

UPDATE

Bi-monthly Membership Newsletter Reporting on US - Vietnamese Current Events and Culture
 Issue 4 July/August 1999



Mission Statement. GSVA is committed to promoting positive relationships and mutual understanding between the people of Greater Seattle and the people of Viet Nam. We will accomplish this by promoting contact and cooperation in the areas of education, humanitarian work, trade and the arts.

**THE GREATER SEATTLE
 VIET NAM ASSOCIATION**

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Angel of Saigon to be Honored at GSVA's Third Annual Benefit and Dinner

By Beth Whitman

Betty Tisdale. The Angel of Saigon. Credited with helping hundreds of orphans flee Saigon before the south fell to the north Vietnamese.

It's been twenty-four years since Betty arranged for the evacuation of 219 young children from An Lac Orphanage in April of 1975. They were safely loaded onto planes bound for the US and soon after adopted into homes. This remarkable woman, (and Queen Anne resident), continues to spread the word about the conditions of orphanages in Viet Nam, and feels that by continuing to talk about the events of 24 years ago, she's helping these orphans, now adults, to remember where they came from.



An Lac means Happy Place. And indeed, Betty did her best to make it so for these orphans. Taking her vacation time from work, Betty spent nearly 15 years traveling to Viet Nam starting in the early 60's. Spending as much as two months at a time ("They never quite figured out I was taking December for one year's vacation and January for the next year's vacation", Betty quips.), she spent her time volunteering at the orphanage and trying desperately to improve the conditions there.

Photos of iron cribs and unsanitary conditions are obvious signs of how she had her work cut out for her. Other challenges included encouraging them to actually USE the soap she would mail to them, rather than selling it for money. Providing the orphanage with \$2,000/month that she had raised through speaking engagements, she felt her presence there was important so that she could oversee the spending of this money.

Betty and her then-husband, US Army doctor Patrick Tisdale, adopted five of the girls themselves. The orphans are now adults, some living locally but most spread across the country and around the world. Betty keeps

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On the Board

Thus far, you've had the chance to "meet" ten out of our sixteen board members. This month, I'd like to introduce you to three more...

Jessica Nguyen



Jessica was born in Viet Nam and has been living in the US since the age of eight. She was introduced to GSVa in 1993, by former Board President, Norma Mohr, after expressing a desire to know more about her native country. She has since returned to Viet Nam three times in the last four years, as a participant in humanitarian projects. While there, she visited with family members, including her mother and sisters, whom she had not seen since 1975. Prior to her involvement with GSVa, Jessica spent two years in Lesotho, South Africa, as a Peace Corp. volunteer. Jessica is currently employed by Washington Mutual, and works in their Human Resources department as a recruiter. She enjoys spending time with her husband and friends, and likes hiking, traveling and cooking. She has been an active board member since 1994.

Doug Irvine



Doug has been involved in international sales and marketing in Europe and Asia for over 20 years. His most recent assignment was Viet Nam, where he developed a marketing program for marine engines and generators in support of the infrastructure refurbishment requirements of the country. During this time, he and his wife, Sue, spent one year living in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City. As a result, they had the opportunity to befriend many local Vietnamese, and learned that regardless of economic circumstances, we have a lot to learn from each other.

Upon his return to the US, Doug discovered GSVa through its excellent series of Business Breakfast meetings, and joined the Board in September 1998. He is very excited about helping to contribute towards the future development of Viet Nam, across the broad spectrum of cultural, humanitarian and commercial trade opportunities.

Doug was born in Edinburgh, Scotland and received a B.Sc. degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the University of Glasgow. For fun, Doug likes to run, read, play soccer, and with, Sue, takes their two dogs (one of which was brought back from Viet Nam!) for long walks near rural Fall City, where they reside.

