



COUNTERPARTS

TUỞNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á

SITREP

#38

Volume V

Issue 2

Summer/Fall 2002

2003 Reunion to be held in Branson, Missouri

Counterparts Reunion 2003 is scheduled for Jan. 30 through Feb. 2, 2003, in Branson, MO.

Branson is located in the Tri-Lakes area of the Ozarks and offers a variety of recreational and entertainment attractions. Some of the activities being considered for the reunion are a visit to a Vietnamese Monastery, a tour of Branson's Presidential Museum, and an opportunity to see one of Branson's famous shows.

Thanks to Chuck P. Schantag from the POW Network. Chuck and his staff were instrumental in finding us a facility to host the reunion. He has also provided information on attractions and events, and coordinated planning in many areas.

The Grand Plaza hotel is offering us Standard rooms at \$64.95 plus 11% tax and Premium King rooms at \$74.95 plus tax. The hotel will also furnish a Hospitality Room for a one-time charge of \$75.00. We are also looking into the possibility of a dinner at Tran's Vietnamese Buffet.

We are tentatively planning on a Saturday Banquet at the Chef K Gourmet Grill at the Plaza hotel. The cost will be \$18.95 per person. An \$8.95 fee for the Departure Breakfast will be waived under this plan.

To reserve your room at the Grand Plaza Hotel, call 800-850-6646. Be sure to tell the hotel that you want to reserve a room for the Counterparts 2003 Reunion. Director of Marketing at the hotel is Stormy Snow. The Grand Plaza's web site can be found at www.bransongrandplaza.com

Additional information will be provided as soon as it becomes available.

...Darryl Nelson

Return to Vietnam: one CoVan's Experience

Visit brings old memories, new faces, and some surprises for Counterparts member

By
Rich Webster

Dear Counterparts,

I have just returned from a three-week tour of Vietnam with three other Vietnam vets, and believe it or not, we found COSVN (Central Office South Vietnam) headquarters, that mysterious camp in the jungle that avoided American efforts to pinpoint its location for years. You ask, how could we do this?

Dave Gallo, former Lt. with the 1st Air Cav, tour leader for Peace Patrols, Inc, requested permission to visit COSVN HQ, newly opened to the public, and surprise, we became one of the first American groups to be allowed to view the camp northwest of Tay Ninh near the Cambodian border.

It required a special police permit, two extra guides to accompany us from Tay Ninh, a stop at a military police compound near the town of Xa Mat on the border, and a stop at a military road block, before we could proceed to the actual camp (18 kilometers northwest of Xa Mat). On the maps that you can now buy on the streets of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), COSVN is now located inside Vietnam, I suspect to continue the communist line that neither North Vietnamese troops nor COSVN was ever in Cambodia

The Ben Than tourist agency arranged for us to meet a Viet Cong Colonel named My when we arrived and he mentioned that COSVN moved back and forth across the border at various times. He commanded a sapper battalion in the fishhook area in 1968, at the same time I was on patrol there as a Lt. with the 1st Infantry.

There is a little museum at the site, devoted to the communist take on the war, and a military post a hundred meters down the road. We followed a little trail into the jungle and came to what was obviously a reconstructed camp representing what COSVN was probably like: there are 6 hooch's, a meeting room for the commanders, and a dining facility interconnected by tunnels and trenches. One can't help to be impressed by the simplicity of it all.

Next to the museum is a little picnic area where soldiers of the People's Army were drinking. They motioned us over and were quite friendly. It was an eerie experience, almost like going back in time, because these young soldiers were carboncopies of

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COUNTERPARTS SITREP

The Official Publication of Counterparts/Tướng Hữu Đông Nam Á

Published quarterly

Volume V

Issue 2

Summer/Fall 2002

Commander's Corner

Let's all be in Branson, MO in February 2003 for our Reunion. Everyone put aside some money for this event. You'll enjoy yourself. Those of us who go do. So be there with bells on, even if you're not a country music fan. There will be many other things to do to keep you and your family entertained.

