

UPDATE

Bi-monthly Membership Newsletter Reporting on US - Vietnamese Current Events and Culture
Issue 7 March/April 1999

GSVA Delegation Meets Ambassador Peterson

The GSVA delegation which recently traveled to Viet Nam had the opportunity to meet with Ambassador Douglas "Pete" Peterson at the US Embassy in Ha Noi. Ambassador Peterson, a former Congressman from Florida, is the first U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam

and is singularly qualified for the job. During the US war with Viet Nam, Ambassador Peterson was a prisoner of war and spent several years in the infamous "Hanoi Hilton." In spite of that experience, the Ambassador has great

Continued on page 5



Pictured (left to right) : Jim Kern, Teri Conti, Ambassador Peterson, Gary Johnson, Beth Whitman, and Son Michael Pham

Playground Project Underway

A delegation of five GSVA members has just returned from a very productive mission to Viet Nam. The primary purpose of the visit was to kickoff the playground project at the Hoa Phuong Orphanage in Hai Phong for which GSVA has raised \$5,000. While the orphanage enjoys a lovely setting in a French colonial compound, it is sorely lacking playground equipment for the fifty children who live there. On ground-breaking day, the delegation was met at the orphanage gate by a festival atmosphere created by the kids. Flowers, a drum corps, and smiling faces led the way to a brightly decorated formal hall where the official greetings were exchanged. The children performed music and dance numbers

Continued on page 3

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

PO Box 23282
Seattle, Washington 98102
(206) 322-1178

Gary Johnson, President
Jim Kern, Vice President
Tylar DuLam, Treasurer
Judith Henchy, Secretary
Teri Conti, Editor
Beth Whitman, Membership
Minh Khue Dang
Al Davignon
Karl Hutterer
Doug Irvine
Michael Kunz
Rebecca Levison
Jessica Phu Nguyen
Joyce Noonan
Son Michael Pham
Khan Tran

Ideas for articles may be submitted to Teri Conti at P.O. Box 27545, Seattle, WA 98125 or at tconti@scn.org.

On the Board

GSVA's board is made up of a diverse group of individuals, who bring a wide scope of experience and perspective to the organization. Thus far, you've met five of our sixteen board members. This month, I'd like to introduce you to three more board members. Please meet...

Michael L. Kunz

Michael is a management consultant specializing in economic development for transitional economies. He is currently Managing Member for Pan Pacifica, LCC, a management consulting firm.

Michael's development work began in 1990, when he moved to the Czech Republic to set up a business and language training firm. Beginning with only a handful of business and English teaching materials, he developed the business into a 15 employee organization, training over 1,500 clients annually. Under Michael's leadership, the World Bank, European Union and United Nations sponsored three small business consulting programs. This experience led to the design and management of a Czech national program that assisted nine Czech cities in the establishment of economic development offices and industrial parks for the purpose of attracting foreign direct investment.

How does all this relate to Viet Nam? Michael explains, "As Doi Moi took hold, I decided to apply my experience with transitional economies to Viet Nam, but this time beginning with an academic angle." So he enrolled in the MPhil/Ph.D. program at the London School of Economics. Michael's view is that Viet Nam is an interesting country to study and work in the field of economic development. He believes that "the country has a long-term role to play in the context of the Pacific Rim economy," and states that "there is a natural exchange of culture, business and life style between Seattle and Viet Nam, along with potential business opportunities for those with patience." Last summer, Michael took his first trip to Viet Nam and witnessed these changes first hand.

Michael joined GSVA in 1997, when he became involved in the early stages of the trade mission proposal funded by the US Trade Development Agency. While funding is still pending, the crux of the proposal is to work with a city like Hai Phong to develop grass roots capacity for local economic development. For example, how to target appropriate industries for growth and how to identify and attract appropriate levels of Vietnamese and foreign capital.



