



Viet Nam Friendship Village

The Newsletter of the US Committee of the Vietnam Friendship Village Project

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Summer 2002

Good-bye, George



GEORGE M. MIZO

*Founding International Director,
Vietnam Friendship Village, Hanoi*

October 21, 1945–March 18, 2002



by Michael Cull

Our beloved friend George was buried in a sacred ceremony on March 25, 2002 in Höfen, Germany attended by about 300 of his family of friends from all over the world. His wife Rosi and 14-year-old son Michael organized a sweet, solemn service in their village cemetery just a few blocks from their home. Michael's choir sang like angels, offering George's favorite hymns in German mixed with "Yesterday" and, finally, John Lennon's "Imagine." Letters of condolence from officials in Vietnam, Japan, France and the US were read in German by his friends with tears and tender voices.

I was touched by the lovingness conveyed for George and his family, but unable to understand the words due to my language gap. I drifted into meditation, many
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Michael Mizo receives a hug from General Giap as proud parents George and Rosi look on. This scene represents two of the most important things in George's life: his family, and making peace with former enemies. The photo was taken soon after George and Rosi received Vietnam's State Medal of Friendship on Oct. 30, 2000.

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Friendship Village bids farewell to its American founder

by Suel Jones

When I arrived at the Friendship village the older kids were cleaning the dining room while Director Hung and Vice Director Nhung were hanging a picture of George on the wall above an altar of fruit and incense burners. Soon the room filled with the children and veterans from all around Vietnam who are receiving treatment at the village, leaders of the Veterans Association of Vietnam, paid workers and volunteers who keep the village functioning, as well as people who simply wanted to honor a man who has touched their lives. Most in the room never knew George, but they all knew that this place of healing and reconciliation stands because one American veteran wanted to give something back to the country where he once fought.

As we waited for the ceremony to begin, I watched the smoke rising from the incense burners. It curled around George's picture then snaked out the window to disappear over the fish pond that runs across the village grounds—a pond built with donations because George didn't understand the word "quit." The children sat quietly as we waited and I thought about George Mizo and how one man, through personal determination, had affected the lives of so many.

There are 24 children walking today because of operations they never would have had if George had become discouraged and quit. There are more than 400

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memories of George's life adding to my sorrow and profound sense of loss. I noticed a tree in the cemetery, which to me became a mystical symbol of his life. It was a strong, tall elm with a twisted trunk. It must have withstood a major crisis at an early age, but it survived to grow and thrive, its many budding branches stretching across the cold gray sky.

George indeed survived many battles, during and after the Vietnam War, on his way to becoming a quiet but relentless warrior for world peace and



George Mizo (right) with Korean soldiers in Vietnam, 1967.

friendship. The love he shared with Rosi and Michael spread to all those who came to know them. The Village of Friendship was a dream realized that healed his soul through total dedication to peace and reconciliation. The Mizo Tree of Loving Service now has deep roots and many branches around the world.

On a personal note, George will always be an inspiration in my work as a therapist treating combat veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. I share his story of recovery and redemption with other, less fortunate vets. He was the first Vietnam vet to become my friend. We both grew up in New England. We were stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey at the same time but never met. We served in Vietnam near each other at about the same time, but I was mostly safe and sound in a field hospital. As ex-warriors, we became vets against the war at the same time in different places. We understood each other as survivors and learned to enjoy

life and laughter. My favorite memory is when we saw the movie *Rocky* together, in which Sylvester Stallone trains for a comeback championship fight. Up at dawn, running the streets of Philadelphia, never quitting until he reached the top steps of the library—that movie was a model of our own comeback, our ability to ignore the pain and never give up on ourselves.

It was an honor to stand with Rosi and Michael as friends paid their last respects to George. Michael and I smudged all the people with sage and sweet grass as each one dropped a flower in the grave. I gave a salute to George for being an outstanding human being and a great warrior, as he went to join his ancestors to rest in peace. I dropped Indian medicine beads and scarf on the casket and said "Goodbye George, my good friend. Thank you." Later Michael told me that he put a statue of Buddha and his Boston Red Sox cap in the casket.

George The Soldier served in The US Army from 1963 to 1968. Officially, he was a Sergeant in Vietnam with B Battery 3/18 Artillery in the Americal Division, mostly in the field, on the ground, and at times as a tank operator with heavy combat exposure. He was wounded in Que Son near LZ Baldy in late January 1968. Later, he learned that he was the only survivor from his unit, news that changed his life profoundly and forever. He earned two Silver Stars and a Purple Heart with many citations for valor. He gave all his medals back during the Veterans Fast for Life in 1986, in protest of US policy in Nicaragua. He often said that it was very hard for him because these medals were his memory and connection to his fallen comrades.

