



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Vietnam Center and Archive

# FRIENDS OF THE VIETNAM CENTER



Summer/Fall 2010 Vol. 17 No. 2

## 2010 Student Summer Study Abroad in Southeast Asia



From left to right: 2010 Summer Study Abroad group visits the historic battle site at Dien Bien Phu. Left to right: Khanh Le, Jennifer Burns, Kymberly Ball, James Sandy, Kimberly Wiggins, Dr. Brian Nutter, Dr. Ron Milam, Justin Simundson, Patrick Hunt, Nikki Davis, and Kolbe Cotter.

### **Stephen F. Maxner, Ph.D.**

Director

#### ***Introduction***

Every year, the Vietnam Center hosts a summer study abroad in Southeast Asia where we take Texas Tech University graduate students and senior undergraduate students on an extensive tour of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. This past summer, we escorted eight students to sites throughout Vietnam to include Hanoi, Ha Long Bay, Dien Bien Phu, Hue, Da Nang, Saigon, Can Tho,

and the Mekong Delta. In addition, we visited Vientiane, Laos, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, Cambodia, and Bangkok, Thailand. Our students receive some support to cover the expenses for this trip from our Lee Roy Herron scholarship but must find most of the funding from other sources. As you can see from the comments provided here, this is a life-changing trip for the students, and I can think of no better way to express how profound an experience this is than to let the students tell you for themselves.

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# Letter from the Director

## The US and Vietnam: Past, Present, and Future



**Stephen F. Maxner, Ph.D.**

Director  
The Vietnam Center and Archive

I find one of the most exciting things about our work at the Vietnam Center and Archive is in how it reflects the relationship between the US and Vietnam – past, present, and future. The core mission of the project is to promote education and understanding regarding all aspects of the US Vietnam relationship. Much of our current focus (and our primary focus for the past 21 years) has been on the Vietnam-American War. This is evident in our numerous conferences and symposia and, for example, we have our 7th Triennial Symposium coming in March 2011. Our commitment to understanding our joint past is also apparent in our archive which collects, preserves, and provides access to more than 20 million pages of historical material onsite to include nearly 1,000 oral history interviews with wartime participants. The materials and interviews available in the Vietnam Archive also reflect our dedication to preserving the history of and providing access to the perspectives of all participants in the US, Vietnam, and other participant countries. We also provide online access to more than 3.2 million pages of digitized historical material via the Virtual Vietnam Archive.

Since early after our project started, the Vietnam Center and Archive became mindful of the potential impact of our

work on the present. Our historical resources have been used directly in contemporary research and writing about the war and, as a result, are continually contributing to our collective understanding of the war and its affect on the US, Vietnam, and other participant nations. In addition, our conferences and symposia provide a venue where scholars, students, and wartime participants can come together to discuss their most recent research, scholarship, and interpretations of those events. This has resulted in some remarkable interactions between scholars, students, and wartime participants at our events. But perhaps of equal importance, Vietnam Center conferences have been a place where Vietnamese Americans and Vietnamese from Vietnam can come together to talk about their wartime past but also to discuss reconciliation and how they can work together to create a brighter future for Vietnam and the Vietnamese people.

Most recently, the Vietnam Center has been involved in additional activity that we hope will contribute greatly to the future of US-Vietnam relations. Earlier this year, the Vietnam Center was invited by the United States Ambassador to Vietnam, Mr. Michael Michalak, to help the embassy organize a conference to commemorate the 15th anniversary of normalized relations between the US and Vietnam. In addition to being partners with US Embassy in Hanoi, we also partnered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Vietnam and the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. In this capacity, the Vietnam Center worked very closely with the US Embassy, MOFA, and the Diplomatic Academy to develop an agenda for a two-day conference that would look at the past 15 years to include the numerous challenges, difficulties, and accomplishments we have faced. In addition, we designed this event to look forward to determine what issues, challenges, and opportunities await us for

