



# COUNTERPARTS

## TƯƠNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á

# SITREP

Volume XI

Issue 1

Summer-Fall 2009

## Counterparts invited to Ft. Benning Advisor Symposium

Six *Counterparts* members and at least one of our former RVNAF Counterparts have been invited to participate in an upcoming Symposium on Advisors sponsored by the US Army's TRADOC command.

Since the beginning of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, many *Counterparts* members have offered to share their experience and lessons learned with today's Advisors. Individual members, including Terry Turner, John Loving, Steve Leighton and others have participated in Advisor training, but until now, *Counterparts* as a whole has not been involved.

This all began to change last month when *Counterparts* Commander Ken Jacobsen received a phone call from Maj. Robert Boone, an Army Ranger enroute to an Advisory tour in Iraq. Maj Boone had found our website and had also read John Loving's book, *Combat Advisor*. He was putting together a new training package for Advisors and wanted to know if any of our members would be interested in passing on their experience to those preparing to take on Advisory duties.

After additional phone conversations it was agreed that *Counterparts* would provide 4 former Advisors and if possible, two former Vietnamese military people who had worked with Advisors. Maj Boone also separately invited John Loving and Jim Willbanks, both *Counterparts* members. We will be participating in a one day symposium at Ft. Benning, GA on August 28, with the possibility of involvement in similar events in the future.

An emailed call for volunteers quickly produced more than 40 responses, and the most difficult task became that of selecting four representatives from this highly qualified group.

....Continued on page 4

## Former RVNAF Officers Join Minneapolis Reunion

By

Ken Jacobsen

For the second year in a row, the weather gods smiled on our annual Reunion. In 2008, rainy Seattle gave us a warm, sunny welcome and this year chilly Minneapolis greeted us with three days of balmy, shirtsleeve days. We must be doing something right.

We were welcomed by Steve and Donna Leighton in our Hospitality Suite, which included drinks and snacks contributed by the Leightons, and featured a balcony overlooking the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, just across from the hotel. The more energetic among us took the opportunity to hike the Refuge's many nature trails, while the less ambitious visited the nearby Mall of America or simply "hung out."



Steve Leighton presents replacement Silver Star and Bronze Star ribbons to LTC Long and Maj Tai. Annie Le, LTC Long's Daughter, looks on.

Friday morning was a time for renewing old Counterparts friendships, and swapping War Stories newly remembered (or invented) with old comrades.

.... Continued on page four

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# COUNTERPARTS SITREP

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Volume XI

Issue 1

Summer/Fall 2009

## Commander's Corner

It's been a while since the last SITREP was published and there's much news to cover and some interesting developments to report.

While the Reunion in Minneapolis was small it was also more than worthwhile for those who attended, thanks to Steve and Donna Leighton's hard work. We had the honor of hosting 13 of our Vietnamese comrades and their families, a long overdue trend that we hope will continue.

Thanks to those who volunteered to fill other offices, notably **J.C. Fischer**, one of *Counterparts* true stalwarts, who will now be XO and Adjutant, and **John Haseman**, who will take over Membership duties. I agreed to stay on as Commander for another two years, which will complete two three year terms in office. I urge all members who want to help move us forward to consider volunteering for one of the *Counterparts* Officer's positions, including that of Commander, as I will not be a candidate for an additional term in office.

*Counterparts* members continue to support our friends in Southeast Asia, and to fight for their interests here in the US. **Grant McClure** and **Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt** have kept the plight of Hmong Lao refugees in the public eye, while **Mike and Marion Little** press on with their work in Vietnam, an effort that has continued for more than a decade. Other members like **Max Lund**, **Rich Webster**, and **Ken Forrester** have made frequent visits to remote refugee sites in Mondulkiri province of Cambodia in conjunction with Tommy Daniels' *Cambodia Corps*. Largely due to their effort and the generous contributions of other *Counterparts* like **Jim O'Malley** our first "Counterparts Scholar" **Broy Makara** has completed Veteranarian training and will soon be in the field, helping his people. A second "Counterparts Scholar" will soon be selected.

Probably the most exciting new development is our upcoming participation in an Advisor's Symposium at Ft. Benning on August 28. Since the beginning of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, many of us have been looking for a way to do our part and share our hard earned experience with the new generation of Advisors. The August event may finally give us that opportunity to serve. My call for volunteers for the Symposium certainly proved that we have many members who are ready to step up to the plate. At last count, I had more than 40 emails from well qualified members offering their services.

Hopefully, the Army will find our participation worthwhile and schedule additional similar events at Ft Benning and other installations. In that case, more *Counterparts* volunteers will have the opportunity to participate.