Today, the Village of Friendship serves 120 children and elderly veterans still suffering from the effects of Agent Orange. It is a self-sustaining community for healing the wounds of war. Veterans in Vietnam joined with veterans from countries who fought there to create a living symbol of reconciliation and peaceful service. Veteran committees raise donations for

the village in Japan, Germany, France, USA, and now Australia and Canada.

The Friendship Village is indeed a dream come true for George and his family. In October 2000 George and Rosi received the Vietnam Medal of Friendship for outstanding humanitarian service for developing the village over the past 15 years. George Mizo's humble determination and love of life will continue to inspire people around the world. May he rest forever as a Warrior for Peace.

Friendship Village Bids Farewell ... from p. 1

Vietnamese veterans who would be going without treatment if he had not cared. And there are American veterans like myself who have learned, from George's example, that healing comes through giving back.

Friendship Village Director Mr. Hung, Cu Chi Tunnel veteran and former enemy, expressed his gratitude and love for George, speaking of him as a brother. Lt. General Vinh put his arms around my shoulders and told me, as tears filled his old eyes, "I truly loved that man!" This from an old warrior who saw so many of his countrymen die in two wars, yet loved this American veteran because he understood that George loved the Vietnamese.

After two short speeches, incense sticks were lit. One by one, each child and veteran honored George by approaching the altar, bowing three times, and placing a stick of incense in an earthen bowl. By the time the ritual was finished, the room was thick with smoke. No great groans or outcries were heard; only quiet, dignified mourners honoring an American vet who had the courage to return, extend his hand, and say in a soft and gentle manner, "I'm sorry."

Now I want to say to George Mizo: "My brother, I thank you for being a man who had the wisdom, power and fortitude to keep taking one step at a time until your dream was accomplished, and for having so much love in your heart." Many of the people here may never know George's name, but they'll never forget the day they came to the Friendship Village.

WORLD PREMIERE

The Friendship Village

The Friendship Village
Directed by Michelle Mason
Digital/Colour/50 Minutes

"Those of us who have seen firsthand that horror called war know how fragile life is, and how precious life is, and know that war is not the answer, but part of the problem." —George Mizo

The Vietnam Village of Friendship stands not only as a symbol of remorse, but as a testament to the potential for all people to come to terms with the past, heal the wounds of war, and create a better world. *The Friendship Village* is a one-hour documentary that explores the significance of this unique village and its message of transformation, reconciliation, and peace.

Following the story of Village founder George Mizo, *The Friendship Village* takes audiences through his experiences of war's horror to the transformation that ultimately led to the birth of this village for children and veterans. Working alongside the Vietnamese General responsible for killing his entire platoon in 1968, General Tran Van Quang, as well as other veterans and activists from the US, Vietnam, France, Germany, Japan and Great Britain, *The Friendship Village* documents their efforts to mitigate the ongoing effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam through international grassroots efforts.

In so doing, *The Friendship Village* is a powerful reminder that in an increasingly globalized world, average people can still make a profound difference. Through it, audi-

Why I joined VFVP-USA

by John Hopkins

My relationship with Vietnam extends back into the early to mid-60s when I realized in high school that I was headed there. I went to Vietnam in 1968 with the First Infantry Division as an aerial recon specialist working with artillery, close air support and B-52 strikes. After the war I spent several years trying to help change the policy of war against Vietnam. For years I was haunted by the memories and guilt for the things I did there. I lived with a vision of Vietnam locked in my head full of the images, sounds and smells of war.



In 1997 I returned to Vietnam with Global Volunteers to help build a drainage system at a nursery school in the Mekong. It was a very emotional experience but a curative one. I came to see the Vietnamese for who they are, an open, family-oriented, hardworking people who deeply love their children. I came to see a society not at war but at

peace, and a people willing to embrace Americans as their friends. I was better received there than when I returned to the US in 1969.

I came to the Vietnam Friendship Village as an occasional contributor. Then I started making a regular monthly contribution. This was not out of guilt, but out of a sincere desire to help a people trying to bring themselves up into the world as full partners but still carrying the legacy of decades of war. Agent Orange, which affected many of my friends who fought there, still causes great devastation in the lives of young Vietnamese children. It is only fitting that we help in any way we can, so when I was asked to be a board member I gladly agreed.

Left: The newest building is erected at the Friendship Village.



