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VIETNAM GENERATION NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1989

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS!
10301 PROCTER ST.
SILVER SPRINGS, MD 20901
(301) 681-9541

We are very proud to announce the publication of our second issue, *A White Man's War: Race and Vietnam*. Edited by William King, Director of the Black Studies Program and the University of Colorado at Boulder, this issue contains the finest examples of scholarly writing on race and the Vietnam War. We hope that you find it exciting reading, and that it spurs new research in the field.

Vietnam Generation is doing very well for a brand new scholarly publication. Thus far we have received almost 200 paid subscriptions. Most of these are from individual academics and interested readers, but we are collecting a substantial library and veterans' center subscription base, and a full 20% of our subscribers are from outside the US—the Philippines, Australia, Austria, Spain, West Germany, Holland, Japan, and the United Kingdom. We anticipate reaching our quota of 400 subscribers by the end of this year, and increasing our list by several hundred next year.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your support, both financial and moral, and to remind you that continued support is necessary to keep the journal going. After the publication of our third issue, we will be sending subscribers early renewal forms, and we hope that you will promptly resubscribe. We also encourage professors to use our issues as classroom texts (that's one reason we published them with no advertisements), and to order copies in bulk.

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EVENTS

Gender and War. A multi-disciplinary humanities research institute on Gender and War: Roles and Representations, Spring 1990. Contact: Lynn Higgins or Brenda Silver, 1989-90 Humanities Institute Directors, Wentworth Hall, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH 03755; (603) 646-2400 or 646-3451.

May 3-6, 1990. The University of Toledo and the Council on Peace Research in History are sponsoring a conference on the Vietnam Antiwar Movement in America. The conference will commemorate the posthumous publication of Charles DeBenedetti's history of the movement as completed by Charles Chatfield. Syracuse University Press is publishing DeBenedetti's book, *Ordeal for a Nation: The Antiwar Movement and America, 1955-1975*. Among the possible subjects are the origins and internal politics of the movement, comparisons with other antiwar movements, strategies and tactics, the relationship between the movement and Congress, the media, the military, the public, the decision makers, and the foreign governments, including North and South Vietnam, the Selective Service system, college students and campus activities, and the women's and civil rights movement. Funding for the conference costs, room charges, and some meals will be paid by the University of Toledo for those individuals who deliver papers. For further details, contact Professor William D. Hoover, University of Toledo, Local Arrangements Chairman. Plans are underway to publish the conference papers in a book-length volume. Send paper proposals by **September 1, 1989** to the program chairman: Professor Mel Small, 816 Mackenzie, Dept. of History, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202.

PHNOM PENH UNIVERSITY Library Appeal

The university of Phnom Penh re-opened in March 1988. It had been closed since April 1975. Its library had been scattered.

No former Kampuchean professors or lecturers are known to have survived in the country during the Pol Pot regime, but over 100 have been trained in the past decade, mostly in the Institute of Languages and the Teachers' Training College which opened in 1980 and now form part of the University. They are naturally lacking in experience and are keen to

study how other universities function. The University of Phnom Penh now has 2,000 students and over 200 academic staff. Most of the staff are Khmer, but there are also Vietnamese, Soviet, French, Australian, Cuban and East German staff. The medium of instruction is Khmer.

There are eleven faculties: History (70 students in 1988), Khmer Literature (250 students), Philosophy, Geography, Russian and Western Languages, Vietnamese and Eastern Languages, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Educational Psychology.

One of the three Vice-Directors of Phnom Penh University, Mr. Chan Pom, a professor of Mathematics, recently visited Australia at the invitation of Quaker Service Australia, which provides several English Language teachers for the University. In Phnom Penh in January, Ben Kiernan (University of Wollongong, Australia) met with Mr. Pit Chamnan, another Vice Director. Both stressed the shortage of books in the newly-established Library, and they both asked if anything could be done to help. Pit Chamnan and the members of the History Faculty headed by Mr. Son Somnang asked in particular for texts on Southeast Asian History and World History, as well as course outlines, reading lists and general University Handbooks.