the next 15 years. The Vietnam Center helped in selecting American speakers to include diplomats and others involved in normalizing the relationship and we selected scholars who could help us to better understand the various issues involved from all sides. The conference was attended by approximately 200 Vietnamese and Americans to include a significant number of students from the Diplomatic Academy. We were also able to organize the event so that it coincided with the Vietnam Center study abroad so that Texas Tech University students could also participate. While no event is perfect, we were very pleased to hear from numerous observers and participants that the event surpassed many of their expectations. Perhaps the most striking example was in the candor and openness with which Vietnamese and American participants discussed relatively sensitive subjects and issues. In no way was this more evident than in the discussions about China and the current conflict between China and Vietnam over the East Sea (as Vietnam refers to it) or the South China Sea (as China perceives it). We were also very fortunate to have some noteworthy keynote speakers to include Sen. Jim Webb of Virginia who is also a Vietnam veteran. The entire conference was video recorded and the recordings are available online at the Vietnam Center website. Unfortunately not all of the remarks in Vietnamese have been translated. However, we hope to have a translated transcript or English captions added to the video at some time in the future. Until then, we hope you enjoy watching what we believe to be an important event in the ongoing relationship and dialogue between the United States and Vietnam. ★

Videos from the conference in Hanoi can be found here:  
[http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/events/2010\\_Vietnam/2010VietnamSessions.php](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/events/2010_Vietnam/2010VietnamSessions.php)

# The Seventh Triennial Vietnam Symposium

## Call for Papers

**March 10-12, 2011**  
Overton Hotel and Conference Center  
Lubbock, Texas

The Seventh Triennial Vietnam Symposium will take place on March 10-12, 2011, and will be held at the brand new Overton Hotel and Convention Center in Lubbock, Texas.

Vietnam Center symposia are open to presentations that examine any and all aspects of the United States involvement in Southeast Asia. This includes activities before, during, and after the war in Vietnam. Papers can examine any aspect of the experience to include early interac-

tion and diplomacy, activities in theater during the war, the international dimensions of the war for all sides involved, activities in the US and elsewhere in support of or in opposition to the war, post-war issues, etc.

We encourage anyone interested in presenting a paper to submit a one page proposal and a short CV for consideration. As always, graduate students are highly encouraged to submit proposals. 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 single page and submit them electronically to:

[VietnamCenterConference@ttu.edu](mailto:VietnamCenterConference@ttu.edu).

If you make an email submission but do not receive notification of receipt within seven days, please call 806-742-3742 and ask for Steve Maxner, Ph.D., Director, Vietnam Center and Archive.

**The deadline for submitting proposals is December 1, 2010.**

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

## Vietnam Archive Online Exhibits

**Amy Mondt**

Reference Archivist

All good museums have a strong exhibit program, so that they can both educate the public and show off their great collections. While the Vietnam Archive does not have an exhibit hall for this purpose, we do have an absolutely amazing webpage backed by the Virtual Vietnam Archive, which is full of wonderful photographs, objects and documents just perfect for creating online exhibits. With this resource at hand the staff of the Vietnam Archive got to work in early 2009 to begin an online exhibit program for our webpage.

If you visit our exhibits page you will see exhibits for celebrations like Black History Month or the birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps as well as ones that commemorate major anniversaries of events such as The Fall of Saigon. These exhibits feature items from our collection

related to the celebration or event. We also have some educational exhibits, like "So Others May Live: Dustoff – Medical Evacuation in the Vietnam War." This exhibit discusses history of medevac and how during the Vietnam War the helicopter was used with great success as an air ambulance for the troops.