May 1993: Michael Mizo does the honors as George Mizo and Vietnamese friends celebrate the groundbreaking for the Friendship Village. At right is Chu Do, then head of the management committee for the village (Chu Do died in 1998).

ences may come to understand that the Vietnam Friendship Village has the potential to change not only the lives of the children who live in it and people who build it, but all who come to understand its significance. One individual can change a community; one village can change the world.

Director/Producer Michelle Mason is a Canadian filmmaker and close friend of George Mizo. Three years in the making, her film about the Friendship Village will be screening at a series of fundraisers throughout 2002, and will air on Canadian television in the fall. The premiere showing at the Pacific Cinematheque Theatre in Vancouver on Sun., July 21 at 4:00 p.m., the kick-off event for a new Canadian Committee for VFVP, will feature a silent auction and Vietnamese food.

Hosting a fabulous fundraiser in a New York apartment

The Friendship Village was blessed this spring with the proceeds from a New York City fundraiser. The event was postponed several times after the September 11, 2001 trade center attacks that left New Yorkers feeling shaken and vulnerable. Nevertheless, in early March, friends and family of Helen Lukievics and her husband, Ernie Lendler, reached deep into their hearts and pockets, and raised over \$7,000 for the Friendship Village. And, they had a great time doing it!

by Helen Lukievics

On March 3, 2002 we finally had our fundraiser for the Friendship Village which had been postponed due to 9/11 and its aftermath. Holding a fundraiser for the first time felt overwhelming but, in retrospect, it need not have been. I started with Suel Jones's idea of a little party for close friends. And friends are the key to the whole event, whatever size it turns out to be.

From the very beginning, when I wondered if the event would turn into a disaster due to my complete inexperience, my friends encouraged me. Sally and Gudren and Hilde pledged to pitch in with anything, Lenore volunteered her fabulous new apartment that had room for a crowd, and then it was just a matter of sending out the invitations and making the follow-up calls. And organizing the food. And the plates. And the glasses. And the tables. We needed acres of tables to display the things we were going to auction and sell. We had hundreds of things large and small and they all had to be priced for sale or a minimum auction price set. Here's a piece of advice: Have three people work on setting the prices. Everyone has a vastly different idea of what someone would pay for something and you can go with the middle price.

Since it's friends who are coming, you can be assured that all that good will means things will work out no matter what happens. Well, almost no matter. The night before the party,

Lenore took out the lovely gold lacquer plates she had bought for the occasion and noticed for the first time the label that said, "Not for use with food—may poison edibles that come in contact with surface." So that's another good tip: Don't poison the guests.

In the end, friendship triumphed: Friends from grammar school, friends from high school, and friends from college all came. Friends I met last year came. And their friends came. We had nearly 70 people. The wine flowed continuously, the food was plentiful (on regular plates), but the real draw was an antique jewelry shop and they donated bags of beautiful jewelry, as well as Japanese prints and other wonderful things. Hilde brought art and artifacts from her world travels, Gudren brought jewelry, antiques and pottery. And I brought embroidery from Vietnam, silver from Thailand, lacquer from Burma and silk from Cambodia. Elena decided to price the silk scarves very high, and then bought the most expensive one herself. We had so many things that we had to sell them rather than auction them, but we reserved a few things for auction, including embroidered pictures from Vietnam.

In all my trips to Vietnam I had never bothered to take a close look at the embroidered pictures that are a traditional art in Dalat and have appeared in great numbers in the "tourist" shops in Hanoi. When Suel told me that someone had paid a large sum for an embroidered picture that he brought back for a fundraiser, I decided to investigate. The range of subjects was incredible: everything from an exact copy of a Botticelli Madonna to another type of classic, Dogs Playing Pool. I selected some traditional Vietnamese landscapes of exquisite needlework and wondered if anyone would find them as charming as I did. They were a big hit. If anyone needs an embroidered picture of Dogs Playing Pool, I'll be happy to bring one back next time.

We put up dozens of photos of the kids at Friendship Village and everyone could see instantly that they were supporting a very good cause. People spent their money joyfully. One of my friends came late and piled up an odd assortment of merchandise that was left over and wrote a check for double the total price. It was the best kind of party, an opportunity to see old friends, shop for some unusual stuff, and do it all for a good cause.

For years my friends from out of town had promised each other to get together, but had never gotten around to doing it until this fundraiser made it irresistible. Even my high school math teacher came, and she told us she was proud of us for doing this for the children in Vietnam. I don't care how old you may be, it's really something to have your high school teacher say she's proud of you.

Left: Helen captured the smiles of these Friendship Village school children on film, while they captured her heart.

