



# COUNTERPARTS

## TƯƠNG HỮU ĐÔNG NAM Á

# SITREP

Volume XX

Issue 3

Winter ,2020

### ***Ft. Benning, GA Proposed for September 21-25 Reunion***

Reunion Coordinators Ray Robison and Lewis Grissaffi have begun the planning for a MACV Advisor Reunion, sponsored by COUNTERPARTS, to be held at Fort Benning, Georgia, Sept 21 through 25, 2021. They have enlisted COUNTERPARTS members Bill Miller from South Carolina, and Jerry Hughes and Lou Rothenstein from Georgia to assist on the ground in Columbus.

Tours will be coordinated through the Public Affairs office at Fort Benning, to include visits to the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade, the 200-foot tower at the Airborne School, the Army Ranger School, and the Infantry Museum (Depending upon availability). Coordination will be made for individual recorded interviews with various Military Historians, similar to the interviews done at the Houston Reunion. Members who participate will be provided copies of their interview. The Village Market will also be open for purchases of COUNTERPARTS material.

We want to invite all COUNTERPARTS members to emerge from the long hibernation in their COVID Cocoons and spread their wings in flight to Ft. Benning in Columbus, Georgia. Along the way, we suggest you also invite fellow former MACV advisors to join with COUNTERPARTS in the spirit of camaraderie. Also if you know of any Advisory Teams, MAT teams or other Advisory units that might want to join us in our Reunion, please invite them.

Non-COUNTERPARTS members are reminded that by paying Registration fees, they can participate in our social activities *but will be excluded from our business meeting*. Those groups that come as separate teams can plan their own mini meetings between scheduled events.

Vietnam Advisors are rapidly becoming a dying breed, so we need to take every opportunity to gather in camaraderie and fellowship. Just know that when you arrive at our Reunion, you may not know anyone but by the time you leave you will know many other former *CoVans* who walked in your boots.

Tentative Reservations have been made at the DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL in COLUMBUS GA. Reservation information is as follows:

***Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, 5351 Sidney Simons Blvd, Columbus GA 31904 T. 866 568 0896. Cite "COUNTERPARTS Reunion" for special rate.***

***Room rate is \$119.00 plus taxes and fees for a total of \$143.04 per night. Reservation cutoff date is September 11, 2021.***

***Room rate includes two free Breakfasts per room and free Parking. The hotel also has a ten passenger van available for short trips up to three miles.***

More details will follow as the planning develops. Additional information on the 2021 Reunion will also be published on our Website at [www.Counterparts.net](http://www.Counterparts.net) and on our Facebook page.

***Comments and recommendations on the proposed Reunion Plan should be sent to COUNTERPARTS Commander Grant McClure at [grant.mcclure@outlook.com](mailto:grant.mcclure@outlook.com) as well as the Hosts Ray Robison [rayrobison@gmail.com](mailto:rayrobison@gmail.com) and Lewis Grisaffi [luisaffi@yahoo.com](mailto:luisaffi@yahoo.com). For planning. please get back to Ray if you plan to attend (circumstances permitting).***

**Commander**

Grant McClure  
[grant.mcclure@outlook.com](mailto:grant.mcclure@outlook.com)

**Executive Officer**

Hank Choy  
[choyh002@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:choyh002@hawaii.rr.com)

**Adjutant/Treasurer**

Jim O'Malley  
 P.O. Box 1331Brawley CA 92227  
[omalley@usa.net](mailto:omalley@usa.net)

**Quartermaster//Logistics****Officer/Village Market**

Mike McMunn  
 2310 Newberry St Williamsport PA  
 17701-4243  
[covan2@verizon.net](mailto:covan2@verizon.net)

**Membership**

John B. Haseman  
 555 W Saddle Dr  
 Grand Junction CO 81507  
[jhaseman@earthlink.net](mailto:jhaseman@earthlink.net)

**Public Affairs/Information Officer**

Rich Webster  
[covanmi@mchsi.com](mailto:covanmi@mchsi.com)

**Historian**

Carol Lund  
[lundc@chartermi.net](mailto:lundc@chartermi.net)

**Web Site Administrator**

James F. Alkek  
[jimalkek@yahoo.com](mailto:jimalkek@yahoo.com)

**Facebook Group Administrator**

Charlie Shaw  
[charlie.shaw@west-point.org](mailto:charlie.shaw@west-point.org)

**SITREP Production Manager**

Bui Quang Lam  
[lam@completeprintshop.com](mailto:lam@completeprintshop.com)

**Montagnard Liaison Officer**

Mike Little  
[littlecrazy3@cox.net](mailto:littlecrazy3@cox.net)

**SITREP Editors**

Ken Jacobsen  
[kjacobson@knology.net](mailto:kjacobsen@knology.net)

Bill Laurie  
[bill.laurie@yahoo.com](mailto:bill.laurie@yahoo.com)

**REUNION Coordinator**

Lewis Grissaffi  
[luisaffi@yahoo.com](mailto:luisaffi@yahoo.com)

