



COUNTERPARTS

TƯƠNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á

SITREP

Volume XIX

Issue 2

Winter 2018 - 2019

Houston Reunion 2019 to include More Activities with Vietnamese Community

The 2019 COUNTERPARTS Reunion will be held in Houston TX on April 3-7. It promises to be a memorable event with a schedule that will keep us busy.

Reunion coordinators, Ray Robison and Henry (Hank) Newinn are going all out to invite many of our Vietnamese COUNTERPARTS. COUNTERPARTS Commander, Grant McClure is urging as many members as possible to attend this Reunion, since it is a rare, and perhaps vanishing opportunity for us to meet again with our former comrades-in-arms. Ray has coordinated with Quoc-An Tran, the President of the Vietnamese Community of Houston and Vicinities, which comprises one hundred and fifty thousand members.

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR REGISTRATION FORMS PRIOR TO MARCH 1ST. WE ARE HAVING PERMANENT NAME TAGS MADE, WITH A MAGNETIZED FASTENER. NO MORE HOLES IN THE APPAREL.

Ray plans to integrate our reunion banquet by having former US Advisors sitting at a table with their Vietnamese Marine, Army, Navy and Air Force COUNTERPARTS. **When you submit your reunion reservation, tell us what branch you served with.** The registration form can be found on page four and on the COUNTERPARTS webpage. Our good friend and new COUNTERPART, Henry Newinn, is coordinating for the music and entertainment after the banquet meal. Don't miss his country music and his son's Vietnamese Elvis presentation.

There will also be a Wreath Placement memorial ceremony Friday featuring an Honor Guard of former South Vietnamese soldiers in

uniform. Other participants will include a Catholic Priest, a Buddhist Monk, and patriotic South Vietnamese speakers. The ceremony is expected to be a memorable experience. Immediately after the ceremony we will proceed to nearby Vietnamese Restaurants to have lunch with the local Vietnamese veterans.

We need a good turnout for this reunion. The time that we can spend with our brave and loyal South Vietnamese fellow freedom fighters is waning as the years pass. We should never forget that we fought for the freedom of South Vietnam, and that religious and political freedom is almost non-existent in present day Vietnam.

In addition, to other activities, The Vietnamese community of Houston is interested in creating a Memorial Park similar to the *Tri An* project in Louisville as a testament to their valiant struggle. They will look to us for advice and input on how to undertake this project.

Another reason not to miss the Houston Reunion is that there will be a special one-hour showing of the new documentary about combat advisors in Vietnam. *Combat Advisor in Vietnam* is based in part on the book, *Under Fire With ARVN Infantry*, by Dr. Bob Worthington, a retired Army Officer with 15 years experience in the infantry and special operations.

The film will be shown in the COUNTERPARTS hospitality suite and Dr. Worthington will be on hand to autograph and sell copies of his new book, which is in part about his role as an advisor in Vietnam during 1966-1967, and 1968-69. See his web site for more information. www.BobWorthingtonWriter.com.



COUNTERPARTS SITREP

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Commander's Corner

Our reunion coordinators, Roy Robison and Henry Newinn, have been actively pulling together all of the details that will make for a terrific get together in Houston, Texas, April 3 - 7, 2019. Leadership from the Vietnamese community has extended a special warm welcome to us and we'll enjoy active participation with fellow comrades-in-arms. For me it represents a nostalgic return to the location of my very first reunion in 1991 and this has special significance. At that Reunion our small group of attendees focused our attention on refining association by-laws and constitution. It was at this early reunion that discussions led us to consensus on augmenting the association name with **COUNTERPARTS/ Thương Hữu Đồng Nam Á**.

Also noteworthy, Life member Bob Worthington has arranged for a viewing of his film, *Under Fire with the ARVN Infantry* and for his book to be available at the reunion. XO, Hank Choy, notified me that the new **Cố Vấn Mỹ** scroll patch would definitely be available to members attending the reunion. Eager to see everyone next year!

Subsequent to the 2018 reunion in Pensacola, your HQ staff has been active in the Washington, D.C. area with COUNTERPARTS presence and support of events with local Vietnamese community organizations such a *Boat People SOS*, and the *Vietnamese Ranger Association*. We participated in Vietnam Advocacy day where Mike Bengé and I joined in team visits to Congressional Offices on Capitol Hill to solicit active support of **House Resolution [HR 5621] the Human Rights Act**.

Another great opportunity was afforded in the form of our attendance at a symposium at the National Archives, *Vietnam War Revisited*, where members Rex Latham and Mike Bengé joined me. COUNTERPARTS Distinguished Member Rufus Philips was a noted speaker at this event, and a delegation of Montagnards from North Carolina attended as the son of community leader Nay Rong presented perspective on the history and plight of Montagnards from the early period of US involvement in Vietnam to present.

I'm eager to know of other Vietnam & veteran related events that our members have been involved in so I can add them to the official association chronology that I've been maintaining. Let me hear from you.

..... Dr. Grant McClure
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Commander

COUNTERPARTS/THDNA is an IRS 501 (c)(3) Veterans organization Chartered in the State of Illinois. Registered Agent is Richard Webster, 1019 W Lafayette Ave Jacksonville IL 62650-1860

COUNTERPARTS REUNION 2009, HOUSTON TEXAS

Hotel Information and Reunion Events

Hotel Information

The Reunion will be held April 3rd thru 7th, 2019 at the *Crowne Plaza Suites*, 9090 Southwest Freeway, Houston, Texas 77074 (**713-995-0123**). If at all possible we recommend you fly into William Hobby airport, as it is much closer to the hotel, **In order to get the COUNTERPARTS rate at the hotel you must inform them that your group code is "COU"**. The room rate per night is \$118.66 including tax. This rate is available for April 1st thru 10th. The room rate of \$118.66 includes Tax and complimentary breakfasts per room. If additional persons are staying in the room, additional breakfasts may be purchased for \$6.00 per person. The hotel offers complimentary parking. These rates will be honored if reservation is made before March 22, 2019.