The History Faculty consists of five lecturers: Mr. Son Somnang, BA in History (Phnom Penh), head; Mr. Sreng Sarin, BA in History (Phnom Penh); and post-1979 graduates Messrs. Koy Hemarin, Siv Thuon and Heng Samnang. Most of them read both English and French. In the 1988-89 year they are teaching 60 students in first and second year History, and 10 at third-year level. Their courses so far include ancient and modern Kampuchean History, Medieval History, and Modern History of Europe, China, and India. New courses are planned on 'regional history,' focusing on Southeast Asia. A post-graduate program is to be introduced in 1989.

There is an acute shortage of books and monographs, and the University of Phnom Penh does not have adequate funds to stock its Library. Would you be willing to donate a copy or set of your own book(s), *in hardback if at all possible*? If you send them to Ben Kiernan, he can arrange with Quaker Service Australia to have them sent to Kampuchea and delivered direct to the Phnom Penh University Library. Kiernan recommends that you write inside the book, "Gift from the author to the Library of the University of Phnom Penh", and sign and date it.

Other books on Asia or the Humanities in general, of which you may have spare copies, would also be greatly welcomed, as well as course outlines, reading lists, or general university materials that you might think would be useful. Please mail them to: Ben Kiernan, Senior Lecturer, Dept. of History and Politics, Univ. of Wollongong, NSW, Australia 2500.

ORGANIZATIONS

American Medical Help for Vietnam, 3330 Lake Crenshaw Rd., Lutz, FL 33549; (813) 949-5575. This organization, founded by Dr. Cecil B. Currey, is dedicated solely to an effort to raise medical supplies to relieve suffering in Vietnam. Its projects are Tu Do Women's Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, and the Institute for Women and the Newborn in Hanoi. They are lacking medical equipment, supplies and medicines of all kinds yet their dedicated physicians do a great work and need help. Donations of medical supplies and medicines are greatly appreciated.

Interchurch Medical Assistance, Inc., College Avenue, Box 429, New Windsor, Maryland 21776; (301) 635-6474. Keeps in touch with various groups working to provide medical assistance to Vietnam. These groups include the Foundation for International Scientific Cooperation (Judith Ladinsky, contact), American Medical Help for Vietnam (Cecil B. Currey, contact), Mennonite Central Committee (John Hostetler, contact), American Friends Service Committee (David Elder, contact), Church of the Brethren (D. Miller Davis, contact), Church World Service, National Council of Churches (Soon Young Hahn, contact). Medical supplies of all kinds are in short supply in Vietnam. You can assist the efforts of these organizations by speaking to your local physicians and asking them to donate any extra sample medicines (they have hundreds of them, supplied by pharmaceutical companies), or obsolete equipment. Many of these organizations are non-profit, and equipment donations may be taken as a tax write-off.

PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES

Richard L. Blanco, Professor of History, SUNY Brockport, Brockport, NY 14420. As the general editor of a nine-volume series entitled "Wars of the United States" to be published by Garland Publishing, Inc. of New York, I am seeking editors to compile encyclopedias

of the major wars of the US. I need some scholar with expertise on Vietnam to edit a 900 page encyclopedia to be entitled *The War in Vietnam*. The academic community as well as the general public needs a concise and dependable encyclopedia on the conflict in Vietnam. This project will have intellectual as well as financial rewards. We expect to sell at least 4,000-5,000 copies of the volume. Anyone interested should contact me.

RESOURCES

The Australia/Southeast Asia Program, Department of History and Politics at the University of Australia at Wollongong, Wollongong, NSW, Australia. BA Degree courses in: Southeast Asian History and Politics, Southeast Asian Languages, and North/South Relations in Asia and the Pacific. This is a unique three year major in Southeast Asian History. All ten nations of Southeast Asia, and their ancient and modern histories, are studied in detail. This major, first established at the University in 1987, is now backed up by 7-week Summer School courses in modern Indonesian History and Language, and by proposed three-year majors in Indonesian and Malay Language and Literature and in Thai Language, making a comprehensive Program in Southeast Asian Studies available for the first time in Australia. Address inquiries to Jim Hagen, Dean, Faculty of Arts, Univ. of Wollongong. Ph: (042) 27 0369. Fax: (042) 27 0477.