Finally, we still have the unfinished business of selecting a 2010 Reunion Site. Experience has shown that the most important requirement for a successful reunion is for a Reunion Coordinator who is "on the ground" at or near the Reunion Site. Planning a Reunion from a distance just doesn't work.

**We urgently need a recommendation for a location and a volunteer Reunion Coordinator**

.....Ken Jacobsen

**NEW DUES ARE \$25.00 PER YEAR, \$250.00 LIFE MEMBERSHIP**

**Minutes of Counterparts Annual Business Meeting  
Minneapolis, MN April 18,2009**

The meeting opened with a review of the past year's activity, which included contributions to several organizations assisting people in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Counterparts Rich Webster, Max Lund, and Ken Forrester also traveled to SEA to assist with the work being done by Tommy Daniels' Cambodia Corps. Our Counterparts Scholar, Broy Makara, will complete Veterinary Studies this year and has already been hired to work with a British-based organization devoted to protecting and treating elephants in Cambodia.

Ken Jacobsen reported on the Working group appointed earlier this year to study expanding Counterparts to include former advisors from the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. The Working Group, headed by Terry Turner, invited comments from all Counterparts members, prepared its own questionnaire, and examined a variety of issues involved in a possible expansion. The Working Group's recommendation was that we not expand membership because our limited volunteer manpower was not sufficient to do the work required to reorganize and conduct the necessary outreach program, and if the reorganization was not done thoroughly it could damage our existing organization.

Max Lund gave a report on the work done the past year by Cambodia Corps, and specifically by Counterparts Rich Webster, Ken Forrester, and Max. Since Broy Makara, will complete his Veterinarian studies this year, Max's recommendation that we seek a new scholarship recipient was approved. A more detailed report of our work with Cambodia Corps is being prepared by Max and Rich Webster.

J.C. Fischer made the Treasurers report which will be published on the website Bulletin and in SITREP(Page 11).

Jim Ellis made the Membership report. John Haseman volunteered to assume the Membership Chairman duties and will succeed Jim.

Proposed Counterparts donations for 2009 were discussed and the following approved: Counterparts Scholar; \$1500.00, Vihn Son Orphanage/Operation Rice Lift; \$500.00; Vietnam Vets with a Mission; \$200.00.

It was also agreed that annual dues will be raised to \$25.00 and lifetime dues to \$250.00

A call for nominees and volunteers for the position of Commander made at last year's reunion, in the last two issues of SITREP, and by email did not produce any candidates and there were no volunteers among those present. Ken Jacobsen agreed to continue as Commander for two additional years, which will complete two three-year terms as Commander. Steve Leighton suggested that we begin a system of "fleeting up" other Counterparts Officers, such as XO, to succeed the Commander in office. It was agreed that this would be pursued. J.C. Fischer volunteered to fill the currently vacant XO position, replacing Tom Stevens who resigned for health reasons earlier this year.

Next year's Reunion Site was the final item discussed. Possible locations suggested were: Las Vegas, NV, some location in North or South Carolina, San Jose, CA, a city in the Florida panhandle, Lubbock, TX, and Chattanooga, TN. We agreed that it is vital to have a Reunion Coordinator who lives in the city where the Reunion is to be conducted.

Submitted  
Ken Jacobsen

## Reunion (Continued from Page One)

It was a special pleasure to meet Steve Leighton's old Counterparts Maj Tai and LTC Long. In the afternoon we were given a personalized tour of the Air Museum at the Minnesota Air National Guard Base that included a close up look at many old warbirds of the Vietnam era. Many members were surprised to learn for the first time that HUEY's actually had doors!

Our Annual Business Meeting was held on Saturday morning. Saturday's Banquet at the Ft Snelling Officers Club was the highlight of the Reunion. Steve Leighton's former Counterpart, Major Tai, is also Class President of his class from the Military Academy at Dalat, and had invited a number of his old classmates to the Banquet. 13 former VN Officers and their wives joined us, a pleasant surprise for all.

Our guest speaker, Bill Hudson of WCCO TV in Minneapolis, was the man responsible for doing the memorable news story on Steve Leighton's return to Vietnam and his eventual reunion with his counterparts Tai and Long.

Bill gave some thoughtful insights into both his personal interest in Vietnam (his brother served in-country with the SF) and the state of the TV news business.

Maj Tai and LTC Long had both lost all their US decorations when they left Vietnam, so Steve Leighton presented them with new ribbons. Major Tai had earned a Silver Star and Presidential Unit Citation; LTC Long won a Silver Star, two Presidential Unit Citations and three Bronze Stars with "V". LTC Long then thanked the Americans for their service and for giving him and others the chance to start a new life in the US. LTC Han, a former ARVN Airborne Battalion Commander followed, with a dramatic account of his experiences in a Vietnamese Communist "Reeducation Camp."