Schedule of Reunion Events

Wednesday April 3rd: Registration in the Crowne Plaza Suites Houston hospitality room starting at 12 Noon. The Hospitality room is open from 8 AM to 12 PM daily except on April 6th when the Hospitality room will be closed at 2 PM to allow resetting for Banquet Dinner.

Thursday April 4th: Depart with Bus at 9:15 AM/10:45 AM (if 2nd trip required) to Johnson Space Center (JSC).. The tour takes about 4 hours. Food and drink items will be available in the JSC cafeteria. Return to Hotel at 2:00PM/3:40PM. Rest and refresh

Friday April 5th: Depart Hotel at 11:00 AM/11:15 to Vietnam Veterans Memorial Houston for a memorial ceremony and placing of a wreath, with local Vietnamese Veterans. From there to a local Vietnamese Restaurant (pay as you go), with Vietnamese Veterans. Depart to Hotel at 1:30/1:45PM.

Friday April 5th Lady guests who do not want to attend the Veteran Memorial Ceremony, will be bused at 11:30 AM to the Galleria Mall and picked up at 2:00 PM

Saturday April 6th: Business meeting from 9 AM to Noon at Crowne Plaza Suites Houston Hospitality room. The Hospitality room closes at 2 PM for set up for Banquet Dinner. There will be a cash bar at Banquet. The guest speaker is TBD. Sunday

Sunday April 7th: Goodbye's, checkout and depart for home or continue a personal vacation. 'Til next year.....

Note on Dress for Wreath Laying Ceremony, Friday April 5

The Houston Vietnamese Community is making a major effort on this event and consider it a formal and solemn occasion. COUNTERPARTS members should plan on wearing coat and tie, or as an alternative, any appropriate Vietnam Veteran insignia/ uniform items e.g. vests, jackets, shirts with VN related patches and insignia.

.COUNTERPARTS REUNION
April 3rd-7th, 2019,
Houston, tx

2019 Houston Reunion Registration Form:

Registration Fee for 2018 Reunion includes Banquet Dinner, Transportation, Drinks/Snacks in Hospitality room is \$166.00 Per Person.

\$166.00 X number of reservations _____ = _\$_____.

Please provide the names and addresses of Member, Spouse and Guests and make your check payable to "COUNTERPARTS".

If bringing a guest for the banquet, the price will be \$35.00 per guest

Member: _____

Spouse/Guest: _____

Guest: _____

Guest: _____

SEND REGISTRATION FORMS TO:

Mr. Lewis Grissaffi
1221 Vegas Street
San Diego, CA 92110
619-922-8682

Email for Additional Information or Questions: Luisaffi@yahoo.com or rayjobison@gmail.com



Counterparts *Thương Hữu Đông Nam Á*

A veterans' association of Advisors and their Counterparts who served with Allied Forces in the Second Indochina War

May 1, 2018

Counterparts Distinguished Member: James R. Reckner

In recognition of Counterparts member and fellow Co Van, James R. "Jim" Reckner, a career naval officer who served two tours of duty in Vietnam as Senior Advisor RAG 26 and a second tour as Senior Advisor CTF 212.

Jim moved on in retirement from the military in 1988 to become a professor at Texas Tech University (TTU), where among other courses he taught what might have been one of the first university courses on the Vietnam War.

Jim was among one of the original Vietnam veteran groups in Texas that formed in 1989 to discuss preservation of the history of the Vietnam War. During his tenure as a professor at TTU he was the guiding (and forceful) leader to expand teaching and preservation of Vietnam War history, and became the first Director of what became the Vietnam Center and Archives at Texas Tech—a position he held for 20 years, until his January 2009 retirement. Under Jim's direction it has become the 2nd-largest (behind only the National Archives) repository of documents, history, artifacts, etc., of the Vietnam War.

Jim joined Counterparts in the early 1990s and is a lifetime member. The association officers and membership of Counterparts strongly support designating Jim as a **Distinguished Member of Counterparts** for his honorable service in Vietnam and his decades-long support of Vietnam Veterans through preservation of our history.

Dr. Grant A. McClure
Commanding Officer

COUNTERPARTS VILLAGE MARKET



White T-shirts (M, 2XL).....	\$10.00
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Patch (3x 4.75" Oval 7 Color Logogram)	\$6.00
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Decal (3x 4.75" Oval 7 Color Logogram).....	\$2.00
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Lapel Pin (.75x 1.06" Oval, Bronze over Pewter)	\$12.00
NEW COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Challenge Coin:.	\$15.00
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Baseball style Cap (direct embroidery logogram)	\$15.00
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Coffee Mug (COUNTERPARTS color logo).....	\$11.00
COUNTERPARTS Knit Polo shirt with collar. Black or White. (Embroidered COUNTERPARTS Logo, M, L, XL, 2XL).....	\$20.00
MACV Shoulder Patch (full color mfg. 1968).....	\$3.00
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Jacket, black, Logo. (Large, XL, 2XL).....	\$35.00

"Covan My" Tab coming soon!