Counterparts has been involved with the refugee problems in Vietnam and Laos from the beginning. Some of us have been involved with the Lao Hmong tribe, other ethnic tribes and the Royal Lao people who escaped from communist terror after the fall of their country. We were even involved with Laos before Counterparts was formed. We helped get two groups of *Montagnards* from the Central Highlands to the United States in 1986 and 1992.

These people were left "high and dry" by the US government when we pulled out of Vietnam. While Vietnamese boarded boats to become "ship refugees," the mountain people were locked up in the interior of their country. They paid a high price for their loyalty to the United States. Over two thirds of their fellow mountain people are now dead. Many spent years in "Reeducation Camps," which were nothing but prisons, with brutal treatment and hard labor for the "detainees".

We have gotten about three thousand *Montagnards* out of Vietnam. Not many for the work they did for us. Now *Save the Montagnard People* (STMP) has gotten over 900 more out of Cambodia. Some of us are members of STMP, such as your commander. Most of the *Montagnards* will be settled in North Carolina near the first two groups we brought over.

If you wish to contact STMP and offer assistance in money or equipment, please don't hesitate. Let them know that you are a member of *Counterparts*. This is a worthy cause. Contact STMP president, Greg Stock at atgjstock47@aol.com

Personally I'd like to go back to Southeast Asia and settle the business we were not allowed to finish in the first place. But that's the reason I'm an old trooper and not a politician.

.....Pappy

FROM THE EDITORS...

WE CONTINUE TO SEEK ARTICLES, PHOTOS AND OTHER MATERIAL FROM *COUNTERPARTS* MEMBERS. WHILE WE WELCOME COPIES OF NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES, YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND RECORDS ARE MUCH MORE VALUABLE (AND USUALLY A LOT MORE INTERESTING)

Abuses of Montagnards Continue

From the "Forum" Section of The Washington Times 1/13/02

The War on terrorism must never be an excuse to persecute minorities," according to President Bush (President speaks out on rights, Washington Times, 10/20/01), yet the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) has been systematically terrorizing one of America's most stalwart allies, the Montagnard people of the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

After destroying their church buildings, and burning their house-churches (private residences where the Montagnards are forced to hold services), the Vietnamese secret police (CongAn) are systematically forcing Christian Montagnards to drink a mixture of liquor, goat's blood, raw chicken liver and raw pig's intestine, renounce God, and promise not to tell others of Christianity. If they do not, they are tortured, imprisoned or "disappeared." This affront is comparable to forcing Muslim or Jewish people to eat raw pork.

Additionally, the Vietnamese communists have been systematically implementing a policy of coerced sterilization of Montagnard women, a fact admitted to by Vietnamese Ambassador to the United Nations, Nguyen Quy Binh, at a conference in Geneva last August. The sterilizations included use of an outlawed chemical that burns and scars the women's reproductive organs causing irreparable harm. This policy is in violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, defined as including "imposing measures to prevent births within the group."

During the first part of this year, the Montagnards staged a series of peaceful protests over the burning of churches, confiscation of their lands, starvation conditions, and other human rights abuses. The Vietnamese communists reacted violently, beating, imprisoning, and killing many of the protesters. Thousands fled to the jungle, many heading for what they thought would be safety in Cambodia. Of the hundreds imprisoned for the protests, at least 48 have been sentenced in secret trials to long terms in prison - "kangaroo courts" denounced by human rights groups in the U.S. and Europe.

Hanoi has also carried out acts of international terrorism by crossing into Cambodia to kidnap Montagnards who fled the communist terror and sought refuge there. A special unit of the communist secret police infiltrated UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) camps in Cambodia in order to intimidate legitimate Montagnard refugees and to influence UNHCR. Senator John Kerry, Massachusetts Democrat is a long-time advocate for the Vietnamese communist government. Mr. Kerry seemingly cares more for a government that sponsors terrorism than for our allies who are the victims of terrorism.

Over one-half of the adult male population of the Montagnards was killed fighting side by side with Americans during the Vietnam War. Without the Montagnards' supreme sacrifice, there would be thousands more American names engraved on the somber black granite wall of the Vietnam Memorial. Many more have died since the end of the war because of Hanoi's terrorist and genocidal policies. If this is allowed to continue, the Montagnard people and their culture will cease to exist in our lifetime.

