigrating to the United States through the

Orderly Departure Program. This collection will be a valuable information resource for scholars and students of post-war Vietnam and the immigration experience of Vietnamese-Americans.

When the records arrived at the archive in 2005, they were disorganized and some were severely damaged by mold. In processing the collection, Ms. Mallett arranged the records into six series: ODP Applications, Office Files, Resettlement Files, Master Lists of Applicants, Restricted/Reserved Files, and Oversized Documents. Each series contains multiple sub-series as well. She and her team of student assistants, which included several students from Vietnam, re-housed the records in new folders and boxes. Ms. Mallett also wrote a comprehensive finding aid for the collection, which included a Scope

and Content note describing the collection, an Administrative History of the FVPPA, and a folder level inventory of the 157 linear feet of documents. The finding aid is available through the Virtual Vietnam Archive, and catalog records for

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# Letter from the Director

**By Steve Maxner, PhD, Director**

This past academic year has seen a substantial number of changes at the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University. This past spring we hired three new faculty members – Dr. Kelly Crager, Ms. Amy Hooker, and Mr. Jason Stewart. Kelly and Jason are our new Oral History team and, together, they are already making some outstanding contributions to our archive and project - having added more than one hundred interviews to the website and conducting new interviews every week. Amy is our new reference archivist and she manages most of the requests for assistance we receive from scholars, students, veterans, and others who are using the resources at the Vietnam Archive to better understand the Vietnam War.

Our team is working very hard to collect, preserve, and make accessible the history of the Vietnam War. Our primary

donors remain Vietnam veterans and we are very proud to be working with them to preserve their history with the respect and honor it deserves. Last year, we received more than 300 collection donations to the archive and we hope that number will increase this year. In terms of access, last year we added 22,000 records to the Virtual Vietnam Archive for a total of 132,000 pages of documents and other materials; bringing our total to just fewer than 3 million pages online. Equally impressive, researchers accessed the Virtual Archive more than one million times last year making it one of the most accessed resources on the Vietnam War in the world.

As you will see on the pages of this newsletter, the Vietnam Center has also been very busy with other projects. Due to the hard work and dedication of Ms. Ann Mallett, as well as a complement of student assistants, we have recently opened the papers of the Families of Vietnamese

Political Prisoners Association. These unique historical resources will add tremendously to our understanding of the plight of thousands of Vietnamese citizens who fled Vietnam under political duress.

Additionally, the Vietnam Center is preparing to celebrate its 20th anniversary next year. This is a tremendous milestone for us and we are working hard to organize events that we hope will increase local and national awareness of the Vietnam Center and Archive. Perhaps more important, however, through these events we hope to increase national awareness of and appreciation for the service and sacrifices of our nation's Vietnam veterans. Please watch for additional mailings and other information about these upcoming events that will take place during calendar year 2009.

As always, thank you, the Friends of the Vietnam Center, for your constant support. ★

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the collection are available through the Texas Tech University Library catalog, and WorldCat.

Although the collection is available for research, one series of documents will remain closed until December 1, 2008. The ODP Applications series contains personal information for each prisoner seeking to immigrate through the Orderly Departure Program. Any immigrant or family member who has privacy concerns over their files may contact the archive to discuss the appropriate arrangements. On December 1, 2008, the Applications series will be open to the public.



T. Kumar, Amnesty International

United States of America as a political prisoner. The lengthy application process kept me in Vietnam until July 1992. Thanks to the work of Vietnamese activists like Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho, who joins us today, my years in prison allowed me and my family to immigrate to the United States.”

Remarking on the opening of the collection, Mr. T. Kumar, Advocacy Director for Asia & Pacific, stated that open access to information on political prisoners is essential to human rights. “In terms of advocacy, it is very important.”

