



COUNTERPARTS

TƯƠNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á

SITREP

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Summer 2016

San Diego Reunion Brought New Ideas, a Memorable story of Re-connecting, and Another Delightful Dinner Cruise

Rich Webster, PAO

Kudos to Lewis Grissaffi and Jim O'Malley for hosting a fantastic reunion in San Diego with a well planned agenda that included a bus trip around San Diego, a dinner cruise, and a banquet that many felt was unrivaled in the history of COUNTERPARTS.

The Saturday banquet was attended by 91 COUNTERPARTS members, wives, and four tables of Vietnamese guests. Those present were privileged to hear COUNTERPARTS member and former Naval Advisor Tom Green tell the remarkable, heartfelt story of how he finally connected with the family of his Vietnamese counterpart, Troung-Uy (LTJG) Huynh Van To.

It was a momentous occasion, for among the Vietnamese guests in attendance were six naval officers and graduates of the Vietnamese Naval Academy in Nha Trang, all present in honor of their good friend and fellow cadet Huynh Van To, whose wife, sons and extended family were special banquet guests of Tom Green. Two of the sons, Dat Huynh and Loc Huynh delivered an inspiring keynote address on their harrowing trek to freedom and successful resettlement in America.

A city council candidate and a representative of the Vietnamese Community of San Diego in attendance were introduced. Another noted attendee was COUNTERPARTS member Tucker Smallwood, admired for his special contribution to COUNTERPARTS in applying his talent and wonderfully distinctive voice to cogently narrate the US Advisory story with a collage of photos presented at a June 2015 event, ***"Our Journey to Freedom,"*** at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC (sponsored by the Vietnamese-American Community to express gratitude and reflect on four decades of the Vietnamese experience since the fall of Saigon in 1975.)

First time attendees this year were: MSGT Tom Soles-teams 98, 95, 80; Tony Hoeliner of Tm 84 at Kien Phong; and marine corporal Samuel M Yrias stationed at Bien Hoa. Helicopter crew chief, Doug Wilson, who is a regular attendee at our reunions, brought along his

exhaustive research on advisory teams spanning all four military regions of Vietnam.

Ray Robison, Lou Rothstein, and Lewis Grissaffi represented COUNTERPARTS at a local "Black April" ceremony organized by the San Diego Vietnamese community. The ceremony included Fire Department personnel, political officials, Veteran groups, former Vietnamese soldiers and sailors, and many San Diego business owners. COUNTERPARTS presented a wreath at a ceremony honoring our former South Vietnamese allies. (For more on this story see Page 13).

In addition, COUNTERPARTS Commander Grant McClure and Reunion attendees laid a wreath at the Mt Soledad Memorial. (Grant's Remarks on Page 12)



Wreath presentation at Mt Soledad

It requires a great deal of time and effort to host a Reunion but organizers Lewis and Jim succeeded in hosting one of the best events ever. Don't miss the next one where you can share memories about the Co Van experience with your fellow comrades.



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Commander's Corner

From an ABC news article: In one of the "Hillary Clinton emails" finally released February 26, 2016, a former Marine and Iraq veteran sends a heartfelt and somewhat prescient e-mail to Secretary Clinton after meeting with her and discussing the US troop withdrawal.

"America has a habit of leaving these types of places and turning our backs on our allies," Zachary Iscol wrote. "We've lost a lot of blood and treasure in Iraq in the last 8 years and many of the relationships developed by military and State personnel were hard won. Those groups are now incredibly fearful that we will abandon them to the Shia majority and to Iran's will." "And, as we divest ourselves of direct military engagement throughout the world it is even more important to send a message that the [U.S.] does not abandon those who throw in their lot with us..." (After retiring from active duty, Iscol became an advocate for Iraqi refugees and local military translators, working with both U.S. and non-governmental aid organizations)

This was the fate of the South Vietnamese, the Montagnards and a host of other indigenous minority groups, the Hmong and Lao, and to our allies in Cambodia, and then repeated in much the same way decades later to the northern Kurds, and southern Iraqis, and also to loyal and faithful Afghans. It appears to be the long established trend of the State Department, and the Executive and Congressional branches of our government that once the fighting stops, to heck with our allies...and our veterans. I proffer this opinion to fellow advisors.

As Counterparts is comprised of former military a/o civilian advisors (and our allies) during the Vietnam War, we've all shared a common bond with our former allies, and reflect deeply on the tragedy of what happened to them when America pulled away from its support after the Paris Accords were signed in 1973 with President Nixon proudly proclaiming an end to the war with "peace and honor." There was neither peace nor honor of course, for it was a political expedient laced with downright betrayal of those who believed in us and fought by our side. The victors in that war lost the peace and brought nothing but misery to the people of Southeast Asia in the ensuing years. To this very day the war never ended for our allies, and that story plays out again and again over the decades in other wars where our troops and our advisors served. Hence the reason Counterparts has been so relentlessly focused on helping its former allies by any means practicable or possible, and has done so in earnest since 1990.

Betrayal of one's friends...it's quite an indictment for the US government, and it amazes me that anyone could ever place their trust in us again.

I want to express sincere gratitude to all members who took the time to write to their legislators regarding the plight of some 200 Montagnard refugees in Phnom Penh who are facing forced repatriation to Vietnam. Without any meaningful response by the State Department and the Executive Branch, these refugees have only groups like Counterparts and a few others to provide support and a voice.

Dr. Grant A. McClure

Commander, COUNTERPARTS/THDNA

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2016 SAN DIEGO COUNTERPARTS BUSINESS MEETING-April 30, 2016

Commander Grant McClure called the meeting to order and members introduced themselves and identified their advisory team designation. This was COUNTERPARTS 27th reunion fortuitously scheduled in a timeframe coinciding with what our South Vietnamese allies refer to as “Black April”, the day Saigon fell on April 30, 1975.

Commander McClure reported on our organization’s effort to assist those Montagnards who have escaped from Vietnam and are presently being held in refugee camps in Cambodia and Thailand. Former Montagnard soldier/ally Nay Rong accompanied by MHRO advisor, John Alles, has returned from a fact finding mission in Cambodia/ and Thailand. Rong and John were able to review conditions and to advocate for the refugees who are seeking asylum status and relocation. Grant says things are starting to improve with respect to the group’s refugee claims. Attention to their plight increased when one Montagnard has committed suicide and the Cambodian authorities received negative reaction through media sources for the poor treatment individuals experienced. Ten thousand dollars has been raised through a combination of sources to include “GOFUNDME” all earmarked to provide direct aid to the Montagnard refugees who are in dire need of food/medical care. An email was sent out to members regarding this issue.