Two members of Cong An unit Luoc Luong 04 have been identified in one camp. To prove their loyalty to the Vietnamese communists, these two agents each killed three members of families of former freedom fighters who fought for the Americans during the Vietnam War. Upon their insistence, a UNHCR camp official forced 117 Montagnard Christians and former freedom fighters from one camp into the arms of Cong An and back to Vietnam to face torture, prison or death. In morbid irony, the Vietnamese communists have labeled these Christians as terrorists.

One refugee family — Y-Lien Dien, his wife Maria Nam, and five children — thought they had reached safety in Cambodia and had been given a UNHCR certificate of protection. In violation of international law, the Vietnamese communists crossed into Cambodia, kidnapped this family, taking them back to their village, Krong Dieng, in Vietnam. There, the mother and father were tied to posts in the center of the village, severely beaten in front of their children and villagers, left hanging on the poles, and reportedly died.

While a Prisoner of War, I witnessed similar treatment of prisoners who were left tied to the poles for days until they died. Of the hundreds that have been similarly kidnapped in Cambodia and taken back to Vietnam, many have just "disappeared."

Regardless of these gross and sadistic human rights violations against our former Montagnard allies, Congress and the White House recently rewarded these communist terrorists by approving a new Bilateral Trade Agreement giving the Vietnamese government (SRV) increased access to U.S. markets as well as providing U.S. subsidies for investment in that terrorist state.

In return, Hanoi made only a token public expression of condolence to the United States for the September 11 tragedy-Black Tuesday, while at the same time, the Vietnamese Communist Party's Official newspaper, The Peoples Army Daily, blamed the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on "America imposing its policies and values on the world."

While demanding increased trade, Hanoi has conducted a media blitz covering up its litany of human rights abuses against the Montagnards and other Vietnamese peoples. SRV President Tran Duc Luong condemned the recently passed Vietnam Human Rights Act, HR 2833 linking improved human rights to increased trade as "brazen interference" in the affairs of Vietnam. Passed in the House by a vote of 410 to 1, this Act is now frozen in committee. As the Administration was building a coalition against terrorism, Congress and the White House rewarded the Vietnamese terrorists, while turning our backs on these brave and loyal Montagnard allies. At this crucial time, this sends absolutely the wrong message to the world and should give our new allies pause to think.

.....Michael "Mike" Bengé

Falls Church, VA

Mr. Bengé is a senior adviser to the Montagnard Human Rights organization. He spent 11 years in Vietnam as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer and worked closely with the Montagnards during that time.

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the NVA we fought years ago in that area. We had a glass of homemade honeybee wine with them, a mixture of rice wine, honeybee nectar, and dead bees floating in the bottle. It wasn't bad. We learned that their duty is to clear mines. We told them we were returning American soldiers. No problem. We had another glass of wine.

We also visited communist B-2 headquarters (an operational area similar to III corps) out in the fishhook area near Loc Ninh. To get to B2 headquarters, the base camp of General Tan Van Lin who ran the war in the South after 1972, we turned west about 6 k's from Loc Ninh and followed a brand new black top road until we came very close to the Cambodian border again. To camouflage the camp from the air, it was built within a Montagnard village, with the hooch's constructed on stilts. Near the reconstructed camp, there is also a brand new one-room museum, where the young son of a North Vietnamese Captain gave us the history of the camp and the battles that were fought in the Loc Ninh area. He said he didn't know what his father did in the war. Isn't that typical of the children of Vietnam veterans?

The Montagnards who lived there have been moved out to a barren area that we passed on the way back to highway 13. Believe it or not, there were several TV antennas protruding from their hooches. I also took a picture from our van of a company of people's army soldiers on a training patrol on the way back, even though it is against the law. I also snapped a photo of the front gate of what the guide said was a reeducation camp near the edge of Xuan Loc.

There is also a newly built museum in Loc Ninh filled with lots of pictures of the war and the Ho Chi Minh trail. There is a picture of two captured Co Van My's being led into the jungle after the battle of Loc Ninh in 1972. I took a picture of the photo in hopes that someone in COUNTERPARTS could recognize them. Lots of old US Army vehicles in the area. According to our guide, an old American Army jeep in good running condition now sells for 5000 dollars. I can't figure how a USMC jeep—which the Director of the museum now drives—got to Loc Ninh. That's a long way from I Corps.