*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

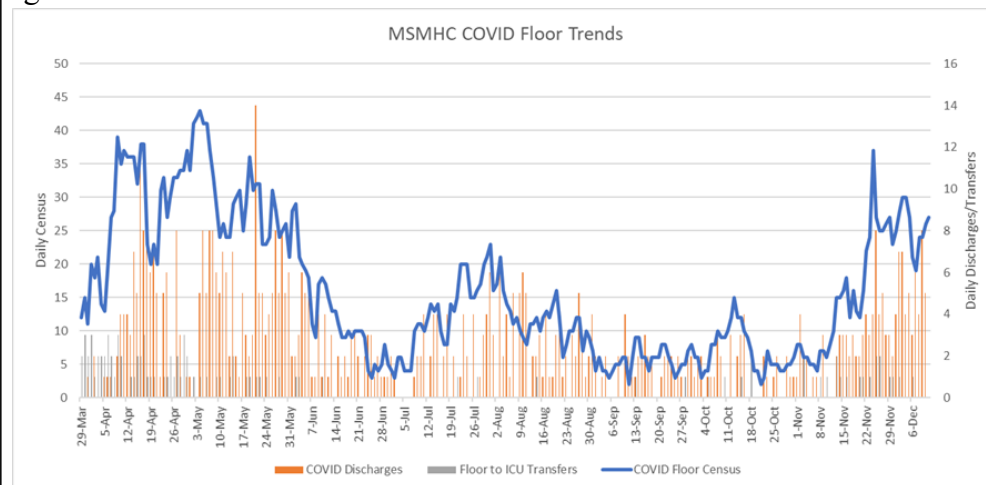


# COUNTERPARTS SITREP

The Official publication of COUNTERPARTS/Thương Hữu Đồng Nam Á

## Commander's Corner

So, we all continue to ponder, what's the outlook for an association Reunion in 2021? Well, I sure hope conditions shape-up well as spring approaches, but for now the crystal ball remains cloudy. On the ground in everyday life, we're all impacted in some way, and certainly more profoundly feeling the reality of the ebb and flow of pandemic surge in healthcare organizations like mine with trends highlighted in the timeline below that mirror many facilities across the nation. Covid cases are on the rise again...we're under duress.



The past SITREPS necessarily focused on this issue, and I long for the day when a new normal emerges. Beginning next week recently approved Covid vaccines will begin distribution, and however that plays out, it may be a factor that will bring stability to the travel industry and enable Lewis to pursue a reunion organizing effort.

With all the problems California has been experiencing, some very interesting alternative developments are under review now by Lewis Grissaffi and Ray Robison for the potential of focusing on scheduling the reunion in Ft. Benning, Georgia in September 2021 in tandem with vaccinations and decelerating pandemic trends. Ray will outline the interesting sites we can partake of on the base. We encourage members to provide feedback through comments and recommendations on this proposed location to my email [grant.mcclure@outlook.com](mailto:grant.mcclure@outlook.com). I'll share with Ray, Lewis and HQ staff. My very best to you and yours for a safe and enjoyable holiday season!

*...Dr. Grant McClure, Commander*

## ***Website Administrator Jim Alkek Completes Major Changes to [www.counterparts.net](http://www.counterparts.net)***

A few major improvements have been completed recently.

First was the completion of the Member Dues system. Although most members will not see any changes, the impact for our Membership Chairman will be significant by giving him the tools he needs to get an accurate, historical list of member's dues from 2006 to the current date. This will help him getting the reminders out to non-paying members and will prevent a member, who has already paid, from getting another notice for the year.

Second, the Bulletin Board is back up and running. A significant number of pre-2019 messages were recovered and are ready for Members to read and make comment. Members have also requested the ability to post pictures directly into Bulletin Board comments and this feature should be available soon.

Third, Membership Database and the Advisor Database, have been restructured to give more accurate, complete responses to Search requests. All Counterparts Members can now use the Home Page "Advisory Assignments" search for their teammates and themselves. Several new items have been added to the database: 1) Advisory Medals of Honor Citation links have been added to individual records, 2) the individual records of Advisors who were KIA are now in the process of being linked to the on-line Virtual Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Profile pages, and 3) if you are a member of "Together We Served", the individual records will also be linked which in some cases give you a complete military assignment history, citations, and final rank of the Advisor.

Finally, a significant number of Advisors have been added to the Advisor Database. They were added with the goal of making the Advisor Database a source for anyone to use to get a picture of the entire Advisory effort including Allied countries efforts. In some cases, not a lot of us were exposed to other countries Advisory efforts so the Home Page now has links to information about those Allied efforts as well as the US Naval Advisory Group and the USMC Combined Action Group.

Australia (AATTV) 1,019 Advisors listed (Note: Excludes 11 Teammates from New Zealand)

New Zealand (NZATTV) 129 Advisors listed (Note: Includes 11 Teammates who served with AATTV)

US Naval Advisory Group (NAG) 296 Advisors listed (Note: Excludes 257 US Navy personnel listed under other Command Units)

USMC Combined Action Group (CAG) 128 CAP Advisors listed and 2,172 in process. (Note includes US Navy Corpsmen)

USAID or CORDS 44 Advisors Listed (Note: Not included with MACV Teams)

US MAAG 256 Advisors in Process

US Advisory Teammates 4,821 Advisors Listed (Note: Excludes SF Personnel. Includes Province, District and 176 Mobile Advisory (MAT) Teammates)

US Special Forces Teammates 93 Advisors Listed

US Advisory Personnel Attached to RVN Units 1,421 (Note: No Military Branch or Advisory Team Number listed)

Total Advisors Listed 9,885 with 2,328 in the process of being added

...Jim Alkek

*Editors note: Many members may not be aware that Jim is one of COUNTERPARTS Cornerstone members and has created and updated our website for almost thirty years; all at his own expense, and while running a successful accountancy business in Houston. Jim has also, at various times, been COUNTERPARTS Adjutant, Treasurer, and Membership Chair, sometimes holding down several offices at once. We all owe Jim a heartfelt "Well Done!"*

***J.C. Fischer Passes:  
A COUNTERPARTS Founder and Cornerstone.***

John C. Fischer died on 2020, in Killeen, Texas. J.C. was one of the founders of COUNTERPARTS in 1989 and served in a number of Offices in the organization, including, at various times, Commander, XO, Treasurer and Reunion Coordinator. His obituary notice follows:

John "JC" Christopher Fischer, 81, of Temple died at home in the early morning of October 8th. 2020. JC was born on June 2nd, 1939, in San Pedro, California and enlisted in the Navy at an early age. He later transferred to the Army and met his future wife, Rita Jimenez, while on leave from service in Vietnam. They married on February 22, 1969. He retired from the Army after 22 years of service.