Other speakers at the event included: Dr. James Reckner, Executive



Khuc Minh Tho, FVPPA founder, and Ann Mallett, project archivist



An Hoang Le, former political prisoner

## 2009 Vietnam Center Conference Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand and the Vietnam War March 13th-14th, 2009

Most historical examinations of the Vietnam War tend to focus on the effects of the war on the principal participants to include the Republic of Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the United States. The events that took place in Vietnam from 1955 through 1975, however, had a tremendous impact on the entire region.

The purpose of the 2009 Vietnam Center Conference will be to examine the effects of the war on the neighboring nations of Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. The Vietnam Center invites both individual paper proposals as well as complete panels that will examine a wide range of topics that include the effects of the war within these nations either individually or collectively; specific events

and activities that took place within each of these nations; the participation of US and other military, diplomatic, and civilian organizations within these countries, issues of regional and international diplomacy and diplomatic relations; the participation of these nations' military, diplomatic, and civilian organizations within Vietnam and each other, postwar issues for each nation, etc...

Persons interested in participating should provide a proposal as soon as possible. Please format proposals to resemble an abstract to include the author's name, title, and affiliation, contact information, along with a 500 word abstract. Complete panel proposals should include brief biographies of each speaker, their contact information, as well as

a 500 word abstract that describes the theme and purpose for the panel. Please submit proposals to:

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

You may also submit proposals via email to [steve.maxner@ttu.edu](mailto:steve.maxner@ttu.edu). If you make a submission but do not receive notification of receipt within 14 days, please call 806-742-9010. **The deadline for submitting proposals is December 1, 2008.** This event will take place at the Holiday Inn Park Plaza in Lubbock, Texas. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you! ★

In her remarks at the event, VAHF President Nancy Bui spoke on the experiences of herself and other Vietnamese Americans, saying “Our stories of survival need to be preserved in order for future generations to understand why and how we came to America. If we give a voice to Vietnamese Americans, we can document how we feel about the homeland we left behind, what we have done to cope with our new lives, and how we have become one of the most productive groups of immigrants.”

Mr. An Hoang Le, a former prisoner now residing in Austin, Texas, said “I was released from these re-education camps in November 1981. After several years of waiting, in 1984 I submitted all the required paperwork to come to the

Director, Institute for Modern Conflict, Diplomacy, and Reconciliation; Ms. Khuc Minh Tho, Founder and President, Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association; Dr. Stephen F. Maxner, Director, the Vietnam Center and Archive; Ms. Anna Mallett, Project Archivist, the Vietnam Center and Archive; Dr. William M. Marcy, Provost, Texas Tech University.

Certificates of Appreciation were given from the VAHF to Dr. James Reckner, Dr. Stephen Maxner, Mary Saffell, and Ann Mallett. In addition, the Vietnam Center and Archive also presented a staff achievement award to Project Archivist Ann Mallett in recognition for her hard work and dedication in processing the collection.

of Vietnamese were able to relocate to the United States; and we as a country have benefited greatly from their accomplishments and contributions. Senator Bob Dole commented, “Thanks to the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech, the unique stories of these Vietnamese immigrants are collected together in one place to be shared with researchers, students, and Vietnamese Americans alike.” Presidential candidate and Vietnam Veteran Senator John McCain commended the work of Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho and other Vietnamese activists, stating, “I am honored to have the opportunity to work with so many of you over the years to achieve our common goals of preserving fundamental human rights.” ★

# Collection Spotlight on Gerald Hickey

By Ty Lovelady, Associate Archivist

In the Spring of 2008, world-renowned anthropologist Gerald Hickey donated over 10 linear feet of material to the Vietnam Archive. The donation mainly consists of books, but also contains periodicals, maps, and clippings. The bulk of the publications are written in French and were collected by Hickey from 1956-1973 while he was in Vietnam, primarily studying Montagnard tribes and Vietnamese rural life.

Hickey first became interested in Vietnamese ethnic studies while he was a graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Chicago in 1951. This growing interest led him to spend time in Paris from 1953-1954 conducting research on the subject. While he was in Paris, Hickey was initially interested in Vietnamese culture, but soon turned his attention to the study of the Montagnards of the Northern and Central Highlands of Vietnam and Laos, who are of Malay-Polynesian and Mon-Khmer descent and are different physically and culturally from the ethnic Vietnamese. Hickey wanted to go to Vietnam while he was studying in France, but he mentioned that in 1954 no one would offer grants for study in Vietnam at that time due to the French Indochina War and the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in particular.

