



Summer 2003

# Viet Nam Friendship Village

Joint Newsletter of the United States and Canadian Committees  
for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project

## A Long Journey *by Bill Dean*

Editor's note: For William "Bill" Dean, a Vietnam veteran from Corvallis, Oregon, the path to personal peace and a seat on the Board of Directors of the Vietnam Friendship Village Project's US Committee began with visits to two of the world's greatest war memorials. An unexpected walk past the 50,000 silent names on the Vietnam Memorial and a sojourn to Hiroshima, Japan—site of the first atomic attack—moved Bill to reopen an unfinished chapter in his life. Looking back to his years as a turbine engine specialist and helicopter pilot, Bill can finally see a path forward through a minefield of unclaimed emotions. It is a path that he hopes will lead him later this year to the front gates of the Vietnam Friendship Village.



BILL DEAN

*LEFT: Bill Dean made this self-portrait in 1969, while on night duty in a guard tower overlooking the perimeter of his army base in Vietnam. It was especially important to be alert during these assignments. Guards would use flares and night scopes like the one shown to watch for enemy activity. TOP RIGHT: Bill is still an avid photographer. This picture was taken in May 2003, during our Northern California fundraising tour.*

It has been more than 30 years since I served in Vietnam, and yet I still remember the heat and humidity of the Mekong Delta and the buzzing of mosquitoes in my ears at night.

From 1968 to 1969 I served as a turbine engine specialist and helicopter pilot with the 7th Armored Squadron, 1st Air Cavalry, operating out of Vinh Long Airfield on the banks of the Mekong. The only relief from the oppressive heat was to fly missions. Even though I knew full well I might be shot down, it was worth risking my life to get up into the cool, sweet air above the jungle and rice paddies.



KITTY NORRIS

Now, 35 years later, I realize that it was more than the heat I was trying to escape. Every time I took off, I was trying to escape

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## News from the Friendship Village *by Becky Luening*

As this newsletter was being prepared, we received from Vietnam the latest VFVP Director's Report, dated June 30th, highlighting achievements since the International Meeting was held in Hanoi last October.

### Inpatient Care Report

At the time of the International Meeting, 93 children and 42 veterans were being treated at the village. Between Nov. 31, 2002 and June 30, 2003, an additional 43 children and 139 veterans were recruited for treatment. Individuals stay at the village for varying lengths of time. Normally, 130-140 inpatients reside at the village at any given time; the present number is 153. Of the total 317 people who have received care at the village during the past 8 months, it is reported that 91 % of them, to different extents, have enjoyed some health improvements.

### Medical Treatments

Friendship Village medical staff strive to find the best treatments available, combining Oriental, traditional and Western medical methodologies. These have included acupuncture, massage, and physical therapy including indi-

vidual exercise regimens, with and without the aid of exercise equipment. Recently, "bio-energy" treatments have been tried with about 20 children who have not been successfully treated by other means. The results of this three-month experimental program will be included in the director's next report.

Two physical therapists have volunteered their services at the village for some time—Ellen from Denmark and Natasa from Holland. One more specialist has recently been recruited to further train and strengthen the regular village medical staff. In addition, at the request of the German Committee, the Veterans Association of Vietnam has agreed to work with the German Development Service in Vietnam to hire a German teacher for mentally handicapped children (financed by this German Service) and a Vietnamese counterpart (financed by the German Committee) for two years.

### Inpatient Education

One of the ongoing concerns of the International Committee members is that children being cared for at the village have access to education. To this end, three categories of educational classes have been organized at the village: one

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## VFVP Contacts

### USA

#### Vietnam Friendship Village Project USA

- Becky Luening, President
- Carl Stancil, Treasurer
- Bill Dean, Secretary
- Michael Cull
- Liliane Fløge
- John B. Hopkins
- Suel Jones (Hanoi) – sueljones@mac.com

P.O. Box 3805, Santa Cruz, CA 95063

<http://www.vietnamfriendship.org>

Email: [info@vietnamfriendship.org](mailto:info@vietnamfriendship.org)

### CANADA

#### Vietnam Friendship Village Project Canada

- Michelle Mason, President
- Tom Boivin
- James Dean
- Wayne Dwernychuk
- Shannon Rodgers
- Jeff Schutts

<http://www.cypress-park.ca/>

Email: [cypress-park@shaw.ca](mailto:cypress-park@shaw.ca)

### GERMANY

#### Dorf der Freundschaft

- Rosemarie Höhn-Mizo, President;  
President of International Committee  
Pfarrstraße 3, 74357 Bönnigheim-Hofen  
Tel/Fax: +49 7143 24891  
<http://www.dorfderfreundschaft.de/>  
Email: [dorfderfreundschaft@web.de](mailto:dorfderfreundschaft@web.de)

### FRANCE

#### l'Association Républicaine des Anciens Combattants et Victimes de Guerre (ARAC)

- Georges Doussin  
2, place du Meridien, 94807 Villejuif Cedex  
Tel: +33 01-42-11-11-12 • Fax: +33 01-42-11-11-10