After retirement JC worked at the VA, and also established his own business, introducing *Pop-A-Lock* locksmith service to the Temple, Texas area. He also earned an Associates degree from Temple College.

JC enjoyed a lifelong hobby of collecting military insignia, many of which are now on display at the William R. Courtney Texas State Veterans Home. He was active in several Veteran's organizations in addition to his major role in COUNTERPARTS. JC also was an enthusiastic collector of railroad and train memorabilia.

He is survived by his wife, Rita and their two sons, Chris and Louis, daughter, Laura Simpson, grandchildren, and two sisters, Jean Wingate and Barbara Flanagan. A Private burial service was held at the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen, TX with father Leonard Onwumere officiating. Jim Ellis attended the service as a representative of COUNTERPARTS. In Lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Salvation Army for relief of victims of natural disasters.

Memories and expressions of sympathy for the Fischer family may be shared at [www.crawfordbowerstemple.com](http://www.crawfordbowerstemple.com).

***The extent of J.C.s contribution was recalled by COUNTERPARTS Commander Grant McClure and by other members who worked with JC over the years;***

*... From Dr. Grant McClure, Commander, COUNTERPARTS “*

Very sad indeed, as the *tall Texan*, JC, was among the original group of founding members in 1989 whom I was privileged to meet at the 1991 Houston reunion. Bill Laurie was also with us in Houston as a very small nucleus of members convened to form, storm and norm the early formation of association leadership direction that JC volunteered to support and serve.”

JC was right there with us all the way enthusiastically contributing to many organizational developments, and remained energized and active in a host of leadership roles serving as CO, XO, Adjutant, Locator and Historian over the course of three-plus decades...and we all remember he was a terrific reunion wrangler several times gathering us together in his beloved hometown of Killeen, Texas. He generously gave of himself to the good purposes Counterparts serves, indefatigable through the decades until health issues surfaced.”

“I was so glad I was able to chat with him about a month ago where he surprised me with a personal reflection of something that was very dear to him when, during the banquet dinner at the Greensboro, NC reunion in 2014, I awarded a *Texas-style* hand-crafted Counterparts Logo belt buckle (donated by Paul Brubaker in 1990). You all recall that was a changing-of-the-guard reunion when JC, then serving-out his term as CO, passed the gavel to me. The award was more special to JC than I realized. I quipped-back though and reminded JC of a unique gesture he made to me at the 1995 reunion banquet dinner in Alexandria, Virginia when he awarded a classic stainless steel Army mess hall tray inscribed with the words, “May your tray always be full.” He laughed at that gag!”

“Sure proud to have known JC and I’m sure I speak on behalf of others that he was truly an ardent and devoted association member that will be truly missed.



*...From Rich Webster, COUNTERPARTS PAO*

“Thanks to Ray Robison, I was able to call JC a few weeks ago and chat. He was a great Commander for COUNTERPARTS. He hosted a Reunion at Fort Hood a number of years ago while Commander. JC was also an avid collector of military insignia/patches which he donated to the Texas Veterans home near FT Hood. During the Reunion he arranged for COUNTERPARTS members to visit the home and have lunch there. JC’s insignia collection adorned the walls of the corridors. JC was well known there and obviously a frequent visitor and was greeted warmly when he stopped by to visit with the vets. “Texas knows how to take care of their veterans.” He said. And so they took care of him in his final days.

JC was also a model train collector and we visited a refurbished train depot filled with model trains and tracks. He was also well known there, and that connection was the source of his email [address-traindepot@hotmail.com](mailto:address-traindepot@hotmail.com).

JC was a compassionate believer that the fight for the freedom of South Vietnam was a noble cause. I believe that he was also one of the original founders of COUNTERPARTS.

Those are a few memories I have of JC. GOD Bless JC and his wife Rita.”

*...From Bill Laurie, COUNTERPARTS Founding Member and SITREP co-editor...*

“J.C. went way, way back to the beginning. I still recall the first time I called him when we got this thing up and moving and he expressed the same enthusiasm and the unique J.C. sense of humor that we would see henceforth. He was always there, ready and very willing to do what he could for COUNTERPARTS. He will be missed.”

*...From Max Lund, Longtime COUNTERPARTS member and CEO of Cambodian Corps, Inc. ...*

“So, long ago in the early days of the organization, I made the mistake of giving JC a hard time, for what reason I know not. To get back at me, he decided I had to have a big red lipstick kiss on my forehead. Also for a long-forgotten reason. From that time on, at every reunion I lived in fear of JC's red lipstick attack. Finally I gave up and just waited for JC to tell Rita he needed to borrow her lipstick. I'm sure that visitors to the hospitality room must have been impressed with two guys wearing lipstick and grinning. There was no way it could be explained and make any sense. I'm pretty sure there was no alcohol involved”.



