

UPDATE

Bi-monthly Membership Newsletter Reporting on US - Vietnamese Current Events and Culture
Issue 4 July/August 2000



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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Historic Trade Agreement Signed

By Gary Johnson

On Thursday, July 13th, US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky and Viet Nam's Trade Minister Vu Khoan signed a bilateral trade agreement. Though full diplomatic relations between the two countries was restored in 1995, Viet Nam has remained on the handful of countries the US has refused to grant Normal Trade Relations (NTR) status. Consequently, goods produced in Viet Nam have been subject to prohibitive tariffs in this country, essentially closing off the world's largest economy to Viet Nam.

The agreement represents a personal victory for US Ambassador Pete Peterson, who has worked tirelessly for the past four years to get an agreement signed. He strongly believes that the trade agreement will provide a substantial boost to Viet Nam's economy and raise the standard of living there. Indications were that the agreement would be signed last fall, but Vietnamese representatives walked away at the last minute. Speculation centered on a reticence by Vietnamese leaders to lessen their control of the domestic economy and a lingering distrust of the US. Many now feel that the recent US House of Representatives' vote to end the annual review of China's NTR status gave impetus to Viet Nam to get the agreement done. China currently produces many of the goods for the US market that Viet Nam is well suited to produce, and leaders there may have feared getting left behind.

Currently, trade between the two nations has been at a paltry level of less than \$1 billion per year. Many US companies rushed in when diplomatic relations were restored in 1995, but grew disillusioned by the bureaucratic inefficiency of the Vietnamese economic system. In the new trade agreement, Viet Nam has agreed to make substantial changes to that system, improving the legal and financial infrastructure. Viet Nam will also open sectors, such as telecommunications, financial services and retail and distribution, and promises to protect foreign intellectual property rights.

Congress must still approve the agreement and, while few expect strong opposition, there is some question as to whether the vote will happen this year-giving President Clinton and the democrats an election year victory.

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Since 1981, International Negotiations, Inc. has delivered over US \$500,000,000 in commodities, foodstuffs and non-perishable goods to governments and industrial customers on four continents. It has shipped sugar and fertilizer to Viet Nam since 1993.

INI's specialty is providing turnkey trading, brokerage, transportation and related services to emerging markets through its international network of offices and affiliates.

Born in Seattle, David Gates Smith, President and CEO of INI, has spent over seven years living abroad.

CORPORATE MEMBER BENEFITS

\$100 Level: Receive a bimonthly issue of The Update, and have a biography of your organization included in our Corporate Members' Corner.

\$500 Level: In addition to the benefits cited above, you will receive two free seats at any exclusive GSVA function. This includes our business breakfast series, special membership functions, and two seats at our Annual Dinner & Benefit Auction.

\$1000 Level: In addition to the above benefits, your organization will be given a Corporate Table, seating 10 guests of your choice, at our Annual Dinner and Benefit Auction.

BUSINESS BREAKFAST

By Sally Schultz

Building commercial bridges between American and Vietnamese companies was the focus of the recent Business Breakfast co-sponsored by the Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle and GSVA.

Sam Dang and Joe Nguyen, co founders of the Alliance America Vietnam Development, Inc. were the featured speakers at the June 8 forum. The company facilitates relationships between American and Vietnamese companies seeking to do business with each other.

AAVD represents several large Vietnamese companies in the textile, coffee and special product development industry. It also is building relationships with corporations in America seeking to tap the Vietnamese workforce and resources.

Participants spoke of their efforts to build trust between Vietnamese and American companies, and the investment of time necessary to develop that trust.

Breakfast attendees included PeaceTrees Vietnam; City of Seattle; BF Goodrich; Garvey, Schubert, Barer Attorneys; Washington State CTED; Port of Seattle and North Seattle Community College, as well as several GSVA members. The Business Breakfast series will continue in September with another event on doing business in Viet Nam.