Khan Tran



Khan was born in Ha Noi. He and his family moved to Sai Gon in 1954, where he remained until he moved to the US in 1975. Khan says he feels lucky to be living in the US and is grateful to be an American citizen, though his heart and soul are in Viet Nam. He is saddened by the conditions under which many Vietnamese live, and is dedicated to helping improve their lives in any way he can. Khan is particularly interested in uplifting the quality and availability of education and medical treatment in Viet Nam. His first visit back to Viet Nam occurred in 1989, and he now makes annual trips to visit his mother and network with universities in Ha Noi and Sai Gon. His intention, when meeting with educators, is to explore the possibility of a teacher exchange program, and to bring information about programs offered through US universities. Prior to his departure in 1975, Khan was a mathematics professor at the University in Sai Gon. He now holds an MA in Computer Science, and works as a computer analyst for the City of Seattle. He likes travel and photography. Khan has been a board member since 1992. His vision is that GSVa grows into an annual multi-million dollar budget, to allow for bigger and more plentiful projects.

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Ideas for articles may be submitted to Teri Conti at P.O. Box 27545, Seattle, WA 98125 or at: angelheart2@earthlink.net

Deadlines for article submission:

September 16, 1999

November 16, 1999

January 17, 2000

We would like to say thanks to our Corporate Members for their continued support !

- Fluke International
- International Market Brands
- Orca Bay Seafoods
- PATH
- Prosthetics Research Foundation

To find out how your organization can become a corporate member, contact Jessica at gsvawausa@aol.com.

GSVA Board Members Return to Viet Nam on a Rotary Discovery Grant

By Beth Whitman

Fellow GSVA board member Son Michael Pham and I recently returned from Viet Nam after receiving a Discovery Grant from Rotary. The trip was initiated to research the possibility of a Medical Trek to be implemented in the hill tribe regions of northern Viet Nam.

The Medical Trek, done successfully in this area before, was created to provide treatment to ethnic minority villagers, many of whom have never seen a doctor. The hope is to bring doctors from the US to Viet Nam to help in this project, providing not only much needed medical diagnoses but also basic medicines such as aspirin and antibiotics.

During our brief stay in the country, we had the opportunity to trek to a village outside of Mai Chau. Located 100 miles southwest of Hanoi, Mai Chau is a good trekking point to many of the more remote villages that are inhabited by minorities such as Black and White Tai peoples. We stayed overnight in a house built on stilts in the village of Xo and we were hosted by the head of the local People's Committee, Mr. Hieu. While we were quite comfortable in this home and enjoyed experiencing this simple lifestyle, it was obvious that not only Mr. Hieu's home,

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Angel of Saigon

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in touch with many of them today.

Vikki Sloviter is one of these lucky young people. She had entered a contest, sponsored by LIFE Magazine, asking participants to write about the one person they would most like to meet. There was no doubt in Vicki's mind that person was Betty. Vicki's dream came true earlier this year, when LIFE magazine brought Vicki to Seattle, and gave her the opportunity to personally meet and thank the woman who made such a tremendous difference to her life. Today, Vicki says of Betty: "She has spent her entire adult life helping others; she constantly thinks about those she has helped, and those who she would like to. I don't know anyone as selfless as she."

After exposure on Dateline NBC and in LIFE Magazine, Betty continues to receive letters, emails and phone calls from many of the 219 orphans. They are eager to make connections with her, wanting to find out about the other orphans, as well as their own background, and about Betty.

Many of us don't know the feeling of saving or even drastically improving the life of another human being. Betty has done so much more than that for a group of youngsters who struggled for mere survival in an orphanage in Saigon. Not only is she an Angel, but she is a hero.

UP & COMING EVENTS

August 25:

GSVA board meeting. 6 p.m., 521 2nd Ave. W., Seattle.
Open to general membership.

August 28:

Support group for families who have adopted, or who are planning to adopt, a child from Viet Nam. Contact Lea Ann Kaplan at: leaannk@nwlinc.com or search the Kaplan Family web page at: kaplanfamily.net/adopt.htm.

September 6-11:

Five day meditation retreat in Santa Barbara, CA with Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh. Nhat Hanh will also be presenting a "Day of Mindfulness" in Oakland on September 18. For more information, contact the community of Mindful Living at 800-863-5290.