Karl Hutterer

Karl is an archaeologist specializing in Southeast Asia and is currently the Director of the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture at the University of Washington in Seattle. He was born and raised in Austria and spent several years in the Philippines where he received his MA in Anthropology from the University of San Carlos in Cebu City. He completed his Ph.D. in archaeology at the University of Hawaii in 1973 and from 1974-1990 was Curator of the Asian Division at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

As an archaeologist, Karl has conducted research in the Philippines, Australia, Malaysia, Thailand and Laos. He has been to Viet Nam three times, once to negotiate academic exchanges between Viet Nam and the United States on behalf of the social Science Research Council in New York, once to conduct a conference on



the Vietnamese Bronze Age in Hanoi, and once to participate in anthropological research in a minority (Tai-speaking) village in Hoa Binh Province.

Besides his personal interest in Viet Nam, Karl supports the mission of

Khue Dang

GSVA in his professional capacity as Director of the Burke Museum. The Burke is the State Museum of natural history and culture with a strong focus on the Pacific Rim. This focus was clearly expressed in the recently opened exhibit "Pacific Voices," which features cultures native to the Pacific Rim and endeavors to establish a connection between homelands and origins of cultural traditions and diverse cultural communities that are now resident in the Puget Sound region and the Pacific Northwest. The "Pacific Voices" exhibit includes a display of a Vietnamese ancestral altar, which serves not only to explain an important aspect of traditional Vietnamese culture to local visitors and tourists, but also to give expression to an important aspect of cultural identity for the local Vietnamese American community.

In his "spare time," Karl enjoys classical music, opera, and going to the theater. He also enjoys woodworking and gardening.

Khue first learned about GSVA in 1993, when a friend referred her to the organization. At the time, she owned and operated a travel business specializing in tours to S.E. Asia, and was interested in connecting with an organization that had ties with Viet Nam.



Khue was born in Cam Ranh, a small village located south of Nha Trang. She left Viet Nam and began her journey to the US on April 30, 1975, the day Sai Gon fell to the north. She was seven years old at the time.

Khue's diverse background brings

a unique perspective to GSVA. In addition to having owned her own travel business, she holds a BS degree in Corporate Finance from San Diego State College, and was credit manager at Orca Bay Foods, a northwest seafood company, prior to her current position in retail sales at the same company.

Khue's vision for GSVA is that it be a broad organization with many arms. She sees the organization as a place where both native Americans and Vietnamese Americans can join together to support the people of Viet Nam, as a whole. Four main areas which hold particular interest for Khue include health, humanitarian projects, business opportunities and providing information to potential travelers to help make their trip to Viet Nam more enjoyable.

Khue enjoys country music, and spending time with her husband. She regularly travels to Eastern Washington to help her parents run a family owned restaurant.

Playground Project Underway

Continued from page 1

and then everyone moved out to the playground site where the group planted palm trees. Soccer, badminton, and lunch rounded out the activities. The GSVA's group returned a couple of days later to host a party for the kids which included lots of food and dancing. The kids flipped over picture taking with the digital camera of one of the group's members. The reward of the experience underscored the importance of GSVA's work at the orphanage. We hope to raise additional funds to rehabilitate a pond in the center of the orphanage grounds which is currently growing larger as its muddy bank collapses into the water. Its possibilities for a sustainable project are exciting.

The group had a busy itinerary during our week in Hai Phong and brought back many ideas for cooperative projects. Please watch the Update for opportunities to get involved.



Kids First Travels to Vietnam

Kids First traveled with a delegation of 18 people to Ha Noi, Dong Ha and Hai Phong in February. What a successful trip! We were lucky to be in Viet Nam for Tet, and enjoyed special



foods, a fireworks display that rivaled Ivar's, and the hustle and bustle of markets and city streets as folks got ready for the festivities. Kumquat trees are a traditional

part of the celebration in northern Viet Nam and it was especially fascinating to see the trees in large pots strapped to the backs of many motorbikes.

Our delegation participated in two scholarship ceremonies for 200 children in Dong Ha. This year we were joined by a team from Mercer Island and Eastlake High Schools. The students raised \$10,000.00 to educate the 100 handicapped children in the program for 2 years - a remarkable fundraising effort! The high school students made several heartfelt speeches at the ceremony and presented each child with a red envelope containing their tuition, along with handmade Valentines from school children in the states.