*J.C. Fischer shares Montagnard wine and Blessing from Buddhist Priest*

## **An Urgent Plea for Vinh Son Orphanage**

**From COUNTERPARTS Member Mike Little**

**(As a Reminder, VSO is one of the Organizations COUNTERPARTS helps support through an annually voted contribution)**

As you may know, I serve on the Board of “**Friends of Vinh Son Montagnard Orphanages**” also known as FVSO. We are a non-profit organization approved by IRS code 501c(3) and all donations are tax deductible. There are 6 Vinh Son orphanage sites in the Kontum area, each overseen by a Nun from the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal. About 830 Montagnard children occupy these orphanages, and as you might expect, they rely on outside help to survive. FVSO provides annual dental care, food and medicine, primary and higher education, building repair and clean water. Special projects (like a piggery and chicken farm) help them become more self-sufficient, which makes losing their farm land so painful. Less food on the table.

Like so many areas of Vietnam, Kontum and surrounding villages were hit hard, by a Typhoon last October, especially in areas where the Dak Bla River breeched its banks. Damage estimate for VS-2 is about \$2,000, which is needed to replace the lost crops. FVSO is soliciting donations to help restore this Highland oasis.

The gardens of Vinh Son-2 were known for their lush morning glory, and the popular cassava trees. Everyone old enough worked in the vegetable plots, proud to be helping supply food for their orphanage. Smiling children picked morning glory and enjoyed afternoons outdoors under clear blue skies.

Of course, their smiles would fade once the typhoons wiped the land clean. Gone would be the corn fields, the sugar cane, and all variety of vegetables. But whether it's a draught, a pandemic or typhoon, the Vinh Son “family” will pull together and forge a new future.

Crops near the Dak Bla River were no match for the torrential rains that wiped out everything, leaving a moon-scape wasteland. Despite the obvious challenges, teams of children immediately went about reclaiming the land on behalf of the 170 kids and 13 caregivers at the Vinh Son 2 orphanage. Thankfully, no one was injured during the storm.

For more information, my email address is:

**Mike Little:**

[littlecrazy3@cox.net](mailto:littlecrazy3@cox.net)

FVSO can be reached directly at:

**Address:** P.O. Box 9322, Auburn, CA 95604 **Email:** [FriendsofVSO@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsofVSO@gmail.com)

**Web:** [www.FriendsofVSO.org](http://www.FriendsofVSO.org)

*All of the monthly newsletters can be found on the web site, and are the best source for learning about the Vinh Son story.*

## 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.

***Rice Roots: The Vietnam War, True Stories from the Diary of a U.S. Combat Advisor.*** Robert R. Amon Jr.

Our COUNTERPARTS colleague Bob Amon has written an absolutely outstanding book about his year on a MAT Team deep in the Mekong Delta. Bob kept a diary during his year on MAT 88 in Kien Giang Province, January-December 1969. By combining his 50-year-old diary entries with his near-time recollections and important assistance from his then-Province Senior Advisor, COL (Retired) Bill Stanberry, Bob has produced a detailed account of the challenges, successes, failures, humor, and sadness during his year of trying to win the hearts and minds of communities mostly under the control of the Viet Cong. Bob has written an easy-to-read account of his experiences, and two very detailed maps show the location of his outposts, significant combat actions, and important events. He closes the book with an account of the difficult and emotional 1993 return to his main village of Hoa Quan.

*Rice Roots* is available from Amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

## MEMBERS IN MEMORIAM

### ***COLONEL WILLIAM B. CARLETON, USA***

Col. William Baker Carleton, age 78, passed away at his Pine Knoll Shores, NC home on Tuesday, 24 November 2020.

Bill graduated from Denison University in Granville, OH and attended Clark University in Worcester, MA. He was drafted into the Army in July 1967. He was a patriot who served his country as an Army Captain and decorated Vietnam War veteran (MACV, Central Highlands from 1968-1969). After Vietnam, Bill returned to Fort Holabird, Baltimore, MD as an instructor. In the early 1970's he pursued his dreams of international travel and study with 29 years in the Foreign Service. He and his family were stationed in Morocco, Iran, Tunisia, Bangladesh and the Philippines and traveled extensively for work and pleasure. Bill worked as a consultant with Booz Allen Hamilton for eight years before retiring to New Bern, NC in 2008 to a home overlooking the water.

Bill's many interests included photography, reading, travels abroad and boating (he was a member of the Chesapeake Yacht Club in Maryland for 24 years), and was affectionately known by his grandchildren as "Captain Bill". Col Carleton was a long-time member of COUNTERPARTS.

### ***ALFRED C. "AL" SERRATO***

Al Serrato Died on December 14, 2020. Al was a recent member of COUNTERPARTS who served on Advisory Team 2, Quang Ngai Province, September 67 to September 68. Al served for many years as the Commander of the Combat Infantrymen's Association ( <https://cibassoc.com>). He lived in Tustin, CA

## COUNTERPARTS Support of Boat People SOS Initiative

Harking back to 1991, during the early formative years of COUNTERPARTS, we have enjoyed a purposeful long-term symbiotic networking relationship with Boat People SOS (“BPSOS”) headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia. In the wake of the refugee crisis that followed the fall of Saigon in April 1975, BPSOS emerged in the 1980’s undertaking a pivotal role in voluntary missions to rescue tens of thousands of Vietnamese boat people in the Diaspora that followed and defend their refugee rights in first-asylum countries. In my role as the first CO of COUNTERPARTS in 1992, and living in the Washington, DC area, I linked-up with Dr. Thang and his associates and have remained close to BPSOS since then. From its earliest formation BPSOS has remained committed to ongoing human rights advocacy and protecting the liberty and dignity of victims of persecution and exploitation.

Through its long-time serving CEO and President, Dr. Nguyen Thang, COUNTERPARTS has been frequently invited over the years to participate in varied initiatives ranging from refugee assistance, family reunification, submitting affidavits for QLVNCH personnel in refugee camps, advocating for asylum seekers during peak periods of the refugee crisis, and in more recent years we’ve become staunch advocates taking-on issues of abysmal human rights conditions affecting our former South Vietnamese and Montagnard allies still in Vietnam.