Over the course of the year between Reunions, Grant has represented the membership in endorsing a Senate Resolution recognizing Montagnard service and sacrifice during the Vietnam War, as well as an effort by Congressman Chris Smith to urge President Obama to press for human rights in Vietnam.

Grant also represented COUNTERPARTS at the Lao-Hmong Memorial commemorative event at Arlington Cemetery May 15, 2015, a special event at the Kennedy Center in which Counterparts received public recognition and a unique trophy, and attended the annual Tu Duc Reserve Officers Military Academy reunion dinner in DC. Grant also received an invitation to attend an exclusive screening of “Ride The Thunder,” a film honoring both Vietnamese and American soldiers (specifically advisors) who fought valiantly together in Vietnam.

MEMBERSHIP: JOHN HASEMAN reported there are 265 active members who have paid dues;145 lifetime and 120 annual. Currently 16 haven’t paid their dues, and 68 of 100 didn’t pay on time. When members are late, John sends them notice. There are 318 inactive members on the roster. John encourages members to consider making a donation beyond the annual minimum to COUNTERPARTS and for those who do, they should designate to what charitable causes they want their funds to go to. Gradual declines in membership over time, leaves the association with less income that will eventually diminish the association’s capacity for charitable giving. Extra contributions are encouraged and can be sent to John or to Adjutant, Jim O’Malley.. It was noted that those who elect life membership status provides a nice short term influx of funds, but carries with it the downstream effect of diminishing returns in membership dues.

John recommended that the membership category of Associate Member be eliminated and all current Associate Members become regular “plenary” members. A motion to proceed was made, seconded, and passed unanimously. John will annotate the current membership pages to reflect the change.

Discussion was held on how to reach out to more Vietnam Veterans who served as advisors. Members have placed notice on the website MACV teams.com encouraging other team members to join COUNTERPARTS but it is always removed from the site in a short time. It was suggested that Carol Lund investigate a *Facebook* page for COUNTERPARTS and she was encouraged to do so.

Commander McClure distributed a detailed chronological accounting of the expenses/revenues for the last 9 years beginning from 2007, including income, expenses, contributions made to causes/charities, and a net income/loss for each year.

TREASURER’S REPORT: JIM O’MALLEY reported that COUNTERPARTS operates on a \$4,500 - \$5,000 dollar yearly budget. He expects this year’s reunion to make a profit. This year \$2,200 dollars were collected in dues and there were \$356 sent from Mike McMunn who operates the Counterparts Village Market.(Jim will update this after the reunion)

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT: TOM POLSTON. An *ad hoc* committee was formed last year to discuss the finances of COUNTERPARTS and to make recommendations. Tom reported the need for an operating budget and to maintain a surplus. There is a need to differentiate the operating budget from the charitable giving budget, and to maintain close scrutiny of reunion expenses to ensure it doesn't lead to a negative variance. Other avenues of funding were discussed, such as setting up a *Facebook* page, encouraging members to give extra when they pay dues, setting up a *GOFUNDME* site, updating our website with a donation tab, and conducting a raffle at the Reunion.

ANNUAL CHARITABLE GIVING: Observation was made for the need to balance the approach towards support of charitable organizations the association gives to. It was suggested that effort be made to extend the reach of charitable giving such that former Vietnamese allies might be included along with others that have been traditionally important programs developed from within the ranks of Counterparts membership such as Cambodia Corps, Inc., and the Vinh Son Orphanage.

In that light Rich Webster presented an option for the association to direct funds towards the Vietnam Healing Foundation (www.thevhf.org) which is a narrowly focused NGO run by Viet Vet RJ Del Vecchio that helps provide assistance to former South Vietnamese veterans, many of whom are living in dire poverty and in need of medical care. These funds are distributed discretely as the communist government still persecutes our former comrades. There are no paid employees in VHF and over the years they have distributed \$200,000 directly to our Vietnamese allies through trusted networking relationships in Vietnam. A picture of RJ Del Vecchio with 8 crippled ARVN was shared with the group. Rich has direct contact with RJ and wrote a short article about the VHF in the SITREP Summer/Fall 2009.

The finance committee and officers will make a post-reunion determination on charitable giving when the annual financial report is finalized.

CAMBODIA CORPS:TOMMY DANIELS provided an update on, and proffered a proposal for consideration by the association to assume a larger role in which Counterparts might oversee CCI going forward. To date CCI has educated 41 Montagnards with college educations who have gone back to their Provinces to work with NGO's and become future leaders of their community. At present there are 10 Montagnard students in college in Phnom Penh and 17 girls living in a sponsored house in Ban Lung with the goal of finishing high school. CCI has revenues of around \$45,000, and operates with 2% overhead. Tommy said COUNTERPARTS could have a hands-on involvement with an expanded role helping our former allies in Southeast Asia. He thanked COUNTERPARTS for their traditional support and encouraged those interested to come and visit the CCI center in Phnom Penh.

A suggestion was made to present an option on the COUNTERPARTS web site where donors could contribute to COUNTERPARTS charities with a separate link to the 501c (3) charities we support.

HISTORIAN. CAROL LUND, our official historian wanted to alert members that they will be receiving a biographical form for wives and members to fill out to further update the history of COUNTERPARTS. Carol produces a photo/narrative summary of all reunions and provides valuable support for our organization.

NEW BUSINESS

Efforts to enhance the association's brand identity:

It was posited that the association should devote attention to efforts to enhance name brand recognition by and through emblems and other references that might improve identification of the unique role of advisory service. Inclusion of such emblems like MACV and MAAG will be considered along with reference to the *Vietnam War* in preference to the *2nd Indochina War* which seems more obscure to the general public. A committee was formed to study this comprised of volunteers, Grant McClure, Rich Webster, JC Fisher, James Ellis, and Andre Lecault.

Members in Memoriam:

It was decided to include COUNTERPARTS wives in this section of the SITREP. JC Fischer said he and his wife would donate \$100 dollars for each wife listed. Members are encouraged to remember COUNTERPARTS with a bequest when a family member passes. Major Dick Rollar's family sent \$200 after his death as they were quite moved by the two articles about their father in the SITREP.