J. Wesley Miller, 5 Birchland Ave., Springfield, MA 01119. While Mr. Miller was a graduate student in Madison, WI, he was local Movement archivist and has collected about 100,000 pieces of what he calls "street literature" documenting community attitudes, both in Madison and in New England, toward a wide range of issues. His collection is the finest of its kind in existence, and it includes exhaustive documentation on Madison opposition to the Vietnam war. The collections are housed in the Manuscripts Division of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and with the Miller Family Papers at the University of Vermont in Burlington. He also has a few thousand items on hand in Springfield (about 5000 color slides of the material and Madison murals). The collection includes a detailed diary about what was going on in Madison in those days. Mr. Miller and his collection are available to serious researchers upon introduction and by appointment.

Vietnam Data Resource & Electronic Library, accessible computer modem, 300 or 1200 Baud, 8

bits, Even parity, 1 stop bit; (213) 373-6597. Voice message number: (213) 373-4497). Mailing address: 1300 S Pacific Coast Hwy # 101, Redondo Beach, CA 90277. VDR Library's sole mission is to preserve and provide as much factual data about America's involvement in Vietnam as we can get our hands on. We don't attempt to supply a political viewpoint about the data we provide, just the naked facts. The Library was started by a group of Vietnam veterans who wanted to provide vets and students of the Vietnam war with information about its beginnings, course, and subsequent loss. The Library is not associated with any groups, organizations, or political parties. The Library does, however, encourage users to give their opinions and/or comments. The Library also encourages submissions, either in correcting or enhancing the information provided, or providing new information. So far, the Library consists of over 400 hundred files containing various statistics such as casualty comparisons and desertion rates, previously classified communiques between embassy and military chiefs with their respective centers in Washington, various lists such as combat arms used in Vietnam, troop levels, and Medal of Honor recipients, treaties, Presidential speeches, and interviews, and historic documents such as Ho Chi Minh's Declaration of Independence and Eisenhower's famous letter to Ngo Dinh Diem. The library was recently honored with a literary contribution from Gen. William C. Westmoreland who offered his "Analysis of the American Experience in Vietnam." Another recent contribution was Oliver Todd's op-ed "When Hypnotics Win a War." The Library's theme is "Always Growing." New files are added daily and existing data files are updated continually. Library files are immediately available via an easy-to-follow menu. Some files may be downloaded (transferred in whole from the Library to the user's computer), and all may be printed from the user's monitor. Users are encouraged to leave comments to the Library staff or messages to other users or literary contributors. Library hours are 10am to 9pm Monday through Saturday. Currently, users are limited to 30 minutes log-on time per call. However, users may call in as often as they wish. Most importantly, the library is free. There are no subscription or access fees, user charges, or telephone company surcharges.

SCHOLARS IN THE FIELD

Jean Blankenship, 10221 Slater Ave., #103, Fountain Valley, CA 92708. **Request for help:** Interested in collecting information about Vietnam War widows

for a work in progress. Especially interested in personal experience/first person account and statistical data.

Catherine Calloway, PO Box 4117, State University, AR 72467. Doctoral area of specialization is Vietnam War Literature. Has published and presented papers in this area and have served as a consultant to publishers and individuals wanting information on this field.

John W. Conroy, Rt. 2, Box 451, Plattsburgh, NY 12901; (518) 563-7228). Served in Vietnam 1966-1967, 1st Log, Long Binh, 185th Maint. B. Spent two weeks in Vietnam February 1989. Researching book about those times. Interested in hearing from anyone who has pertinent information.

Hugh Deane, 10 West 74th St. #1A, New York, NY 10023. Author of "The War on Vietnam" (Monthly Review Press pamphlet) 1963.