The families of the children made great efforts to be at the ceremonies at this busy time of the year. But as one of our Vietnamese friends said, "Tet is a time for children - what better way to begin the new year than with this gift."

A professional clown named Scooter joined the Kids First team for this trip. Scooter entertained the children at each of our scholarship ceremonies and orphanage parties. Children and adults left the parties with balloon hats and huge smiles. The children's amazement and laughter was wonderful to experience.

Our trip also included visits to, and parties for, three orphanages. The first, in Dong Ha, was one that some mem-

bers of the team had visited 2 1/2 years ago during the Peace Trees Viet Nam project. We were treated to a wonderful talent show, with even the youngest little girl singing into the mic with the confidence of an expert. The Kids First team had assembled gift bags for each of the 50 orphans, including toothbrushes, combs, stickers and notepads. They were a big hit! After a tour of their kitchen, where we saw that all meals were prepared on a wood fire, several of the Rotary members committed to bringing back propane stoves on the next trip.

The second orphanage, in Hue, was run by 15 Buddhist nuns. For many in our group this was a highlight of the trip. The nuns care for 150 children of all ages, and they do it without any assistance from the government. They

hand carved statues of Buddha, which we learned later, are being sold through an American Buddhist organization to help support the orphanage. The delegation made a spontaneous donation to the nuns, and a work party is being planned for the next visit.

Our last visit was to the Hai Phong Orphan-Bring-Up and Education Village. Another wonderful day! After being regaled with song and dance by the children, we celebrated with Scooter and balloons, an awesome buffet and an afternoon of play with new Frisbees and scooter balls. Roger Ferrell had an opportunity to negotiate with the orphanage about the building of a new playground which GSVa members would begin during their March trip.

Kids First will return in August,

GSVA Welcomes Kids First

GSVA is pleased to announce that Kids First has become a formal part of the GSVa family. Kids First is a project, based in Bainbridge Island, which for the past couple of years, has worked to improve the lives of children in Quang Tri Province, half of whom have some sort of disability. Kids First is also raising



money to fund the construction of a twelve room school in the same location and ultimately plan to construct a vocational school. GSVa is very pleased to have the important work and outstanding individuals of Kids First associated with our organization. GSVa is always looking for opportunities to expand our activities to additional areas in Viet Nam and Kids First provides a high quality presence in the Quang Tri area. Welcome, Kids First! For more information about Kids First, call co-chair Roger Ferrell at (206) 842-6558.

have relied first on faith, and second on donations from friends - both local and international. We were received by the head of the orphanage, a nun whose kindness, commitment and generosity reminded us of Mother Teresa. The nuns have committed to raise their children through college and several of the students have returned to teach the younger children. We were astounded by the quality of woodworking done by some of the older students - gorgeous

taking a delegation of 20. If you are interested in traveling with them, please contact Roger Ferrell at 206-842-6558. This is an incredible way to experience Viet Nam. And remember that \$50.00 will educate a child for one year, and that all donations go directly to the children and their families. You can mail a donation to Kids First, P.O. Box 11814, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110.

North Seattle Community College Offers Study/Travel Tour of Viet Nam

by Teri Conti

This summer, join Bob Brubaker, history teacher and travel guide, for a two week study/travel tour through Viet Nam. Bob teaches at North Seattle Community College, and while this will be his first trip to Viet Nam, he has been leading tours to Asia and Europe for the past 25 years.



One of Bob's objectives is to provide participants with an understanding of Vietnamese life, in both rural and urban regions. Highlights of the tour include visiting markets, villages, historic sites and museums in south, central and north Viet Nam.

This study/travel tour will begin this spring with a series of lectures, discussions and other classroom activities designed to acquaint participants with the land and the people of Viet Nam. The classes, scheduled to be held at North Seattle Community College, are geared, in part, to the general audience, but will be tailored to the needs of those needing college transferable credits.

Cost of the tour is \$2,350, and includes round trip airfare to Viet Nam, lodging, all in country transportation, daily breakfast, and all entrance fees to sites scheduled on the itinerary. Participants will have the option of extending their trip beyond the return tour date.

For further information, call the Social Sciences Division at (206)527-3722.