Not unlike prior years of association involvement, from May through November 2020 Mike Bengé and I have been active in supporting the efforts of BPSOS and a cross-section of other similarly grounded organizations focused on protecting and defending fundamental freedoms in Vietnam. In August 2020, on behalf of the association, I signed on a joint letter to Secretary of State Pompeo calling for the State Department to apply visa restrictions under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) against Vietnamese government officials perpetrating egregious violations of religious freedom in Vietnam. Moreover, impetus for action also centers on the US Commission on International Religious Freedom recommendations that Vietnam be designated a *Country of Particular Concern* for “engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations.”

The IRFA has demanded sanctions of government officials who are responsible for forced renunciation of faith through harassment, multiple interrogations, torture, imprisonment, denial of medical care, severe persecution against people of faith and intimidation of Christians, including many Montagnards (ethnic minorities living in the Central Highlands and other remote, primarily mountainous regions) in the following provinces since 2013:

1. Dak Lak Province: 177 incidents documented of forced renunciation of faith, 8 incidents of torture, 5 incidents of imprisonment, and 2 deaths by torture, all because of the victims’ religious belief and/or practice.
2. Gia Lai Province: 49 incidents documented of forced renunciation of faith, 16 incidents of torture, 20 incidents of imprisonment, 15 incidents of beating, and 2 deaths by torture, all because of the victims’ religious belief and/or practice.
3. Kontum Province: 29 incidents documented of forced renunciation of faith, 3 incidents of imprisonment, and 1 incident of demolition of a house of worship. By 2018 practically all house churches of the Montagnard Evangelical Church of Christ had been forced to cease operations.
4. Nghe An Province: Government officials who are responsible for the persecution and imprisonment of Catholics calling for environmental justice after the ecological disaster of 2016; use of organized mobs known as Red Flag Associations to intimidate and incite hate speech against entire Catholic parishes and their priests; retaliation against victims and witnesses who denounced the Red Flag Associations and the government officials directing them; and forcing Hmong Christians and Vietnamese Catholics to renounce their faith and threatening or punishing those who resisted.

Since May 2020 BPSOS has been steadfast in building capacity for a growing core of trained local “rapporteurs” (individuals trained to report human rights violations) within the Montagnard, Cao Dai, Hmong and other

communities in Vietnam enabling them to provide mutual support, legal activism, and participation in regional and international forums with early signs that their efforts are having an impact in leading to decreases in the frequency and level of harassment by local authorities. Given our prior service as advisors in Vietnam, BPSOS believes these communities can benefit from our unique guidance and support. By example, one area where we can render assistance is through recommendations on how additional laptops, printers and smart phones could be made available for the teams who are using Vietnam's legal framework to assert their right to religious freedom. I for one have donated funds towards bolstering functional office infrastructure needs which are the essential tools for documenting violations and generating reports for submission to UN mandate holders.

There is evidence of success of these endeavors based on positive developments reported by Montagnards who have successfully implemented the BPSOS sponsored **Civil Society Development (CSD)** model. In brief, based on monitoring of some 70+ communities in Vietnam as they conducted activities in recent months:

1. Observance of the August 22 International Day Commemorating Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief
2. Observance of December 10 International Human Rights Day
3. Christmas celebration.

In contrast to last year, this year there was practically no harassment from the local authorities. In a few places, the public security officials actually presented Christmas gifts to the house churches.

As CO, I am encouraging membership support to a very worthy cause. For those interested to support, donations can be made at: <https://www.bpsos.org/donate> and designate their contributions to "Equipment for Montagnards." Please direct any questions to me at my email address: [grant.mcclure@outlook.com](mailto:grant.mcclure@outlook.com). Thank you.

Dr. Grant A. McClure, Commander

## **Don't Forget 2021 COUNTERPARTS Dues!**

Counterparts annual dues are payable as of 1 January 2021. Dues remain \$35.00 for annual membership, or \$350.00 for lifetime membership. Your dues pay for the programs that Counterparts makes to organizations supporting our friends in Southeast Asia. Please note: Lifetime Members do not pay annual dues but are always welcome to make a personal contribution. If you want to check your dues status, contact John Haseman by email: [jhaseman@earthlink.net](mailto:jhaseman@earthlink.net). **Please make checks out to "Counterparts" and mail to Membership Officer John Haseman, 555 West Saddle Drive, Grand Junction CO 81507.**

## ***New Members***

Counterparts continues to welcome new members, mostly through word-of-mouth contacts. Here are the most recent additions to our membership.

**Arthur M. "Art" Fowler** served as Deputy Chief, MAT Team 1-31, Advisory Team 1, in Danang, from June 1969 through May 1970. He spent his time training RF/PF forces in offensive and defensive operations and equipment maintenance. Art lives in Johnson City, Tennessee.

**John J. Ruszkiewicz** served as S-2/Intelligence advisor, Advisory Team 66 in My Tho, Dinh Tuong Province, MR IV, from January through December 1971. He was introduced to Counterparts by our active member Dave Priddy. John lives in Pine Island, New York.

**Michael Wheeler** served as a MAT Team Leader on Advisory Team 16, Quang Tin Province, MR I, from October 1970 through October 1971. Michael lives in Marco Island, Florida.

## Update: Cambodian Corps Inc. (CCI)

As everyone is well aware, this has been a challenging year. Fortunately, Cambodia took early action and the effect of the virus has not been as devastating for them or our students. Last SITREP we reported on students that COUNTERPARTS has sponsored and their current jobs. For More of an overview, this time we would like to highlight some of our other student successes.