Skip Delano, Director, GI Movement Oral History Project, 548 Riverside Dr., 2C, New York, NY 10027 (212) 749-0169. Researching and studying the antiwar GI movement as it developed among the soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines during the Vietnam War. Developed a lecture and slide show on the antiwar GI movement. It is based on historical fact and presents a very different view of the Vietnam vet, in direct contradiction to the carefully groomed, patriotic Vietnam vets of the 1980s. Delano was an editor of a GI underground newspaper (Left Face) and is a member of the New York City chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (Anti-Imperialist). Seeking opportunities to present the slideshow to high school, community, and college audiences. An Oral History Project seeks to interview veterans and civilians who were activists in the GI movement. If you know of any individuals who should be interviewed, please have them contact me directly or forward their names and addresses. The Oral History Project needs volunteers. If you would like to help with the Project, write for more information.

Dave DeRose, Director of Theater Studies, Yale College, PO Box 2962, Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520-2962. Currently at work on *Stages in the War: Vietnam and American Theatre*, a study of the impact of the Vietnam War on all areas of American theater and drama. **Request for Help:** Looking for any and all plays by Vietnam veterans about their war and postwar experiences. Also looking for information about veteran theater groups, both therapeutic and professional.

John J. Fitzgerald, 95 Cedar Road, Longmeadow, MA 01106. US Army (Ret.)—Cpt. (O-3) Bronze Star, Purple Heart, 25th Inf. Div—1966—Platoon Leader. McCarthy Campaign, 1968. Antiwar Movement, 1967-1975. Currently a high school history teacher at Longmeadow High School, Longmeadow, MA 01106.

Hiroshi Fujimoto, 3-5-13, Yoshina, Higashi-ku, Nagoya, 461 JAPAN. Associate professor at Sugiyama Women's University (Nagoya). Current interest in the history of the Vietnam War in the context of US-Japan relations.

Gary Gullickson, PO Box 74, Kasson, MN 55944. **Request for Help:** I am working on a novel and need your help. If you're interested in writing a brief summary of your high school days, a complete, detailed account of your Vietnam experience(s), and an up-to-date account of your life since leaving military service, please let me know. Proceeds from this work will be used in such areas as: The Homeless Veterans, to fund a memorial for women veterans, for disabled and hospitalized veterans, and for the POW & MIA issue. Mail me a note, including your name, address and telephone. I will get in touch with you.

Walter W. Holbling, Inst. f. Amerikanistik, Koerberlg. 20/I, Graz, Austria A-8010. Work published: *Fiktionen vom Krieg im neueren amerikanischen Roman*, Tübinger Beiträge zur Anglistik, Bd. 10), Focus on US war novels since 1945, with detailed discussion of works by De Vecchio, Hawkes, Heller, Mailer, Moore, O'Brien, Vonnegut; "Going West—to Europe": *Invertierter Mythos und innovative Ästhetik in Tim O'Brien's Vietnamroman Going After Cacciato*, *Literature in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 17: 4 (1985): 309-330; "Out of Time and History: Loose Ends of the Mimetic Tradition in the Recent American Novel", *Indian Journal of American Studies*, 15: 2 (Summer 1985): 53-64; "Fiktionale Texte in der Landes- und Kulturkunde: Pragmatische Überlegungen am Beispiel amerikanischer Romane zum Zietnamkonflikt," in Hgg. M. Kune und H. Tschachler, *Dialog der Texte: Literature und Landeskunde*, Tübingen, 1986: 231-258. Works in progress; *The Discourse of War in Recent American Novels* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press) 1990; "Literary Sense-Making: American Vietnam Fiction," in J. Walsh and J. Aulich, eds., *Vietnam Images: War and Representation* (London: Macmillan) 1989; "US Fiction about Vietnam: The Discourse of Contradiction," in M. Klein, ed., *US and Vietnam: Popular Culture and Media* (Pluto Press) 1989; "Teaching American Vietnam Fiction to Students in Austria and in the

United States" in Slabey, ed., *The Literature of the Vietnam War: Essays in Criticism and Pedagogy*, 1989; "The Discourse of War in US Novels," in *Guerre et Litterature dans le Monde Anglophone*, ed. M. Bodin (Le Mans) 1989.