Viet Nam Was All I Expected and More....

by Matt Mormino

Looking back on my trip to Viet Nam, one things pops in my head: when do I get to go back? It was all I expected and more. We traveled up the whole country and saw everything, from the Perfume River to Ha Long Bay. The scenery was amazing, and so was the history that accompanied it. Nothing, however, could compare to our time with the kids we had spent time raising money for.

It was our third day in Viet Nam. We woke up at 6:30 a.m. to make the three hour drive from our hotel to Dong Ha. We arrived a few minutes late and walked quickly into a small concrete room, packed to the brim with kids, parents and relatives. To my surprise, then, and for the remainder of the ceremony, no one cracked a smile, no one said a word. At first, there appeared to be nothing different between these kids, and the other Vietnamese children we had met. It was not until they approached the front that their ailments showed. Some had to crawl, and some had to be carried. All were afflicted in a different way, but the look

in all of their eyes was the same. It was a look I will never forget. It was a look that made all the time and effort we put into fundraising worthwhile. For a moment, I was not a tourist. I was something more. I felt like I actually did something in Viet Nam. I left my mark.

After the ceremony, we finally got to spend some free time with the kids. There were two or three of our students for up to twelve of theirs. Prior to lunch, all the members of our team stuffed our pockets with little trinkets: key chains, buttons, stickers, and even Koosh balls were passed out. That is when all of the smiles showed themselves. The shyness of these children quickly wore off and we had a great time. The words passed were few and far between, but the communication was constant. We learned each others' name and age. After that it was all just smiling and eating. It was an experience that is hard to describe, and will never be repeated. To say the least, it was amazing.

Continued on page 6

Ambassador

Continued from page 1

respect for Viet Nam and its people and embodies the spirit of friendship and reconciliation. The Vietnamese people often speak of looking to the future rather than dwelling on the past and Ambassador Peterson clearly embraces that philosophy. A productive meeting allowed for a briefing of the Ambassador on GSVA activities and for the Ambassador's insights on the status of US-Vietnam relations, the progress of bi-lateral trade agreement negotiations, and the potential for the granting of Most Favored Nation status to Viet Nam this year. Ambassador Peterson also hopes that Viet Nam will send a delegation to the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Seattle this fall. GSVA looks forward to the opportunity to host a visit to Seattle by the Ambassador sometime in the future.

Gary Johnson
1506 North 40th
Seattle, WA 98103

PO Box 23282
Seattle, WA 98102



THE GREATER SEATTLE VIET NAM ASSOCIATION

GSVA UPDATE

All I Expected

Continued from page 5

Viet Nam is a friendly, beautiful place. The weather is wonderful and the beaches are similar to those of Hawaii and the Caribbean. The people are welcoming and outgoing. There is never a dull moment. I can hardly wait for a chance to go back. This experience will be a tough one to beat, but I am hoping a return trip will equal it.

(Matt was a one of 13 students from Eastlake and Mercer Island high schools that participated in the Education Fund ceremonies for the children of Dong Ha. He, along with his team members, raised approximately \$9,000 to support this program. Great job, Matt! See Jan/Feb Update for his pre-trip article).

Acknowledgements

We, at GSVA, would like to take a moment to thank the individuals and organizations that helped make our March delegation's trip to the Hoa Phong Orphanage such a wonderful success. Your contributions of time, toys, supplies, and money for the playground project have truly touched the hearts and lives of the children and of all who have been involved in this project. We would especially like to thank Homewood Suites Hotel, Seattle for its generous contribution of furniture to GSVA, from which over \$3,000 was raised at a garage sale where the furniture was sold.

Many thanks to Son Pham and Beth Whitman for the numerous hours

they spent organizing and staffing the sale. Also, special thanks to:

Roger Ferrell
Deborah Bonjouklian
Maple Leaf Pharmacy
Seattle Sounders
Beth, Baley & Libby Sands
Christine Saunders
Lynchi Tran
GSVA Board Members
Sue Lefebvre
Walgreens at Greenwood
Robin Calixto
Wide World Books and Maps
Community Services for the Blind
and Partially Sighted