J.C. Fischer sprang a surprise by presenting a Plaque recognizing my service as Counterparts Commander. Personally, I think I should be the one to thank Counterparts for giving me the privilege of serving with some of the finest people I've ever known.

Although a limp economy and some unexpected cancellations limited the number of attendees at Reunion 2009, it was, in my opinion, a great success, thanks to the outstanding advance planning done by Steve and Donna Leighton. The opportunity to meet Tai, Long and many other of our Vietnamese comrades and their families was in itself worth the trip.

We still need a volunteer to host the 2010 Reunion. As noted in the Minutes, sites discussed so far are: Las Vegas, NV, some location in North or South Carolina, San Jose, CA, a city in the Florida panhandle, Lubbock, TX, and Chattanooga, TN. It has also been suggested that we coordinate our Reunion with the commemoration of the 35th Anniversary of the Fall of Saigon, which will be held in Westminster, CA, on the last week of April 2010. *Counterparts* had a previous Reunion in Westminster, coordinated with the local Vietnamese-American Community, that was very successful. ***Again, we need a volunteer who lives in the community where the Reunion is to be held.***

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## **Symposium** (from Page one)

The final choices span a wide spectrum of service experience and dates in country, from 1961 to 1973. Counterparts, Jim Coolican, Pappy Hicks, Max Lund, and Rich Webster, and former ARVN LTC "Harry" Hue, will bring impressive credential to the table. Counterparts Commander Ken Jacobsen will also participate.

If the Symposium is a success we may be asked to provide additional participation in similar events in the future, at Ft. Benning and at other sites. In that case, we can expect that other Counterparts volunteers will have the opportunity to become involved in this program. While we don't yet have a specific agenda or format for the Symposium, it will probably include each *Counterparts* participant giving a brief summary of his Advisory experience and lessons learned, followed by a Question and Answer period and possibly a roundtable discussion with the Advisory Course students. We're all looking forward to this long awaited opportunity.

## WITH THE MONTAGNARDS IN CAMBODIA-2009

By

Rich Webster, PAO

I spent February, 2009 in Cambodia at the Indigenous Student Center in Phnom Penh run by Cambodia Corps Inc. There are currently 21 Montagnard students enrolled in various college programs at the Center, including Broy Makara, who has been sponsored the last four years by *Counterparts*. Broy, a member of the Phnong ethnic group in Mondulakiri Province will graduate this spring after finishing a research paper in Mondulakiri Province on the cattle raising techniques of the Phnong people.

After a treacherous 12-hour bus ride (the large boulder type holes in the road broke the front shock absorbers and we had to get out and walk down the large hills), I arrived in Sen Monorum, the capitol of Mondulakiri. I made contact with an Englishman, Jack Hyland, who is dedicated to preserving the Asian elephant through his tourist business. Jack has offered to provide employment for Broy upon his graduation providing veterinary care for his elephants. I visited several other graduates of the Cambodia Corps program, the first of a small number of Montagnards to ever have graduated from college in Cambodia, who have gone back to Mondulakiri to work for their people and improve their lives.

30,000 Montagnards, mostly Phnong, live in Mondulakiri. They are in a struggle to save their traditional lands from globalization and from Cambodian government officials selling their land to foreign companies. I rented a motorbike with a young Phnong driver/interpreter who took me out into the far reaches of Mondulakiri where I interviewed villagers in Bousra who had experienced a violent confrontation with a big French company. The company was bulldozing the village's jungle land, destroying their ancestral burial ground. The villagers reacted by piling brush around the machinery and lighting it afire during the night.

The first course of action by authorities was to imprison the Montagnards involved for ten years. Only the quick intervention of a former CCI worker, who negotiated between the Cambodian Province Chief, the French Company, and the Montagnard leaders, kept the Montagnards out of jail. Believe me, you don't want to spend time in a Cambodian prison/jail. You don't eat, unless someone from the outside brings you food.

The older people in the village of Bousra remembered when the Americans and South Vietnamese invaded this part of Cambodia to fight the NVA. Gesturing to an open rice paddy field nearby, they said the American soldiers told them to gather thereto avoid the bombing and firing from the helicopter gunships attacking surrounding jungles where the NVA were hiding.

My next journey was another day-long bus ride to Ban Lung, the capitol of Ratanakiri province, where there is a large population of various Montagnard tribes-notably the Jarai, Steing, Tampoun, Krung, Koe, and others. Tommy Daniels, the founder of CCI wants to expand the scholarship program to Ratanakiri where there is a huge unmet need for educated leadership for the Indigenous Peoples.