* UP & COMING EVENTS *

July 28-30: *Khac Chi Ensemble*

This husband & wife duo honors Vietnamese musical tradition by performing ancient melodies with original arrangements. They will play songs from all regions of Viet Nam. They will be performing at the World music, arts and dance festival (WOMAD). More information can be found at: www.womadusa.org.

August 5

Families with Children from Viet Nam adoption group will be meeting at the Seattle Asian Art Museum. Admission to the museum is free. 10:30 a.m. For more information, contact Lea Ann at leaannk@nwlinc.com or 425-489-2828.

August 17-20

Vietnamese Heritage Camp in Colorado. See: <http://www.heritagecamps.org>.

August 24-28

Families with Children from Viet Nam adoption group is organizing a family camp out at Cougar Rock at Mt. Rainier.

For more information, call Roseanne at 206-861-8310.

November 5

GSVA will be hosting "Adoption Night." This promises to be informative and inspiring event. Speakers include our own "Angel of Saigon," Betty Tisdale; Lea Ann Kaplan from Families with Children from Viet Nam; Dave Ptasnik, from Americans Adopting Orphans, and Cathy Gentino, single parent. 3-5 p.m. Location to be announced.

Contact Teri Conti at 206-276-2119 or Gary Johnson at 206-233-8560.

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FRUITS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

By Claire DiFrances

Some of the fondest memories visitors to Southeast Asia have are of the many unique and delicious fruit drinks they've enjoyed during their visit.

A trip to Southeast Asia is not complete without a glimpse of its market places, where an astonishing variety of succulent fruits abound. Many are available throughout the world, but there will be countless first encounters with exciting discoveries in brilliant colors and tantalizing aromas.

Whether these fruits are available year round or are seasonal, one is always rewarded, not only by a great variety, but also by great prices on fruits in season. Below are just a few of the many fruits that can be found.

BANANAS: Perhaps the most popular of all tropical fruits is the banana. Native to Southeast Asia, it is mentioned in early Buddhist documents, circa 500 B.C., and was exported from Indonesia to Africa about 500 A.D. The banana plant is mentioned in the Koran (600 A.D.) as the Tree of Paradise.

However, the banana is not a tree but a giant herb. Though it grows to a height of 12-25 feet, depending on variety, it dies to the ground each year as it has no woody tissue. Today, Viet Nam boasts 28 different fragrant varieties of banana from plantains (used in cooking) to the dwarf.

When young and green, they may be eaten raw, as a vegetable, with spicy sauce. More mature, but still unripe, they are sliced, dried in the sun and fried for a luscious dessert. Bananas are also grilled and soaked with syrup, boiled in coconut milk with salt and sugar, boiled in syrup, smoked in the peel and fried into golden fritters.

COCONUTS: For a visitor to Southeast Asia, an especially exotic treat on a hot day is a freshly opened young coconut, whose tender white flesh and sweet juice is a welcomed refreshment. The coconut is native to Malaysia. Fruit of the coco palm tree grows to a height of 60 to 100 ft (18 to 30 m) and has a crown of frond-like leaves. The coconut itself is a single-seeded nut with a hard woody shell encased in a thick fibrous husk. The hollow nut contains coconut milk, a nutritious drink, and its white kernel, a staple food in the tropics, is eaten raw and cooked. Coconuts, available throughout the year, are present at every Thai meal in one form or another. Coconut milk is an important ingredient in curries and soups. It is even more prevalent in desserts such as delicate custards, candies, crispy strips cooked in brown syrup, to mention just a few.