The road now from Saigon to Bien Hoa to Di An is 4 lanes wide and lined on both sides with factories, all established by China, Taiwan, Singapore and other Asian countries. The communists have gotten used to making money now and they are getting rich on the backs of the people. (Just my opinion, but also that of many of the "people in the streets" that I talked to.) Average salary in these factories is 20 to 30 dollars a month—information from ex-special forces Vietnamese type returning for visit who I met in Da Nang.

A Chinese businessman informed me that there are now 1400 garment shops in Vietnam. I bought a Nike golf shirt for 2 dollars. The dollar goes a long way in Vietnam; you can get a very nice meal in a Saigon restaurant for 3 dollars, and that includes live entertainment with the five-course meal. One dollar now buys 15,000 dong.

I learned to look out for the street vendors: they are merciless around the big tourist hotels in Saigon. We stayed at the Rex Hotel, with two nights in Tay Ninh, and three nights in Binh Dung province.

The Black Virgin Mountain (Nui Ba Den) is now a miniature Disney Land. You can ride to the top on a tram lift, and slide down on a little vehicle on a track ride. The top of the mountain is a pilgrimage site for the Buddhists in the province as there are several temples there. We met several former NVA soldiers there in uniform proudly displaying their "we were there during liberation week" medals and one lifted his leg and showed us a bullet wound. He said he worked on the Ho Chi Minh trail.

The Cao Dai Holy See was an unforgettable stop outside Tay Ninh. Remember, they had their own private army and they fought against the Viet Cong. When the ushers found out that we were American Vietnam Veterans, they treated us with the utmost respect, while ignoring the French tourists.

Near Tay Ninh, I talked to an ex-special forces Vietnamese type now working in a brick factory, who said he spent two years in the "Re-education" Camps after the war. He mentioned belonging to A-32 special team. Talked to another former RF soldier there, also.

As you all know, the Vietnamese soldiers who fought with us all spent time in the camps. The higher the rank, the longer the imprisonment. Our guide's English instructor spent 12 years in the camps because he was a captain. When you see a man begging on



Restored shelter at COSVN Headquarters near Xa Mat, Tay Ninh area

the streets, and missing a limb, or blind, you can assume that he fought with the south. In Hoi An, I bought a hand-held fan from a former Regional Force soldier who was totally blind, and missing one leg and was hobbling along the street with his crutch. How sad. Not only has he been forgotten in his own country, but he will be ignored by history also.

Our former allies are afraid to talk when others are around, nor could they get jobs for years after the war. On job applications, one had to account for the background of three generations. Tough luck if your father fought for the South.

In every village and district town, there is a People's Party headquarters situated in a brand new expensive building with a fence around it. There are loudspeakers everywhere, and early in the morning, you hear the propaganda being played. However, the communists have loosened up, barter and the grand hustle have been revived and the streets of Saigon are full of thousands

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of little shops and roadside stands. The incredible entrepreneurial skills of the South Vietnamese that we all knew, has sprung back to life. We know how tenacious and industrious they can be.

Tour leader Dave scheduled me a special trip to the little village of Cam Tan, located between Xuan Loc and Blackhorse, the former base camp of the 11th Armored Cavalry. One of the largest communist cemeteries in the country is located on the edge of Xuan Loc where the last great battle of the war was fought. Five thousand dead NVA soldiers are buried there, and there is a huge war memorial praising Ho Chi Minh and the sacrifice of the NVA soldiers. These Stalinesque statues are all over Vietnam, and they are almost duplicates of what one would find in the Soviet Union.

At the main entrance to our old base camp of Long Bien there is a huge memorial to the People's Army. I bought a souvenir post card from a young Vietnamese lady who had come from the North to find work. Little of our old base can be seen from the highway, but way off in the distance some of the old barracks are visible, and it would be my guess that a large number of the People's Army soldiers reside there. I snapped a quick photo of the barracks, although the guide warned me that it is illegal to do so.