HELEN LUKIEVICS

Why we had a fundraiser for Friendship Village

My husband, Ernie, and I have visited Vietnam ten times since 1991. We were introduced to Friendship Village by Suel Jones, an American who fought in Vietnam with the Marines. With Suel we visited Friendship Village in 2000 and again in 2001. The children there have all kinds of disabilities and deformities. Some are orphaned and some come from families that have several children with similar problems. In the latter case, Friendship Village selects one child from a family, not the most disabled, but the one they think they can do the most for. These children are cared for with love as well as skill, and as much medical technology as is available. Expanding the number of beds at Friendship Village and the extent of care that can be given is a goal that can be reached. A dollar goes a long way in Vietnam.

When I was leaving Vietnam last December, my taxi to the airport paused in traffic for a minute. Outside the taxi window I saw a young boy sitting in the gutter. His legs were withered, as thin and brittle as the sticks that lay by his side that were all he had as crutches. His back was to me; I'd guess his age as 10. A man walked by and offered him, of all things, a cigarette, but the child shook his head, he didn't want it. He gazed, if at anything, down an alley where there was a soup cart. I was wondering if they ever gave him soup when my taxi started up again and I continued on my way out of Vietnam.

If you look at the photos of the Friendship Village, you will see one of a boy with withered legs. It is not the same boy. Friendship Village is outside Hanoi in the north and the boy in the gutter was in Saigon, in the south. The boy in the photo looks sad, almost as bereft as the boy in the gutter. But he is



not. Moments after I took his photo, a bunch of other little boys came charging in. (It's amazing how rambunctious even disabled boys can be when they are well-fed.) They piled onto his bed and were soon playing a vigorous game of cards with him. I wish I had gotten a photo of that. But I can only tell you this so that you might understand what blessings Friendship Village can bestow. Most of the children say their favorite thing about Friendship Village is having so much food. Just having food is wonderful to them, but they get so much more.

I will not find that particular boy in the gutter in Saigon again. You know I will look for him anyway. I am grateful to have Friendship Village to support in the meantime.

Thanks to all our friends, old and new, who participated in our fundraiser.

— Helen Lukievics

The Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange Trust

by Bruce Montgomery

Australia became involved in the Friendship Village project in October 2001 when journalist Bruce Montgomery returned to Hanoi with close friend and Vietnam vet Don Killion and their friend Tony Brown. Montgomery and his wife Vicki had visited Hanoi 12 months earlier when they met Suel Jones and Michael Cull, who, during long conversations around the lake, described their work for the children in the village.

Killion had been an Aussie medic working with the Americans in Hue in 1969. Like many vets, he had experienced many difficulties adjusting to normal life after Vietnam. He had never felt comfortable about going back. However, he has been a stoic supporter and leader in organizations such as Legacy, an organization established to help the families of ex-servicemen and women.

Montgomery suggested that the two of them work together in Australia to help the people of Vietnam still affected by the use of Agent Orange. He offered to accompany Killion back to Vietnam—back to Hue—if he would like to do that. Killion readily agreed and with the unstinting help of Suel Jones and Tony Brown, they returned in October. They visited the Friendship Village many times during their stay and

resolved to establish a Trust in Australia to raise money, particularly for the children. That Trust has now been established: the Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange Trust. Killion, Montgomery and Brown are the trustees.

Montgomery and Killion have addressed veterans' groups, war widows, etc. in their home state, Tasmania. Eventually, they would like to operate the Trust nationwide. They have yet to determine the optimum means of allocating any money raised. They are holding ongoing discussions with VFVP-USA board member Suel Jones, who visited Tasmania in April, and with medical authorities in Australia.

Public awareness of the plight of these people, the contrast between their welfare and Agent Orange sufferers in First World countries is stark. The objective of the Australians is to raise that awareness through the Trust, and through further visits by Australian vets to Hanoi. The Australian project is embryonic, but everyone to whom they tell their story is touched and eager to help. They hope to make a solid contribution to the work that US veterans—George in particular—and other nations have started.

For more information about the Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange Trust, visit the trust's new web age, at: http://users.bigpond.net.au/agent_orange_trust/



George, first grade

Dear Friends,

It brought very great shock and sadness to hear that Mr. George Michael Mizo passed away on March 18, 2002. . . .