Dan Leavitt encouraged members to hold a regional mini-reunion in their home areas to spread the word about the organization that may attract new members.

Public Affairs: Rich Webster encouraged members to write their stories/experiences and send them to Rich or Ken Jacobsen, SITREP editor. SITREP is archived at Texas Tech University and member stories will become a part of the recorded history of the Vietnam War.

Discussion was held to open up the category of Associate memberships. Going forward all members would enjoy plenary status.

Next Reunion: Dallas, Louisville, San Jose, and Charleston were possible locations suggested for the next reunion. This will be determined at a later date but it is suggested that the dates be coordinated in tandem with BLACK APRIL and on a weekend around April 30th as that is the general timeframe each year in which Vietnamese-American communities hold their commemorative events and reunions affording greater opportunity for Counterparts participation.

....*Rich Webster, PAO COUNTERPARTS.*



COUNTERPARTS WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Membership Chair John Haseman reports the following new members:

Charles R. Goff: Charlie served on Advisory Team 60 at two different times. From June to December 1966 he was an Operations NCO in Vinh Long, and again from January 1970 to January 1971 while a Master Sergeant Operations NCO. He also served as Advisory Team 50 (44th STZ) First Sergeant. Charlie retired in December 1973 after 20 years of active service and lives in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Joseph P. Billot: He attended the April 2016 reunion in San Diego and was happy to meet fellow Counterparts there. Joseph served on Advisory Team 43 in Hau Nghia Province. He was on MAT III-100 and subsequently Deputy District Senior Advisor, Trang Bang District. He lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Lawrence E. Eagen : Larry served on Advisory Team 70 from 1966 to 1967, with 2/7 Battalion, 5th ARVN Division, during which time he "earned" the Purple Heart. He lives in Port Huron, Michigan.

David W. Curd: lifetime member. David served on Advisory Team 86 where he was Deputy District Senior Advisor, Ben Luc District, Long An Province, from March 1968 to March 1969. David lives in Tempe, Arizona, where he is President of Harrison Middleton University.

Edwin W. ("Bill") Boland: Bill attended our April 2016 reunion in San Diego and met a lot of Counterparts members and is happy he joined with likeminded veterans. Bill served on MAT 43 in Trang Bang District, Hau Nghia Province from July 1970 to Jun 1971. He lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

William B. Carleton: Bill joined Counterparts as a lifetime member, and attended our April 2016 reunion in San Diego. He is part of the ever-growing battalion of veterans of Advisory Team 31, Phu Bon Province, where he served as S-2 of the team in Cheo Reo from February 1968 to February 1969. Bill is very interested in boating, and lives in beautiful New Bern, North Carolina.

Patrick T. Hardesty: Patrick was communications NCO with the 261st Signal Company and detached to Advisory Team 28 in Tuy Hoa Province from August to December 1967 and again from April 1968 to April 1969. Patrick lives in Roseville, California.

Jon Fischman: who lives in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. Jon was assigned to U.S. Navy River Patrol Section 532, River Squadron 5 in My Tho, Dinh Tuong Province, where he worked with Advisory Teams 66, 75, and 92.

WELCOME ABOARD!

Reunion comments from One Member

Tucker Smallwood has been an active member of COUNTERPARTS who has contributed articles, a DVD of his Vietnam experience, and most recently a moving voice over of the COUNTERPARTS presentation done at Kennedy Center last year. The San Diego Reunion was the first he has attended in over twenty years. His comments follow

...Editors

So: To do justice to a very memorable gathering this evening. I am now home, having driven 300 miles today, San Diego and back...and am grateful to have encountered far less traffic than I'd expected.

I'd really had no expectation of encountering anyone that I knew; that was hardly the point. I went to honor the organization COUNTERPARTS and their members. A Counterpart is what we called the foreign soldier whose rank and responsibilities paralleled those of the American soldier with whom he was paired, in-country.

As I walked along the outside patio to the dinner site, I was greeted by several...they referred to me, playfully as "the movie star" who was said to be attending. Once inside, I got a beer and began to engage people. Some seemed to know me...or know of me. That was as much because a few recognized me, but more so because they'd learned that I had recorded the narration for the 50th Anniversary event at Kennedy Center last year. Their remarks were generous and kind for my voice-over. And slowly I now had faces to connect to the names I'd read for years in our quarterly newsmagazine, COUNTERPARTS SITREP.

Then things got interesting. I'd met both past commander Ken Jacobson and J.C. Fischer more than 20 years ago at the last reunion I'd attended, in Orange County. They remembered me and greeted me warmly. JC offered me a beautiful commemorative coin...and when I mentioned to Ken that I wanted to buy a COUNTERPARTS pin, he immediately unpinned his own from his lapel, despite my protestations and offered it to me.

As folks continued to gather, I moved around the room, meeting and greeting people and encountered Tami, who is running for San Diego City Council. There were numerous Vietnamese nationals of varying ages and my rusty Vietnamese found kind approval. Some of us, especially Commander Grant McClure were still impressively fluent. We sat down to dinner and continued to share memories and stories. Then Grant introduced Tom Green and the evening became electric.

Tom had been a Naval Officer and advisor, with a close relationship with his own Counterpart. Some of you understand the profound bonds I shared with my own Counterpart, T.U. Nguyen Van Dai. I will not attempt to type the Vietnamese names for this account; simply understand that after America's withdrawal, Tom tried manfully for 47 years to regain contact with his Counterpart...who sadly succumbed to cancer in 2010. They had lived 350 miles apart in the Midwest for most of those years. The Counterpart had been compelled to leave Vietnam; only death awaited him from the NVA. Yet his wife, newborn son and other children could not yet travel. Ultimately, the family was reunited in America. Tom's efforts did eventually put him in contact with his Counterparts wife and children...and all were in attendance tonight.

First the eldest son then youngest son spoke of their gratitude to Tom and to America for the efforts on their behalf. I met his wife and children and learned the story of their struggle to escape, to reunite and to establish themselves here in America, which they have done successfully. It is a very inspirational and moving narrative.

Tho I can speak only for myself, I think such an accounting validates for many of us our efforts and what we strove to accomplish by our service during our war. I turned down several other rather important events tonight to attend this gathering...and I think I chose wisely.