LONGAN: In Vietnamese, "long nhan" means dragon eye. Longans are grown mostly in the cooler highlands of Southeast Asia. It was brought by Chinese immigrants as they migrated south and settled in various areas. The Longan tree is an erect tree with spreading, slightly drooping, heavily foliated branches. The globular fruit, which droops in clusters of yellowish-brown, is 0.5 to 0.75 inches in diameter (1.2 to 2 cm) and has a thin layer of edible pulp surround-

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Reflections on the Viet Nam War: An American's Perspective

By Bill Kelsey

Editor's Note: At the beginning of the year, you were promised that each edition of The Update would contain an article that related to the 25th Anniversary of the end of war in Viet Nam. Believing it is important to view an issue from many angles, I have made a personal commitment to portray a variety of perspectives and experiences that relate to this topic. It is through understanding and accepting our personal differences that the door to dialogue and peaceful resolution becomes possible, both personally and globally. My hope, at the start of the year, was that a dialogue be sparked among our readers. I invite you to make use of the two remaining editions of this year's Update. Your comments and personal stories are welcomed.

It was 1965 and I was thirteen. I was feeling some disappointment over the fact that I was too young to serve in Viet Nam. This great historical opportunity to serve my country and heroically fight communism would certainly pass me by. There were still four years left to finish high school and turn seventeen when I would be old enough to kill and risk death for my country. But by then the war would be all over and I would miss my chance to earn the Congressional Medal of Honor.

I was an American kid growing up in the Middle East - in Jordan and then at an American high school in Lebanon. Our American Scout troop had Marine guards from the US Embassy assisting the scoutmaster. I respected them immensely and turned to them for advice about how best to serve in the Armed Forces. Should I become a Navy pilot or a Green Beret or a Ma-

rine rifleman? They tended not to share my enthusiasm for going into combat infantry. One day while having lunch with them in the Embassy snack bar they kindly suggested that if I was so committed to the idea of military service I should go to college to become an officer or perhaps even attend the Naval Academy. I eventually accepted this idea, though reluctantly, as this meant probably not going to Viet Nam at all. The war, by this time, had been dragging on and it looked like I might actually have a chance to be a part of it after high school graduation, if I didn't go to college. As I began the application process to the Naval Academy, I still wondered about putting the idea aside in favor of enlistment in the Marine Corps to serve in Viet Nam first while there was still a chance. My scoutmaster assured me that the war would be long over by the summer of 1969 and suggested I focus on getting into the Academy and forget about going to Viet Nam.

I read news reports diligently and watched the battle scenes on television and made note of the body count score. I was attached to Viet Nam.

During my last two years of high school, which I spent in New Jersey, I was somewhat surprised that no one else in my class was applying to a service academy. I was accepted and at Annapolis, Maryland, on June 30, 1969, seventeen days after my seventeenth birthday, I had my head shaved, donned a uniform, and raised my right hand in an oath to "support and pro-

tect the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and to bear true faith and allegiance to the same."

My fascination with Asia continued unabated, so I chose Far Eastern Relations with Chinese language as my academic major. (Vietnamese was not offered). Perhaps it was at the rifle range where I overheard our Marine instructors talk about looting banks during the battle for Hue that I began experiencing my first doubts about the virtue of this war. During leave periods I sought out veterans of the conflict and began hearing about other unsavory aspects of the conflict from them. I read *Lotus in a Sea of Fire* by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk who opposed the war and in turn annoyed both the North and South Vietnamese governments. I studied the histories of various Asian revolutions.

My experience as a midshipman became an emotional hell as my doubts intensified and I wondered, from hour to hour, whether or not I should be there. The service academies are difficult enough for those who are highly motivated and believe in what they are doing. Most of the time I was on the verge of resigning, but in the end continued my studies - poorly in all the military subjects and well enough in the foreign relations and Chinese. I held on because of the desire not to be a "quitter" on the one hand, and the continuing impression that the war might be over soon on the other. I was returning to the Academy from leave during the summer of 1971, between

my second and third years, with the intention of resigning, when President Richard Nixon announced his plans for visiting the People's Republic of China. This was confusing to me. As much as I had begun to express my doubts about American foreign policy, I would not have openly suggested such a radical step as a dialogue with China, though I might have desired it privately. What point would there be in resigning to join the protesters if the Administration itself was now making peace with America's enemies?