While Hickey was studying in France he made friends with many Vietnamese students. In fact, Hickey was invited to separate victory celebrations by both Vietnamese Communist students and supporters of Emperor Bao Dai following the Viet Minh's victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu. Hickey politely went to both celebrations, not wanting to identify with either side.

When Hickey returned to the United

States he met Wesley Fischel, who was a close friend of Ngo Dinh Diem, the president of the newly established Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Fischel was looking for people with Vietnamese studies background to work with him at the Michigan State University Group (MSUG) in South Vietnam. MSUG was contracted with the United States Agency for International Cooperation, which later became the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Their goal was to help South Vietnam develop into a modern nation-state.

Hickey was hired by Michigan State and went there for an orientation in late 1955 and early 1956. He then went to Vietnam in March 1956. Fischel wanted Hickey to gain experience working in the rural areas because most of the people with Michigan State were already working in Saigon. "It gave me an endless chance to take notes on South Vietnamese society and I was very happy to go to the highlands and begin to work with the Montagnards," said Hickey.

Hickey's initial work in Vietnam extended past working with the Montagnards and was more involved with rural life in Vietnam in general. Hickey and Jim Henry, who was also with Michigan State, began a study of an ethnic Vietnamese village called Khanh Hau in the Mekong Delta in 1958. Hickey and Henry essentially became part of the village. "The people liked us and started inviting us to all the weddings, funeral, and ceremonies. They were terribly nice people and very hard-working," claimed Hickey.

Hickey concluded his village study in the Mekong Delta in December 1959. He noted that he had learned a lot about Vietnamese culture and that the villag-



Rare French and Vietnamese language books donated to the Vietnam Archive by Gerald Hickey.

ers were extremely industrious and were to be admired, but that it was clear that their lives were being negatively affected by the Viet Cong insurgency, particularly through economic development.

While he was conducting his village study, Hickey also visited the Central Highlands and learned of the Montagnards disenchantment with the policies of the Diem government in their regions. Hickey claimed that the French had originally kept the Vietnamese out of the highlands and for the most part had let the Montagnards administer themselves within their villages. Ngo Dinh Diem, however, had a different policy. Diem had started to allow

Vietnamese from the lowlands to move into the highlands, which greatly upset the Montagnards. Hickey felt that he really began to identify with the problems of the Montagnards as he began to spend time with them. "The Montagnards were very independent people. They made everything they needed. They didn't want anything from the outside."

While Hickey was in Vietnam, he would constantly buy books and journals, primarily written in French to help him with his studies. He even met a

that the French did not usually publish large editions, sometimes there would only be 500 or 1000 editions of a single book and it would take time to find a copy. The bulk of these purchases make up Hickey's tremendous donation to the Vietnam Archive.

Hickey then left Vietnam in December 1959 and then took a teaching position at Monteith College in Detroit. From 1961-1963, Hickey worked with the Human Relation Area Files at Yale where he helped write a study on Southeast Asian ethnography. Hickey was approached by the RAND Corporation in 1962 and visited several Strategic Hamlets on their behalf. The RAND Corporation talked to Hickey again in early 1963 about returning to Vietnam to conduct further studies on the villagers of the Central Highlands. Hickey then returned to Vietnam in 1964 where he spent the next nine years working with the Montagnards.

While Hickey was in Vietnam, one of his main goals was to get the Montagnards titles for their lands because he felt that the Vietnamese people were very legalistic and that they may honor the titles. He even thought that the Communists may honor the titles if they won the war.

Unfortunately, he was never able to receive land titles for the Montagnards from the South Vietnamese government. Instead, he claimed, many of the leaders in South Vietnam wanted to have titles to the lands for themselves to have coffee plantations upon their retirement from government service.

