

UPDATE

Bi-monthly Newsletter Reporting on US-Vietnamese Current Events and Culture
Vol. 7 Issue 7 October/November 1997

Van Leeuwen Keynotes Annual Meeting

Robert Van Leeuwen, Executive Director of the World Affairs Council, was the featured speaker for the GSVVA Annual Meeting held September 18 at the Port of Seattle's Atrium Room. Mr. Van Leeuwen recalled his long association with and affection for Vietnam, dating back to his first stationing there in the mid-sixties. He later oversaw settlement of the Vietnamese refugee issue, directing efforts for the UN High Commission in Hong Kong from the late 1980's to 1993. He commended the Vietnamese government for its compliance with UN agreements and consistently humane treatment of returned refugees.

Beatrice Wolbaum followed Mr. Van Leeuwen, showing slides from her recent Vietnam tour for travel agents, featuring some elegant new accommodations there.

GSVVA President Gary Johnson reported on several organizational initiatives. The project to provide an English teacher to Sister City Haiphong got literally off the ground when teacher Rebecca Levison left Sea-Tac on Tuesday, September 16th.

Attempts to mount a trade mission from Haiphong to Seattle continue apace, and a water puppet troupe from Ho Chi Minh City has been booked to appear at the Seattle International Children's Festival next May.

continued on page 3

GSVVA Teaching English Project Underway

GSVVA's Teaching English project in Haiphong has begun. Through generous support from the Boeing Company, Airborne Express, and others, we have hired Rebecca Levison to work with English teachers in Haiphong to improve their skills. Ms. Levison has a masters degree in education from Seattle Univer-

sity and has completed their Teaching English As a Second Language program and is certified to teach English as a foreign language as well. GSVVA decided that it would be much more effective to send someone qualified to teach teachers of English rather than simply send an English teacher. We were very thrilled to

continued on page 2

\$600 Million Port Project Includes Industrial Zone

A consortium of firms from Belgium, Thailand and the United States recently announced plans for involvement in the first stage of a \$600 million joint-venture industrial zone in Dinh Vu, northern Vietnam.

An executive with the group said the three firms, American International Group Inc, Belgium's International Port Engineering & Management NV and Thailand's Asian Infrastructure Development Ltd, would be investing \$80 million together with a Vietnamese partner in work on the project's initial phase.

The Dinh Vu Economic Zone, to be built in the northern port town of Haiphong, will comprise a 1,152 hectare (2,846 acre) industrial park, a deep seaport capable of handling tankers of up to 10,000 dwt, plus residential and commercial zones.

The executive said work would start in December, with the first phase completion expected in four years.

The local partner, the Haiphong Transport Engineering Company, will hold a 30 percent stake, while the remaining share is being split equally between the foreign partners.

Business Briefs

Negotiators from Vietnam and the European Union recently agreed on the broad terms of a new trade pact which will see Hanoi gain a 30 percent overall increase in textile exports to EU countries. Hanoi, battling a trade deficit which so far this year stands at more than \$2.07 billion, had been seeking a substantial increase in its overall quota.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai said in a Vietnam Economic Times interview that the government was committed to "a multisector economy without discrimination against any sector." The premier admitted, however, that "some complaints from the private sector have been justified."

Khai also alluded to the development of a new exchange rate policy replacing the current system of a central bank managed, non convertible currency.

Hanoi will limit the number of industrial parks in the city to five and work on 'tackling problems' in those now being built, a government-run newspaper reported. In Hanoi, 14 foreign invested projects worth \$453 million have been committed to the new parks whose infrastructure will cost \$247 million, the English-language Saigon Times Daily said.

The Asian coffee trade has shifted its focus to what is expected to be a record coffee crop in Vietnam as supplies from drought-stricken Indonesia tails off, dealers said. The province of Dak Lak in Vietnam harvests around two-thirds of the coffee produced in the country.

Business Breakfast Series Kick Off

GSVA began the second series of its popular "Business Breakfasts" in October. Warren Gross, the President of the Export Finance Assistance Center of Washington led a discussion with 15 professionals. The main topics addressed were the Export Import Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and alternative business financing.

Two critical institutions for international trade, OPIC and the ExIm Bank are closed to Vietnam. However, Mr. Gross noted that the Thompson Directory lists 5 pages of banks with representation in Vietnam. This includes approximately 18 foreign banks, the first on which obtained a license in 1992. The increasing presence of foreign banks is an encouraging sign for the future of business finance in Vietnam.

The Export Finance Center has worked with a few business projects dealing with Vietnam, including a transport joint venture using MIGA. According to Mr. Gross, Vietnam has paid into MIGA sub-

stantially, demonstrating that it is taking the World Bank organization seriously.

The GSVA Business Breakfast Series resumes January 1998. Please join us the fourth Wednesday of the month for a discussion of business topics with experienced local professionals.