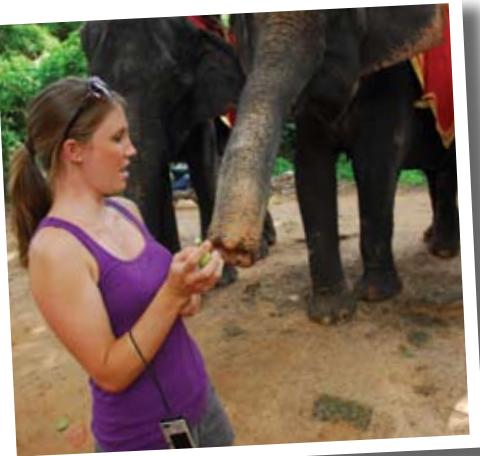
We are very excited by our new exhibit program and hope to see it grow. As a matter of fact we are currently working on a new exhibit that will premier during the Tet holiday next year. This exhibit will explore the major battles of the 1968 Tet Offensive featuring separate exhibits on the siege at Khe Sanh, the battle of Saigon, the campaign to recapture the imperial city of Hue and an exhibit discussing the entire Tet Offensive campaign. So stay tuned. ★

The Vietnam Archive  
Online Exhibits Page:  
[www.vietnam.ttu.edu/exhibits/](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/exhibits/)



The Vietnam Center and Archive is proud to partner with The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration. This federal organization was officially established by the US Congress in 2008 to honor and pay tribute to Vietnam Veterans and their families during the 50th Anniversary of the war. The commemoration program will consist of a series of events and activities over the course of several years and spread across the country. For more information, please visit:  
[www.vietnamwar50th.com](http://www.vietnamwar50th.com)

# SOUTHEAST ASIA LEAVES LASTING IMPRESSION ON TEXAS TECH STUDENTS



"I can honestly say that throughout my college career I never thought that I would be studying abroad, let alone doing so in Southeast Asia. I began to question the idea a few weeks before leaving the country. I guess you could say I was a little nervous. I wish I would have known what a beautiful and life changing experience this was going to be so that I wouldn't have been worried for no reason. It was the mix of the Vietnamese people, the Cambodian children, the food, the places we were visiting (Cambodian killing fields and Chong Ek Prison), and the pure intoxicating nature of all of these places for their various reasons. I truly fell in love with Southeast Asia."

As a future secondary history teacher, teaching cultures is something that I will have to do every week. But there is the unmistakable advantage I gained with actually being in this place. I truly believe that people must experience cultures first hand to actually understand them; eat the food, meet the people, see the places. I learned so many different things about Vietnamese culture that I couldn't get from a textbook and the 1,657 pictures that I took will help me to share my passion of this place with

my future students, family and friends. I have the honor of student teaching 11th grade U.S. history this semester at Coronado High School and I am counting down the days until the lecture when I get to stand up in front of the students and tell them about this beautiful place.

Academically, this was the best decision I could have made for myself. Not only was I able to visit all of the sites associated with the Vietnam War, but I made lasting lifetime friendships with Vietnamese and Cambodian students, with some of my fellow American students and I learned a lot about myself in the process; what I can handle (and it's a lot!) what I value in my life, and just how blessed we are to be able to live the lives that we desire. I am so grateful for this experience and it will be something that I will think about everyday for the rest of my life. I can't wait to go back!"

-Kim Wiggins



"Studying abroad in Southeast Asia was an educational and cultural experience. The multiple opportunities to meet with Vietnamese and Cambodian students were not only educational but eye-opening. I never expected to be welcomed with the level of hospitality they showed towards us. They were excited and appreciative that we were interested in learning and experiencing their culture. These students taught me how history does not have to repeat itself. Though our past generations were at conflict with each other, it is our generation's job to build on the relationship that currently exists.

One of the most amazing things to witness was Mr. Khanh Le, a South Vietnamese Veteran; Dr. Ron Milam, an American Veteran; and Bao Ninh, North Vietnamese Veteran, share a meal and talk as if they were old friends. It was like they put the war that they had fought 30 years before behind them. Bao Ninh stated, "Whether I shot at you and your friend, or you shot at me or my friend, I still love you."

In addition to this, the opportunity to walk through the mountains of Dien Bien Phu, visit the Hanoi Hilton, and crawl through the tunnels of Chu Chi supplied us with first-hand knowledge about the history we have studied. The Vietnam War is a time period in US History that is still resonant in daily conversation. This program was vital for me to truly and fully understand the context and culture of this distant area that at one time affected the daily lives of many Americans.