*September 15:

GSVA's Annual Meeting and Fund-raiser. See insert for details.

October 22-24:

The Northwest Regional Consortium for SE Asian Studies and the Canadian Counsel for SE Asian Studies will be presenting its biannual conference in Vancouver, BC. For more information, call 604-833-6212 or check their website at www.iar.ubc.ca.

* Our goal for this annual event is to raise a minimum of \$10,000, to be used towards funding innovative and practical projects in Viet Nam. Prime seating is guaranteed when your group or corporation purchases a corporate table. Priced at only \$500 for a group of 10, **The Corporate Table** is a great way to introduce your friends and colleagues to GSVA, and entertain them with a stimulating program and scrumptious meal. We have only five Corporate Tables to sell, so get your reservation in soon!

Wish List for Our Fall Fund-raiser:

Frequent flyer miles
Auction items
In-kind donations
Medical equipment
Dental products
Children's medicine
Framing
And of course....cash donations are always welcomed!

Volunteers Wanted to Help with Fall Fund-Raiser

If you like to have fun, work with great people, and support a worthy cause, we'd love to have you on our team! To find out how you can participate on one of our fund-raiser committees call (206) 322-1178, and leave a message for Beth or Son.

Return to Viet Nam

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but the entire village, is in need of basic necessities such as clean running water.

After meeting with US Ambassador Pete Peterson and Dr. Michael Linnan, liason between the US Embassy and Viet Nam's Minister of Health, we are confident that a successful Medical Trek can be organized and are currently working out details of this project.

If you would like more information about this project or you would like to participate, please call either Son or myself at 206-322-1178 or email us at gsvawausa@aol.com.

The Children's Angel GSA's Annual Benefit Dinner

Mark your calendar for September 15th and plan to attend the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association's Third Annual Benefit Dinner Auction / Membership Meeting.

Evening Magazine's Mimi Gan will be our Master of Ceremonies for this evening in which we will be honoring the Angel of Sai Gon, Betty Tisdale. Featured on Dateline NBC and in LIFE Magazine, Betty, a Queen Anne resident, is credited with evacuating hundreds of orphans from An Lac Orphanage before the fall of Sai Gon in 1975. Today, nearly 25 years after helping these children, she continues to be an inspiration, not only to those of us who hear her story but to the young adults that these children have become. Now living across the country and around the world, we expect many of these spirited young people to come and help us honor this selfless woman who helped them to find a life in the United States.

In addition to honoring Betty, we are proud to be hosting Paul Cleeves from Sai Gon Children's Charity for this event. Paul will be visiting us from Sai Gon to present information about programs that he runs in Viet Nam. We will also be presenting information about our work at the Hoa Phuong Orphanage in Hai Phong, and about Kids First!, a program that recently joined the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association; there will also be a short business meeting.

This event will take place in the beautiful Harbor Dining Room at Bell Harbor International Conference Center, Pier 66 in Seattle. A full dinner will be served and business attire is suggested. We will begin at 5pm with a reception and silent auc-

tion with our program to follow.

Tickets are just \$35 for GSA members and \$45 for non-members. Please respond before August 31, 1999. Corporate tables and corporate sponsorships are available. For more information, please call Son Michael Pham or Beth Whitman at 206-547-1016 or email at gsvawausa@aol.com. We look forward to having you there for this very exciting evening!

Proceeds from this evening will benefit children's projects in Viet Nam.



Membership Benefits

- Receive our bimonthly newsletter to stay informed about happenings here, and abroad, regarding issues pertaining to Viet Nam.
- Attend our popular Business Breakfast Series, where guest speakers share their experiences of working with, and in, Viet Nam.
- Attend events like barbecues with people interested in Viet Nam.
- Attend GSVa board meetings.
- Learn how you can contribute and participate in GSVa projects.

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

Individual member: Student/low income...\$10
 Friend of the Association...\$25 Philanthropist...\$100
Corporate member: Associate partner...\$100
 Senior Partner...\$500 Executive partner...\$1,000

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Your membership contributes to GSVa projects AND is tax deductible.

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