### JAPAN

#### Vietnam Friendship Village Project Japan

- John Tsuguo Oishi  
Fusen Heishi No Kai, Sun Mole Dogenzaka 325  
2-18-11 Dogenzaka, Shibuya-Ku, Tokyo 150-0043  
Tel: +81 3-3461-4160 • Fax: +81 3-5489-4847

### VIET NAM

#### The Veterans Association of Viet Nam

- Col. Ta Hung, Director of Foreign Relations
- Lt. Gen. Tran Hanh, Managing Director VFVP  
34 Ly Nam De, Hanoi, Vietnam  
Tel: 84-4-7332384 Fax: 84-4-8236815

## News from the Village *...continued from page 1*

class for intelligence-deficient children; one general education class for primary level and one for intermediate/secondary. The 2002-03 school year ended with a formal summary session on June 1st, in which various recommendations and rewards were presented to students for their achievements.

### Vocational Training

Opportunities for vocational training at the village include a flower-making class and an embroidery class, each of which have a capacity of 14 children. The first tailoring (sewing) course was successfully completed by 17 children, 15 of whom have already been employed by the "Nhan Dao-Tri Tue Company." Many of these trainees are not village residents, but come from the surrounding community. A new six-month course was begun on June 4th for 26 children.

### Outpatient Services

Friendship Village management have continued to work with outpatients who have left the village but still require support services because of their difficult situations. Staff have been gathering funds in support of production activities of eight families. Each family will receive 1,500,000 VND (equivalent to \$100 USD). A Vietnamese company, Pham Tu's "Moto Bike Ltd.," contributed money for six of these families, and also provided four children with wheelchairs.

### Cultural Activities

There has been an effort to integrate cultural activities such as dancing and singing into village life as well. Children who are able to participate in these activities are provided with training so they may play a major role in any social intercourse organized by the village with other establishments.

### Visitors

During the past 6 months, the Friendship Village has received more than 50 groups of nearly 200 international visitors from 13 countries, as well as 70 groups of local guests.

### Self-Reliance

During the past 6 months, these food products have been harvested at the village for meals:

- 842kg pork meat;
- 324 kg chicken;
- 150 kg fish;
- 77 kg goose;
- 2000 eggs;
- many vegetables.

### Financial Support

Between Nov. 2002 and June 2003, the Village received the following (US Dollars):

- French Committee—\$11,330
- German Committee—\$33,390
- US Committee—\$31,000
- Casual Visitors—\$1,100

Also, the Canadian Committee will soon be sending \$7,000. An additional 2000 Euro was sent by the French Committee on July 17, and 10,000 Euro sent by the German Committee on July 25.

Apparently, everyone has been busy raising money to support the village!

### Village Expansion

This item comes from our Man in Hanoi, Suel Jones. In June, earth-moving equipment rumbled into the Friendship Village to start road work and the foundation for a new 15-meter by 36-meter craft and tailoring center. When this prefab metal building is completed, there will be new space for crafts such as embroidery, artificial flowers, and possibly non-making (traditional conical hats).

The tailoring class will gain the most space, however, enabling an expansion from the current use of 38 sewing machines to 100 machines. The six-month class starts with such basics as how to maintain the sewing machines and sewing in a straight line; in the final months students actually make a product for a local manufacturing company. Under the tutelage of a factory quality control expert, students learn to perfect their craft. The sale of the manufactured products also brings a small income to help support the village.

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# A Visit to the Village Opened His Heart

by Becky Luening

When photojournalist Dave Rocovits visited the Friendship Village in 2002, he took photos of the children he met there, and the resulting photo display traveled with us during our fundraising/ film-screening tour of northern California this spring. Approximately twenty 11"x 14" frames display black & white photos of children with short bios typed on orange paper. Dave's brother, Dan, who lives in Hanoi, did the writing, and the computer work was done by Dave's son, David II.

These are beautiful photos of relaxed, friendly kids. Evidence of their afflictions is subtle. The bios explain the children's physical or mental challenges and/or family situations, while the images give a glimpse of their unique and engaging personalities and resilient spirits. We are in the process of scanning all of Dave's photographs and hope to have them up on our website very soon.

Dave explained his reaction to the Friendship Village: "After visiting the village I vowed to raise \$10,000 for medical reconstructive operations. I think nothing of removing birthmarks or putting braces on my children's teeth which are non-essential, while these poor people can't afford a small operation to help make them more productive.

"I started by donating \$1,000 and will add 10% more to additional donations earmarked for this fund, up to another \$1,000 on my part. I have traveled a lot in poorer countries and have tried never photograph anything negative about the country or its people, but felt that I had to show [what I saw at] the village to maybe stimulate

people or awaken their conscience."

Dave has raised almost \$7,000 of his \$10,000 pledge already. Of this amount, \$4,800 has already been transferred to the Friendship Village. During a break from our spring film-screening tour, US Committee member Suel Jones was able to attend a fundraiser hosted by Dave and his Chinese-American wife in their Reno, Nevada home. Attendees included friends from a Chinese school and a Taiwanese Buddhist group, and other friends who have traveled overseas. The food was reported to be fabulous.