One Advisors Experience; With the ARVN in 1963

Joe Frankoski

In May 1963 I choppered into *Bau Ca Tre* strategic hamlet, 30 miles north of Saigon, assigned as Battalion Advisor, 2/48 Inf Regt (sep). 2/48 Inf troops endured harsh conditions month after month including no sanitation, primitive shelter and exposure to the elements. CoVans with the 48th Regt only pulled 6 month tours instead of 12 months due to the conditions in 1963.

After being briefed I walked around the hamlet and noticed the ARVN troops were all in civilian attire, only the officers were in uniform. The soldiers only wore uniforms when on patrol, security, etc.

Lunch was served at 1200 for the Battalion command group officers and the Co Vans. The "kitchen" was about 30 meters from our dining area (See photo). I was introduced to Cpl Bau, the chief cook and Pvt Daca, assistant cook. Also I met Cpl Loi, who was the driver and batboy for the Co Vans. Dinner was served at 1700 and I must say I was impressed with the food. Fish, rice and veggies at lunch; rice, soup, veggies and meat for dinner as well as tea and fruits.



The kitchen at strategic hamlet Bau Ca Tre. Advisors hut on the right side

Not bad at all for being in southwest War Zone D in a hamlet partially hacked out of the tropical forest!

During the next seven months we moved at least six times to protect the hamlets in our area of responsibility. Cpl Bau was an expert in breaking down the "kitchen", moving it, and having our meals served on time in a new location. A memorable feast was held in October during a national holiday. The main course at lunch was roast puppy, veggies, fruits, rice paper wraps and warm *Bier La Rue*. I thought that the puppy was a bit greasy but who can complain when the Co Vans were only paying \$8.00 US a month for meals!

In August we were located at *Xom Can* hamlet, the easternmost hamlet held in War Zone D. The VC took control of the laterite road leading to the hamlet for a period of time.

As far as rations went, we were out of fresh foods but still had enough rice. At dinner one evening we were served a large roast lizard that somehow Cpl Bau had obtained. He was a very resourceful individual. I believe that this trait would lead to us to losing him to a General's mess.

In early December 1963 the battalion was ordered to conduct a search and destroy operation against the 58 VC regt. It was then that we learned that Cpl Bau was reassigned to be the cook for the ARVN III Corps Commander! Bau would be at ARVN III Corps HQ in probably the most secure location in RVN. How the Corps commander found out about Bau I can only guess.

We moved out on the operation as ordered. Bau and PVT Daca accompanied us. We destroyed a regimental base camp, pulled off a successful ambush and then found the VC on high ground overlooking us. There was an open valley with a stream running through the center. We saw a herd of five water buffalo and reported to regiment. We were instructed to kill the buffalo, as they were a food source for the VC.

It took many rounds of .30 and .45 cal to bring down the buffalo. Suddenly Cpl Bau rushed out into the open valley, armed only with a butcher knife. He ran to the nearest buffalo, used it for cover and severed a leg. He jumped up, threw the leg over his shoulder, and ran back to our position to the cheers of his comrades. There he prepared buffalo meat for our lunch with small arms fire crackling over our heads.

I think the above is an example of the esprit and individual morale among the troops. They were well led and responded, as most leaders would want. Cpl Bau is perhaps the best example—he ran to the buffalo without orders because he felt it was his duty.

Counterparts Reunion Banquet Dinner—Grant's remarks

Esteemed ladies and gentlemen, friends, comrades-in-arms, fellow veterans, and the Vietnamese Community of San Diego. We are very proud to have you attending this evening.

I want to express our gratitude to Lewis Grissaffi for hosting this year's reunion and compliment him for the wonderful venue, great location, and all of the hard work and planning that went into making this such a special occasion.

Today is April 30th, also known as Thang tu Den or "Black April." It is a day of great sadness for us, as it marks the time when Saigon fell and the Republic of Vietnam was abandoned and betrayed. We will never forget our comrades-in-arms, and those who became political prisoners. We will also never forget the many boat people and the refugees who fled communist tyranny.

Before I engage in introductions, I would like for all our guests to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Let us also observe a moment of silent reflection for those who served with honor and sacrificed during the war and those good friends that we continue to lose within our ranks.

Long ago, I spoke Vietnamese very well, but after 45-years I have begun to forget much as my memory has been fading, and I become older. I was in Vietnam two years, in Nha Trang and Ban Me Thuot from 1969 to 1971. I served with MACV Team 25 with assignment to MILPHAP Team 19, with primary responsibilities as a medic working in the Province Hospital emergency room, operating room, laboratory and radiology.

Let us now allow everyone here get to know each other. First of all, I would like to introduce Tammy Le Murillo who is running for City Council, District 9, for San Diego. It is also my honor to introduce, Ms. Kim Trang Dang, Vice President of the Vietnamese Community of San Diego.

I would now like to introduce former cadets of the Vietnamese Naval Academy, Lt. Col. Tuan Voung, Lt. Col Chi Pham accompanied by his wife Thoa Pham, Lt. Col San Pham accompanied by his wife Nga Hoang, Lt. Col Trung Tran accompanied by his wife Van Tran, Lt. Col. Du Le accompanied by his wife Tammy Le, and Lt. Col Thu Tran accompanied by his wife Hanh Tran.

And now let us please go around table by table so that everyone can introduce themselves before we break for dinner. After dinner we will have a presentation by Tom Green and introduction of a keynote speaker.

(Remarks after Dinner)

I am now delighted to introduce Counterparts member Tom Green former advisor to the Vietnamese Navy in the 3rd Coastal Zone at Coastal Group 33 operating in and around Rung Sat Special Zone. Tom's counterpart was LTJG (Troung Uy) Huynh Van To who died in 2010. After a relentless search for his good friend and counterpart, Tom finally made contact with his family after 46-years of arduous effort, getting an unusual lead from a pedicurist in Coronado, California. In early February 2016, Lewis Grissaffi arranged to drive Tom and his wife to the widow's home where he then met all of To's family, wife Nay Ngo, and her four sons, Dat born in 1967, Thanh born in 1969, Dahn born in 1972 and Loc born 1974. They all visited the gravesite of Troung Uy To to pay respects, and a plan was arranged for the eldest son Dat and youngest son, Loc to speak at the annual COUNTERPARTS reunion.

In appreciation and recognition for his steadfast and life-long concern for his former counterpart, Lt. Col Trung Voung presented a framed poster of the Vietnamese Naval Academy unit logo to Tom Green.