In my three weeks in Vietnam, I never did see any Vietnamese paying any attention to the war memorial statues or visiting the cemeteries or the war museums, nor did I see any visiting the COSVN and B-2 headquarters. And this was during liberation week. The people's party in Da Nang hosted a celebration party in the hotel that we stayed in and the music they played was American rock music from the 60's. The television station was saturated with party dignitaries giving speeches during liberation week but my take was that the people ignored that also.

And back to cemeteries. You can't visit ARVN and our former comrade's cemeteries. Shortly after liberation, those families who wanted to preserve their loved ones' remains had to dig up their bones. All SVN cemeteries were bulldozed into oblivion. It's true that the winners write the history; that's why it is important for COUNTERPARTS to stay alive.

I was MAT team 49 leader in Cam Tan in late 68, early 69, with the 413th Regional Forces Company. I noticed the loud speaker, reminiscent of George Orwell's *1984*, now situated on an old French water tower. It was there to tell the villagers what to do and how to think. I learned the 413th was overrun shortly after I left. If anyone out there has knowledge of the particulars of this small battle or any knowledge of this area, please email me at Co-vanmi@mchsi.com, as I am trying to write about my experience. Several Vietnamese Catholic nuns were killed in the battle there, and as I located the small building of their former clinic, a drunken man emerged. I discovered through the guide/interpreter, that the man is a former Viet Cong. Yes, our old enemy was given the homes of those we served with.

If anyone is interested in reading a detailed account of the battle, see www.vietnamexp.com and click on 2002 return visit, and read "The Angels of Cam Tan."

I also visited another one of my old assignments, the Tan Tru district in Long An Province in the delta, and discovered that a new communist party headquarters is situated right on the spot

where the old MACV compound stood. Out front there was a large sign with a cartoon picture of two smiling happy condoms with the caption, "Only have two children" and "Help Prevent Aids."

In Binh Duong province, we were invited into the house of a 72-year old Viet Cong that Dave had met on a previous tour. He was a double agent serving with the ARVN as a veterinary's assistant. His son is now the district chief and his daughter runs a restaurant for the workers of a Taiwan furniture factory. He bragged about his getting rich and owning a large parcel of land that was soon to be developed into factories in a new industrial zone. Most people can't own land in Vietnam but he does. He was friendly and invited us into his home and served us cokes.

So much for the socialist worker's paradise that the communists preached. My take is that the Vietnamese have better things to do now, like making money and lots of it, as the industrial zones around Saigon are booming. My only hope is that it trickles down to help the little guy.



"Peace Patrol" Tour Group with Tour guides at old COSVN HQ

Saigon and the larger towns now have Internet cafes where one can go in and log onto the Internet for several dollars an hour. That is how we kept in contact in Vietnam. These cafes are filled with young Vietnamese kids, reading American news and logging onto American web sites. The Vietnamese are copying everything American, although we aren't getting any royalties for it. In the end, we may have won the hearts and minds' battle after all.

I can't put into words my feelings about my return to this little village of Cam Tan and my visit with some of the villagers who remembered those long ago times. It was one of the emotional highlights of my life. I am encouraging all Co Vans out there, to return to Vietnam before it is too late. The Vietnamese like us and are very friendly, and the War is over. Most of the people we met there are really not that much interested in it.

My recommendation for you Co Vans out there is to go back to Vietnam as a group and have Dgallo1@mindspring.com, coordinate the tour because he will specialize the trip like no other sponsored tour.

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Dave was assigned to MACV at Xuan Loc as an Artillery co-ordinator in 1968. I also would be glad to assist in this if there is enough interest. Don't be misled by the name, Peace Patrols, Inc. It's not one of those left wing apologist groups. It's just a name that Dave chose; their email is insfca@aol.com.

As to particulars, my cost for 13 days in Vietnam was 2350 dollars, including airfare to and from San Francisco to Ho Chi Minh City, lodging, meals, and all transportation in Vietnam. For an additional fee, I extended my tour by 7 days.

We also visited Lai Kai, Cu Chi tunnels, Phu Bai, Tan An, Trang Bang, and Phuoc Khanh, My Tho and Binh Dung province where we stayed three days.