Delores A. Kuening, 808—34th St., Rock Island, IL 61201. I am an author currently under contract for *Life After Vietnam: The Hurt and Healing of Wartime Memories*, scheduled for release in 1990 by Paragon House of New York. Chapters are based on interviews and cover a broad range of issues unique to Vietnam veterans. Gives how-tos of working through grief and guilt. **Request for help:** Need interviews with former POWs. If interested in being interviewed, call (309) 788-1203 collect, 8-12 am or 7-9 pm CST and ask for Delores Kuening.

Henry Laskowsky, English Department, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82071. Presently teaching courses on literature of the Vietnam war at the University of Wyoming.

Gwen Lindberg, Box 40, West Point, Nebraska 68788. Co-publisher of *West Point News* in West Point, Nebraska. Went to Vietnam in January 1988 with 11 other journalists. Interviewed officials. Sponsor of 12 Vietnamese refugees.

John R. Mac, 2641 SW Eastman, Port St. Lucie, FL 34953.

Phil Melling, Periodicals Dept., University College of Swansea, Singleton Park, Swansea, Wales, UK SA2 8PP. Author of the play *Hotel Vietnam* and of two forthcoming critical studies of Vietnam and the Puritan experience.

Joseph T. Miller, Political Science, University of Illinois, 361 Lincoln Hall, Urbana, IL 61801. Vietnam veteran, US Navy, Tonkin Gulf (1964-1966). Currently a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (Chicago). Teaching an undergraduate course on "Politics of the Vietnam War."

Gerald Nicosia, 324 Taraval St., San Francisco, CA 94116 (415) 731-3326. Has been working for over a year on a book that will chronicle the complete history of the Vietnam Veterans' Movement in America from the mid-1960s to the present. This book will deal with such activism and VVAW, PTSD, Agent Orange, POWs, VVA, the Wall, Central America, vets traveling back to Vietnam, and to the USSR to help the *Afgansi* vets. **Request for help:** "I have a contract from Norton to publish the book; but I have completely expended the small advance

traveling all over the US in the past year, interviewing over 350 vets. I was counting on getting university grants to help with transcription of the 600-some hours of tape, but this money has become almost nonexistent, even though many oral history collections—such as Columbia Univ., and Texas A&M—have requested to receive the deposit of material when I have finished (i.e., they are asking me to *donate* the material). I am currently in the position of having to transcribe the tapes myself, a problem that could delay the writing of the book for at least a year. To transcribe the most important 100 tapes at the lowest possible rate (\$1 per page, 50 pages average per tape) would require \$5,000. Asa (Baber), and other vets like Ron Kovic and Larry Heinemann have already vouched for the extreme worth of this book to the veteran community, in terms of giving credibility to over 20 years of activism for political and social justice." Please send any helpful information that you might have. Volunteer of services would, I am sure, also be appreciated.

Mary Sue Ply, Dept. of English, Southeastern Louisiana Univ., Hammond, LA 70402. Has a particular interest in literature and autobiographical accounts written by veterans and secondary interest in Vietnam War films and in PTSD as it is portrayed in literature, film, and television.

Vincent Pollard, 8001 S. Exchange Ave. #1, Chicago, IL 60617-1460. Research has concerned the origins, appearance, and development of "regional" inter-governmental organizations among anticommunist regimes in South East Asia, particularly during 1959-1971; the Republic of the Philippines, including RP-US relations; and some other East Asian topics. The relationships of the Vietnam War to these issues is part of my focus.

Steve Potts, History Dept., Hibbing Community College, 1515 E. 25th St., Hibbing, MN 55746. Primary interests are in 1) Indochina during World War 2; 2) teaching Indochinese cultures to American students; 3) developing curricula on teaching the Vietnam War to secondary and college students; 4) the use of Vietnamese literature in translation in the classroom; 5) the historical revisionism on the war, 1980s; 6) Ho Chi Minh and his role in the Vietnamese revolution.

Joan Seeman Robinson, Visiting Scholar, Menil Collection, 1511 Branard, Houston, TX 77006 (713) 525-9406.