Grant then closed the evening by expressing appreciation for the wonderful participation by the Vietnamese community. "Americans who then served in Vietnam are so very proud of our Vietnamese friends who came here with nothing and yet succeeded so well, and there is no better group of productive and responsible citizens in our country." "But we are not finished with the fight and our advocacy work." "Together, we have one unfinished task: to reestablish freedom and democracy in Vietnam."

Once Upon a Time

By Dennis J. Spice

Once upon a time there was a war. And once upon a time we marched off to that unknown place far across the Pacific. It was called Vietnam. Some say it was not much of a war, but it was our war and it was just as real as any war had ever been. No one wanted it, but our country sent us there and there we served, there we died and for all our sacrifices we found no appreciation on our return. Ours was a generation that grew up seeing our fathers, our brothers, our uncles return from the battlefields of WW II or Korea to cheering crowds, ticker tape parades and kisses from unidentified, unknown young ladies.

But, that was not to be our reward.

When our time ended we returned, some luckier than others. Although I did receive a disability, I still had my arms and legs. Some more unfortunate ones did not. After what seemed a lifetime on a plane we touched down at Travis Air Force Base in California. Our reception consisted of a steak dinner, an issue of clothing, the processing of paperwork and a good night's sleep. Early the next morning I was off on my leave to Chicago. I chose to travel with Greyhound since it was the least expensive even though it was the longest and most tedious modes of transportation.

Many of us were served up by the public with taunts and accusations of being "baby killers" and drug addicts and other foul sobriquets. Some of us were spat upon. I did not have these experiences, but I was about to discover something nearly as bad. I boarded the bus in San Francisco. It was full and that meant about 40 passengers, me being the only one in uniform. I spent the next three days traveling with 39 people who were, to my observation, both mute and blind. They must have suffered from these disabilities because no matter how hard I tried no one would talk to me and no one would even look at me. After all wasn't I nothing more than a drug crazed baby killer? I found myself totally alone and, in a way, abandoned on a 72-hour tour of my homeland. Finally, I arrived at my destination.

After a month's leave it was onward to Fort Sheridan for my assignment. "You've been assigned as the Army Advisor to the Reserve Center at Green Bay, Wisconsin," I was told. "Green what?" I exclaimed. It was the last place on earth I expected to go.

I drove into Green Bay in early January 1972. I was still a little gun shy as to what to expect from the locals. The Reserve Center was all military and, of course, there was no problem there. I got myself an apartment and each day, after work was done, I returned to my safe little corner of the world, changed into civilian clothes and made my way to the neighborhood Pub that I had made my second home. I got to know everyone there and they got to know me ___ or so they thought. They knew I was from Illinois and that I was living and working in town, but didn't know who I really was.

Then I had a bad day on the job. Stressed to the limit I left work with one thing in mind. It was not to go home and remove my uniform, but instead to unwind at that familiar watering hole. I arrived at my home away from home, parked the car and marched in hardly aware of my uniform. There I was in a clean, pressed uniform decorated with stripes on each sleeve and ribbons on my chest. Into the Lion's Den I went with only a cold pint of ale on my mind.

Up to the bar I charged and then from out of nowhere, from my left, from my right, came voices like thunder. "Dennis, we didn't know you were in the Army." "Where did you serve?" "Were you in Vietnam?" "Let me buy you a drink." "No, his drink is on me," another shouted. "Welcome home, buddy."

What a shock! I found myself welcome, appreciated, special. The end to this story is simple. I got totally drunk that night and never paid a dime. I now knew that not all Americans spent their time criticizing the government and blaming the Army and the soldier for what they saw as their duty. I discovered that I was home and that I was among my fellow Americans and this all happened one night,

Once Upon A Time.

SFC Dennis Spice served in Vietnam from January 1969 thru December 1971 as an Advisor with Team 62 in Cholon as an Instructor assigned to the Vietnamese Training Directorate and Team 1 in Da Nang with the 10th Vietnamese Engineers.

RAY ROBISON; FIVE YEARS A CO VAN IN VIETNAM

By Rich Webster

Sergeant Major Ray Robison spent five straight years in Vietnam as an advisor with our South Vietnamese allies and wanted to serve longer. Asked why he kept extending his tours, he said “My 2nd Battalion, 41st Regiment, 22nd ARVN Division was attacked early morning on 10 January, 1968, and overrun by the NVA. Two NVA hand grenades were thrown into the command bunker. The first grenade wounded 1st Lieutenant Richard Morris, Staff Sergeant Robert Harcum, and Sergeant Gerald Deady. The concussion blew me against the wall of the bunker. The second landed at my feet. Private Do Van Tan, threw himself on that grenade and saved my life and ended his. I felt I had a debt to pay to the Vietnamese people for placing that brave young man in my life at that time.” Private Tan was one of three ARVN soldiers to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross during the Vietnam War.

Ray may be the only enlisted man to be forced out of Vietnam by the supreme commander of all American forces there, General Frederick Weyand.

Ray explains, “In mid 1972 I put in for another extension, but was turned down twice. The Vietnamese province officials asked if they could put my request through Vietnamese channels. Sometime later, Dr Evans, the Senior Advisor of Dinh Tuong Province, told me about a personal call he had with General Weyand. It seems Prime Minister Khiem had gone to him on my behalf. General Weyand evidently took umbrage with the Prime Minister’s request to extend my tour of duty. General Weyand said there is no E-7 in the US ARMY with that kind of clout and not being on the take. He would not listen to Dr Evans. General Weyand said you have 30 days to get that SOB out of Vietnam. “

“It just so happened that my counterpart and Prime Minister Khiem grew up together and were personal friends, so that was my connection. I got kicked out of Vietnam for being too close to the Vietnamese. A while back I visited my counterpart, who is alive and well in Houston, Texas. He spent 14 years in the reeducation camps. Sadly he told me that all of our RD Cadre who did not escape, were summarily executed at the conclusion of the war.”

Ray knew the famous Vietnamese General Le Minh Dao when he was a Colonel and the Province chief in Dinh Tuong Province in 1969. “I was working with the RD Cadre at the time. General Dao Spent 17 years and 5 days in the Reeducation Camps (called revenge camps by the South Vietnamese). I spoke to him on the phone sometime back. General Dao was a bundle of energy and over the years I developed a personal relationship with him. I hated to see him leave the Province but I knew he had bigger and better things ahead for him.”