Although Dave's original pledge was to be earmarked solely for surgeries and other costly medical treatments for children at the village, he has made one exception. Suel, who lives in Hanoi and visits the Friendship Village weekly, discovered that the village really needs a library. He wrote Dave Rocovits and asked if they could use \$2,000 of the money he is raising to pay for the library, and Dave agreed. This amount will cover wood-and-glass cabinets, and a lot of books.

While Dave Rocovits' fundraising efforts are a gift to the children of the Friendship Village, his photographs are a gift to us North Americans. They remind us that Vietnamese children are like children all over the world; much like our own. Even these kids, with their various "disabilities," are fully human, and like humans everywhere, they deserve to be loved, respected, and well cared for. They deserve a chance to be as healthy as possible, so they may enjoy full, productive lives. That is why we do what we do.



One of the photographs taken by Dave Rocovits:

*Four of the five girls in this photo have hearing and speech impediments, yet their beautiful smiles make them seem so normal. The Vietnamese by culture are friendly, outgoing, and love groups of friends, so most of their free time is spent with friends, drinking green tea while eating snacks of fruit or sweet cake if one happens to have some money. Yes, that's Lanh in the front, never one to miss a photo opportunity.*

*Quenh (second from right) had knee operations performed in Hanoi (with support from a Swedish aid agency) and returned to her family a much happier girl. She has five siblings, all with physical problems. Her father and mother are farmers and seasonal wage earners. They are very poor because of the added dependence of six disabled children. The Vietnamese Government helps many, and wants to help more, but because of the large number of Agent-Orange-affected families, they simply can't help them all.*

# Fun-raising Alaska Style

by Michael Cull

In early January William W. Bacon III released *Friendship Village: A Place of Healing*, which played continuously in a documentary series sponsored by the Lusac Library on Anchorage cable network. It was also shown at the National Convention of State Council Presidents of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) in mid-February, where Bob Moore, who is in the film, got a standing ovation mixed with tears and smiles. All the VVA chapter presidents received complementary copies of the video.

Newly formed Alaska VVA chapters 891 and 904 helped organize a fundraiser dubbed "The First Annual Night at The Hogg," held April 25 at the Hogg Brothers Restaurant in Anchorage. Over 60 folks enjoyed great Celtic tunes played by John Walsh's group, and again, the video was well received by all. Bill Bacon was the first recipient of the "Hog of the Year Award for being The Revered Photographer of Alaska, and for giving "Outstanding Service and Spirit to Fellow Veterans and Friendship Village." He got a stunning blue and gold trophy with a prodigious brass pig mounted on top, certain to be a collector's item on E-Bay.

Ninety-five people attended a special showing of Bill's film at the Alaska Museum in Anchorage on May 6. Joining Bill on stage were Bob Moore, Mike Cull, and Mike Kerr, another veteran friend. The audience gave an emotional standing ovation, and we were overwhelmed and speechless. It was a very special night. All together, these events raised about \$2,000.

Another fundraiser is being planned for Fall/Winter at the Fly Bye Night Club in Anchorage, an outrageous spoof theatre cabaret for Alaska tourists. Each Tuesday is smoke-free night at the Fly Bye Night when they give 50% of proceeds to non-profit groups. This could turn into an annual event for the Friendship Village. Stay tuned for more fun from the great northwest.

## The Alaska Connection

# The Contribution of Filmmaker William W. "Bill" Bacon III

Bill Bacon has been making films for 47 years. "I've been so fortunate," he says. "My camera's taken me all over the world." Early in his career, he worked 20 years on nature films for Disney. He's filmed all over Alaska—from Barrow, way out in the Aleutians, to way down in Ketchikan. In 2000 he received the Alaska Filmmakers Award. He's done films in Tibet, China—and now Vietnam.

Vietnam veterans Suel Jones, Mike Cull, Bob Moore and Mike Curr, who knew Bill from Alaska, approached Bill about doing a video for the Vietnam Friendship Village, and he agreed. He traveled to Vietnam and shot the village, the children, and some of the veterans that made it possible. The result is a touching 30-minute video, titled *Friendship Village: A Place of Healing*. By the time Bill got to work on the documentary, George Mizo had passed away, but an interview with George's wife Rosi and son Michael is included.

Thanks to digital technology, processing costs for a video production are much more economical than for a film—about \$20 an hour instead of \$10,000. Still, the production was not cheap. But because of Bill's special relationship with the Alaska vets, and his desire to help raise awareness about the Friendship Village, the project came out of his pocket and he doesn't want a penny back. "I've got quite a bit of money tied up in it. But the main thing is to get the word out and so that's what I'm doing. I'm happy that my little video might generate some funds for Friendship Village...Anytime any money comes in I pass it on to one of the vets so they can send it on to [Vietnam]."

Bill was deeply touched by what he saw at the Friendship Village—not just the effects of Agent Orange on Vietnamese families, but also the emotional involvement of the American veterans, some of whom have had similar problems in their own families from their exposure to the dioxin-laced defoliant used during the war. That reconciliation is reflected in *A Place of Healing*.