Please send prepaid orders (including Shipping & Handling Fee) with US bank check or US money order payable to:

**Mike McMunn
COUNTERPARTS Quartermaster
2310 Newberry St, Williamsport, PA 17701 USA**

For information, call 570-220-8156.

covan2@verizon.net

Into The Mouth Of The Dragon – Part 2

Steve King

(Part 1 of Steve's story appeared in the Spring 2018 issue of SITREP)

Midday, Tuesday February 19, 1990 finds me walking out of the Tan Son Nhut Airport terminal in Saigon. I am greeted by my friend Ngyuen Lan Son and his brother-in Law, Dieu. We begin the 80km drive to Vung Tau in a small pickup with Son & myself riding in the back. We make a stop for a quick lunch of Pho & bread. The trip is uneventful, other than the plainclothes policeman following us. In 1990, it was illegal for any foreigner, (and especially Americans), to stay in a private home. It was required that you stay in a government-authorized hotel. Son is convinced that we can ignore that law and that I can stay with his family. Within 30 minutes of our arrival at his family's home in Vung Tau, we receive the first of many visits from one of the 5 different DRV police organizations. For the first few days, they are all fairly cordial and repeatedly remind me that I am not allowed to stay in a private residence. (More on this later.)

In many very practical ways, basic living conditions have only worsened since the communist takeover. The electricity is on only from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am each day and the water is on for only about four hours during the day. This, of course, contaminates the water supply, making it unsafe to drink without boiling first. Not being the shy & retiring type, I decide that the best course of action is to seek an appointment with the Mayor (Chairman of the People's Committee) of Vung Tau – now a city of 175,000+. So, the next day, Son heads to City Hall & makes the request. As could be expected, no one could give him a direct answer & he was told that someone would contact us. Later, we found out that our request was discussed at the city, then the province, then Saigon, and finally Hanoi.

Wednesday, February 20, 1990: Day two begins at 7:30 am. After breakfast, Son sends his younger brother to the Immigration Police Office with a copy of my passport, visa, several passport size pictures & my travel permit. This is required to accomplish the required registration of a foreign visitor in the city where you are staying. Around 9:00 am, we have a visit from a Mr. Thao, who is supposedly from the Immigration Police, but more likely from the Ministry of the Interior. He has come to meet me in person & brings more forms for me to fill out. He also relates that I was supposed to appear at the Immigration Police Office with my papers, not send someone in my place. He communicates to Son that my staying in his family's home is not permitted & that I cannot remain without permission from Hanoi. The SRV has very strong "anti-fraternization" laws relating to foreigners, especially Americans. (Secondarily, they want the US \$ cash flow in the hotels, as they are all at least partially owned by the government.) Son listens very patiently, but remains firm in his request that I be allowed to stay with him in his family's home. Clearly frustrated by our non-compliance, Mr. Thao leaves to discuss the situation with his superiors.

Over the next 10 days, we met with city & province officials numerous times. At our 2nd meeting, we met one of the most powerful men in Southern Vietnam. Do Hang was the Minister of External Affairs for Ba Ria/Vung Tau Province. Since the late 1970's when Russia began drilling for oil off the coast, Vung Tau became a *Special Economic Zone* within Vietnam. During the War, Do Hang had been the North Vietnamese Ambassador to Poland. He was very well educated and spoke Vietnamese, French, Polish and English. Less of an ideologue than a statesman, Do Hang became our advocate & turned out to be invaluable as an ally. (A side note about the cast of characters that we dealt with in the Vung Tau City government: LeVan Han, the mayor, had been a Senior VC political officer in the Vung Tau Area, Vo Quoc Chien, Director of Medical Affairs, had been an NVA hospital commander for 10 years on the Cambodian border, & Ms. Troung Minh Thuy, Social Services Director, had been a VC leader in the area.)

After lunch, Mr. Thao arrives again. He rehashes the great difficulty with me staying in a private home, which is against the law. He also requests more passport size pictures, of which I have no more to give. Trying to seem accommodating, Mr. Thao returns to his office and comes back with a camera to take his own pictures. (Now, I'm sure that my picture will be shared with way too many police organizations in-country.) My passport & other papers reappear with an Immigration Police officer around 5:00 pm, with "*very temporary*" permission granted for me to stay with Son in his family's home until there is more definitive word from Hanoi. Following his conversation with the officer, Son tells me that it is probable that I may be the very first American granted ever temporary permission to stay in a private home since 1975. That is certainly the case in this province.

...Continued on page 8

...Continued from page 7

Late in the afternoon, after returning to Son's family home, the local police captain & his lieutenant arrive to meet & question me. These two are responsible for this district of the city. This, obviously, is all part of the effort at intimidation. They want me to know that my every move is being watched. They are crystal clear that they have authority over me & that none of my movements are going unnoticed. Captain Troung & Lt. Thang are both from the North, from an area close to the Chinese border. They were sent to Vung Tau in 1979. They know every detail of each resident's life & control everything. We share beer, the evening meal & talk for about three hours.

At first, they seem to be intent on communicating to me the extent of their authority. Captain Troung then poses all of the same questions as Major Tran at the airport: *"Was I here during the War? Where was I stationed? How long was I here? What did I do during the War? What was my rank? Was I in combat? Do I know many Vietnamese? Do I speak Vietnamese? What is the purpose of my trip?"* It doesn't take long to realize that the various police organizations will be comparing the results of their questioning. As he translates, Son very deftly, answers what is appropriate & glosses over those things that it would not be prudent to reveal. He provides basically the same "back story" that I have responded with during the previous questionings. As the hours wear on, both officers consume 9-10 beers apiece & finally loosen up a bit. They tell a few jokes & make a few toasts. However, all of us at the table realize that the "game" must be played their way. After all, I am on their turf & they must handle this American correctly.

Thursday, February 21, 1991. At 8:00 AM we have a visit from Mr. Vo Quoc Chien, the Director for Medical Affairs. He is here to tell us that all of the tentative plans for our proposed meetings with government officials have been changed. He relates that from this point forward, we will be dealing with the city government only. (Son tells me that this is primarily due to the official desire to control the situation tightly, as well as the Province's desire to observe without committing to anything.) Chien stays for about 1 ½ hours under the pretense of wanting to get to know Son & I. Over the course of his visit, it's portrayed as a *"get acquainted"* session. Although, Chien's style of questioning is more casual and friendly, in the context of our *"friendly"* conversation, he asks all of the same questions that the various police agencies have asked me.