The Principal of the high School in Ban Lung had gathered 10 Montagnard students, four of them Jarai, for me to interview for the CCI scholarship program. There has never been a Jarai student go to college, and only ten, including three girls, are now seniors at the High School. Several wanted to be doctors and lawyers. The big problem is cost. CCI simply does not have the money to fund all these students. It's possible *Counterparts* will sponsor one of the Jarai with the recent donation voted at the Minneapolis reunion.

During the War, Max Lund, Ken Forrester, and the other Chio Rio *CoVans* worked with the Jarai in the Central Highlands of Vietnam just across the border from Ratanakiri. Max and Ken were in Cambodia and traveled to Ratanakiri and visited a Jarai village while I was there. We had a mini *Counterparts* reunion in Phnom Phenh. To date, 5 of our members have visited the CCI students in Cambodia.

A missionary friend of mine in Ban Lung says that large groups of Vietnamese soldiers, some dressed in civilian clothes, cross the border from Vietnam to snoop and hunt down Montagnards attempting to flee from the Central Highlands. One out of every three Vietnamese in Eastern Cambodia is a spy or reports back to the Vietnamese government in some fashion. (Continued on Page 6)

**Montagnards** (Continued from Page 5)

While in Ban Lung, I attended an Indigenous Peoples Land Rights seminar along with 200 local Montagnards dedicated to teaching the Montagnards about their land rights and how to defend against illegal logging, encroachment, and crooked land agents. It was organized by a friend of mine, the famous female Phnong lawyer, Yune Mane, who used to own an elephant in her local village in Mondulkiri. Now she's the top human rights lawyer in Cambodia dedicated to defending the Montagnard people. The Phnong law student that I sponsor, who will graduate this year, was also in attendance.

I also met Chuck in Ban Lung. He is a Vietnam Vet who has lived Southeast Asia since the end of the Vietnam War. He was seriously wounded across the border in Ple Kieu in 1967 serving with the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry division as a medic. He was here in Ban Lung in 2004 when Montagnards fleeing from Vietnam were picked up by UN helicopters and flown to UN camps. Chuck is a linguist and he and his wife have developed an alphabet and primer for the Krung so that when the Krung children enter the primary grades, they can learn first in their own language, instead of Khmer. They are preserving the Krung folklore and legends of these people with written interviews and publications. There is now one Krung student at the CCI student center.

There is only one NGO dedicated to providing an educated leadership for the Montagnards in Cambodia and that is CCI. Seven students have now graduated from college programs. Tommy Daniels needs more funding to provide scholarships to the Jarai in Ratanakiri. **Any Counterparts members wanting to sponsor a student (approximately \$2000 dollars a year) can help the cause.** The 2000 dollars includes room, tuition, and board.

I have visited my Phnong student yearly now for four years. The experience is life changing. In a land where the majority of the Montagnards can't read or write, a college graduate can make a big impact by standing up for their Montagnard families and villages.

There's a new highway 78 being built in Ratanakiri by the Vietnamese and once that is completed, the vast natural resources will be trucked back to Vietnam. It's the end game for the traditional way of life of the Montagnards that the American soldier and advisor was witness to during the Vietnam War. In less than ten years, the Montagnards will be finished here and their way of life gone forever-just as it has happened in Vietnam.

I watched the Montagnard women, young and old, trudge miles from their villages to the market place in Ban Lung carrying large baskets of forest products on their backs. Forbidden to enter the market, they place their produce on the ground outside and sell it for a pittance to survive in a tough land. Unable to count money they are easily bilked out of a fair price. I witnessed several arguments as the Montagnard ladies tried to stand up for themselves and not be short changed.

The big news on the street here is the Khmer Rouge trial that has dragged on for years. I went out to the new multimillion dollar facility especially built for the trial to see Comrade Duch, the chief torturer at Toul Souk prison. I had to whistle at the guard to get in the main gate-he was sleeping. The trial is considered a sham here, as the former Khmer Rouge officials still maintain control in most of the provinces, the police, the army, and of course the Prime Minister, who is a former Khmer Rouge. Only five Khmer Rouge are being tried for show. Three of the five judges are Cambodian and they paid to get their jobs from the government. The trial has gone on so long that many of the witnesses have died.

The Chinese are the big players behind the scenes here in Cambodia, just as they were players behind the scenes during Pol Pot times. A close examination of the Khmer Rouge era would certainly implicate the Chinese. They were close Khmer Rouge, acting as Advisors and allies during the killing fields genocide. There are still too many Khmer Rouge officials and military running the show in Cambodia today.

Anyone interested in donating or sponsoring a Montagnard to college may contact me at: [covanmi@mchsi.com](mailto:covanmi@mchsi.com).