Ean Sothea: The youngest of six kids. When his mother died, his father remarried and Sothea was on his own. He worked to pay for his primary and middle school education. When he came to the province capital for high school, Tommy Daniels took him, along with several others, into the just established Cambodia Corps program. He continued to work on weekends to help support his studies. He scored well enough on the high school exit exam to qualify for government tuition to the University of Health Sciences. CCI continued to provide his living expenses and he graduated as a Doctor of Medicine in General Disease Treatment. He returned to his home village of Busra, and taking over his father's old house, he opened a simple clinic. He sees about five indigenous patients each day, treating them and providing medication. The cost of his care is around \$6-7 per patient. He also works in his community, educating Montagnard on hygiene and health issues.

Chas Ket: The middle child of seven, her parents are subsistence farmers. She was not able to enroll in public school because she was needed to help support the family. However, she was able to take literacy classes at the Catholic Church Center in her village. She did enroll in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade for awhile but could not study because of working on the farm. When she was about 14 a Catholic priest took her to the church center in a nearby province where she was taught Khmer literacy. In a year's time she completed grades 4,5 and 6. While still living at the Church Center she enrolled in middle school and worked as a cook at the center. There she completed grades 7,8 and 9. Returning to Mondulukiri she enrolled in high school and lived at the Church Center there. Because she was older and could not speak Khmer well, she was made fun of by her classmates. During her time in school her parents were not able to help her. Her father fell ill and died just as she prepared to take the high school exit exam. Recommended to CCI by a teacher, Ket was sponsored in a nursing program and graduated in 2018. She now works as a volunteer at a Catholic Clinic in Phnom Penh. She handles all the Montagnard cases that come to the clinic. These are the serious cases that cannot be treated at the province hospitals. Since she began, the number of cases has more than doubled because word has traveled back to the villages that there is someone trained in health care who can speak the indigenous languages.

CCI has been a bare-bones, small but effective organization since our beginning. Member Tommy Daniels did all the hard work of establishing CCI, navigating the government bureaucracy, getting the NGO licensing and connecting with the Education Ministry. COUNTERPARTS and many individual donations have funded the operation. Officers and Directors pay all their own expenses. Our in-country manager of thirteen years keeps a tight rein on expenses, obtaining discounts, seeking scholarships, negotiating rents. The result? We can put a student through a year of college, all expenses, for \$1,600 and a high school kid for half that.

Presently we have 12 kids in college, and 18 in high school. For their part, all our students are thoroughly vetted by our manager. Interviewed, home visited, poverty verified, references checked. All students are required to commit to a written pledge to use the education provided to them for the benefit of their people. To date, no student has reneged on their promise.

COUNTERPARTS as an organization and many individual members have provided much of the support for CCI students. Our experience as advisors and knowledge of the Montagnard people have combined to create a successful program we can all be proud of. A program that gives back to the people who were so loyal to us. As Mike Bengé says 'if it were not for the sacrifice of the Montagnard people on behalf of the US, there would be many more names on that black granite wall in DC'

On behalf of Rich Webster, Lewis Grissaffi and myself, thank you all for all your support!

....Max Lund





White T Shirts Sizes M, L, XL. (XXL \$12.00).....	<b>\$10.00</b>
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Patch (3x 4.75" Oval 7 Color Logogram) .....	<b>\$6.00</b>
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Decal (3x 4.75" Oval 7 Color Logogram) .....	<b>\$2.00</b>
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Lapel Pin (.75x 1.06" Oval, Bronze over Pewter) .....	<b>\$12.00</b>
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Challenge Coin (1.5" dia. solid bronze, COUNTERPARTS Logo one side Map of Southeast Asia other side).....	<b>\$10.00</b>
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Baseball style Cap (direct embroidery logogram) .....	<b>\$15.00</b>
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Coffee Mug (COUNTERPARTS color logo).....	<b>\$11.00</b>
COUNTERPARTS Knit Polo shirt with collar. Black. (Embroidered COUNTERPARTS Logo, Medium, Large, 2XL).....	<b>\$20.00</b>
MACV Shoulder Patch (full color mfg. 1968).....	<b>\$3.00</b>
COUNTERPARTS/THDNA Jacket, black, Logo. (Large only).....	<b>\$35.00</b>

**Shipping and handling fee is \$6.00**

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

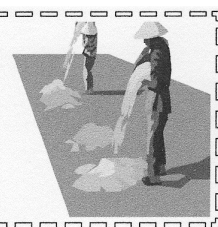
**Mike McMunn  
COUNTERPARTS Quartermaster  
2310 Newberry St, Williamsport, PA 17701 USA**

**For information, call 570-220-8156.  
[covan2@verizon.net](mailto:covan2@verizon.net)**



# BULLETIN BOARD

COUNTERPARTS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE AS ADVISORS



## *Eating Vietnam Style in the Mekong Delta*

By

*Andre Le Cault*

*As a Military Advisor with MACV, I was assigned to the Village/Hamlet of Ấp Bắc Chan and we were embedded with the 153rd Vietnamese Regional Force (RF). In 1968, this was part of the U.S. Pacification program. We were a Mobile Advisory Team (MAT 62) and consisted of 5 men (of various specialties) and a Vietnamese Interpreter. We lived and ate amongst the RFs and their families and the rest of the village. Ấp Bắc Chan was about 20 miles from Mộc Hóa, the Capital of the Province of Kien Tuong. We were also about 20 miles from the Cambodian border in an area (in Vietnam) called the Parrot's Beak. We reported to the U.S. 5th SF, Detachment B-41 in Mộc Hóa. For me, this "long range" assignment lasted 5 months.*

This short story is one of several short stories documenting life in and around Ấp Bắc Chan. As we walked around the village and hamlets, we saw a few pigs, chickens, ducks, and a small number of dogs, roaming freely, looking for scraps of food on the ground. Since there was no electricity or refrigeration, drying meats was a form of preservation for short-term storage). Large earth pots were used for storage for the salted dried fish, buffalo meat, rats, dogs, or any kinds of meats. These were kept in the shade, under the houses. Each house had one or two pots.