The Vietnamese people are friendly, they like Americans, and it was the best damn trip ever for me. That was also the conclusion of the other three Vietnam Vets who went along .

....Rich Webster

Do You Know These Men?



American Advisor POW's near Loc Ninh. Photo from Peoples Army Museum shot by Rich Webster. Caption reads: " Có vãn Mỹ bị bắt Truong ngày giải phơng Lộc Ninh" Author Rich Webster believes that one of the men may be Maj. Mark Smith, captured during the battle of Loc Ninh. Does anyone recognize the Americans or their Vietnamese Counterparts?

Requests for Information

- The following request was received by Ben Myers. It refers to SFC Leslie (Roy) Karnes USA, served 68-69 and 70-71, Team 55, Kien Gang...The request was made by Sue Karnes, SFC Karnes' daughter, 402 Mountain Laurel Dr., Cedar Park, TX 78613 email suze78613@msn.com
"I am searching for (at that time) Major John Renner, who I believe was on board the Boston Whaler that my father was KIA'ed on. Major Renner sent us a letter after his death. I would like to get in touch with him if at all possible... Thank You."
- **Locator Request:** Sgt "Lee Bow" USA, who worked at Childrens hospital at Dong Ha and Ai Tu, Quan Tri Province 1969-1972. His daughter, Le Thi Thu, who is living in Nha Trang, needs to contact him. (contact Bill Laurie)

Douglas Eugene Pike 1924-2002

Douglas Pike, internationally renowned Vietnam scholar, died May 13, 2002 in Lubbock Texas.

Professor Pike was one of the few students of Vietnam who never allowed his academic integrity to be compromised by political or ideological bias; his work was informed by dedication to the search for historical truth and his genuine regard for the Vietnamese People.

His 1966 book, *Viet Cong*, has become the definitive work on the origins and workings of the COSVN. It and his other books, articles, and lectures make up what may be the most complete body of scholarly analysis of Vietnam and the war.

Professor Pike also edited and published the *Quarterly Indochina Chronology*, a unique resource on events and developments in Southeast Asia.

In 1997 Professor Pike became Associate Director of The Vietnam Center At Texas Tech, a position he held until his death.

Please note changes to the SITREP publication schedule printed below. The new publication dates are designed to allow information on Reunions to be published as early as possible (in the Summer/Fall issue) to permit a timely report of each year's Reunion (Spring Issue). Publication dates for the Winter issue have been made more flexible (December/January) in recognition of lengthened lead times associated with the Holiday season.

.....The Editors

SITREP Editorial Policy and Procedures

Copy:

- *Articles, letters and other news items are welcomed from all members and other subscribers. Copy should be typed double spaced using standard manuscript fonts like Courier, Cobb, or other "plain vanilla" fonts that can be easily OCR scanned. If you don't have a typewriter legible handwritten copy is OK*
- *Electronic submissions via email or on disc are also welcome. Microsoft Word or Word Perfect is preferred.*
- *Submissions should not exceed "Column length" pieces, i.e.: no longer than 600-1200 words. Members shouldn't hesitate to send short (50-100) word contributions. Remember, brevity is the soul of wit.*
- *Photos or pictures can be submitted by mail or on the internet. For Internet material use one of the standard graphic formats like JPEG, TIFF, MIX, or GIF.*

Editorial Policy:

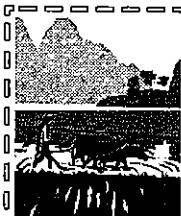
- *We will edit for grammar, spelling and clarity. If we feel the need to edit for length or content we'll contact the author whenever possible. We will NOT edit for political or philosophical content unless it's obscene, illegal, or libelous.*
- *SITREP will be published three times a year. The Spring issue will be published in April, the Summer/Fall issue in August, and the Winter issue in December/January. Deadlines for manuscripts and photos are the first of the month before each publication date, but we can be flexible if there's late breaking news.*
- *Send Submissions To:*

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BULLETIN BOARD



A note from Bill Laurie...