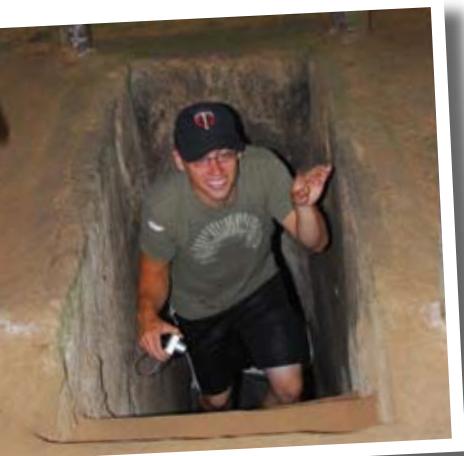
My participation in this trip would have not been possible without the Vietnam Center Lee Roy Herron Scholarship. This scholarship provided me with the necessary funds to afford the financial burden of the cost of travel for the program."

-Kymberly Ball



"Study Abroad in Southeast Asia has completely changed my perspective on the world. As a student, I felt like I learned things that would not be possible in a classroom. Walking through the killing fields in Cambodia and crawling the Tunnels of Chu Chi in Vietnam reminded me of how lucky I was to live the life I live and have the opportunity to study these things. I learned that Vietnam is a country, not a war. I hope that the rest of my generation can understand this region of the world the same way I do. This trip showed me that graduate school is an option in my future and that I can actually do it. I learned not only from the countries but from my spectacular professors and other people on the trip as well. I would never take back any good or bad experience for the world. I wish I could do this trip over and over again. I am sure I would learn new things every time. I hope that others are as fortunate as I was to take this trip in the future. I would recommend it to anyone."

-Jennifer Burns



"This was without a doubt the best and most important academic experience that I have had in four years as an undergrad and two as a graduate student. The range of experiences and things that we saw firsthand was larger than you could put into dozens of courses spanning many disciplines. The variations and contrasts added up to make experiences much more than the sum of their parts and to shed insight on them. We met with a Senator and then experienced the life of ordinary, poor Vietnamese. We ate at five-star restaurants and later ate rat and snake. We walked most of the significant sites of the Vietnam War and saw some of the horrors that humanity can unleash on itself (My Lai and the Khmer Rouge killing fields) and then saw some of the most beautiful and serene pieces of the human experience (like Buddhist pagodas or Angkor Wat or picturesque landscapes like Ha Long Bay). My Lai and the Chuong Ek killing field (along with Tuol Sleng Prison) in particular stand out as experiences that deeply impacted me and that I look forward to sharing with future students. Both were not easy to see and were very sobering, but the true impact of such horrors cannot be fully understood without seeing them, and without understanding them it is far too likely that such tragedies will be repeated. Dr. Milam, Dr. Maxner, and Mr. Khanh all cared a great deal about sharing their knowledge and their own past experiences in Southeast Asia with students, and constantly did so as we toured historic sites and museums and experienced the local culture. There was not a single day that I did not learn something new, and this came not only from the faculty but also from numerous guides and locals we met with, so it really was like we had dozens of teachers along the way. This combination of education from different people (with many differing and interesting perspectives) on the multitude of topics, and the fact that it was not limited to a classroom but was a constant force, made this trip an enlightening experience that taught me not only a great deal about the world but also a great deal about myself."

-Justin Simundson



"My time in Southeast Asia is one of the defining periods in my life thus far. Never before in my life have I experienced a new culture in the way I did in Asia. When I arrived in Hanoi, Vietnam I was wide-eyed and bushy-tailed and very nervous. Twenty three days later as we left Ho Chi Minh City I was very sad to leave. In that short time I learned to love Vietnam and its people. There is a certain infectious quality about both the people and their beautiful country. Laos and Cambodia were also incredible experiences, but Vietnam will always occupy a special place in my heart. Being a 20th century Military Historian really made this trip a treat for me and being able to see some of the most iconic battlefields of the period will only increase my appreciation and understanding. This trip is truly one of the greatest things that has transpired in my life and I cannot say enough about its impact on me now and further down the line."