I had come to Vietnam with the desire to provide assistance to an existing organization that was already caring for orphaned & abandoned children. Somewhat to my surprise, they express interest in us doing more. In our next meeting with the city, Chairman Han presents me with a challenge; *"Mr. King, I believe that your vision is too small! – If you are willing to build an orphanage, the City will give you the land."* I am stunned! Suddenly, my vision has to expand exponentially. Ms. Thuy admits to at least 175 homeless children in the city that they cannot care for. (My hunch is that there are probably 2-3 times that many.) Somewhat amazingly, they offer to allow us to staff & operate the project, with minimal government involvement.

Over the next few days, we are shown multiple properties & buildings – all of which had been seized from former South Vietnamese officials. We ultimately settle on a site with 2 large villas on 1 ½ acres overlooking the South China Sea. Obviously, they need some updating & rehab work, however, nothing major. *Friday, February 22, 1991.* At 9:00 AM, 2 new officers from the Ministry of the Internal Affairs arrive at the house & announce that the American can no longer stay here. Son's sister & brother-in-law are required to return with them to the Internal Affairs Office to *"straighten things out."* They are gone about two hours & shortly after they return, Mr. Thao shows up at the house for 1 ½ hours of coffee & *"conversation."* He relates at great length, how difficult the situation is & that the Internal Affairs Office is only trying to *"protect me from citizens who may have something against Americans."* When he leaves, he promises to advocate on my behalf to be able to stay with the family. It is painfully obvious, that the Internal Affairs folks are seriously paranoid about me staying in a private home.

Sunday, February 24, 1991. At lunch time, the local policemen, Captain Troung & Lieutenant Thang, showed up with their boss, Major Vinh. Major Vinh is the Assistant Chief of the Police District of Vung Tau. They ate with us & stayed about 2 hours. As always, lots of questions about my background, my time in Vietnam, what I had been doing since I was here during the war, & why I came back. They were not antagonistic in the least. However, everyone knew that everything I said would be later written up in a report.

Shortly after the policemen's departure, my two police *"friends"* from the Internal Affairs Department appear again & restate their position that I cannot stay with Son's family & must move to an approved hotel. So, after five days of total freedom, they inform me that this evening they will move me to a hotel of their choosing. And, of course, the hotel they are sending me to, is owned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

What a surprise! The only concession that the Mayor's office is able to secure is that I will only have to pay the Vietnamese citizen rate (\$5.00 per day), instead for the "*foreigners*" rate (\$30.00 per day). When we question this requirement again, the answer is twofold: 1) "*It is government policy & cannot be violated,*" and, 2) "*I must remember that it's for my security!*" My thought is: "Repression is not dead after all!" There is no doubt that they have decided that they must do something to demonstrate their complete authority over me. I have to admit that this really irritates me. However, at this point, I have no choice unless I want to leave the country.

Around 8:00 pm, the Internal Affairs officers arrive to escort me to the Da Lan Hotel. At first glance, the room seems meager, but survivable. After I am secured in my room & the officers have departed, I realize that this is in some small measure retribution for my having been here, on "*the other side*" during the war.

The toilet doesn't flush & is full. There's no hot water & no air conditioning. And, worse yet, there is no screen on the window. Of course, it's stifling hot & the humidity must be at least 95%. So, unless I want to succumb to heat prostration, the window has to be open. I wash up in cold water, open the window & lay on the bed under the single sheet provided. Between 9:30pm & 6:00 am, I get a total of 1 ½ hours of sleep – maybe! As soon as I opened the window, the room was filled with mosquitoes, who are relentless in their attack. Anywhere I have skin exposed, they attack. After about 45 minutes, I sit up at the head of the bed & cover myself with the sheet. The rest of the night, it seems like I would doze off for 5-10 minutes, then move & expose some small area of skin & the attack would begin all over again. By 2:00 am, I am sure that the Internal Affairs officers are having a good laugh at my expense.

Monday, February 25, 1991. I am totally exhausted (and one big mosquito bite) but very glad when Son's brother-in-law arrives at 6:45am to pick me up. After lunch, Son & I discussed the hotel situation & I made the decision that I was going to move to a better hotel regardless of the mandate from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. After dinner, Son & I went back to the Da Lan "*prison*" Hotel & I checked out – over serious objections from the desk person. (He was on the phone to the Internal Affairs office as we exited the building.) I simply told them that if they wanted to find me, I would be at the Canadian Hotel. By the time we drive to the Canadian Hotel, two Internal Affairs Officers are waiting for me in the lobby. They are very upset that I have checked out of their hotel & threaten everything short of expulsion from the country. At this point, I have nothing to lose & adamantly refuse to return to the Da Lan stating unequivocally that I will be staying here at the Canadian Hotel, regardless of their opinion. If they don't like it, I don't care. They leave very angry, saying that their supervisor would "*see about this*" in the morning.

In spite of all of the police harassment, we are able to consummate an agreement with the city and formally sign documents at a dinner reception at a local restaurant the next day. My remaining few days are spent sightseeing, being followed by secret policemen, & being treated wonderfully by everyone I encounter. I return to the U.S. ready to form a 501(c)(3) organization (Project Mercy), pursue licensing by the State Department & the Treasury Department, as well as beginning the process of raising funds. Six months later, in the Fall of 1990, I returned to Vung Tau, with Son, & the American couple who will be directors of the orphanage.

Over the next 3 years, we had the pleasure of caring for 64 orphans at the orphanage. In early 1994, we turned the orphanage over to the Social Services office of the City & moved our efforts North to Central Vietnam. Between 1994 and 1999, we built a network of Vietnamese Christian foster homes throughout central Vietnam & the Highlands. In the next five years we placed 486 orphaned or abandoned children in these foster care homes. Approximately 75% of these children were Montagnard. In early 2000, Project Mercy merged with another NGO, with a much larger profile & infrastructure in-country.