.....*Rich Webster*



## COUNTERPARTS VILLAGE MARKET



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# **One Counterparts Member's Impression of his First Reunion**

By

Tom Green

I have received several newsletters over the years from Counterparts. I never recognized any of the names of members mentioned so I didn't really pursue being active with the organization. Then I received a notice that the 2009 reunion would be held in Minneapolis in April. Living in northern Iowa and only about a 2 hour drive from the reunion hotel (Airport Hilton), my wife and I decided..... "Lets try it and go up to the reunion and really see what it is all about."

Having served as an advisor with the U.S Naval Advisory Group with the Mekong Junk Forces in 1969-1970, I had never met a single field advisor that served in Vietnam for nearly 40 years when I was in country. Upon arrival at the hotel I was greeted by Counterparts Commander Ken Jacobsen and the host of the reunion Steve Leighton. and another fellow advisor outside the hotel. We then proceeded to the hospitality suite where we met all the other attendees. The conversations began and continued for the rest of the weekend with other former advisors that had served at various times during the war. We all had a lot in common as advisors. Also Steve Leighton's Vietnamese counterparts and friends were in attendance. The whole reunion brought back so many memories of 40 years ago and was truly a most memorable experience. The commonality that we had really set the stage for the awesome comradery that we shared a true highlight of course was at the banquet at the Fort Snelling Officers Club where Bill Hudson of WCCO TV and Steve Leighton presented the story of Steve's reuniting with his counterparts Lt Long and Maj. Tai. The event was very emotional as accounts of experiences and the struggles and hardships the Vietnamese endured were truly incredible...

To sum it up, this was a most memorable event relating to my Vietnam experience, an experience that has had an impact on my life more than words can describe. I hope to attend many more Counterpart Reunions in the future as this "first one" was a great experience for both my wife and me. Steve and Donna Leighton did a magnificent job of hosting and coordinating all the activities and a big THANK YOU goes out to them.

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## **COUNTERPARTS MEMBERS HELP FORMER INTERPRETER IN VIETNAM**

By

Rich Webster, PAO

Several months ago long time COUNTERPARTS member James Simmons received a packet of papers regarding Nguyen Son Thao, who had served as the interpreter for MAT 10, MAT 48, and MAT 49. Thao was trying to reach some of his former team members. Jim posted his information on our web site in an effort to locate members of his former teams, including Major James K. Woodward, RF/PF Advisor, Major James B. Ballard, RF/PF Advisor, Captain Greene, Senior Advisor MAT 10, 1LT Raymond Morales MAT 49, 1LT Huck, Mat 49, Sergeant Thomas, Sergeant Joseph Cross, and Captain Anthony, RF/PF Team 48. To date, no one has responded.

R.J. Del Vecchio, co author with Bill Laurie of the book "Whitewash/Blackwash: Myths of The Vietnam War" just happened to be going back to Vietnam, leading a small group of Marine vets on a return trip. I gave Del Thao's email address and he linked up with him in Saigon. Jim and I gave Del some money to help Thao who has fallen on hard times. He spent eight years in the reeducation camps and tried unsuccessfully to get to America. He used to be an official tour guide but got fined repeatedly for anything the authorities could think of, and finally had to give up his tour license.

Del, former Marine Corps photographer in I CORPS, hired him as an unofficial interpreter. Since this is technically against the law in Vietnam he joined the tour as a "friend". Del later said that "getting me in contact with Thao was one of the luckiest breaks of the year. His English is better than some Vietnamese who've been in the US for the last 20 years. He is a really good guy, fun to talk to, eager to be helpful, and pretty knowledgeable about a lot of things. And he is ready to go the extra mile for you."

"We had to hire an official guide in Da Nang, who was a jerk and didn't always know what he was talking about. When the guide was trying to blow smoke about why something wasn't there where we were sure it should be, Thao would go grab some old native who'd been there in the war and get good directions. He went into stores and bargained for us, got prices cut in half or more."

“The poor guy needs all the help he can get. He’s out of work, not popular with the local power structure because of his long history on anticommunism, and doesn’t have extended family to help him. Besides your contributions, we paid him \$25 a day, then threw in bonus money so he wound up with over \$600 from you and us, plus the watch he wanted me to get for him.”

My experience in return Vietnam trips is that if the official guides don’t know an answer to a question they will lie, even if they could easily get the information from locals. This is why a guy like Thao is invaluable if you want to return to one of your old base camps. I had the same experience in Da Nang in 2002 as Del had. We finally ended up with a former Vietnamese Marine interpreter and the government controlled guides hated him. They referred to him as “The guy who kissed the American’s ass.” This guy had been in a reeducation camp where the communists forced our former allies to clear mine fields with their bodies-not using mine clearing devices.