-Sandy James

## Collection Donation From Renowned Anthropologist Dr. Gerald Hickey

**Ty Lovelady**

Associate Archivist

The Vietnam Center and Archive received approximately eight linear feet of artifacts and photographs from the world-renowned anthropologist Gerald Hickey in July 2010. Among the items in the donation are textiles, smoking pipes, swords, and wood carvings from Montagnard tribes that he worked with in Vietnam while he was employed by entities such as the Michigan State University Group (MSUG) and the Rand Corporation in the 1950s-1970s. The Montagnards consist of various ethnic minorities in Vietnam of Malay-Polynesian and Mon-Khmer descent to include ethnic groups such as the Rhade, Jarai, and Bahnar.

Gerald Hickey worked with rural people in Vietnam, including Montagnards as part of MSUG's contract to help South Vietnam develop into a modern nation-state. While working with MSUG, Hickey became particularly interested in the Montagnards during his visits to the Vietnamese Central Highlands. He learned of the Montagnards' disenchantment with the South Vietnamese government under Ngo Dinh Diem for allowing ethnic Vietnamese to settle on Montagnard lands.

After his stint with MSUG, Hickey taught for several years at Monteith College in Detroit. He then returned to Vietnam to specifically work with the Montagnards in 1964 as an employee of the RAND Corporation. While employed at RAND, Hickey unsuccessfully attempted to get the Montagnards titles for their lands because he felt this might cause the Vietnamese to respect their rights. He was also known for his support of a process of political accommodation that would have led to a coalition government in South Vietnam with Communist participation that he believed would end the war.

Hickey's donation to the archive contains many fascinating items. There are intricately woven blankets made by the Jarai people that depict images such as



Top: Gerald Hickey (Left) with Cua tribesmen, 1966. Bottom left: Lat woman smoking a pipe, 1966. Bottom right: Y Bham Enoul, Rhade leader and founder of FULRO (United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races). FULRO was an organization in Vietnam and Cambodia established to fight for Montagnard autonomy.



helicopters and M-16 machine guns. Hickey noted that the blankets had these images because the Jarai were known to weave what they observed in their environment. The fact that the Jarai would add these items to their weavings demonstrates the impact the war had on their lives. Hickey even donated photographs to the archive of Jarai women weaving the textiles. He mentioned that the elder women would sternly smoke their pipes while observing the younger women weaving, waiting to correct them for any mistakes they might make.

Also included in the donation is a beautiful statue of a two foot, wooden peahen presented to Hickey by Nay Luett, a Jarai who served as the Minister of Ethnic Minorities in South Vietnam and also carved the figure. Another in-

teresting carving found in the donation is a two and a half foot wooden androgynous figure purchased by Hickey in Hue. The item was made by the Katu tribe and was more than likely originally placed in a grave before being removed and eventually placed for sale.

Hickey's latest donation of artifacts add to his existing collection at the Vietnam Center and Archive that already included numerous books and maps he collected while living in Vietnam. Most of the books are French studies of Montagnard life in Vietnam. Hickey's collection greatly enhances the Vietnam Center and Archive's holdings on Montagnard culture and is a wonderful treasure for Texas Tech University. We are proud to have these fine items in the archive. ★