In our memory, Mr. George Mizo will always be . . . an American veteran who strongly protested against the US war in Vietnam and who wholeheartedly supported the legitimate cause of peace, freedom and independence of Vietnam. He is honored as the person who initiated the foundation of the Friendship Village and committed the rest of his life for the people of Vietnam and the Friendship Village. We appreciate so much his excellent work and the energy he put into the very fruitful implementation of the [project] until the last minute of his life. Moreover, he sacrificed a large sum of his family's savings to support the Village, a very noble act of kindness. . . . He is a symbol of

the friendship between the American people and the people of Vietnam. . . . His demise is a real loss to all of us. . . . His spirit of peace and friendship will always live in our hearts, in the Friendship Village and in our continued work for it. . . . We pledge to continue our close cooperation with VFVP International and the national committees to fulfill the humanitarian project left by George Mizo and by doing so we will realize the dream of his life and never forget him.

A commemoration stone stele with a gold inscription of the name of George Mizo will be erected in the most [special] place in the Village to honor him for his great contribution to the Village.

With love,
In Peace and Friendship,

Col. General Tran Van Quang, President, Veterans Association of Viet Nam
Lt. General Vu Xuan Vinh, Board of Leadership VAVN
Col. Huynh Van Trinh, Central Executive Committee VAVN, Dir. Foreign Relations
Col. Nguyen Khai Hung, Director of Vietnam Friendship Village
Mr. Ho Xuan Dich, Senior Expert Foreign Relations, VAVN



Veterans Fast for Life, 1986
Four military veterans (George Mizo, Charlie Liteky, Brian Willson & Duncan Murphy) fasted on the US Capitol steps to protest the US Government's covert war against Nicaragua.

Rosi & Michael,

Sadness is in my heart at the passing of a man that I am honored to have known, and who will forever be in my heart, and a gentle happiness to know that his suffering and pain is at last at an end. My brother, my warrior brother's pain is finally over and he is in a better place.

I will forever remember as we sat in ceremony together at Talking Circle in Alaska, how George's words filled our hearts and our spirits. In his humble way, with quiet words he shared his warrior journey with us and our spirits were lifted. George was a warrior. A warrior of and for peace. For having served in war in the service of his country he knew the price of peace. He knew and dedicated his life towards peace and I am humbled and honored to have known him. On this day I ask each of you here who knew and loved our brother George to continue to keep his dedication towards peace alive. To live a life without anger, to be humble, to follow in George's footsteps, walking with peace in your hearts, walking in a good way.

Grandfather, Creator, we ask for a blessing on my brother George and for those who he leaves behind. Accept him now on the other side and have pity on us, for on this day as on all days we are doing the best that we can. We offer our hearts and spirits to the memory in this way, in a good way as we ask you to watch over us now.

Aho "Mitakoyasi!" "All my relations"

Bill Martin
Anchorage, Alaska

Dear Rosi,

George Mizo was one of the most decent men I have ever known. I am proud to have known him as a friend and Vietnam Veteran. Rest assured that God has a special place for men like George. You are in our hearts and prayers.

Big Ed and Yuki Roberts
Palatka, Florida



George & Rosi's wedding



With baby Michael, 1988

Dear Rosi & Michael,

I will always remember George for his kindness and generous assistance and caring when my son Jeff died. It speaks volumes as to the kind of person George Mizo was. He, with your help, did so much for peace and for the children and old folks at the Village of Friendship and his legacy will go on forever.

Love and Peace to you both.

Earl Huch
Catonsville, Maryland



Speaking with conscientious objectors.

Dear Rosi and Michael,

We have been trying to find words to express our grief and admiration for George, but are finding it very difficult to sort through our feelings right now and come up with something that captures his essence. His is such a great spirit, and he lived a great life.

To honor George's life, we are making the film [*The Friendship Village*, see p. 3]; to honor George the friend we loved, we are holding him in our hearts and thoughts.

George Bernard Shaw once wrote, "Some people see the world as it is and say why. I see the world as it could be and say, why not?"

George not only taught us how to say no to war and injustice, but more importantly he taught us to say yes to life. . . . We will carry him and his vision with us always and miss him greatly.

Our love and prayers,

Michelle Mason and Jeff Schutts
Vancouver, British Columbia



Working on the restoration of the Mizos' house in Höfen, Germany

As a peace activist veteran of the US War on Vietnam, I first met George Mizo during his participation in the September-October 1986 "Veterans Fast for Life" with fellow vets Brian Willson, Charlie Liteky and Duncan Murphy. Several New Hampshire veterans and I stood in proud solidarity with George on the US Capitol steps during the courageous fast against repulsive US policies in Central America. Since those tumultuous times, I've continued to admire George's worthy efforts with the Vietnam Friendship Village Project, and I have had the deepest respect for my Vet-Brother. George was a true humanitarian whose presence will forever be warmly felt. I feel honored to have been in his midst.