“I got to Dinh Tuong Province in mid-august 1969 when there was a lot of VC activity in the province. I was wounded a week after I arrived. Before that I was with the 2nd Battalion, 41st ARVN Regiment, 22nd Infantry Division with people being killed and wounded all around me. “

“I came to the RD Cadre at the turnover between the CIA. I would make the trip to Can Tho and pick up a couple bags of piasters. I wore civilian clothes at the time. My counterpart and I then would meet with Colonel Dao and his finance chief and they would sign for the funds. Since I wore civilian clothes, everyone thought I was CIA. The more I denied it, the more they believed I was.”

Ray spent three & one-half years with the RD Cadre and the PSDF (People’s Self Defense Force). “You could say the RD Cadre was my first name, the PSDF my second. I spent a lot of time sitting in ambushes with fingers crossed hoping that the bad guys didn’t show up. The PSDF were old men and young women, completely outgunned, armed with M1s, carbines, and an occasional BAR up against AK47s and RPGs. “

“When the RD Cadre were in 59 man teams, it was not that difficult to form, arm, and train the local PSDF because they were a formidable security force. By the time we left a village, elections were conducted, there was an armed PSDF and development projects were ongoing. In some cases, the RD Cadre were elected to office and discharged for the duration of their term. Some even married local girls.”

“The RD Cadre were the primary PSDF trainers and we lived in the villages for 6 to 9 months. I had some villages where the women could shoot the pants off of the men. I spent many a night in the villages checking out the local PSDF. Some were fairly competent but others were marginal at best. Their being armed seemed to act as a deterrent. An armed woman defending her kids can be very dangerous”.

A former Viet Minh, Colonel Nguyen Be designed the concept of the teams to combat the propaganda effort of the VC at the local level. Improving the life of the villagers to win them over to the GVN was the primary moving idea behind the teams. One half the team was devoted to security and the other half worked on village projects to improve the life of the villagers/peasants. Ray explains, “The RDC was an effective antidote to communist propaganda and helped win back the villages. General Dao accurately described the communists when he said they poisoned the peasants’ minds.”

Another task for the RD Cadre, who wore black pajamas similar to the Viet Cong, was to develop a detailed map/census of the village to determine the political proclivities of the villagers- to see who were VC sympathizers and had family members serving with them. A good part of the mission dovetailed with the Phung Hoang (Phoenix) program. Ray explains, "We encouraged *Chieu Hoi* to cross over to the GVN side and also coordinated GVN programs for the disabled, Veterans, welfare payments, and the Land to the Tiller program. The RD cadres were the people's interface with the CORDS program."

"Colonel Nguyen Be did a great job of training the Cadre at the Vung Tau training school. He believed the field was the classroom with no set down lectures. As a place to call home and work out of, they had to build a hamlet from scratch. They had specialists on the Cadre knowledgeable in the latest farming techniques. Col Be emphasized that when the RDC were deployed, they were under the control of the village chief and their conduct had to be above reproach. I never met Colonel Be but he was held in high esteem by all Cadre. I served three and one-half years with the RD Cadre, wore civilian clothes, and worked side by side with the civilian CORDS personnel."

"I thought most of the VC were nationalists but the VCI were hard core communists who did much to agitate the local populace. They ruled by terror. In April 1972 at the beginning of the Easter Offensive, in the village of Vinh Kim, Sam Giang District, they booby trapped the gate to the local school. When two teachers and 20 children opened the gate, they were blown all over the place. I arrived shortly afterwards and it was gruesome."

"One of the biggest unreported success stories in Vietnam was the "Land to the Tiller" program when the peasants started getting title to their lands, so the attitude towards the South Vietnamese government started to turn favorable."

Ray has this to say about his Vietnamese Counterparts. "The ARVN former French officers that I dealt with, the captains and lieutenants were very competent. If after 13 years, they hadn't advanced in rank, it meant they were very good leaders. General Dao loved his fellow soldiers and spent time eating/socializing with all under him down to the private level. He was a great leader and cared for his men. That's why they fought bravely for him. "General Dao's 18th ARVN Division defeated 3 NVA divisions at the Battle of Xuan Loc in April 1975 before running out of ammunition and supplies.

"Upon my completion of duty with the 2nd Bn, 41st ARVN Regiment, I came to the conclusion that one of the problems with ARVN was their lack of adequate training. I did a tour of duty at the Lam Son National training center for 6 months but that was a mistake. I had experience as a drill sergeant but I discovered that they did not listen to a sergeant. For the most part, the ARVN NCO's were not held in very high regard and in many cases that translated back to their opinion of the American NCO."

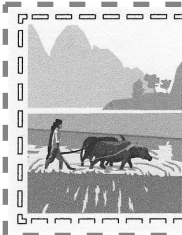
"I had a strange unexplained incident happen to me while I was assigned to Advisor Team 40 at the Vietnamese Lam Son National Training Center in Duc My. A Special Battalion of Cambodian soldiers wearing the FANK patch on their uniforms showed up for training. First thing the Vietnamese did was take away their weapons. A few nights later, I heard gunfire. The Deputy Senior Advisor said they were under attack and stay out of it. I knew the Cambodians were unarmed so I grabbed a medic and headed to the compound where there were dead and wounded all over. Again I was told to stay out of it. I asked if I was going to be court martialed for giving aid to the Allies."

"The next day, I walked the perimeter to see where the bad guys had entered. There was nothing-no holes in the fence, no sign of a unit breaking through. Sometime later, I was told that it might have been an ARVN ranger unit, because of their hate for the Cambodians. I was then told very sternly to leave it alone."

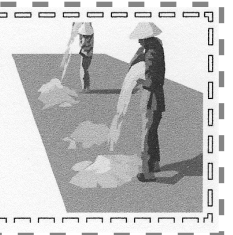
"We fought a different war as advisors. We lived with the Vietnamese, dined with them, fought with them, and in some cases died with them, especially the advisors who served on MAT teams and with Vietnamese infantry units. I even had one Vietnamese soldier die for me."

"I thought we were winning the war by the time I left in Nov 72. I could drive all over without worry. I often went out to the district headquarters to coordinate with the district team and the ARVN HES officers. I was convinced that we had won, even though there were NVA units in the area. Our *Chieu Hoi* rate had gone way up as the Northerners were treating the local VC like a bunch of crap. I still believe the majority of the VC were tricked by the communists."