Although Bill felt some sadness, he had many positive things to report. "When I went into the Friendship Village hospital I saw the care these children were being given. The doctors there are doing a great job. Another thing I saw was the projects the children are doing...Some are making flowers...cutting out these intricate flower designs, and then assembling them, and they make these beautiful, beautiful bouquets. So the whole thing was very heartwarming to see. I was very taken by all the work that the veterans are doing and also what the people in Vietnam are doing to help their people."

About Vietnam in general, Bill remarked, "Everywhere I went I was accepted. They smiled and bowed to me, and I thought that was really neat, after the war, that they still have caring for us and they recognize that there's a friendship there." Indeed.

## To order a copy of *Friendship Village: A Place of Healing*

Directed by Bill Bacon • VHS video • 30 mins.

Send \$10 US + \$5 shipping/handling to:  
Vietnam Friendship Village Project  
P.O. Box 3805  
Santa Cruz, CA 95063-3805  
info@vietnamfriendship.org  
T (831) 429-6302 (Carl Stancil)  
F (253) 399-9739



DAVE ROCOVITS

## ***The Friendship Village*** **Documentary Wins Awards**

Michelle Mason's powerful documentary, *The Friendship Village*, about founder George Mizo and the Friendship Village, has been receiving accolades since its world premiere last November at the Amnesty International Film Festival in Vancouver, Mason's hometown. The 50-minute documentary tells the story of Mizo's transformation from war hero to peace activist, chronicling the journey for healing that inspired the creation of the Friendship Village.

Since its premiere, the film has received critical acclaim, been invited to over a dozen international film festivals, and played to audiences in local communities across Canada and the US, helping to raise funds for the village and awareness about the issues it raises.

"I'm so excited about the response because *The Friendship Village* is a really challenging film for audiences, in that it looks at the responsibility we all share in learning the lessons of war, and trying to find non-violent means to resolve conflict.

"These former enemies who have come together to create this living symbol of peace show us what is possible when we set aside our differences and work together. It is an incredibly inspiring and hopeful message," says Mason.

*The Friendship Village* had its international premiere in Thessaloniki, Greece in March, and went on to win the Silver Hugo for best social/political documentary at the Chicago International Television Awards later that month. It then had its US premiere at the New York International Independent Film & Video Festival in April, where it took the Grand Jury prize for best documentary, as well as the Best Director prize for Mason.

The US Committee's Northern California tour followed next (see article on p. 6). After the tour, Mason and husband Jeff Schutts (the film's Associate Producer) drove to Boulder, Colorado where the film was honored with the Columbine Award at the Moondance International Film Festival. The award recognizes filmmakers whose works depict alternatives to violence as a method of dealing with conflict, or show why the use of violence to resolve conflict is counter-productive

Additionally, the film has played to audiences in Toronto, Washington, DC, San Francisco, Galway (Ireland), and in communities across British Columbia: Victoria, Nelson, Courtenay, Saltspring Island, Kelowna, Vernon, Port Alberni. It has been broadcast in Canada, Greece, Denmark, The Netherlands and Belgium, and will continue the festival circuit this fall in Montreal and Santa Cruz. For more information about the film, see [www.cypress-park.ca](http://www.cypress-park.ca)



## **Saltspring Island Welcomes Friendship Village**

*by Michelle Mason*

In mid-June members of the Canadian Committee were invited to Saltspring Island, British Columbia for a special fundraiser and screening of *The Friendship Village* organized by island locals Amarah Gabriel and Murray Reiss. Situated in an archipelago between Vancouver and Vancouver Island, beautiful Saltspring Island is home to many activists, artists and other good folks, including some Viet-nam vets.

Committee members Michelle Mason, Jeff Schutts, Shannon Rogers and Mandy Leith (also editor of the documentary) took the ferry over on a Friday and spent the first night doing some much-needed relaxing at friend Diana Wilson's cabin, a wonderful spot in the woods. (Thank you Diana!)

The next morning they visited Saltspring's famous farmer's market—a long-standing island tradition—where they sampled a delicious assortment of local cheeses, fish and organic produce, and met with a colourful assortment of community locals, from jugglers and artists to weavers and soap makers. It was a great opportunity to experience island life and spread the word about that evening's fundraiser.

The film and project were well received by those who attended that evening, and afterwards people had tea and cookies while they chatted about the project. The committee was able to bring home \$500 to send to the village. Thank you Amarah, Murray and Saltspring for a great weekend. We hope to come back soon!

### **To order a copy of *The Friendship Village***

Directed by Michelle Mason • VHS video • 50 minutes

**For home use\***, send \$30 US/\$40 CDN + \$5 shipping/handling to:

Cypress Park Productions Inc.  
102-1080 Gilford St.  
Vancouver, BC V6G 2P4 CANADA  
cypress-park@shaw.ca  
T (604) 692-0083  
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T (604) 684-3014  
F (604) 684-7165

\*Home sale income benefits the Friendship Village. For information on a video loan or on low-income pricing, email: [info@vietnamfriendship.org](mailto:info@vietnamfriendship.org) or call (707) 826-9197.

# Friendship Village Hits the Road: Our Spring Film-screening Tour



BECKY LUENING

By Suel Jones & Becky Luening

We began on April 16 in Santa Cruz. Three weeks, several thousand miles and many wonderful couches, floors and beds later we completed our first—and possibly last—annual fundraising tour in San Francisco, after zig-zagging our way across northern California.