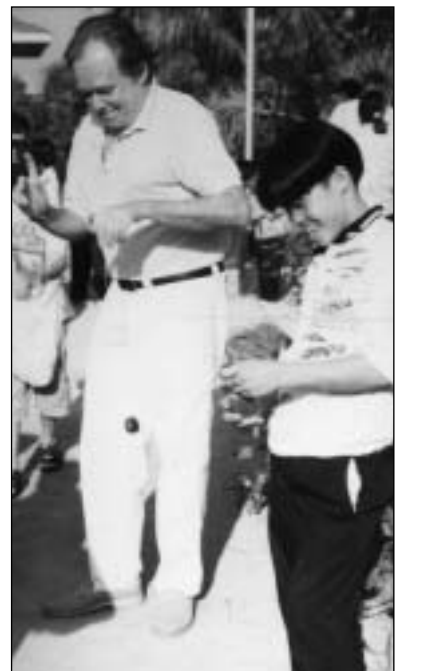
Love and Peace,
Paul Nichols
Loudon Ridge, New Hampshire

The first time I met George was at a gathering of veterans in Portland, Massachusetts back in 1987. This was shortly after the 47-day "Veterans Fast for Life" on the steps of the U.S. Capital Building, in which four veterans (Charles Litekey, George Mizo, Duncan Murphy, and Brian Willson) fasted for peace in Central America. I decided in my heart to follow these four veterans in peace, like I did my comrades in war.

Five years later George came out to California and gave me a great opportunity to help him with the VFVP. The three years that followed were the highlights of my life. I was present with George the first time we went to the site where the village would be built. Today when I see the photos of the Friendship Village, and what George accomplished there, I say, "I salute you George. You are victorious!" I shall never forget him.

I thank George and his family for allowing me into their rich life.

Ruben Gomez
Santa Cruz, California



Having fun with yo-yos at the Village of Friendship

BRIDGES TO HOME

This past December, four Stanford students spent their winter vacation in Vietnam. They weren't there to sit on the beach. Tristan Ivory, Alice Cho, Chitua Alozie and Jenny Ahn arrived in Vietnam with a mission—to share, to learn, and to bring that learning back home.

Each student is now working to translate the lessons they learned overseas into a creative service project within the United States. They aren't alone. All four students are participating in a new nonprofit organization—Bridges to Home—that is committed to making travel more meaningful.

Started by a young Rhodes Scholar, Nico Slate, Bridges to Home aims to connect travel abroad to community service at home. To fulfill its mission, Bridges promotes culturally sensitive and respectful travel, and encourages all travelers to learn from their experience overseas, to be aware of their positions as outsiders, and to bring all they learn back home to share with others.

The Friendship Village was at the heart of the Bridges trip to Vietnam, and continues to inspire the student-travelers themselves, as they strive to turn what they learned abroad into positive change at home. Bridges' mission interestingly parallels that of the Friendship Village Project—both aiming toward cross-cultural reconciliation and the sharing of hope and progress across borders.

Bridges was founded with a simple idea: being abroad is an excellent opportunity to learn about yourself and your own community. Most travelers naturally compare the foreign to the familiar. Journals written by the students in Vietnam again and again reveal the revelatory potential of being open to another place and culture.

One student started thinking of home even before landing in Vietnam: "Descending into Hanoi from the clouds above is like coming back to my hometown. The weather looks about right for the time of year and the scenery, (mostly agricultural) is much the same." Another student observed, "In Hanoi proper, people look more youthful and healthy than back in the states, and it wasn't due to an advanced state of dress or layer upon layer of make-up." A third added, "There is a true sense of community here."

More than making comparisons themselves, Bridges students often question how people foreign to the US view them. One student writes, "A woman walks by with a beanie that loudly declares 'USA.' I wonder . . . does she know what that means? Why does she have this particular beanie on?"

Late-breaking news

***Vietnamese officials to visit U.S.

The dates have not yet been set, but we received word that a delegation of Vietnamese veterans will be visiting the US this summer, probably in late July/early August. The delegation will visit Washington, DC before heading to Santa Cruz, California, home base of VFVP-USA. The group will include General Vinh, Board of Leadership for the Veterans Association of Vietnam, and General Thuy, former Vice President of Vietnam's National Assembly.

Does she like the color? Was she just cold on the day that she decided to buy it? Or does she especially like the USA?" Another student added, "In a way, being a Westerner makes you wealthy, no matter what you may perceive the case to be."