## Graffiti Project Update: Putting Together the Pieces of the Puzzle

**Victoria Lovelady**

Communications Coordinator

In May 2005, five Vietnam Archive staff members stepped aboard the USNS General John Pope and USNS General Edwin D. Patrick at the National Defense Reserve Fleet in Suisun Bay, California to collect material that would eventually be housed and preserved at the Vietnam Archive. I was lucky enough to be one of those staff members. The Pope and Patrick served as troop transport ships during the Vietnam War, and even though they had long been out of service, they still contained many valuable historical items. There were multiple rooms stuffed with filing cabinets containing ships logs and nautical charts. There were even unopened cans of vegetables in the dining area. It was as if the ships were preserved in time. The most interesting and unique item on the ships were the hundreds of bunk canvases still hanging in the sleeping quarters. Troop members would sleep on these bunks during their three week journey either to or from Southeast Asia and many of them wrote and doodled on these bunks to pass the time. These bunk canvases are a unique glimpse into the minds of these young servicemen and are an important addition to the cultural and social history of the Vietnam War. They are now housed in the Vietnam Archive where our staff photographed them and then uploaded the images to a searchable portion of our website titled "The Vietnam Graffiti Project."

Our staff was very surprised recently to learn that a Vietnam Veteran found his bunk canvas on our website. Charles W. Spratt, 16th Army Engineer Detachment, discovered our website, conducted a quick search for his last name, and located an image of the bunk canvas partially covered in his handwriting. Mr. Spratt spent 28 days aboard the USNS Pope in September 1967. He informed us of his discovery and provided us with an excellent photo of himself on the USNS Pope as well as a little bit of information

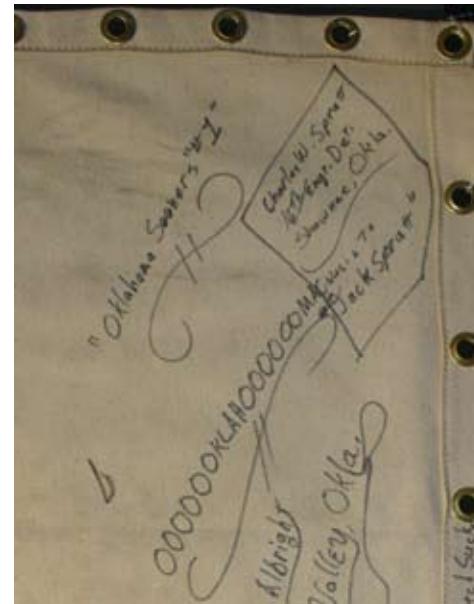


Top left: Charles W. Spratt (right) poses with a fellow serviceman aboard the USNS Pope. Top Right: Mr. Spratt's bunk canvas reads "Charles W. Spratt 16th Engr. Det. Shawnee, Okla. Cousin to "Jack Spratt." Bottom: Mario E. Villamarzo on the USNS Pope in January 1966.



about his Army service. We are looking forward to conducting an oral history with Mr. Spratt and connecting his bunk canvas with his service history.

We also heard from Mario E. Villamarzo who served in II Corps PsyOps Battalion in support of three infantry divisions: 4th Infantry Division, 25th Infantry Division, and the 1st Air Cavalry. He was deployed to Vietnam in January 1966 and traveled there on the USNS Pope pulling guard duty (two hours on, four off) on the ship for the entire duration of the journey. Just like Mr. Spratt, Mr. Villamarzo sent us a photo of himself on the Pope, but unfortunately has not located his bunk canvas.



However, his memory of his time on the Pope is remarkable. He remembers his bunk location on the ship; starboard side against the bulkhead. He also remembers the air conditioning not working for part of the voyage, making the ship very hot. Fortunately, an emergency stop in Guam to repair the unit made for cooler days for the remainder of the trip to Cam Ranh Bay.

It's exciting to know the story behind these bunk canvases. If you have a story about the Pope and/or Patrick, please contact us at [vietnamarchive@ttu.edu](mailto:vietnamarchive@ttu.edu) or (806) 742-9010. More information about the graffiti project can be found at [www.vietnam.ttu.edu/graffiti](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/graffiti) ★

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## Did you know?

The Vietnam Center and Archive has a facebook page, a news and updates page, and a listserv. For more information, please visit these links:

### Facebook

[www.facebook.com/vietnamTTU](http://www.facebook.com/vietnamTTU)

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