The centerpiece of our tour was *The Friendship Village*, the video documentary directed and produced by Michelle Mason, who also recently founded VFVP's Canadian Committee. Michelle, Becky Luening and I were present for almost the entire tour; we were joined at times by Michelle's husband Jeff Schutts, and U.S. Committee members Carl Stancil and Bill Dean. We also received tour support from LB Johnson, Dave Benedict and Dave Rocovits, as well as many local organizers.

Let me see if my memory holds up: We drove from Santa Cruz up the coast to Arcata, across the state and down to Fresno, then headed north to Ashland, Oregon. Next stop was South Lake Tahoe, then Paradise and Chico. After a quick three-day breather, during which I made and a side trip to Reno, Nevada, we met up again in Point Arena. Following the Point Arena show we hit Rohnert Park, then Fort Bragg, then Willits. The last two screenings were in Berkeley and San Francisco. I think!

People were very generous. We managed to raise \$6,518 on this film

tour, all of which was recently sent to Vietnam! All expenses for the road trip were paid out of our own pockets and not the funds collected on the tour.

But for us it wasn't the miles driven or the money collected that defined the trip; rather it was the people we met along the way. Every night another stranger would open their home and heart to us, prepare a warm and inviting meal, and treat us like family. The same held true for the people who organized the shows, without whom this would never have happened. And the people who attended the film screenings touched us in so many ways.

Post-film discussions were always stimulating. Many in our audiences were feeling disenfranchised and disturbed by the war heating up in Iraq and couldn't help making connections to the images they saw in the video—a

third generation of children feeling the effects of a war that ended thirty years ago. I think most people understand the immorality of war and have a deep desire to to change the forces that keep pushing us in that direction.

Some of the questions raised by Michell's powerful film went far beyond the scope of our project. As we responded, we let people know that our opinions were our own, and not representative of the Friendship Village, which has always been a non-partisan, non-secular project.

It's difficult not to get wrapped up in politics when confronting the damage done by Agent Orange. It is important to address the political forces that allow such things to happen. As a society, we have yet to learn those lessons.

At the same time, we attempted to end our discussions on a positive note, emphasizing the healing, humanitarian work of the Friendship Village, and reminding people, "It's about the children." When asked, "What can we do?" I often said, "It's not important *what* you do. It is important that you do *something*."

One person who really touched our hearts was Bob, a man who attended our Paradise event (there we showed Bill Bacon's film, *Friendship Village: A Place of Healing*). A hard-working, honest American, probably in his 70s, Bob told about losing his nephew to the war.



BECKY LUENING

*It was exciting to see THE FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE on the marquee of the Arena Cinema theatre in Point Arena on the Mendocino coast. Our hosts, Leon and Mindy, were integrally involved in saving the historic theatre from destruction and are now partners in the cinema business.*



BECKY LUENING

*Our tour was able to spend two days in the Chico-Paradise area, thanks to our good friend LB Johnson who set up showings each night, as well as visits to two classes at Chico State University, where we showed clips of both documentaries (*The Friendship Village* and *A Place of Healing*) and then answered students' questions. Several students chose to attend the showing of *The Friendship Village* in Chico, where they sought out Suel to learn more about Vietnam, *Agent Orange*, war, reconciliation and healing.*

He had been carrying his grief for 30 years and, maybe because the group was so small (only 11 people), he was able to share his pain with us.

Bob said that his nephew had died during the Tet offensive in 1968, at a place called Nguc Ngoc. Had any of us heard of it? Amazingly, our colleague LB Johnson had been to that village in 1989, filming a group of ex-Marines for her documentary, *Return to the Ville*. LB was able to connect Bob with someone who had served with his nephew and was there when he died. She also gave Bob a copy of the video she had made in Nguc Ngoc. Bob's desperate search for any information about his nephew's time in Vietnam was finally realized through the Friendship Village.

In Fresno a group of teenage boys wearing baggy pants, shrouded in hooded jackets shuffled in and slouched down along the back row. They were in juvenile delinquent detention, on the threshold of big-time adult prison next time they decide to break the law. They came as a group with a counselor from the detention center. After viewing *The Friendship Village* it was these boys who started the dialogue. It obviously made an impression on them.

Everywhere we showed the film, people lingered to talk, and on more than one occasion we had to cut discussions short so organizers could close up.

Although we're not sure we'll do

another tour quite like this one, we will certainly continue to put much time and energy into raising funds for the Friendship Village. Simply put, as the village expands, so must the amount of money we raise to support it.

The fundraising we've been involved with for this project is very rewarding, not only for the Friendship Village, but for us personally. Try it. You'll like it!

## OTHER VIETNAM-INTEREST DOCUMENTARIES

Academy Award winner MAYA LIN: A STRONG CLEAR VISION, now available on DVD, reveals the contentious origins of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, and tells the story of its creator, a 21-year-old architecture student whose plan was selected from over 1,000 different designs, beating out some of the most prestigious architecture firms from around the world. For more information visit [www.newvideo.com](http://www.newvideo.com).