After Ray returned to the US after his 5-year tour of duty, he was awarded the Legion of Merit, an almost unheard of award for a Sergeant First Class. Ray concludes, "I was ashamed of our country for abandoning our South Vietnamese allies. After the War, I avoided any contact with the South Vietnamese and couldn't look them in the eye because of the way we had abandoned them with Congress cutting off all aid to them."



BULLETIN BOARD



Update on Montagnard Refugees Seeking Asylum

(Provided by Grant McClure) Montagnard refugee status as of May, 2016:

Eighteen months after they fled to the forests of Ratanakkiri province seeking refuge from repression in Vietnam, 13 Montagnards are set to be flown to the Philippines, the U.N.'s refugee agency (UNHCR) said. However, the U.N. would not say whether the group of recognized refugees, which the government said in January would be transferred to the Philippines while seeking asylum in a third country, had found a permanent home.

The asylum seekers—who set off a new wave of Montagnards fleeing into Cambodia when they crossed the border in November 2014—are the only ones to have been granted refugee status of the more than 200 who entered the country since. Vivian Tan, regional press officer for UNHCR, confirmed in an email that the group would leave Cambodia but could not say whether a third country had been secured for them.

“I can confirm that they are leaving for the Philippines in line with the agreement reached between the relevant parties. At this point I don't have further details,” Ms. Tan said, adding that UNHCR would be providing accommodation and support for the Montagnards in the Philippines.

Sok Phal, director of the Interior Ministry's immigration department, directed questions to Tan Sovichea, head of the immigration department's refugee office, who claimed not to know about the case. The Montagnards—a mostly Christian group of indigenous minorities concentrated in Vietnam's Central Highlands—claim to have fled their homeland due to increased religious and political persecution at the hands of Hanoi.

Following a meeting between the Interior Ministry and UNHCR officials in January 2015, the government announced that the remaining 171 Montagnards in Cambodia would have their asylum claims assessed. However, less than a month later, a ministry spokesman said they had all failed the interview process and would be deported to Vietnam.

Comments made by Grant McClure at Wreath Laying Ceremony, Mt. Soledad Monument

Fellow members and friends, welcome to our commemorative ceremony today at this impressive veteran's memorial at Mt. Soledad. It's my honor today to preside over this event as we give tribute to the courage of fallen heroes.

At the end of my first tour of duty in Vietnam I received orders to the 95th replacement depot in Bien Hoa for 20-days of leave before returning for my second tour with MACV. The replacement center was filled with hundreds of rowdy, highly stimulated short timers who had just ended their tour of duty and were going to catch the Freedom Bird the following day to go home. That night as a parting gift, Charlie sent a 122mm rocket roaring into our area just to shake-up all the short timers one last time.

The next morning amidst all the activity, noise and commotion when the buses arrived to take us to the Bien Hoa Air Base, a chaplain came into the barracks to bid us farewell on our journey. At first his message was hard to hear amidst the chatter, but he brought every one of us to attention and to respectful silence when he thanked us for our service and then reflected on how we should all now think of those who we knew and served with that will not be going home with us. You could have dropped a pin in that room.

It was one of the most poignant reflective moments of our lives leaving so much behind us from a year in a war zone. Many wept, and most were quiet and sullen as we grabbed our duffle bags and boarded the buses.

Let's each of us take a moment now to think about that. We all know that every day in a war zone could be our last. It was something we thought about before we got there, then lived with, and 365-days later we were able to return home. And we can all think back now, as if it was yesterday, and remember how young we were, and what we had experienced, and the good friends we had who did not make it home.

We're gathered here today on this sacred ground to dedicate a wreath to this Memorial in honor of fallen warriors in remembrance of their sacrifice and honorable service. This Memorial represents a tribute to proud human endeavor, and fulfills a promise that Counterparts maintains as one of its primary purposes...to commemorate the service and sacrifice of US veterans and our comrades-in-arms. We now give a moment of silent reflection for fallen warriors including those veterans we continue to lose from within our ranks.

There is an inscription on a Confederate Monument in Arlington National Cemetery that is most befitting of those we honor here today:

"Not for fame or reward...not for place or rank...not lured by ambition or goaded by necessity...but in simple obedience to duty as they understood it, these men suffered all, sacrificed all, dared all, and died."

Remember them

COUNTERPARTS Members join in commemorating "Black April"

A Delegation of COUNTERPARTS members, led by Reunion host Lewis Grissaffi, joined the local Vietnamese Community in marking the 41st Anniversary of the Fall of Saigon, which occurred on April 30, 1975. Many former ARVNAF members were in attendance as were civic officials and other representatives of the local Vietnamese community. The community BlogSpot also mentioned COUNTERPARTS' contribution and noted the community's appreciation for our organization, saying that:

"Very touching is the US veterans group Counterparts who served as military advisers in Vietnam, represented by Mr. Lewis Grissaffi, who laid a wreath to honor South Vietnamese soldiers who sacrificed to defend freedom with the words: "Counterparts, we salute you." They have come from Las Vegas and other states and San Diego to attend a reunion."

(thanks to Grant McClure and Bill Laurie for the Vietnamese to English translation)



ARVN Hero and COUNTERPARTS member Tran Ngoc "Harry" Hue honored.

The Lowell Milken Center (LMC) for Unsung Heroes in Ft. Scott, Kansas, recently presented an award-winning project telling the story of LTC (ARVN) Tran Ngoc "Harry" Hue. The LMC is an international education nonprofit that discovers, develops and communicates the stories of individuals in history who have made a profound and positive impact on the lives of others.

Tran Ngoc "Harry" Hue is a former lieutenant colonel with the 1st Infantry Division Army of the Republic of Vietnam who received the Silver Star, the highest award for heroism on the battlefield that the American military can grant an allied soldier, as well as two Bronze Stars for Valor. Two juniors in Susan Sittenauer's AP U.S. History class at Seaman High School in Topeka, Kansas, are developing an Unsung Hero project about Harry and his heroic actions during the Vietnam War. The project is also the center's 2015 Discovery Award winner.