Monte Sahlin, 14530 Mayfair Dr., Laurel, MD 20707. Engaged in an on-going research project on the

impact of the Vietnam generation (or Baby Boomers) on the Adventist Church in the US. The first article was published in *The Adventist Review* in December 1987. A monograph version will be published this fall. Yearly up-dates are scheduled. This is meta-research drawing on surveys, demographics, economic analysis, sociology of religion, etc. I am a staff member of the North American Division of the Adventist denomination, and this is one of my research assignments in trend analysis and policy research. I am also involved in a networking newsletter for Adventist Baby Boomers (including all of the Vietnam generation) called *ABBA Newsletter*.

Dan Scripture, PO Box 892, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. Lecturer in Writing, University of California at Santa Cruz. US Army Vietnam veteran. Interests: teaching the war; the war and American popular culture; the war and American politics; Vietnamese language, culture and society; Vietnamese-American issues; veterans' issues.

Sandra C. Taylor, Dept. of History, Univ. of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112. Active in antiwar movement. Has taught a large lecture course and several smaller seminars on the Vietnam War. Doing research on the secret war in Laos, and has written about the literature of the war.

LETTERS AND NOTES

We recently received a short essay from Cecil B. Currey, and felt that it would be appropriate to publish it here. Responses, and comments, are welcome.

An Ugly American Returns to Saigon

In the early 1950s, the British novelist Graham Greene met regularly at sidewalk cafes of Saigon with his French friends. As they drank *aperitifs* and bemoaned the end of French dominance in Indochina, Green thought through the plot of his *tour de force* novel, *The Quiet American*. He saw some of the first Americans arriving in the land and observed gloomily and with alarm that they seemed ready for a fight to save the Vietnamese from both communism and themselves. Inevitably armored by their own ignorance and political prejudices, they blundered through that Asian culture oblivious to its nuances, leaving behind them a trail of suffering that changed the course of both Vietnamese and American history as they descended upon that unwitting jewel of the Orient. In his novel, published in June 1955, Greene described such Americans in the person of his protagonist, Alden Pyle.

A latter-day Alden Pyle—an Ugly American—breezed into Saigon the other day. Representative for a small West Coast humanitarian group, he bragged to acquaintances how Vietnamese officials had granted him VIP status for his visit. English, Dutch and Australian technical experts whom I met in this city and elsewhere in Vietnam work quietly and competently from well thought out plans. In contrast, my young acquaintance came back to “look things over” for his group and to “experience” the new socialist Vietnam—a land very different from the one he saw in the early 1970s when he was an Air Force enlisted man assigned there for a year.

The Vietnamese people—governed by an over-employed bureaucracy—and their officials—easily impressed by self-hyped credentials—desperately need help. This time they got my acquaintance instead, whom I observed at the Cu’u Long hotel (the old Majestic) which sits at the end of Dong Khoi street (once known as Tu Do) on the banks of the Saigon River. He reminded any who would listen how it was that he got a great room rate because of his importance, how he was accorded “diplomatic” status. I first saw him as he tagged along behind western reporters who had flocked into town to write the story of Vietnam’s most recent troop drawdown from Kampuchea, hoping they might add a sidebar about him. I had several brief conversations with him in the hotel during the days that followed. I saw him also during a visit to Future School where the mentally handicapped are trained by dedicated teachers and staff members and at a meeting with Amerasian children.

Vietnamese are neat, modest people who respect those qualities in others. My acquaintance was long-haired, bearded and sloppy, wearing ancient cut-offs and a jungle vest from which dangled an identification tag given him by the *Bô Ngoai Giao* (Foreign Ministry). His attire, suitable for the California beach country, was hardly appropriate in Vietnam for a visiting westerner. He might well have paid heed to the appearance of UN employees and Thai businessmen staying in the same hotel. They are quiet, courteous, well-groomed men who know what they are doing and who go about it without fanfare.