**Business Breakfast
Schedule for the
beginning of 1998**

(every 4th Weds)

January

Tim Douglas, Director, CTED

February

Chris Morgan, Sales Director,
Asia Pacific Sales, Boeing

March

Al Davignon, Director,
REM Ventures

April

Derek Haynes, Product Development,
SE Asia, Microsoft

*Please contact GSVA at
206-322-1178 for details.*

find a candidate of Ms. Levison's caliber. She has been in Haiphong since the end of September and began classes for teachers in mid-October. Ms. Levison has hit the ground running and met with the Chairman of the People's Committee in Haiphong (the equivalent to our mayor) and other top city officials within a day of her arrival. In the short time she has

English Teaching from page 1

been there, Ms. Levison has proven an invaluable liaison for GSVA as we work with Haiphong officials on other projects. She also reports that she is waking each morning at 5:00 am to exercise with elderly people in a nearby park and has begun a martial arts class as well. She also has purchased a bicycle and is riding all over the area.

Seminar on Women in Vietnamese Art

The University of Washington is hosting a seminar: *Women in Vietnamese Art from Colonialism to Doi Moi*. The presenter, Nora Taylor, is an art historian in the Department of History at the National University of Singapore. Her research has focused on the role of politics in the development of modern art in Vietnam. Nora has also done research on Vietnamese women artists, the art and archeology of Vietnam, and ethnic minority art.

November 24
3:30-5:00 p.m.

University of Washington
Jackson School of International
Studies, Southeast Asia Center
telephone: 206-543-9606



Annual meeting from page 1

Treasurer Khan Tran informed the membership on financial matters and thanked retired President, Norma Mohr, for her generous inkind contribution.

Jessica Nguyen presented the nominations for new board members who were elected by acclaim.

The advertised "light dinner" was in fact a sumptuous banquet of Vietnamese favorites. Whether for this reason or others, the meeting was well-attended and it was pleasing to see many new faces amongst the familiar.

Scott Wild

Book Review

LEARNING TRUE LOVE: How I Learned & Practiced
Social Change in Vietnam
by: Chan Khong (Cao Ngoc Phuong)
Publisher: Parallax Press

This autobiography presents a woman's perspective of her life as a social worker in Vietnam. Sister Chan Khong is a woman of great inner beauty and strength. Her story introduces you to a young woman who has always lived her life to its fullest potential.

Learning True Love is also an inspirational portrait of a social activist in Vietnam. You follow the life of Sister Chan Khong from her childhood (1938-61), through the Vietnam War until her life in exile (1976-1996). She learned generosity at an early age from her parents, who provided food for those in need. Sister Chan Khong's personal spiritual development is at the crux of this story, her immense love for children and her country continually guide her during challenging times.

More generally this book is about faith, hope, passion and persistence. Universal qualities admired by many of us searching to do good, heartfelt work during our lives. The golden thread that binds this story and that is sewn into the tapestry of her life is her commitment to work for her community through war and peace.

You will meet interesting people along the way. Perhaps you know Thick Nhat Hanh, a famous Vietnamese poet and Buddhist monk. He is a close personal friend of Sister Chan Khong. In fact I felt as though I knew many of her friends intimately after reading this book. These words transcend boundaries and take you into the soul of a very special person.

Alison Urowitz

Education Coordinator Sought

GSVA is searching for a volunteer education coordinator to work on numerous projects. At present, we are maintaining a pen pal relationship with children in Hai Phong and need a coordinator to oversee this project. Also, this volunteer would work along with others to coordinate our book drive in which

we gather donated books for shipment to the Hai Phong Library and elementary schools. In addition, the education coordinator is encouraged to pursue other projects that may be of interest to the organization.

Please contact Beth Whitman at 547-1016 with any questions.

THE GREATER SEATTLE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION



A grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to helping the people of Seattle create and maintain cultural and business links with the people of Vietnam.

Greater Seattle Vietnam Association

A grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to helping the people of Seattle create and maintain cultural and business links with the people of Vietnam

GSVA Officers

Gary Johnson	President	Judith Henchey	Secretary
Tyler DuLam	Vice President	Khan Tran	Treasurer

Update Editors

Norma Mohr and Michael L. Kunz

U.S.
Postage
STAMP

UPDATE

GREATER SEATTLE VIETNAM ASSOC.

P.O. BOX 23282

SEATTLE, WA 98102

Inside

<i>VAN LEEUVEN ADDRESSES GSVA ANNUAL MEETING</i>	1
<i>\$600 MILLION PORT PROJECT</i>	1
<i>GSVA TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM IS UNDERWAY</i>	2
<i>GSVA BUSINESS BREAKFASTS AND BUSINESS NEWS</i>	2
<i>ART SEMINAR AND BOOK REVIEW</i>	3
<i>JOIN US AS A VOLUNTEER</i>	3