A DREAM IN HANOI documents the coming together of American and Vietnamese actors and directors to produce a bilingual, bicultural production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The film shows the difficulties of crossing cultural boundaries and the wonderful tool that art can be for bringing people together and fostering new levels of understanding. For ordering information visit [www.bullfrogfilms.com](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com).

## The Challenge

Here's our challenge to you: Take up where we left off. Continue our film-screening tour in your own community to raise money for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project.

- Read about each of the two documentaries that are now available about the Friendship Village and pick one to show in your community, to your friends, to your church, school or business group. Both films are incredible outreach tools. If you can't pay for a video, we will loan one to you.

- Tell your audience before the film screening that you are raising money for the Friendship Village. Afterwards, ask them to contribute \$1, \$10, \$100, and send their donations to the US or Canadian Committee, along with names and addresses if they are interested in being added to our mailing list. (Checks should be made out to "Vietnam Friendship Village Project.")

- Send us a photo of your fundraiser and we'll post it on our website. That way a lot of us can share in a virtual fundraising tour and have fun watching our community of supporters grow.

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## **A Long Journey** ...from page 1

the tragedy of a brutal war in a beautiful land, of a beautiful and friendly people that I couldn't trust, and a war that I could die for, but that I couldn't understand.

I have to return to Vietnam. I have to make some sense of the many years of suffering that have passed since I left. I must finally "touch down" emotionally after blocking it from my thoughts for decades.

For the past 30 years, I kept my mind occupied by working for Hewlett-Packard, one of the greatest companies in the world. As a Materials Quality Engineer, I contributed to the success of many of HP's outstanding products, including the famous HP scientific calculators and the amazing new HP inkjet printers.

For years, I rarely spoke of my experiences in Vietnam. When I did, it was never in great depth. But my memories never faded the way memories are supposed to. They were always there, just below my consciousness. Once in 1988, a cousin asked me about Vietnam. She wanted to hear my stories. She wanted to know the details. She had time and was willing to listen. It took me 36 hours straight to expel the emotions from my mind.

Afterwards, I again pushed those memories back into the recesses of my mind.

### **The Wall**

Then one day in November of 1992, while in Washington, DC on a business trip, I found myself standing in front of the Vietnam Memorial Wall. I had not planned the visit. I did not know that it was the tenth anniversary of the Wall. I did not know that the young woman who spoke to me was a reporter for Life magazine. I did not know that my words to her would one day appear in the book, *Wall: A Day in the Life of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. But as I walked along that wall, touching the names of so many brave men and women, I knew that I had come to a turning point in my life.

I began to open up more, to engage

in conversations about Vietnam and to tell of my experiences. But still I held much inside. I suffered from a deep sense of guilt for not having had the courage to stand up for what was right and share with others the horror of war. I wanted to do something, but I was still afraid. Afraid of opening old wounds and not knowing what would come out. But it became harder to bottle up my feelings. That need to finally "touch down" came more and more often.

### **Hiroshima**

In Boston in 1998, I happened to meet a Japanese woman, Yuko Tsutsui, while I was shopping. We found ourselves engaged in conversation about helping people in the world. She talked of her ambition to help people in Africa. I spoke of Vietnam and how the war had affected me. We spoke of the devastation in Japan during the war, and the horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. She invited me to visit Japan, and finally in August 2001, I was able to go.

The moment I saw for myself what happened when the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima, my life changed. How could we, as a civilized nation, release such destruction? I wanted more than ever to do something that would set an example for others to follow that would help in the healing process.

Yuko and I talked of making a cause that could change the world and enable us to become happy in the process. She introduced me to her Buddhist faith and assured me that my suffering was not in vain, and that I could turn my feelings into something positive. She helped me see that making a cause for peace and personal happiness could bring hope. (Thank you, Yuko!) But shortly after my return, the events of September 11th occurred and I felt helpless like so many others.

### **A Student History**

A few months later, I received a call from Crescent Valley High School in Corvallis. For a special history project, a class was interviewing Vietnam veterans. They invited me to participate. As I had 14 years earlier when my cousin asked, I opened up. This time, my experiences were captured in a book and

video titled *Through Their Eyes*.

Even as I sat with other Vietnam veterans watching the completed video, I wasn't sure if I had done the right thing. But I could no longer hide from the truth. I was a Vietnam combat veteran, and I was still suffering the wounds of war. I wanted to heal from this and to somehow help others.

### **Friendship Village**

A series of amazing international connections led me to the Vietnam Friendship Village. An email from a woman in Japan introduced me to a retired Japanese journalist in Australia who asked me to photograph children in Vietnam suffering birth defects thought to be caused by Agent Orange. This finally led to an introduction to Suel Jones, a Friendship Village Director living in Hanoi.

When Hewlett-Packard offered me an early retirement, I finally had the time and money to help. I contacted Suel Jones and Becky Luening and asked how I could help. The result of this was in December 2002, I was invited to join the Board of Directors. I accepted.

### **Stopped by SARS**

Unfortunately, my planned return to Vietnam in March of this year was postponed due to the SARS virus. I was very disappointed, but intend to reschedule the trip for later this year.