Two months after the trip, the Friendship Village continues to inspire Bridges' travelers. A week before midterms, Chitua, Tristan, and Alice came to Santa Cruz, California to meet with VFVP-USA board member Carl Stancil to share experiences in Vietnam and to continue working to apply the lessons they learned abroad.

After seeing first-hand the importance and beauty of reconciliation and peace, Alice and Chitua are hoping to raise funds for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project by organizing an annual Vietnam Celebration at Stanford University. Tristan is planning to organize a student-initiated course about the legacy of the Vietnam war, both in Vietnam and for veterans and their families within the United States.

The commitment of the students to apply what they learned in Vietnam speaks to the depth and vitality of that learning. In the words of one traveler:

"After being at the Friendship Village, I can no longer deny the strength of the human spirit—the power that each individual holds over the quality of his/her own life. Whereas before, I had always defined human attributes by using words, I now distinguish them by using the memories that I have brought back with me. Generosity is the ample meal that Ms. Ha prepared for us. Surprise is what I felt when children fought to grab my empty hand. Anger is what rose in me when I saw the severity and extent of the children's physical abnormalities. Relief is what a smile will bring to the worried mother. Trust is in the look that every child gives. Acceptance is shown by veterans regardless of poor weeding skills. Laughter is what rings throughout the classroom as I once again produce a distorted and imperfect paper flower. Forgiveness is what the young Da bestows as he fixes my mistake. Learning is the intention with which we (the students) went to the Friendship Village with and Love is the way—the only way—through which it was done."

This summer, Bridges is organizing two more trips—to the Southern Indian state of Kerala and to the Peruvian Amazon and Andes. For more information, or to read more about meaningful travel, please visit the Bridges website: www.bridgestohome.org.

***Documentary focuses on healing

Oscar-nominated documentary filmmaker Bill Bacon is putting the final touches on a film about the Friendship Village from the perspective of veterans who have found healing through the project. Interviews with veterans focus on their experiences in Vietnam, Agent Orange, the story of George Mizo, and the importance of the Friendship Village in helping to heal veterans from around the world. The film includes footage of Suel at the village with Korean and Australian veterans. The documentary is expected to be distributed this summer, and eventually shown on PBS.

VFVP-USA Income & Expense Report

	FY 2000-01*	FY 2001-02 (to date)**
Income		
Individual Donations	\$ 14,152.26	\$ 22,969.50
Interest Earned	1.50	34.75
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 14,153.76	\$ 23,004.25
Expenses		
Photocopies	\$ 46.05	\$ 19.69
Postage	679.38	201.15
Printing	1,055.31	0.00
Telephone Conferencing	290.19	310.02
Internet Dialup Service	180.00	45.00
Website Hosting	153.55	162.55
Wire Transfer Fees	0.00	30.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 2,430.33	\$ 783.85
Balance	\$ 11,723.43	\$ 22,220.40
Transferred to Vietnam	\$ 0.00	\$ 32,000.00

*FY 2000-01 = 10/1/00-9/30/01

**FY 2001-02 to date = 10/1/01-6/30/02

Living in Hanoi ... from back page

be gone for three weeks in April, but after about half an hour of trying to communicate with the aid of a dictionary I finally called a Vietnamese friend who speaks English well and had her tell Mrs. Nunog what I needed her to know. This simple communication took most of the morning and left me feeling frustrated, knowing that it will be a long time before I can speak basic Vietnamese, despite my twice-weekly lessons.

On the reverse side of the language issue, I have found that many young Vietnamese in the cities speak some English, and want to learn more, so I find it difficult to entice them into speaking Vietnamese with me because speaking English is so important to them. English and Chinese are the two most sought-after languages for today's up-and-coming youth; the languages of money in Vietnam.

Hanoi in particular and Vietnam in general is changing right before my eyes. New shops are opening daily. Buildings are rising from the red soil, construction noise becoming a way of life as the Hanoi skyline changes. This communist society is quickly becoming a capitalist one, this rural society is quickly becoming an urban one, and this closed society is quickly becoming an open one as the young people learn more and more about the world around them. I feel like I'm witnessing a cultural revolution that can't seem to decide which way to go. Two pictures that hang side by side on a street vendor's booth perfectly illustrate the split: Britney Spears and Uncle Ho, the newest American icon alongside Vietnam's most celebrated leader.

International Committee Financial Report

11/1/00 through 11/30/01

Note: All figures are in US dollars.