Hickey noted that he was the only person in academia who had a practical solution to the war. He stated that his solution was "a process of political accommodation leading to a coalition government (which would include Viet Cong representation)." He testified his plan in front of Senator Fulbright in 1971, but he could not get anyone in

Washington to listen to his plan. "The people in Washington didn't have any idea what they were dealing with. They were totally ignorant," said Hickey.

Not only did Hickey face problems with the government, he also faced dilemmas with the anti-war movement. The people of the anti-war movement condemned Hickey just because he worked in Vietnam. "They had no idea what I was doing," said Hickey. They did not understand that Hickey was also against the war and proposed a policy of political accommodation.

The anti-war movement's bias against Hickey because of his work for the United States government essentially blacklisted him from university teaching positions. He was finally able to get a visiting professorship at Cornell and later he received several writing fellowships. He said that he was greatly disillusioned by his blacklisting from academia, but that on a positive note, the small fellowships he received allowed him to do a lot of writing, seven books total. On the other hand, people he knew who were teaching were not able to do nearly as much writing because of their other academic duties.

Though Hickey faced great challenges throughout his career from South Vietnamese and U.S. government policies and the anti-war movement that condemned him for merely working in Vietnam, he always remained steadfast in his support of the Montagnards. "It was a joy to work with these people," said Hickey. The study of the Montagnards is an important facet in the study of Vietnam and merits greater attention. The Vietnam Archive is honored have Hickey's remarkable collection in its possession. ★

Sources:

Ty Lovelady's phone interview with Gerald Hickey, 15 July 2008

Hickey, Gerald C. *Window on a War: An Anthropologist in the Vietnam Conflict*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2002.

# STUDY ABROAD

## Vietnam Center provides important life experiences for TTU students

By Steve Maxner, PhD, Director

Every summer the Vietnam Center hosts a study abroad program in Southeast Asia. Using the proceeds from the Lee Roy Herron endowed scholarship, the Vietnam Center provides seven students from Texas Tech with an opportunity to travel to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. The purpose of this trip is to acquaint TTU students with the rich history, culture, and heritage of these Southeast Asian nations. Most of our time is spent in Vietnam where we tour from Hanoi to the Mekong Delta visiting important war-related historical sites such as the Hanoi Hilton, military museums throughout the country, and former battlefields to include the Citadel at Hue, Khe Sanh, the DMZ, Cu Chi, Tay Ninh, and others. As we tour museums, in particular, TTU students see the effects of government controls on public information – the war museums of Vietnam are designed for proselytizing; not education.

Equally important for our study abroad students is the personal interaction they have with students in these countries. This is especially the case in Vietnam where we meet routinely with university students and are afforded opportunities to interact on a very personal level. What many friends of the Vietnam Center might not realize is that these very rewarding personal interactions occur, in part, as a result of the Vietnam Center scholar-

ships we distribute to Vietnamese and Cambodian students.

As we travel, we visit universities and distribute scholarships so that



Top: Maxner presents a scholarship to a Cambodian student, which will help cover her living expenses while attending Royal University of Phnom Penh.

Bottom: TTU students pose with students from USSH-HCMC after learning to dance and cook Vietnamese food.



Vietnamese and Cambodian students can attend universities in their own countries. The scholarships we provide result from private donations contributed by friends and others who want to help these hard-working and dedicated stu-

dents. The amounts of the scholarships are very modest - \$100 for Vietnamese students and \$125 for Cambodian students. Because we distribute the scholarships in the presence of Texas Tech students, TTU students walk away from the experience with far better appreciation for the worth of a dollar. What the average American student can spend on iPod music downloads in a matter of minutes, their Vietnamese and Cambodian counterparts can pay tuition and fees for a year or pay living expenses for approximately 6 months, respectively. The level of appreciation shown by the Vietnamese and Cambodian students is very powerful as a number of them break down in tears as they express their gratitude. We think this is an important life lesson that few American students will ever experience or appreciate. We at the Vietnam Center are proud to be helping students in all three nations.