So I continued being a midshipman, living in a pattern of wanting to resign in protest during each ferocious escalation, and then deciding to continue when it appeared that resolution was on the horizon. My country had honored me with this opportunity to study at such an elite and prestigious institution and it should not be discarded lightly. Life would have been much simpler for me if I had not had this attachment to Viet Nam and a concern that we do the right thing by the Vietnamese people. How could I, as a teenager, discern which politicians, reporters, officers, and other adult figures were telling the truth? How could I predict the outcome of the war and how history would view the various participants - those who served and fought and those who refused to



Bill Kelsey at the National Cemetery in Viet Nam

Photo courtesy of Arden Norvold

serve and dissented? And how was I to decide the proper role for me in all this? And what was wrong with me that I cared what Vietnamese monks had to say?

The peace agreement in 1973 was a great relief, for now I felt I could graduate and accept my commission that summer with a clear conscience, though diminished enthusiasm. I went into flight training, which I continued for more than a year. I realized that my struggles had taken a toll and that I had no strong motivation to finish my last two months of flight training or serve in the Armed Forces. I had much more in common with all the people in the world on whom my civilization had dropped or was planning to drop

white phosphorous, among other things. So I announced that I was a conscientious objector. I was quickly sent to a psychiatrist, a chaplain, and an investigating officer to determine whether or not I was sane, holy, and sincere. All recommended that I be discharged quickly in the interest of the Navy. After all, Academy graduates are supposed to become war heroes, astronauts, and presidents - not pacifists. This was a scandal, indeed, and I was discharged quickly and quietly.

I have never been comfortable with the fact that I made, and then broke, a commitment to serve the US government for six years in exchange for the education it gave me at great

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An American's Perspective

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taxpayer expense. But I had also been living in great distress about the many people around the world who had suffered agonizing death at the hands of this machine - both those who were direct victims and those who were in its service. Any further participation on my part seemed a greater evil. I have since tried to do "alternate service" or render support for worthy programs whenever possible. Of special interest are projects in which war damage is being reversed, including removal of landmines and unexploded ordnance. During December of 1996, I was privileged to accompany a PeaceTrees delegation to Dong Ha in the former DMZ. We helped plant trees over a former battlefield, which had been recently cleared of dangerous war debris. At last I had my dream trip to Viet Nam, but this time with a happier purpose. Although the work we accomplished was still but a drop in the bucket compared to the task that remains for us all, it was useful as a symbol of the task of transformation and recreation that faces us and the commitment we must make to repair the earth as well as ourselves.

At the cemetery for Vietnamese war dead, I burned incense at the graves of the young men whose lives were added on to television scorecards when they were snuffed out. It is an accident of history that I was not on the same card as one of these. It was sad to remember that in my early youth I had taken satisfaction with the score, since the enemy was always losing more. I burned incense at Quang Tri and at Mylai. This pilgrimage to Viet Nam was not only a remembrance of death, but much more a celebration of life, as we worked with Vietnamese friends planting trees, singing songs, visiting the countryside and dancing. But I was quite overcome at one point when, during a spontaneous musical performance one afternoon, two young Vietnamese women sang and danced a duet. It was pleasant to the eye and ear and a delight to the heart. What blasphemy, what terrible misunderstanding, what disorder of the mind could have caused their civilization and mine to end up sending their finest young men out to blow each other up? How many of these laughing, singing, dancing angels do not exist because their fathers fell while serving in the North and South Vietnamese armies during this tragedy, which few remember today, and even fewer understand?

Do I understand? I read many books, traveled and talked to many over the years to discern the truth of the matter. I used to argue the political and historical points and make the case well for a political position. But arguments of historical point and counterpoint are often excuses for the deep things we already feel. Those who have a personal disposition to violent solutions to difficult human problems will be more likely to argue for one when a human crisis presents itself, regardless of whether they know an abundance of facts or not. Many are decent people who have come to their conclusions for valid reasons. Many accept the mythologies of their civilizations without many questions.