Del goes back to Vietnam on a regular basis and helps our former allies by giving them what they need most now in the latter years of their lives-a little recognition that someone still cares about them in America and money because they have been shut out of the system deliberately by communist apparatus that runs the country.

Most tourists who return to Vietnam, even including many Vietnam Veterans, remain oblivious to the real repression that exists there today. Everything looks good from the air-conditioned tourist bus. If you want to find our former allies, get away from the tourist bus-they are the destitute ones-standing on corners, dressed shabbily, some missing a limb, others trying to eke out a living selling lottery tickets. The sadness on their faces is haunting for someone who has served with them in the past. I once met a former ARVN soldier, blind from an explosion that disfigured his face, missing one leg, using a crutch to walk, reduced to selling hand fans and begging in the market place.

Del relates this fascinating conversation with a former Viet Cong woman officer from the village of An Hoa near a former base camp Phou Loc 6 in I CORPS. She had been in charge of the women’s section of the local Viet Cong group and had fought the Marines for years. “She had children who died during the war on both sides.” Del told me. “She said she had no hard feelings against the Americans and I assured her I had none towards hers and always liked the Vietnamese. I told her I was sorry about the destruction the war had brought to her village and family. We took some pictures together and I gave her a small gift of money to thank her for her time.”

“She reluctantly admitted that life was very hard now, and worse on the poor and crippled than others. I asked her if she knew any cripples from the war. When she answered yes, I thought it was a good time to give her some money to help them. She readily agreed. So I gave her two million VND (about \$120) which is pretty big money in the village, for her to distribute equally to crippled vets, both ARVN and VC. Our official guide didn’t like this at all.”

“As we drove away, Thao told us that we had upset her. This former VC had decided long ago when the war ended and the VC were disbanded and Hanoi took over everything, that she and her people had been used. And my giving her a lot of money to help old war cripples when the government she helped put into power provided little or no help made her think of that all over again. The former VC officer had said it was bitter to feel those who she thought were her enemy were more like her friends, and those she thought were her friends were not really there to act like friends.”

The sincere nationalists who were part of the Viet Minh, and later the Viet Cong realized too late that they had been suckered by the North, and they also lost the war along with our South Vietnamese Allies. Too bad we can’t get a historian to visit this lady and former Viet Cong to provide a more accurate history of the Viet Nam War. It will never happen in Vietnam where the history of South Vietnam between 1961 and 1975 has been completely left out of the history books in Vietnam-no mention of the government, the South Vietnamese military, or why they were fighting.

Any of you COUNTERPARTS members who served with Chao in the past, you can contact him via the email provided below. Thanks, Del, for helping our friend and COUNTERPART. In a previous SITREP, Del detailed a former trip to Saigon to help former ARVN who were down on their luck. (The charity he runs for the crippled ARVN has a website with good information at [www.thevhf.org](http://www.thevhf.org) ) Anyone out there returning to Saigon wanting a friendly former COUNTERPART interpreter, can contact Thao at: [ngsonthao@yahoo.com](mailto:ngsonthao@yahoo.com). And thanks, Del, for making life a little better for our friend.

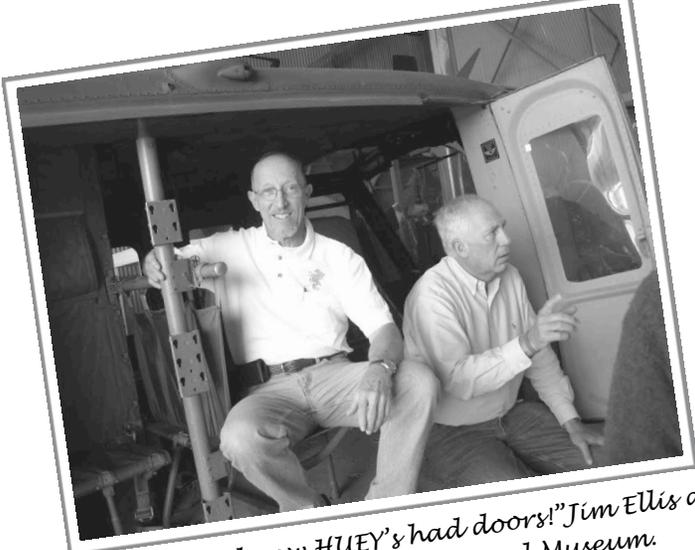


**THE VIETNAM HEALING FOUNDATION**

*Giúp Người Bị Bỏ Quên*

A 501 (C) 3 NONPROFIT CHARITY ORGANIZATION  
(All Donations Are Tax-Deductible)