"In April, The Vietnam Center at Texas Tech held its 4th Triennial VN Symposium, attended by several *Counterparts* members. Other notable attendees were Gerald Hickey and Roger Donlon (the first man to earn the Medal of Honor in VN). The three-day conference had several dozen presentations and an opening session highlighted by an embarrassing performance by several Hanoi representatives, one of whom was eloquently humbled by Nguyen Xuan Phong and Hoang Huy Hung. Also notable was presence of several VERY young Ph.D.s, a number of whom displayed smug arrogance in perpetuating false mythology about VN. One stated unequivocally that South Vietnam was not plagued by disastrous ammunition/supply cutbacks after 1973."

"This statement was made during a presentation and prompted a challenge from one *Counterparts* members who declared the statement to be absolute and utter nonsense. These sadly misinformed people are teaching VN classes at the college level, and putting out what is little more than 1960s "anti-war" propoganda. Pretty sad situation. Members might check into what is taught in their local high schools and colleges."

"Members Bui Quang Lam, Roy Russell, and myself also attended the VN Ranger (Biet Cong Quan) annual banquet 28 July in Westminster, CA. The Ranger 42nd Anniversary was celebrated and many, many stories and memories were exchanged. It was a very good occasion with good people. There was enough living history among attendees to write scores of history books — the 92nd Bn. Rangers who were under siege for over 500 days at Tong Le Chan, 1973-75 — many who had spent years in "Re education" Camps — the Ranger who had spent only 32 days with his wife during their first year of marriage, and had then been sent to a "Reeducation" Camp for 13 years while his wife waited patiently for his return."

Operation Rice Lift; Help urgently needed

Mike Little, a *Counterparts* Charter Life Member, is still running *Operation Rice Lift*, bringing food and medicine to the Bahnar people he first met while in Vietnam decades ago. The Bahnar are in bad shape and suffering from malnutrition resulting from Hanoi's food policies, and in part because Hanoi was — and still is — forcing them to grow coffee for export, while reducing the edible food they can grow for themselves. Members are urged to help out with contributions however they can. Send contributions to:

Mike and Marion Little
Operation Rice Lift
18 Argento Drive
Mission Viejo, CA 92692
Phone: 949 460 0443
email: littlecrazy@cox.net

All donations will go to the 26 Bahnar families that Mike and Marion have been working with.

MEMBERS IN MEMORIAM

Humberto "Rocky" Versace, Captain, USA. KIA 20 July 1965

Counterparts Member in Memoriam awarded Medal of Honor.

President Bush presented a posthumous Medal of Honor on Monday to Army Capt. Rocky Versace, a Green Beret who defied his Viet Cong captors and was executed in 1965.

"He was fluent in English, French and Vietnamese and would tell his guards to go to hell in all three," Bush told a group of about 200 in the East Room of the White House. In the audience were Versace's friends and family members including three brothers.

The president gave the framed medal to Captain Versace's brother Steve, who was applauded as he held it over his head and turned slowly to display it to the crowd.

Versace would have been 65 in July. He grew up in Alexandria, Va., and went to high school in Washington. He graduated from West Point and served as an intelligence adviser in the Mekong Delta. In October 1963, two weeks before the end of his second tour in Vietnam was to end, Versace set out with a company of his Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) in a planned attack on a Viet Cong command post. They were ambushed by a much larger Viet Cong force. Versace was wounded, but kept providing cover fire so the troops with him could withdraw. Versace and two other officers were captured and marched to a prison camp in the jungle. Versace was executed Sept. 26, 1965.

Thong Vongrasamy, Colonel, Royal Laotian Army. KIA 20 June, 1965

Col. Vongrasamy volunteered to go into North Vietnam to rescue two downed US pilots. His Helicopter was hit by 12.7mm fire and Col. Vongrasamy was hit in the stomach. He later died in the Hospital.

Dachar Adulyarat, Lt. Colonel, Royal Thai Police Aerial Supply Unit (PARU).

The PARU was a unit that engaged in combat operations. LTC Adulyarat was in a plane crash, got out of the wreckage and returned to save an American. He then returned to save a second American. At that time, the aircraft exploded, killing LTC. Adulyarat and the second American.

Don Sjostrum, USAID, Laos. KIA 6 January, 1967

Sjostrum was at NaKhang in Laos when it was attacked by NVA units. When the enemy captured a .50 cal machine gun position, Sjostrum led a charge to retake the position. He was killed in the attempt.