If you are interested in contributing to the Lee Roy Herron Scholarship or the Vietnam Center scholarships for Vietnamese and Cambodian students, please contact the Vietnam Center at 806-742-9010 or email us at Vietnam.center@ttu.edu. ★

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<http://www.vietnamarchive.blogspot.com>

## Vietnam Center and Texas Tech University Higher Education Projects in Vietnam

Since the Vietnam Center started traveling to Vietnam a decade ago, most of our interactions have focused on creating relationships and projects with Vietnamese universities. We now have memoranda of understanding with more than 20 colleges, universities, and ministries. Our efforts shifted recently and for more than a year the Vietnam Center has also been actively recruiting Vietnamese students to attend Texas Tech. So far these efforts have been modestly successful and we have brought in a handful of Vietnamese students to study at our great university.

Texas Tech is also a partner with the Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF), which provides \$2 million in annual scholarships that are awarded to 40 of Vietnam's brightest students

every year so they can attend American Universities. These prestigious fellowships are awarded only to students studying in the sciences. The VEF coordinates closely with the National Science Foundation who helps to screen, interview, and select candidates. The goal of the VEF is to increase Vietnam's intellectual capital in the sciences for the betterment of Vietnamese higher education and also to assist with Vietnam's corporate and industrial development. With a population of more than 80 million people, however, 40 scholarships a year is simply not enough to bring about any significant improvements in the near term.

For several years, the government of Vietnam has been attempting to revamp its higher education system in order to become more competitive regionally and internationally. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has

instructed all universities to change to the credit hour system – shifting away from the block system. In addition, they are developing an accreditation system as well as international accreditation for their universities and programs of study. This is an important change that will hopefully translate into real improvements in classrooms at universities throughout Vietnam. In these endeavors, the Vietnam Center and Texas Tech have been assisting Vietnam,

pate in his conference.

Toward the more immediate goal of improving their higher education system, Vietnam's government has also been developing several scholarship programs designed to increase the number of university instructors and professors who hold graduate degrees from foreign universities. MOET will invest several hundred million dollars into an extremely ambitious undertaking – the Vietnam International Education Development or VIED. VIED is a scholarship program

that will attempt to increase the number of Ph.D. and M.A. degree holders in Vietnam by 20,000 by the year 2020. The Vietnam Center and Texas Tech University are very proud to be working with MOET and VIED as they attempt to achieve this important goal. The VIED is organized rather similarly

providing expertise and advice on the credit hour and accreditation systems in our country.

The US government has increased its assistance as well. Under the new leadership of US Ambassador Michael Michalak, the US Embassy in Hanoi has increased its emphasis on developing joint education programs in Vietnam. In January, 2008, the Embassy hosted a conference for American stakeholders in Vietnam's higher education. This two day event included more than 200 participants from nearly 100 universities and corporations. The purpose was to bring together this rather disparate group of organizations so that we could all better understand and perhaps better coordinate what we are trying to collectively accomplish in Vietnam. The Vietnam Center along with representatives from the Graduate School of Texas Tech University was honored to partici-

to the VEF as they will screen applicants for the scholarships to ensure Vietnam's brightest students are sent abroad to study at American and other universities. Unlike VEF, however, VIED fellows will be allowed to pursue degrees in all fields of study.

In June of this year, Texas Tech University hosted a delegation from MOET and VIED to discuss a partnership that will bring VIED fellows to TTU. The two parties signed a memorandum of understanding in Houston in the presence of the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Mr. Nguyen Tan Dung, and the Governor of Texas, Mr. Rick Perry. The Vietnam Center helped to organize this visit and continues to spearhead TTU's program to bring VIED fellows to Texas Tech. We can think of no better way to continue our work of helping to reconcile our wartime past with Vietnam than through these joint academic programs. ★



Representatives from Vietnam's Ministry of Education met with TTU Chancellor Kent Hance.

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