In May, I was able to meet other directors—Suel Jones, Becky Luening Carl Stancil, and Michelle Mason from the Canadian Committee—when they toured California. In meeting them, I felt that I had met George Mizo, the program's co-founder, who passed away shortly before I learned of the Friendship Village. I can feel his spirit and compassion in the people and friends he brought together. George created the Village as a place for healing and peace, not only for the children who are suffering, but also for veterans like me.

### **For the Children**

As the newest director, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who made a donation or helped

with our spring fundraising drives. Your contributions are very much appreciated by all of us, especially by the children. The funds have already been sent to the Village. I would especially like to recognize Carl and Becky for their tireless work in keeping the VFVP-USA running and for coordinating the connection with the other international committees.

I would like each of you reading this to understand the ongoing work to help those in need in Vietnam. There are many opportunities for you to support the village, with time and energy as well as money. Please consider a generous contribution in whatever way you can. The all-volunteer board and the executive team are working hard to educate others on the effects of Agent Orange. They are putting in very long hours behind the scenes. We will keep you informed of the activities.

I feel that my personal healing has begun. Through the Friendship Village, I am at last able to make my contribution toward world peace. May you all find peace in knowing you are making a difference in the lives of others.

## News from the Friendship Village

*...continued from page 2*

This project was started with a small surplus leftover from last year, plus about \$30,000. This includes the building, new equipment and the new road.

### Changing of the Guard

For those of you who are familiar with our Vietnamese partners from visits they have made to the US or visits you may have made to Vietnam, several key changes in personnel have taken place since our International Meeting last fall.

Lt. Gen. Dang Quan Thuy is the new President of the Veterans Association of Vietnam (VAVN) for 2003–2007, after the retirement of Sen. Lt. Gen. Tran Van Quang.

Lt. Gen. Vu Xuan Vinh, Director of the Management Committee for VFVP, retired in April 2003. The new director is Lt. Gen. Tran Hanh, Vice President and General Secretary of VAVN.

Col. Huynh Van Trinh retired from his position as Director of Foreign Relations of VAVN as of June 1, 2003. Col. Ta Hung, member of VAVN Central Executive Committee and Deputy Director for Foreign Relations, has taken over Trinh's responsibilities.

***"We can make a difference. Each and every one of us."***

—George Mizo, 1945–2002

## DEDICATIONS *received since our last mailing*

Donor	Dedication
Anonymous/name lost	In honor of the Human Family
Anonymous/name lost	In honor of Vietnam Veterans Association Alaska
James P. Anderson	In honor of Suel Jones and his dedication
Jim Bannister & Tia Anderson	In honor of Rosi & Michael Mizo
Phil Butler & Barbara Baldock	In honor of Becky Luening
M. Paula Bedell	In memory of Ralph W. Bedell
Judith S. Bellin	In memory of Eugene Bellin
Richard Blanchfield	In memory of Khe Sanh Bros., USMC '67-'68
Eva Brunner	To celebrate life!
Debbie Cahoon	To celebrate the birth of my grandson, Colton Aubrey Barnard, Jan. 6, 2002
Ray Cassol	In memory of my wife, Elizabeth U. Cassol
Lil & Bill Corrigan	In memory of George Mizo and the Veterans Fast for Life Sept.–Oct. 1986
Frank Dorrel	In honor of the people of Vietnam
Janice Eldred & Peter Szutu	In memory of Jeff "Paco" Hüch
John Finley	In memory of Jeff Hüch
Rolland Fletcher Jr.	In memory of Paul "Tink" Davis
Thomas Gale	In memory of George Mizo: Honor Veterans—Abolish War
Joanne Emily Haggerty	To celebrate: "The greatest of these is love." —I Corinthians 13:13
Bruce Hyman	To celebrate the healing of Vietnam veterans
Jane Higgins	In memory of Jeff "Paco" Hüch
Lenore Kodet	In honor of Helen Lukievics & Ernest Lendler
Kathleen Lowder & David Cole	In honor of Becky Luening
Robert Margulies	In honor of your work for peace
James T. & Patricia W. Miller	In honor of our daughter, Lisa Miller
James Murtaugh	In memory of Joseph La Rose
Mike Oxtoby	In honor of Becky Luening for working so hard to keep your lights on!
Janet M. Powers	In honor of Liliane Floge
Jim Richmond & Leah Wecksler	In memory of Jeff "Paco" Hüch
Pat & Holly Riley	In honor of David Rocovits
Muriel Salmansohn	In memory of Bobsy Draper
Jerome Schnitzer	In honor and in memory of Ellie Schnitzer, militant activist
Celia Scott	In memory of Lucy Haessler
Florence M. Schneider	In memory of Staff Sergeant Bill Schneider
Laura Simkins	In the name of my father, Capt. E.T. "Buck" Little, also known by his call sign, "Snoopy 5"
Frances Steadman	In honor of Bill & Bea Eisman
Tom Taylor	In honor of ALL who died in the war
Venita Varga	In honor of Staff Sergeant Wayman Kenneth Law, U.S. Army 1935–1965
John & Barbara Wodynski	In memory of John Laning (killed in action)
Ed & Mary Wolf	In celebration of Michael & Wanda Cull's wedding
Constance Worthington	In honor of Michael John Carley whose father died in Quang Nai Province 36 years ago today, 2/27/03