Often, we were invited to eat with the local hamlet villagers/residents, and this took great diplomacy because the cuisine was challenging. We welcomed eating the rice and boiled vegetables but became cautious when "meats" were presented. Nước mắm was habitually poured over the various selection of a dinner entree. The sauce was made by stringing dead fish on a suspended line, pole, or rocks in the hot sun; letting the fish drip oil into a bucket; then adding some hot spices and soy sauce.

Our water source was the local river (we boiled our own water). One did not have to use nước mắm to either add taste, or change the taste, or to make you forget what you were eating...

Chickens were bled and feathered and mostly boiled. But villagers ate the whole chicken. If a chicken soup was presented, you could scoop up some chicken soup with a makeshift spatula. But as you often saw, one could scoop up chicken feet, or a head, or some other part which was somewhat disgusting to our Western standards. The greenish color of the soup (vegetables were added) made the whole thing look like swamp water.

The best-looking meat was water buffalo as it was generally roasted meat. It was a tough, coarse meat, but offered a lot of protein. I declined to eat the meat when I suspected that dog meat was presented. It may have been acceptable to Vietnamese, but it was not up to my standards. I was never got that hungry.



Young rat hunters do their part to provide dinner in Ấp Bắc Chan

Huge gray rats were a staple for many Mekong Delta villages and hamlets. I don't know about the rest of Vietnam. The gray rats lived by the thousands out in the rice paddies, so the men trapped them. They were a common meat source. Rats were also a trading commodity with other Vietnamese villages and hamlets, as well as at the Cambodian Border. The thought of eating rats was initially disgusting; but after a few weeks and eating out often with some Vietnamese, it became the absolute finest in our cuisine. Rats and lima beans, green beans, and or rice. The rats were like pulled pork, braised in oil; a nước mắm sauce was added for flavor.

I remember taking my first bite with caution. It was good! By the end of a meal, There wasn't a bit of rat left on anyone's plate. Rats were a problem too, when you went to bed! Although we used mosquito nets, the rats were night scroungers and they got brave. If one ran across your chest, the idea was not to jerk. They could bite! At night, the air came alive with mosquitoes, moths, big black ants, and many other nasty insects. We used mosquito repellent generously. If you were lucky to have no mosquitoes in the net with you, it also meant that there was no air moving through the fine netting to relieve the muggy heat. Light breezes simply do not move through fine netting. So you lie there and suffer the fevered air.

In the beginning, we were issued two kerosene lanterns. As darkness came, one was tempted to light the lanterns. These did not stay on for very long, as we were wary of escaping light that would invite trouble. We could not cover the door or windows with ponchos, as the openings were too big. Besides, lanterns attracted bugs that swarmed around the light and crawled into your hair, flew down your shirt collar, and even got into your mouth. This added new meaning to keeping your "mouth shut." We rigged up a little BBQ cooking device in the schoolroom. Cooking inside the schoolhouse was a problem as the smoke tended to overwhelm us (not too much aeration, especially during rains). However, the smoke helped with the mosquito issues.

Cooking on the porch was OK but you had to deal with many villagers looking down your neck.



## *An Early Morning Train Ride*

*By*  
*Alex Brassert*

In 1964, I was the US Army advisor to the Viet Nam national railroad security forces. My counterpart was a Vietnamese Army Transportation Corps officer. I was officially Rail Security Adviser, Zone 3 (VN 3 Corps area)

Early in my tour, eager to learn and experience the railroad security problems, I took an early morning train. We left in the dark from the Saigon main railroad station in front of the downtown Saigon Market. It was a passenger train full of Vietnamese Army recruits, and we were headed for a VN Army training camp about 300 kilometers north of Saigon near Cam Ranh Bay.

I was by myself. My French was pretty fair, and I was working hard on Vietnamese after the 3-month crash course at Monterey before I came to Viet Nam a month or so before this story took place. I felt pretty at home with the civilian railroad men who were running the railroad because they all had learned their trade in French.

I established myself in what had been turned into a cooking and coffee drinking car, toward the end of the train. Several ladies were making snacks and coffee on charcoal open fire cooking pots on a kind of a stand on one side of the car. There was a bench along the other side where I sat drinking a coffee.

Well, we hadn't gone very far, it was still dark, when there was a sort of a dull thud and the train slowly came to a jerky stop. I then saw that the car just in front had tilted at a crazy angle. We had hit a mine!

I jumped out, all excited, drew my pistol, maybe fired a round, I don't remember. There was loud talk, some screams from the mostly overturned cars at the front of the train. Two recruits came by me carrying a third one. He had been riding between two cars. His leg was crushed. The wounded

soldier said to me in French “sir, I am a Catholic”. His friends were carrying him to the road to find a vehicle to take him to a hospital.

I went along the wrecked train, and soon came to the two wires that connected to the mine and set it off. I pulled them up. The VC with their electric dynamo were long gone.