# COUNTERPARTS/THDNA REUNION 2009 MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA



*"... I didn't know HUEY's had doors!" Jim Ellis and Steve Leighton at Minn. Air Guard Museum.*



*Counterparts and Guests at Saturday's Banquet. Guest Speaker Bill Hudson of WCCO TV in back row Right*



*Some old Comrades and their Families*



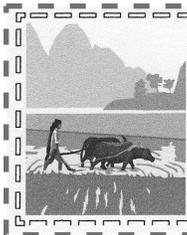
*A Counterparts Tradition.... Dinner at a Vietnamese Restaurant.*



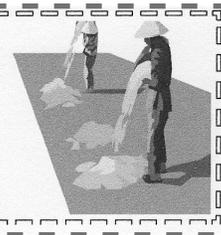
*XO JC Fischer presents Plaque to Counterparts Commander Ken Jacobsen*



*Old Warbird, Old Warriors*



# BULLETIN BOARD



## ***Treasurers Report, 2007-April 2009***

Began Period with Bank Balance of \$5,195.01.

Income was \$525.00

Expenses were \$480.38

Balance was \$5239.63

At the 2009 Reunion, members voted a total of \$2200 in Donations (See Minutes, Page 3)

New Balance \$3039.62

## ***Members-in-Memorial Archivist Report***

Archivist Mike McMunn Reports, as of February 2009, the following info. There are currently 2374 Members-in-Memorial Listed. The listing includes MACV Advisors, Special Forces, VN Counterparts, Australian Advisory Training Team, Vietnam Members, USMC Combined Action Platoons, Naval Advisory Teams, and Civilian Advisors.

The list includes those KIA as well as those who have died since their service in Indochina.

The listing can be found on the *Counterparts* website or at <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill2365>

Members are encouraged to submit additional names or remembrances for inclusion in the Members-in-Memorial Roster. This is the only listing of deceased Advisors available. Address information to Mike McMunn, 2310 Newberry Street, Williamsport, PA 17701, email [covan2@verizon.net](mailto:covan2@verizon.net)

## ***Thanks from Recipients of Counterparts Donations***

**Vietnam Vets with a Mission (VWAM)** one of the organizations we help support, reports another active year. Highlights included a mission to Vinh Long province in the Delta, where the team saw more than 2,000 patients, provided \$7500 in medicine, 20 Walkers, 2 Wheelchairs, 3 canes, 200 pairs of eyeglasses, and 3 hearing aids. The team also saw 181 dental patients.

**Vihn Son Orphanage** reports “*Thank you so much for Counterparts continued support of Vinh Son Orphanage. Your \$500 contribution will feed, clothe, educate and shelter 5 children for 8 months. We want you to know that all donors are remembered in the prayers of the Sisters and the children every day.*”

**Cambodia Corps, Inc (CCI)** reports that “*After five years our university program is beginning to foster the upper tier of the educated leadership of the Montagnards of northeast Cambodia;*

*Our six 2007/2008 university graduates plus Yun Mane in 2005 are the first seven of these people to attain higher education. They’re now serving in teaching advocacy and technical roles to stop the destruction of their ecosystem and improve the odds of survival of their culture”.*

### ***Member in Memoriam***

*Counterparts* member **Donald H. Souder**, June 22, 2009. Don was an Advisor with Advisory Team 65, 98, and MAT 46.



# BULLETIN BOARD

## ***New Books***

Carl Nelson: *Madam President and the Admiral*: New Century Press, [www.newcenturypress.com](http://www.newcenturypress.com). (paperback). *Counterparts* member Carl Nelson's latest novel is an international thriller based on an unusual situation that includes the threat of global war, against a backdrop of the unique relationship between the President, a woman, and her Advisor, a US Navy Admiral.

Richard Botkin: *Ride the Thunder*: Cumberland House Publishing, July 2009. (Available through Amazon.com) The author, a former Advisor, tells the heroic story of American Marines and their Vietnamese Counterparts who were largely responsible for thwarting the North Vietnamese invasion during the Easter Offensive of 1972. Botkin tells remarkable stories of Captain John Ripley's heroism in destroying the Dong Ha Bridge, the determination of Major Le Ba Binh and his seven hundred Marines who held off more than 20 thousand North Vietnamese troops, and the leadership and bravery of Lieutenant Colonel Gerry Turley.