# Friendship Village a Hit with Vancouverites



*This fundraiser had just enough cooks in the kitchen to make for a fabulous feast. Those Vancouverites really know how to party, and they raised \$5,000 Canadian dollars for the Friendship Village in the process. Not bad...*

by Michelle Mason

The Canadian Committee's June fundraiser in Vancouver, British Columbia was an evening to remember, raising \$5,000 CDN for the village, and providing a moving, fun and positive experience for all who attended. Organized by committee members Marina Percy and James Dean, the fundraiser brought together over 100 leading members of the business, activist and educational communities, as well as two city councilors, Anne Roberts and Ellen Woodsworth.

Held on June 6 during an unseasonably hot Friday evening, fundraiser-goers gathered at L'Espace Dubreuil, a funky old Vancouver industrial space jazzed up by owner and salvage artist Regis Painchaud. The exposed brick coupled with Regis' eye for beautiful Asian artifacts, quirky industrial details, and his warm French Canadian hospitality created an ideal atmosphere for an evening of goodwill. The décor was augmented by a colorful art exhibit of drawings by the children at the Friendship Village.

As guests made their way from a martini bar hosted by friendly volunteers from Greenlight Power Technologies, they were greeted with mouth-watering appetizers created by

chef Julio Gonzalez-Perini of Villa del Lupo Restaurant. All of his time, assistants, and much of the food were donated. The delicious seafood-based menu was also inspired by a generous donation from Mark Rossum at Ocean Beauty Seafoods.

Guests then headed upstairs to the second level of L'Espace, where they screened Canadian Committee founder Michelle Mason's The Friendship Village documentary. The film was followed by a Q&A session with the filmmaker and committee members Wayne Dwernychuk and Tom Boivin of The Hatfield Group, who are doing some of the leading research in Vietnam on Agent Orange contamination.

After the screening, Julio served an incredible dinner that truly blew people away, only to be surpassed by a sublime assortment of desserts crowned by chocolate raspberry cups that were possibly the most memorable part of the evening.

Fat and happy, guests then danced the night away to the music of DJ Dan, chatted on the outdoor balcony garden—where the popcorn maker John Verbanich provided an extra dose of entertainment and nibbles—and put in their bids for a wonderful assortment of silent auction and door prizes donat-

ed generously by community businesses, and organized by committee members Jeff Schutts and Shannon Rogers (please see below for the list of donors). Prize winners were delighted with their good fortune, taking home everything from a wooden Buddha, rounds of golf, fitness gear, and baby clothes to CDs, haircuts, restaurant gift certificates and Vietnamese silk.

Most of all, at the end of the night everyone took home memories of a very special evening and awareness of a very special project. We look forward to seeing everyone again at our next fundraiser, and thank them all for their generous donations to the village. Thanks also to everyone who made the evening possible, especially Greenlight Power Technologies and Fresh Strategy, who underwrote many of the costs.

## VFVP-Canada Summer Fundraiser June 6, 2003

### SPONSORSHIP LIST

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Greenlight Power Technologies  
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Lola Home & Apparel  
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Northwest Imaging  
Ocean Beauty  
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Pho Number One  
Post Modern Sound  
Precision Transfer Technologies  
Sharp Audio Video  
Stratosphere Hair Salon  
Suel Jones  
Sugoi  
Villa del Lupo Restaurant

# Vietnam Friendship Village Project thanks you for your support!

*Listed below are all who donated time or money since our last newsletter. Please let us know if we missed anyone.*

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*\*Special thanks to all  
those who made our  
Spring film-screening  
tour possible.*



# Vietnam Friendship Village Project-USA, Inc.

P.O. Box 3805, Santa Cruz, CA 95063-3805

*Return Service Requested*

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the Vietnam Friendship Village Project is to cultivate reconciliation and heal the wounds of the Vietnam War by uniting veterans and caring citizens through international cooperation in the support of the Vietnam Friendship Village, a living symbol of peace.

The Vietnam Friendship Village is located in Van Canh Commune, Ha Tay Province, about 11 km from Hanoi, Vietnam.

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PHOTO BY DAVE ROCOVITS

*Eighteen-year-old Nguyen Thanh Hung (left) comes from Hanoi where his father, mother and three disabled siblings live in a 270-square-foot apartment. His mother supports the family with a noodle soup shop on the steps of the apartment, selling a bowl of soup for about 25¢. His father is a pedal-powered rickshaw driver. Hung has had one operation, but many more are needed to straighten and strengthen both hands. Because of a lack of funds, he has gone as far as he can in school, but would like to be an architect. Hung's friend, Nguyen Manh Da, 16 (right), is luckier than Hung. His family owns a small shop repairing and selling used electrical appliances. Da also has had an operation on his hands, and as in most cases, more are needed. Nevertheless, Da will return home soon to work in the shop. He is a success story. His leaving will make room at the village for another child.*

Visit our webpage at <http://www.vietnamfriendship.org>