The Californian was loud, fast-talking, a “take-charge kind of guy” whose rapidfire speech, run-on sentences and slangy vocabulary left his interpreter aghast and gasping. Even I could hardly keep up with what he was saying. Periodically he asked his interpreter if he was translating everything. The man responded as such spokesmen around the world will do. “Yes,” he replied. The American’s intentions were good, but he, like Alden Pyle, was innocent, naive, politically unaware.

Vietnamese are proud and sensitive, concerned about ‘face’. At Future School we were met by the director and his staff and seated before a low table on which were placed the inevitable fruits and tea service. The director presented his business card. My American acquaintance took it and immediately launched into a long monologue on the purpose of such cards. He criticized the one just given him. The logo was wrong, he said. He added that the name of the school was misleading, the small print explanation was inadequate, the card (the same dimensions as many others used by Vietnamese) was too large to fit into his American business card case. He asked for a sheet of paper and immediately began to design a more “appropriate” card. The director, embarrassed before his staff, sat there with a stricken face....

Visitors to Vietnam should be very careful about what they promise, for they may be unable to deliver, and failure to do so leaves a lasting impression. On the spur of the moment, caught up with the needs of the school, my acquaintance boldly promised to help send a psychologist from the United States who would be able to teach the staff and teachers of Future School the latest training methods. Such an arrangement, he said, would be “no problem”. Nor would there be any difficulty in sending teaching material, nor in procuring \$10,000 to pay for an 8-room expansion of school facilities. Then with a flourish he presented his own card to the director and departed, while another visitor who had listened quietly and gravely to the director’s explanations left a gift of \$200 (about 800,000 dong in Vietnamese money; many monthly salaries are in the neighborhood of 15,000 dong).

The plight of Amerasian children is serious and many have waited years for their turn to come to the United States. They are desperate for attention, for love, and they hang on the words of visitors from America, hoping that such people will be able to help them. When my acquaintance met with a group of Amerasians, he tape recorded the session. His fast speech and inappropriate vocabulary made it difficult for the leader of the group, a young man who had taught himself to speak his father’s language in a limited way, to understand him. My Alden Pyle moved impatiently from point to point while the young Amerasian hesitantly and repeatedly responded “Yes” to all his questions. The American believed those replies were actual answers to his queries.

He embarrassed the young man by insisting he take a simple and impromptu test in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division to determine his math skills after the boy had already admitted he lacked education. Impatient with the answers, he

smiled at wrong moments, inspiring the Amerasian to exclaim, "Do not smile, sir. We are poor; our life hard." He saw the young people's ragged clothing, pinched faces and diseased, rotten teeth. He learned they foraged for food and slept in the park by the river. Then, in front of a government representative and while recording the whole, he asked, "Do you survive by stealing? Are you a thief?"

'Alden Pyle' then turned to the official and asked why Amerasians had so little education. (The government generally pushes them out of its school system by the end of second grade; further education must be acquired privately and at great cost and consequently few proceed much farther.) The man replied, "They have no interest in attending school; they don't really *want* an education." My acquaintance nodded gravely and accepted this as an accurate response.

Shortly thereafter, as it came time to leave, he became emotional over the plight of the young men and women standing around him. Tears streamed from his eyes and across his anguished cheeks. He hugged them, one after another, and promised that upon his return to the US he would see to it that their lot in life improved. "Things will be better," he insisted, and their faces lit up with hope. Once more he produced his business cards and gave one to each of the Amerasians. Meanwhile, another visitor quietly slipped 5,000 dong banknotes to the needy youngsters.

As I watched this spectacle I was reminded of a passage in the Christian scriptures, from the gospel of Matthew, seventh chapter, ninth verse: "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask for bread, will give him a stone?" They needed rice; he gave them a business card! He lamely explained later that he was on a tight budget and had little money. But that same night he took a woman to dinner at the Rex—Saigon's best hotel restaurant—an ordered Lobster Thermidore at 24,000 dong. The bill for the entire meal was 47,000 dong; equivalent to three month's salary for a teacher or governmental employee. As I did my best to avoid additional encounters, I wondered how those Amerasians for whom he had cried such bitter tears might have made use of that same sum. Alden Pyle had surely returned to Saigon.



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