I got to the engine at the front of the train. The mine had gone off a little late, right after the engine had passed. It blew a hole in the first car. It was not a passenger car. It was filled with merchandise. Some of the merchandise were sacks of peanuts. The sacks had split open and a Vietnamese man who had been riding in that car was sitting up in a great mound of unshelled peanuts. Though pretty shook up, he did not appear to be hurt. The engine was one of the small General Electric diesels that had recently been provided to the Vietnamese railroad. Though it had escaped the main power of the blast, the motor went dead and the engine had gone about 20 yards down the track on its momentum.

It was now getting light. Because we were still pretty close to Saigon, soon Lieutenant Colonel Tu, head of Railroad Security arrived. I showed him around the site and though it was pretty obvious, I explained to him what had happened.

What luck! The car I was in did not derail. What a mess those charcoal fires could have made?



### ***Chinese Advisors in the Mekong Delta: 1969***

*By*  
*Bob Amon*

researched book about the life and times of John Paul Vann, at least four NVA regiments were inserted into the Mekong Delta in the summer of 1969,<sup>1</sup> I can attest to this, because I had the dubious distinction of bumping into one of them.

I kept a diary while I was in Vietnam, the substance of which enabled me to finish writing my new book, *Rice Roots*, published in April of this year.

In my diary I recorded that on the morning of June 19, 1969, my Mobile Advisory Team (MAT IV-88) was inserted into Vinh Thanh Village, located in Kien Binh District, Kien Giang Province. Our province overlapped the infamous U-Minh Forest, an uncontested Vietcong stronghold in the Delta. Locals told stories of the “old days,” when, before the French unraveled at Dien Bien Phu, they sent a battalion of crack paratroopers into the U-Minh to dislodge the communists. They supposedly entered the U-Minh on a Friday afternoon and were never heard from again. Not one radio message. Not one article of clothing found. Nothing.

And even by 1969, there were no attempted incursions into the U-Minh by either RVN or U.S troops. It was deemed impenetrable.

Accordingly, Vinh Thanh Village had been in communist hands for at least fifteen years prior, dating back to 1954. My Province Senior Advisor, LTC Bill Stanberry, had intelligence that Vinh Thanh was being used as a communist sanctuary and stopover coming out of the U-Minh, and it was going to be our job to occupy and pacify the area and deny refuge for enemy troops.

Our first night in the village seemingly passed without incident. We had been inserted with two Vietnamese Regional Force rifle companies, the 780 and 781, who were new recruits and fresh out of Basic Training. But our unannounced insertion on June 19th had given us the element of surprise, and we successfully set up a perimeter around the pagoda to sleep there for the night.

The next morning, June 20, I awoke to find that my interpreter, Trung Si Binh, had been off on one of his fact-finding jaunts around the village.

As I was finishing up my Sit-Rep to inform Major Bond that all was well and we had made “no contact” during the night, I saw Binh approaching. He looked ashen and shaken and stared directly at me as he approached.

“Trung Uy,” he began, “last night fifty North Vietnamese regulars moved through Vinh Thanh along that trail right over there.”

“Look,” he pointed, “you can see from here.” At a distance of 300 meters or so I could see a trail peeking out along a woodline to our north.

The information given to Binh was supplied by a villager from that hamlet who had seen the enemy patrol and confided in Binh. And they were heavily armed. The disturbing news became even more bizarre as Binh relayed the rest of what the informant had told him: The NVA had “other Orientals” with them and they were not Vietnamese. The two others wore tan uniforms with red epaulets and spoke “another language.”

Dumbfounded, I blurted out, “Binh, what ‘other Orientals’ are you talking about and what ‘other’ language?”

“We think they Chinese,” he went on, “Chinese Co Van, same-same like you, Trung Uy, but from China!”

At the time, I dismissed Binh’s story, but wondered about it for years. Our unexpected arrival the day before denied the NVA the use of Vinh Thanh as a stopover resting place. Had they chosen to, they could have chewed up my new RF recruits and send us all scurrying for our lives. But for whatever reason, they decided not to engage us. Perhaps it would have compromised their more important mission somewhere else.

But our chance encounter matches Neil Sheehan’s research on the presence of NVA troops in the Delta that summer, and was substantiated by Major General Roderick Wetherill, who replaced General Ekhardt as commander of IV Corps, when he visited our team on August 18, 1969 to warn us of the fact.

Two weeks after the general’s visit, a Connecticut newspaper carried a UPI article relating how the 18B Regiment (about 2,000 troops) of the 1st North Vietnamese Army Division had deployed into the Mekong Delta. Major General Wetherill is quoted as saying, “I think they came down here [the Delta] to shore up a deteriorating situation. It’s an indication of Hanoi’s growing concern with what’s happening down here [in the Delta].” The article pointed out that “the Delta is the richest prize of the Vietnam War. More than half the nation’s 17.5 million people live there and most of the rice is grown there.”<sup>2</sup>

I had discounted the story told to me by my trusted interpreter, Binh. At the time, it sounded incredible that NVA troops could be that far south. But years later, matching my diary entries with other research, I’ve come to the conclusion that not only did the NVA have troops in the Delta in 1969, I’m convinced the eyewitness account by the rice farmer, a poor peasant who rarely travelled very far from Vinh Thanh and who would have no knowledge of uniforms worn by the Chinese, is too compelling to have been made up by him.

*Submitted by:*

*Former 1LT Robert R. Amon Jr.*

*Team Leader, MAT 88*

*Kien Giang Province, RVN, 1969*

*Author: Rice Roots, The Vietnam War:*

*True Stories from the Diary of a U.S. Combat Advisor*

*Published April, 2020,*

*Legacies and Memories, St. Augustine, Florida*



**COUNTERPARTS/THDNA**  
**607 WAMPLER DRIVE**  
**CHARLESTON SC 29412**