After 10 years & 9 trips back to Vietnam, I felt a personal sense of accomplishment that we had been able to help so many children. All without succumbing to the police pressure, without paying any bribes, & maintaining our personal integrity.

....*Steve King*

Running Through Vietnam

By
Jim Barker

I served in Vietnam July 1969- August 1972. During that time I tried to stay involved in my main avocation; running. At times though it took all the creativity and imagination I could muster. Here is the story,

Arrival: Stepping off the Tiger Airlines flight at Bien Hoa in the early dawn humidity, my running shoes were hung casually over my shoulder. A passing GI took note and said " mister, you won't be using those over here." However, after settling in at MACV headquarters, I embarked on an 8 mile run in the midday heat. Slogging in the final stretch, I must have passed for a prime Maine Lobster! It was a humble realization that this climate had little mercy for distance runners.

Assignment Nha Trang: Initial orders found me at the 330th Radio Research station, which was located not distant from the ocean at one of the most desirable places in Vietnam. The city, with its culture, lovely bay and coastline was a Mecca for tourists. Along the bordering white sand of the seaside road, one could almost touch the sparkling waters of the South China Sea.

Using a jeep, I soon marked out a 10-mile course that bordered the ocean, turned at the Central City traffic circle, and returned along the airport. I ran "Hawaiian style" in shorts only, to the amusement of part of the local populace. It was the end of the rainy season and the roads were soft and wet. Due to the bacteria in the water I had two bouts of blood poisoning within the first few weeks. At first I ran solo, but was later joined by a dedicated triathlete from Southern California. Our best workouts were during pouring rains to mitigate the heat and humidity. It became a game and a pleasure chasing and pacing with bicycles and the three-wheel lambrettas. An occasional treat to the final finishing mile was racing into the ocean for a quick cool down. On a few occasions I was greeted by an airborne incoming school of flying fish! Ascending the beach for the final distance to the company was the inevitable encounter with a coterie of the local nightclub gals dressed and adorned with much makeup. I would greet them in Vietnamese, however they could see that this semi –naked ape in motion didn't have a bankroll in hand.

. After a few months a captain buddy who was a very competitive tennis player invited me to join him on a special assignment to the II Corps Central Highlands as an advisor with the South Vietnamese 23rd Division.

As the area was under Red Alert, I spent my workouts the first month running forty laps around a rutted soccer field bordering our Intel compound. After conditions stabilized, I started countryside runs on Highway 14. The route passed by a South Vietnamese regiment and a Montagnard battalion. after a few weeks I observed the montagnards out jogging slowly. Maybe their command did not want to be trumped by this American Soldier flowing by their premises.

One late afternoon after doing Intel intercept I was jogging and encountered some school children returning home. A young fellow encumbered with books began jogging with me in his sandals. I offered to carry his books, which seemed to be a great relief to him, but when I handed the books back there was a clear perspiration hand imprint on the cover. He smiled broadly. A good moment of autographed diplomacy! In time, Captain Rogers a recreational runner, joined on some of the runs. Running uphill in the weather we experienced was laborious and the captain tended to run behind me some distance.

On a few instances on countryside runs villagers on their bikes in would shout " VC!" to warn me. In the Spring of 1972 Hanoi planners chose to launch the Easter Offensive with Kon tum City as the 3rd Front. As the siege began to escalate, I was called up to do communications and language work as a member of Defense Command. Any chance for workouts evaporated for nearly two months in the command bunker, trying to dodge incoming artillery and rockets from Communist forces. My weight plunged as dysentery and a scarcity of fresh vegetables ravaged my body

By June, the siege lifted, and the diminished North Vietnamese forces were forced to withdraw. All parts and limbs intact, I returned to Ban Me Thuot as a lucky survivor. Feeling an immense sense of relief and liberation, I worked out more fervently than ever. GIs at the intelligence unit assumed I would start saturating myself in booze and/or marijuana. However, self-numbing was not an option; I was more focused and vigilant than ever. More than fitness, running now served as healing and meditation.

Finishing military service and discharging home to Idaho, I landed running. With the internal intensity I felt, running and endurance sports became a big part of lifestyle. At one point I even qualified for the Olympic trials in the marathon. The Vietnam Experience was now a permanent part of my emotional real estate.

Note: 20 years later a vanguard Aussie sports organization was approved by the Vietnam government to sponsor the first inaugural marathon in Vietnam. I seized this opportunity to organize a contingent of wheelchair veterans and join with two Olympian friends to run the marathon. Beyond the dialogue opportunity with former foes and national athletes, the event served a deeper purpose as an illustration of American freedom, and a statement as individuals that we had never abandoned the people of South Vietnam.

EARLY INTRO TO VIET NAM

Mitchel R Woolard/Sp5 MAAG VN Team 96

I grew up watching the US Army Pictorial Service program *The Big Picture*. At that time, they often had documentary films of the Vietnamese helping the Allies fight the Japanese followed by the Viet Minh kicking French derriere at Dien Bien Phu. I liked movies of colonial militiamen, frontier rangers and US Calvary and admired the scouts who roamed independently among the locals. While this led to my studies of military history and thoughts of a military career I still held to my desire for being independent of authority. Here's how it played out.

Summer 1961; Fort Jackson, SC basic infantry and advanced weapons and demolition. A few of us were told that since we were assigned to the 82nd there had developed a new opportunity for like minded souls – something called “special forces”

Fall 1961: Fort Bragg, NC, We were told that some would be assigned to a newly formed “5th Special Forces” with following assignment on six months rotation to a place called Viet Nam! All I could recall of SE Asia was the old news reels of French Indo-China. Could that be it? Our SOG (Special Operations Group) told us there was talk of JFK having our units wear green berets, but that we were not to do so as we would be out of uniform and would be picked up by the MPs.