Peter Badcoe, Major, The Australian Army, KIA 1967

Maj Badcoe was the Senior Advisor with The Australian Army Training Team in Quan Tri Province. He quickly established a reputation for being a fearless leader who did not hesitate in the face of enemy fire. In the short 10 weeks before his death, he earned the admiration of his Vietnamese counterparts and had been awarded the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross. He had also been recommended for a US Silver Star for rescuing a wounded American, while under heavy enemy fire. He was killed while leading his Vietnamese unit in an attack on an NVA Machine Gun position.

Floyd James "Jim" Thompson, Colonel, USA. July 16, 2002, Key West, FL

As a Captain serving with the Special Forces in Vietnam, Thompson was captured in March 1964. On his release in 1973 he had been held as a POW longer than any other American (See Book Reviews, page 10).

BOOK REVIEWS

Reviews of Books, new and old, relating to the Southeast Asia experience. Members are encouraged to submit reviews. All reviews will be published as space permits.

Dai Uy LTC James E. Behnke, USA (ret.) Military Books, 2122 28th St., Sacramento, CA 95818

Good straightforward account of the author's tour as Co Van to the ARVN 33rd Ranger Bn., 1964-65, a time before major American presence in the war. The 33rd operated in MR III and conducted a number of combat operations while Behnke was Advisor. The author lived and fought with his Battalion, gained many insights and came to respect the Vietnamese fighting man.

Glory Denied: The Saga of Jim Thompson, America's Longest Held POW. Tom Philpott. 480 pages, W.W. Norton.

Most people think that Navy Pilot Everett Alvarez was the POW held in captivity for the longest time. SF Advisor Jim Thompson though, was captured before Alvarez, in 1964. The book recounts Thompson's numerous escape attempts, generally barbaric treatment, and painful experience after he returned to the US.

...Bill Laurie

NOTE: The following reviews were gleaned from various publications and journals. We'd prefer reviews written by members. Send them in.

Reeducation in Postwar Vietnam; Personal Postscripts to Peace

Edward P. Metzner, Huynh Van Chinh, Tran Van Phuoc, and Le Nguyen Binh; 160 pages, Texas A&M

When helicopters plucked the last Americans off the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in 1975 countless Vietnamese who had worked for the Americans remained behind. Many were arrested and sent to "reeducation" camps, where they faced forced labor, indoctrination sessions, and severe privation. Huynh Van Chinh and Tran Van Phuoc, who had been colonels in the Army of Vietnam, lived through the deprivation and torture of the camps and eventually found freedom in America. Le Nguyen Binh tells a different story: that of his dangerous escape from Vietnam, with some of his junior officers and enlisted men, in three overloaded fishing boats. The matter-of-fact, even stoic stories of these survivors stand as a testimony to their endurance and persistent desire to return to a life of freedom.

The Twenty-five Year Century; South Vietnamese General Remembers the Indochina War to the fall of Saigon. Quang Thi; 448 pages, University of North Texas

For Victor Hugo, the nineteenth century could be remembered by only its first two years, which established peace in Europe and France's supremacy on the continent. For Gen. Lam Quang Thi, one of the youngest generals in the Vietnamese National Army, the twentieth century had only twentyfive years: from 1950 to 1975, during which the Republic of Vietnam and its army grew up and collapsed with the fall of Saigon. This is the story of those twenty five years. According to one reviewer, the book "... reflects the experience of the brave men and women who served in the army of the Republic of Vietnam. It is the genuine voice of those who fought for freedom." —Yung Krall, Author, *A Thousand Tears Falling*

Hard Men Humble: Vietnam Veterans Who Wouldn't Come Home

Jonathon Stevenson. 227 pages. The Free Press, NY.

This is not a book about the "ExPat" community that can be found in many Southeast Asia Cities. It deals instead with a small group of men who chose to return to Southeast Asia because of strong feelings they developed toward the people they fought to defend. Many of these veterans felt a sense of personal obligation to the people they served with and have organized various forms of assistance to help the Vietnamese and the Montagnard people.

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