The film tells the story through photos that trace Harry's early life and battlefield achievements as well as describing the struggle by his former US Counterparts to find Harry and his family and bring them to the US. It includes interviews of COUNTERPARTS member COL Jim Coolican, USMC, (Ret.) his US Advisor during the ferocious battle for the Citadel in Hue during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Jim also accompanied Harry to the event at the Milken Center.

More information, and a YouTube video of the story can be found at <http://lowellmilkencenter.org/>

Comments made by Danny Huynh at Reunion Banquet

The following comments were made by guest speaker Danny Huynh, the oldest son of Troung Uy (LTJG) Huynh Van To, who was COUNTERPARTS member Tom Green's Counterpart at Coastal Group 33 in the Rung Sat Special Zone (RSSZ). Details of this remarkable story are on page nine.

...Ed.

"This story starts with two people were sold into slavery at the age of 10. 15 years later they ended their slavery by having too many kids together. After gaining their independence they quickly found an even harsher, harder life raising a family without the association of anyone who cared, neither friends nor family, in a country ravaged by war, poverty and starvation around World War II. With no resources, completely isolated, they constructed 4 standing posts, gathered coconuts leaves for a roof top, no walls, called it home under a shady tree in a small town name Ba Ria."

"Without any education or profession some how they survived with their kids. Adding to their miseries the husband was accused and arrested by the French for being a member of the Vietminh movement. They beat and tortured him in front of his family, chained and shackled and paraded throughout the village to intimidate others "this would happened if one tries to stand up to imperial power." He then escaped prison and relocated his family under another tree in another village. His wife by now had fallen very ill. On one night she appeared in his dream to tell him good-bye and pleaded with him to stay strong and take care of their five kids. He woke up from the dream only to realize that she did passed away that same night in the hospital bed in a nearby town. "

"With a tattered spirit he found the courage to preserve and provide for his children. One of his children rose above all adversities to just survive, self educate under the street lamp and against all odds graduated from Naval Academy, my father, and some of you know him as LT Commander, Huynh Van To".

"Ladies and gentlemen, my Grand Parents gained their freedom by producing too many mouths for their slave owner to feed. All advisors, counter parts- "Heroes" because of our alliance and common goal to fight for Democracy, today my family and hundred of thousand other Vietnamese were given freedom by your involvement, to pursue Happiness, Liberty and Prosperity in this country, for this. We Thank You!!!"

"What is TRUE friendship? One often asks in life."

"One story begins in 1968 through 1969 between 2 naval officers of 2 different worlds that could not be further apart. Both patriotic and full of ideals to better the world. Tom Green, a fresh college grad of Notre Dame University, raised on a small farm home from the heart of USA, Iowa. My father, a fierce officer of the South Vietnamese Navy. I mentioned "Fierce" because he just lost his older brother, who was defending Quy Nhon in the Tet Offensive earlier that year. In the 2 years Tom Green advised my father at naval base 33 in Vung Tau. They trusted each other with their lives daily and an breakable bond developed."

"My father often told me the stories of the many nights laying in the mangroves jungle waiting for enemy contact. He was motivated by revenge for his brother and ever ready to ambush the enemies, life and death are moments apart."

"Fast forwarding to life in the 80s in Wisconsin, I remembered hearing my father asking people with the same last name.... " Do you know of a Thomas Green?" As kids we did not understand who he was referring about. Eventually in 2010 he was lost to cancer and never finding his friend. Little that did he know the whole time, only 300 miles away his friend is also looking for him, posting their picture on the Internet "looking for HQ Troung Quay Huynh Van To." He revisited Ba Ria looking for his friend very discreetly fearing that he would do more harm if he did find his friend."

“Finally in 2015, Tom found a random Vietnamese lady in a nails shop that had a husband that served in the Vietnamese Navy to help reconnect their friendship. Mr. Thomas Green, I can't find words enough to thank you for what you have given to my family and my father fellow officers present.”

“Your love of fellow comrades, your unwavering attempts to search and finally locating a friend is heart touching. Every time we tell your story to anyone, tears start flowing”.

“The world remembers a king of India spending 11 years to build the Taj Mahal for a person he loved. Sir, my family and friend will never stop thinking and thanking you spending 47 years looking for your friend, my father.”

“Exactly today, April 30th, 41 years ago, South Democratic Vietnam was occupied by the Communist North. The sad day is known as “Thang Tu Den” translation “Black April”. As I remembered the screeching sounds of shelling in Vung Tau and when the shell hit, it could be a mile away, you could feel as if it has landed next door to you. A couple years prior my father was reassigned as an EX-O of a coast guard ship HQ6. On this April morning, he convinced his Captain to come back to Vung Tau harbor for him to pickup my Mother and the four boys.

“Mom cried and convinced Dad not to leave Vietnam with their new born and heading to uncertainty, it was too risky and dangerous. He radioed to the captain about the changes and the ship left the harbor. By dusk, five of his officers went to the house and changed his mind about fleeing Vietnam. They were Northern Vietnamese that migrated to the south after the Geneva Agreement of 1954. They told him that at a very minimum the Viet Cong would torture, bury him alive or execute him for all the successful covert mission with Mr Thomas Green”.

“They had lived under communistic regime and witnessed the brutalities. Images of his Father tortured in shackled and chains reassured that he must leave his wife and the four sons behind and escape the country. He gave me a hug and told me to stay strong and look after your Mom and brothers. I was eight years old.”

“Life was extremely tough for my Mom after 1975. They often come to the house interrogating her and sent her to reeducation classes on any given day. She grew rice with the help of my Grand father for some income. After 2 years plus under communist ruling she now understand she must risk all to escape Vietnam to have any future for her sons. She planned several escape parties and failed a couple times almost landing in jail. She finally succeeded in 1978. We the 4 sons and Mom fled by boat to Malaysia. We stayed in a refugee camp for 6 months.”

“And finally reunited with Dad in December 1978 in Wisconsin. I can't describe a happier man reuniting with his family that night. However, one member in our family that night was not so thrilled. Loc, his young child was born in Oct 1974, so he never saw his Dad. He trusted only Mom at that pointed. Oh my he was crying as Dad was so happy holding him... ladies and Gents, our youngest brother Loc.”

(In addition to Loc's subsequent comments, CDR Troung Voung, a graduate of the VNN Naval Academy, presented a poster of the Naval Academy's logo to Tom Green, in recognition of his loyalty and dedication in seeking out his counterpart).



COUNTERPARTS

Tương Hữu Đông Nam Á

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