March 1963; Fort Benning, GA, 2nd Infantry Division. After arriving there I was called in and reminded that one of my requests on enlisting was for chopper school. I was told that since I was nearing the appropriate age I could transfer to Fort Rucker and begin training with subsequent assignment to --- Viet Nam! There again I said I had only just arrived and would like to get a feel for my new assignment. Shortly thereafter I was assigned to joint US Army Air Force Strike Command for a brief tour. Upon returning to Fort Benning I was assigned to return to Fort Bragg JFKSWC for further training.

October 1963; Fort Bragg, Camp Mackall, MATA 3-64. Met up with some of the old souls I'd started out with and renewed old friendships. Viet Nam was on the horizon and approaching fast.

December 1963; Cholon, VN. I quickly became enmeshed in Chinese/Vietnamese culture, food, beer, wine, etc. Reported to MAAG VN Saigon HQ for an introductory briefing. We were quickly informed that we were *persona non grata*, that politically we did not exist, that our combat MOS were all changed to administrative and to remove all forms of US military ID. We were then given a Vietnamese driver license as ID. In the event we were captured our presence would be denied and we'd be exposed as possible drug runners. The next day at 05:30 Sp. Greenberg and myself hopped aboard a Caribou outbound for IV Corps MAAG Team 96. We were the only two Americans among an RVN unit with their families and livestock. As the sun broke the horizon, the engines roared to life, the women began to scream, the kids started crying, ducks and chickens started squawking and flapping, the plane lifted off with the tailgate down and we lifted our feet to let the vomit and pee run out the back. I'd never seen anything like it!

Nearing Christmas 1963; Can Tho, VN. After several stops dropping off all but Greenberg and myself we approached the shelled out tower of Can Tho. The pilot said he'd do a fly-by to kick out our bags but the next pass we were to be out the door. We quickly gathered our gear and high tailed it out to the nearest road to town about ten km away. We hitched a ride and were dropped off at the Vietnamese IV Corps HQ. Without a greeting, the team first sergeant came out told us to drop our bags and accompany him. His only comment on seeing the state of my fatigues was “Where the hell was your last tour!”. Ten minutes later we were both in the local hospital giving blood to wounded RVN troops with one VN doctor and two VN nurses. That afternoon I was to be introduced to my counterpart, he had been killed earlier that day and ARVN was still rounding up a replacement. That evening we reported in at Eakin Compound and were told the team major had been shot the previous night; a “training accident”. (There was a lot of “training accidents” back then.) We went for drinks while waiting for the two sergeants we were to replace. About 2100 hrs, an RVN scout arrived to inform us there had been an ambush on the road from the airport that afternoon trapping the two Americans in their French armored car - another “training accident”.

We were then informed that we'd have a three man A-Team backup if needed, but not to count on it as they too had their hands full, basically if something went down to head north and find our way back to Saigon because we'd be on our own. The first sergeant turned to us and said “Welcome to Viet Nam”!

MEMBERS IN MEMORIAM

Dr. James Richard "Jim" Reckner (1940 - 2018)

"Only those are fit to live who do not fear to die, and none are fit to die who have shrunk from the joy of life and the duty of life. Both life and death are parts of the same Great Adventure." - Teddy Roosevelt

Dr. James (Jim) Richard Reckner passed away in Dallas on November 16, 2018, at the age of 78. We think this quote above from his favorite president, Teddy Roosevelt, captures the way that Jim lived his life: A great adventure shaped by duty and graced with joy.

Jim was born in Philadelphia on August 7, 1940. One of the early photos of him was taken when he was about 5 years old and he's proudly wearing a sailor suit: It would seem his career choice was preordained, and in 1958 he embarked on his great adventure. The US Navy would take him to many exotic places, but his most important stop was Wellington, New Zealand where he met his beloved wife Middy. Middy passed away in 2016 but his love for her never faltered.

Following the joy of love, came duty. Duty called Jim to Vietnam for two tours, and his time there stirred an intellectual curiosity that would be quenched in the years to come. After retiring from the Navy, Jim earned a Ph.D. from the University of Auckland and began his academic career. He taught history at Texas Tech University for twenty years, and during that time founded the Vietnam Center and Archive that is housed there. As director of the center, Jim forged friendships with some of the key players in the Vietnam War and received accolades and honors from a variety of academic and government organizations. While exceedingly proud of these accomplishments, his children feel that none of them compare to the love and devotion he showed as a father. In his most important role, no recognition or award would be sufficient to quantify his success.

Jim was also instrumental in ensuring COUNTERPARTS continued existence at a time when the organization's very survival was at risk. In 2004 he set up and coordinated a Reunion at the Texas Tech Vietnam Center. The theme was centered around the Advisory War, and did a great deal to help grow and sustain the effort to document and understand the Advisory effort.

Jim will be missed by his children, Rachel, David (Renea), and Sean (Michelle), and grandchildren Ben and Chloe. He is also survived by his in-laws (the beloved Montgomery family of New Zealand) and many siblings, nephews, and nieces. Jim is preceded in death by his parents Harry and Ellen Reckner, his sister Irene McGarvey, and his brother Harry Reckner. A memorial service was held at Lake Ridge Chapel and Memorial in Lubbock, Texas on Friday, November 30.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Texas Tech University Vietnam Center and Archive Fund for Excellence or to [The Michael J. Fox Foundation](#).

Note: COUNTERPARTS recognized Jim Reckner's unique and lasting contribution to COUNTERPARTS. The letter is reproduced on page five of this issue

Egon Tausch

Egon R. Tausch was an active member of COUNTERPARTS until 2016, when he let his membership lapse due to illness. Mr. Tausch died on 27 July 2018. Should any of the membership wish to visit his grave, he is buried at Fort Sam National Cemetery, Section 104, Grave 188.