## ***News from Vietnam***

Religious persecution continues in Vietnam. Despite assurances of tolerance, the Government of Vietnam continues to persecute Christian and other minorities. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/26/for-christiansvietnam-war-rages-will-obama-aid-ail/>

## ***May Events Honor Hmong and Lao Veterans, Highlight Refugee Plight***

*Counterparts* Hmong/Lao liaison Officer **Grant McClure** again represented us in a wreath laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery honoring Hmong and Lao veterans and their American Advisors as part of the Lao and Hmong Veterans National Recognition events in Washington, D. C. held on May 22 and 23. Grant has long been active in Hmong/Lao issues. He, "**Pappy**" **Hicks**, and others were instrumental in gaining Congressional recognition of our Hmong and Lao allies.

**Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt**, another long time *Counterparts* member, was a keynote speaker at Recognition events in Washington, including a Congressional Forum and Briefing on Laos titled "Mass Starvation Fuels Lao/Hmong Refugee crisis in Thailand and Laos". Dr. Hamilton is a two time Nobel Peace Prize Nominee and author of *Tragic Mountains*, the definitive work on the "Secret War" in Laos.

Dr. Hamilton also praised the work done by Doctors Without Borders (Medicins Sans Frontieres, MSF) in protesting the treatment of Lao/Hmong refugees in Thailand and Laos. She said:

*"Thank you, Doctors Without Borders for the courageous stand your agency has taken to protect the vulnerable Lao Hmong refugees in northern Thailand from forced repatriation back to Laos where they have survived military attacks, gang raping of children, extreme torture, starvation, and the maiming and killing of men, women, and children by the Lao government"*

The suffering of Lao Hmong and other minorities in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia is a tragedy that is too often ignored by governments and the news media. *Counterparts* members individually, and collectively, must continue to fight this fight.



# BULLETIN BOARD

## ***Counterparts member Speaks at Language School***

Jim Barker recently spoke at ceremonies marking the closing of the Defense Language Institute's Vietnamese Language Division. What's most remarkable is that he gave the speech in English and in Vietnamese. Jim, an Honors graduate of the Vietnamese language course, went on to serve as an Advisor and translator in Kontum, during the siege of that city during the '72 Spring Offensive by the North Vietnamese.

When he learned that the Vietnamese Division would be closing down this year, more than 50 years after its inception, Jim organized a Reunion of his honors classmates and Faculty. "Studying at the Presidio and service in Vietnam had an incredible, profound impact on our lives" Jim said.

Since the war's end in 1975, Jim has also made repeated trips to Vietnam, working on issues of assisting Asian-American children and various POW/MIA issues.

## ***Reunited after 50 Years***

*(from the Lawrence Journal-World, Lawrence Kansas, April 18, 2009)*

It's a friendship that has stood the test of time, and now two soldiers from two different countries are reunited after 50 years apart. "I'm so happy that you're alive and that you found me," Lawrence resident and former Army officer Gene Kean said to his longlost friend Anh Vo, a former colonel in the South Vietnamese army.

The two met in 1958 at the U.S. Army Engineer School in Fort Belvoir, Va. where Vo was assigned for training after graduating from the Military Academy of Vietnam. Kean, now 73, was then on the general's staff at the School. He served as an "unofficial adviser" to a group of 35 Vietnamese engineer officers, including Vo.

The friendship grew from there. Vo said he and his fellow officers would practice their English with Kean. Kean taught them how to play football and played the piano for them. Kean even invited Vo and another officer to his home in Olathe to spend Christmas in Kansas. "it became such a good friendship that we swore that we would be blood brothers throughout the war," Kean said. But when Vo graduated from the officers' school in 1959, the two went their separate ways. Kean became a helicopter pilot and went on to train troops in the 1st Infantry Division. "When the mail stopped coming and South Vietnam was overrun by the communists, I was very sad and presumed he was dead," Kean said.

In fact, Vo served in the Vietnamese army for 17 years, rising to the rank of colonel. After the war he spent three years in a Viet Cong prison camp before escaping the country spending more than a month walking to cross the border between Cambodia and Thailand. After a year in a refugee camp he made his way to the United States in 1981.

"I came to the United States without a penny in my pocket, just my shorts and shirt," Vo said. Vo, who now splits his time between Wausau, Wis., and Garden Grove, Calif, said he often thought of Kean and tried repeatedly to look him up in Kansas phone books. His son finally helped Vo track down Kean using the Internet, and about a month ago the two finally connected. "It was just complete surprise and joy," Kean said. Most of the time has been spent talking; they have 50 years of news to catch up on. "We've been laughing and having a great time," Kean said. And the two promise the next reunion will be much sooner. "We'll try to keep meeting if we have the chance to," Vo said. "We don't know how long we'll be alive, so we'll take time to enjoy it. We're very close, very good friends. He's a brother."

**Reunion 2010**  
**needs you!**  
**See inside to Volunteer**



**COUNTERPARTS**  
TƯƠNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á  
**SITREP**

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