And I have cast my lot with those who will argue against any war - whether or not I have a deep understanding of the issues in a particular crisis. With enough time I might dig up all the reasons to make a convincing case against an invasion somewhere. But at the beginning and end of the day, the reasons for me come from two fundamental ones: Firstly, I have attended the births of my two daugh-

ters and have suffered both agony and great pleasure as I have watched them grow over the years. A woman indeed endures great pain while giving birth - and a family invests so much in the raising of its loved ones. If there is no greater tragedy to the human than the loss of a child in an act of violence, then it is truly a blasphemy that whole societies routinely allow their youth to join groups specifically organized and trained to inflict just such violence onto each other. The second fundamental reason for my view is that during this short life one must create to the extent possible. Whether this is discovering a cure for a disease, the planting of a garden, the laying of bricks, or cleaning up the trash, one must leave the world a better place. To spend one's life creating or using devices that kill or destroy is indeed a tragedy. What does one who builds a landmine do at the end of a day of work in the factory? Relax? Pet the dog? Can one drink a beer and be satisfied at the results of an honest day's labor?

I encourage young folks anywhere I might be in the world to avoid military service and work instead for companies that create or do useful things. Where the fortunes of history, politicians, or media have convinced us that another group is a monster, we must do our best to study its history, learn about its people, and perhaps even learn its language. We must travel, visit, and study in each other's countries. Let's study and practice creative conflict resolution. We must have as much trade as possible. We must find or make a way to live on the same planet without sending our young folks out to kill and be killed by others.

May all rifles be broken.

May the landmines be removed from our hearts and from the earth.

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

ADVERTISING RATES:

NUMBER OF ISSUES	RATE
1	\$ 60
2	\$ 120
3	\$ 171
4	\$ 219
5	\$ 259
6	\$ 287

DEADLINES FOR ARTWORK ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Jan/Feb	January 17
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May/June	May 17
July/Aug	July 14
Sept/Oct	September 16
Nov/Dec	November 16

Artwork must be black and white and camera ready. Original artwork, laser copies, a diskette or business card can be submitted.

Questions: Call Teri at (206) 525-3650 or email her at: angelheart2@earthlink.net

FRUITS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

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ing the seed. The meat is translucent white and is very juicy and sweet with a musky bouquet. The shiny seed is jet black. The peel is brown and brittle. In Viet Nam, dried longans are cooked in water to make a dessert drink called 'nuoc long nhan'.

STARFRUIT: The starfruit is a native fruit of Southeast Asia. It is a yellow berry type of fruit that grows on shrub-like trees in clusters of three or four. The sizes vary from two to seven inches (5-17cm). The fruit is green when young, turning yellow to almost orange, and slightly translucent when ripe. Starfruit's skin is quite tough while the flesh is soft, juicy, sweet and sour tasting. The fruit has a distinct taste and is often used in cooking. When sliced cross-wise, the pieces look like five distinct-angled stars. Consequently, the fruit is a must in certain Vietnamese dishes as garnishes. The fruit can be eaten raw or cooked. It contains vitamin C and lots of vitamin B.

Here's a delicious dessert dish, which utilizes both Banana and Coconut Milk:

FRIED BANANA WITH COCONUT MILK

Ingredients:

- 5 egg whites
- 2 c flour
- 1 c water
- 6 c oil
- 3 big bananas
- 3 tsps sugar
- 1 c Coconut milk

Preparation:

1. In a container, mix sugar, egg whites, flower, and water until smooth and very stiff.
2. Peel bananas. Cut each in half lengthwise. Coat banana pieces with batter blend.
3. In a wok, heat oil until hot. Carefully place the batter covered banana pieces (one a time) into the hot oil. Cook the banana pieces for about two to four minutes or until golden. Remove banana from oil and place on an absorbent paper towel. Place banana pieces in a bowl, and top with coconut milk. Serve.

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Recipe supplied by Bites of Asia.

For more tantalizing recipes, check their website at: www.bitesofasia.com.

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- 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.
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