Y'Kok Ksor,

Spartanburg, SC January 9, 2019, Born February 26, 1944, in Cheo Reo, Gia Lai Province, in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, he was a devoted husband, father and grandfather as well as a prominent political activist. Ksor is a member of the Jarai ethnic group and fought with U. S. Army Special Forces during the Vietnam war. He was awarded multiple honors for his bravery, including the [Purple Heart](#) and was a COUNTERPARTS member and President of the Degar Foundation, Inc., whose mission is to preserve the lives, rights and culture of the Montagnard people. An online guest book is at <http://www.floydmortuary.com/>

COUNTERPARTS SCHOLARS- A History since 2006

By

Rich Webster

I just returned from my 10th visit to Cambodia where our COUNTERPARTS organization should be proud of our commitment to provide college educations to Indigenous Hill Tribes (Montagnard) students from Eastern Cambodia. What prompted me to write this overview of our Montagnard Scholar program that supports the international NGO, Cambodia Corps was a comment by a member on why he doesn't attend reunions. The comment was that COUNTERPARTS doesn't do anything. Perhaps a lot of our members don't know the good we have done and continue to do.

First a history of how COUNTERPARTS got involved with Cambodia Corps. In 2005, I traveled to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to write a report for Church World Service on Montagnards in a refugee camp. They had fled Vietnam after the uprisings in the Central Highlands in 2004. While there, I rented a space in a pickup truck and traveled 8 hours out to the frontier province of Mondulakiri where I witnessed firsthand what remarkable work Tommy Daniels with his Cambodia Corps was doing with many young Montagnards who were homeless. Tommy started supporting the homeless shelter in Sen Monorum in 2001 so that over one hundred students from the Bunong tribe could finish their high school education in Sen Monorum.

In the Spring of 2003, Tommy received a \$55,000-dollar grant from his Rotary Club that enabled CCI to upgrade the Sen Monorum homeless shelter and begin feeding and clothing the 180 middle and high school students. At that time, there was only one Bunong with a high school education in Mondulakiri Province. That was Mune Yane, a young female Bunong, who received her bachelor's degree in 2005, and went on to become the first Montagnard lawyer in Cambodia.

I came back and presented the idea at our Seattle reunion in 2006 to sponsor one of these kids to a college education. The idea was to give back to the Montagnard nation that the US had abandoned in Southeast Asia. Since 2006, our members supported this effort and we have now funded the education of three college graduates and currently sponsor two young Jarai ladies, Sall Panha who studies for a BS in Community Development and Toeum Phem who studies Information Technology at the Catholic Don Bosco Training Center in Phnom Penh.

Our first three graduates were: a Bunong, Broy Makara with a degree in Veterinary Science; two Jarais, Romas Phanna with a degree in Information Technology; and Sev Yem, a high school teacher. These three have been active back in their home provinces working at jobs that improve the lives of their people. One of the goals of CCI is to develop an educated leadership for the Montagnard nation that was over 90 percent illiterate.

While in Ratanakiri Province, I visited one of our scholars, Romas Phanna, who is now the assistant principal/technology specialist at a private school with 300 students, grades 1-6. He proudly told me that he had recruited 38 poor Tampoun kids from the surrounding area to provide them with a much-needed quality education.

Since 2005, CCI has graduated 45 college students who have gone back to their home provinces of Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri to work at jobs helping their people. One of the requirements to receive a scholarship is to go back to work two years for every year of education provided. CCI in early years concentrated on boys; now we have switched to educating girls.

CCI now has 14 college girls in their Indigenous Student Center in Phnom Penh who travel out to various colleges in the city. The cost to educate each girl is \$1800 a year to include rent for the 3-story house and transportation. Each girl is given \$2 a day for food and incidentals. CCI provides the rice/cooking oil, gas stove, and three motorcycles and 12 bicycles for transportation. The girls buy their own food down the street in the local market.

CCI has only one paid employee, Siramaren Uth, a Cambodian who fled the Khmer Rouge as a young child and grew up in a refugee camp in Thailand, being educated there by a Catholic priest. He has been with CCI for 10 years and is a faithfully dedicated to our mission in Montagnard land.

Maren and I just returned from Ratanakiri Province where we recruited seven new high school girls living in remote villages for our house in Ban Lung. There are now 18 Montagnard girls living there so they can finish high school. They are from the Jarai, Tampoun, and the Kachork tribes. We provide them with housing and a small stipend, so they can attend the only high school in the province.

The additional money that COUNTERPARTS provides each year goes to the Ban Lung house and for expenses on the Indigenous Student Center in PP. At least seven COUNTERPARTS members have visited the program over the years, and several members, including myself, have sponsored students.

I can personally attest that most of the money given to CCI goes directly to the now 34 students that CCI provides services for, the only expense being our loyal Cambodian employee. For the record, I pay my own travel expenses to and from Cambodia, as well as expenses while there.

COUNTERPARTS charitable giving and individual members have provided college educations for at least 12 Montagnard students over the years. Since 2006, we have given \$35,000 and individual Members another \$80,000 to CCI, an achievement to be proud of.

On my last day in Cambodia, October 2, a former CCI graduate, Chang Nin stopped by to see me. Years ago, CCI had taken him when he was living in the homeless shelter to Phnom Penh to have an operation on his foot. He grew up in the village of Dak Dom on the border with Vietnam. A poisonous snake had bitten him on the foot when he was a child and paralyzed the muscles. He had grown up with a deformed foot unable to walk without a limp. He wore an old rubber boot on his foot to hide the deformity. Foot surgery and several years of rehab recovery finally enabled him to walk with a normal gait. CCI provided him with a college education in 2010 in accounting. He now is married and has a young child, lives in Bous Rau in the center of Bunong country. His job now is to settle land disputes between foreign companies and the Montagnard villagers. COUNTERPARTS' generous giving had enabled this young handicapped Montagnard to rise above his circumstances in a land that is 90 percent illiterate and become an advocate for his people against the giant land grab that is now going on in Eastern Cambodia.

Chang Nin rode to the airport with me to say good-bye. It was an emotional parting. I'm glad that I climbed in the back of that pickup truck years ago and made the connection with Cambodia Corps. Max Lund has now taken over as President of CCI from Tommy Daniels and I am still a board member.

And that's the story of how COUNTERPARTS got connected with CAMBODIA CORPS and why we do more as a veteran's organization than just swap stories at our reunion.

COUNTERPARTS WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Robert S. "Bob" Boyd joined as a lifetime member of COUNTERPARTS. He served as Phung Hoang Coordinator and Deputy District Senior Advisor in Cu Chi District, Hau Nghia Province, from February 1969 through February 1970. Bob lives in Alexandria, VA.

Robert F. "Bob" Lee served on Advisory Team 75 in My Tho and Dong Tam, Dinh Tuong Province, as advisor to the 7th ARVN Division Reconnaissance Company from November 1969 to November 1970. Bob lives in Katy, Texas and is looking forward to attending the April 2019 reunion in Houston.

Edwin R. Rorriquez served on Advisory Team 42 as RF/PF Advisor in the Bong Son area of Binh Dinh Province, from April 1972 to April 1973. Edwin lives in McAllen, Texas.

Aaron Gritmaker was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group from 1966-1967. He had short stints on Team A-107 in a couple locations, then spent most of his time in I Corps on Team A-100. The team was a joint U.S./Australia team leading the I Corps Mobile Guerrilla Force, made up of Rhade and Ko Ho troops. While serving on a six-month extension of tour he was severely wounded and medevaced back to the U.S. Aaron learned of COUNTERPARTS from his Australian team members, with whom he has maintained contact. Aaron lives in Maypearl, Texas.

DUES NOTICE

COUNTERPARTS members are reminded that annual dues are payable and due on 1 January 2019. Annual dues are \$35. Your dues fund the several programs we have to support our former COUNTERPARTS in SE Asia. Lifetime members DO NOT owe any dues; you already paid with your lifetime membership. Please make your check out to "COUNTERPARTS" and mail to our Membership Officer: John Haseman, 555 West Saddle Drive, Grand Junction, CO 81507

BOOK REVIEWS

Reviews of Books, new and old, relating to the Southeast Asia experience. Members are encouraged to submit reviews. All reviews will be published as space permits.

Two Books by COUNTERPARTS Members

Reviewed by John B. Haseman

Two COUNTERPARTS members have written books that describe two completely different aspects of the role of an advisor to ARVN tactical units. One officer spent over a year as a young lieutenant advising an infantry battalion, that division's reconnaissance company, and the Division G-2's Recondo company. The other author spent two separate assignments as an intelligence advisor at ARVN division level in the Mekong Delta. Both officers describe the closeness of their relationships with Counterparts, their admiration for ARVN soldiers and their tactical prowess, and the how leadership -- good and poor -- influenced their Counterparts' units.

Sadly, we lost Robert Parrish in 2017. His account of a year in combat with the 5th ARVN Division in and around the Iron Triangle in MR III is riveting. His book, *"Combat Recon: My Year with the ARVN,"* was published back in 1991 and I wish I had read the book before he passed away. He wrote perhaps the best account I have read about the intricate relationships an advisor must cultivate with immediate Counterparts, their soldiers, and the ARVN chain of command. Virtually his entire year, 1967-1968, was spent in combat. His descriptions of his small unit combat operations are realistic and highly descriptive. Sketch maps of their areas of operations are very helpful in "following the action" that took place during his many months as a small tactical unit advisor. Robert dedicated his book to the units he advised: "They deserved much more than we ultimately gave them."

COUNTERPARTS member William Hanne's book covers his two tours of duty as an advisor in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam as well as brief chapters about the rest of his distinguished career in the U.S. and Europe. His short book is highly readable. Bill had two separate assignments as an intelligence advisor to the 9th ARVN Division. He served in Sa Dec as the deputy division G-2 advisor 1965-66, and returned as the division G-2 advisor, mostly in Chi Lang near the Seven Mountains, 1971-72.

Bill describes in considerable detail the close relationships he formed with his Counterparts, and his affection and admiration for the ordinary people in Sa Dec Province. He compares and contrasts the situation with the Division and its leadership, noting many times the importance of leadership to unit morale and effectiveness. His description of the changes between 1966 and 1971 assignments are important.

He enjoyed his advisory experiences and his work -- from competent Counterparts and shared meals in downtown restaurants, to aerial reconnaissance flights to support his division. He even enjoyed a sudden assignment to build a new advisory team compound from scratch when the 9th Division moved to Kien Giang Province on short notice. He did not enjoy the poor support he received from higher headquarters intelligence offices, or the near-total lack of interest and combat reality he found in Saigon-level personnel.

I enjoyed both of these books! We shared a sense of mission accomplishment, the pleasure of counterpart friendships, and the unique environment experienced by advisors regardless of the areas where they worked.

Robert D. Parrish, *Combat Recon: My Year with the ARVN*

St. Martin's Press, 1991. Available on Amazon.com in hardback and paperback formats

William G. Hanne, *A Snake in the Road: A Different Take on the U.S. Involvement in Vietnam*

Michael A. Feinberg, 2015. Available on Amazon.com in hardback and paperback formats. Or directly from the author

*MARK IT ON YOUR CALENDAR!
COUNTERPARTS REUNION 2019.
HOUSTON, TEXAS,
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INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION IN THIS ISSUE
OF SITREP*



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