INCOME

Contributions from

Fundraising Committees:

Germany	\$ 99,596
France	19,498
USA	18,433
Japan	5,000
Total from Committees:	\$ 142,507

Grant from Government of Vietnam:

(to pay for food for children)

Total Grant:	\$ 20,000
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Cash Donations from

Visitors and Organizations:

German Visitors	\$ 92
French Visitors	170
American Visitors	590
Japanese Visitors	100
Vietnamese Organizations	1,062
Chinese Embassy	1,000
Total Cash Donations:	\$ 3,014

In-Kind Donations:

(from Vietnamese and European organizations, mostly medical/rehab equipment and materials)

Total In-Kind:	\$ 23,822
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TOTAL INCOME	\$ 189,343
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EXPENSES

FY 2000-2001

Operating Expenses:	\$ 76,982
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Estimated Expenses—

House for Severely Disabled Children:

Building Construction	\$ 45,000
Rehabilitation Equipment	5,000
Total Cost:	\$ 50,000

Please see page 10 for a narrative with more detail about how monies are being spent at the village, particularly the US contribution.

Where did the money go?

— Fundraising Update as of June 2002 —

• Our goal

Approximately one year ago, VFVP-USA mailed our annual newsletter with a fundraising appeal stating a goal of \$50,000 to pay for construction of a house for severely disabled children at the Friendship Village. Although we didn't meet our goal, we did quite well in comparison with past years' fundraising efforts. We managed to wire \$15,000 USD to Vietnam on November 2, 2001 and another \$17,000 on May 13, 2002: a total of \$32,000.

• Last year's international goal met

As for the international effort, the International Committee at its meeting on October 30, 2000 set a fundraising goal of \$140,000 for Fiscal Year 2000-2001; the actual total raised for the year was \$142,507, enabling the village to move forward with construction plans, and to cover all operating costs and increase capacity by 5 to serve 115 children. This figure reflects the number of children at the village during any one month. Fourteen children were able to return home during the year, and 20 more were admitted. In addition, over the year, a total of 169 veterans (elderly and youth) were treated at the village. The estimated cost of care for one child for a month is approximately \$45, or about \$1.50 per day. This includes food, housing, transportation, staff wages, medical expenses and clothing.

• House completed for severely disabled children

While the US Committee worked toward our goal, approximately \$10,242 (30,000 DM) of the construction costs for the house for severely disabled children came in the form of a grant from the Ministry of Economics in Baden-Württemberg (a state in southwestern Germany). Additional funds for the house came from the La Loba Foundation and the Community of Ulm and New Ulm (German organizations). The building was completed in March. Ten thousand dollars worth of rehab equipment has been purchased for the facility, covered at least in part by US donations. Besides those funds earmarked for the house for severely disabled children, all funds received by the village in the past fiscal year went into operating costs for the year, with leftovers carried over to cover this year's operating costs.

• Newest building project

A good portion of the \$32,000 the US Committee recently wired to Vietnam is being put into completing a new 150-square-meter, two-story building that will house an orthopedic rehabilitation center on the first floor and a craft and cultural center on the second. The craft center will include facilities for traditional crafts such as sewing and fabrication of artificial flowers, among other things, allowing the village to become more self-sufficient. A one-time donation of \$10,000 USD received from South Korea helped fund this new building. The Norwegian Red Cross donated approximately \$16,500 USD for the project. A nine-month sewing course currently trains 12 young people at a time. This program will be expanded if living space is available. Until the new building is finished, the sewing operation occupies half of the dining area.

• The next steps

Additional short-term goals for the Friendship Village are the completion of an administrative services building/visitor center (est. cost \$40,000), and the establishment of a pork-raising operation with 10 sows and 100 piglets (est. cost \$15-17,000). Also in the works are upgrades for the clinic and creation of a surgical center and basic hospital for in-house as well as outreach medical services.

• Your contribution makes a difference

Slowly but steadily, we are growing in our fundraising capacity while raising consciousness. The money raised here in the US comes almost entirely from individual donations, made through newsletter and personal outreach as well as special fundraisers like Helen Lukievics' party in New York City (see p. 4). VFVP-USA Board members themselves give enough to cover administrative expenses, so that all other contributions go directly to the village. Recently, board members Michael Cull and Suel Jones, our Alaska contingent, have raised a significant amount through local fundraisers and nationwide networking. Earl Huch and Becky Luening approached friends and relatives for donations in memory of Jeff Huch, former VFVP-USA director. Liliane Floge and John Hopkins have been busy contacting past donors as well as new prospects. It is a pleasure to receive the fruits from these labors and to pass them on to our Vietnamese partners. Again, we wish to thank all who have contributed to the Vietnam Friendship Village Project. Whether \$5 or \$5,000, it is clear that every donation made to this special reconciliation project comes from the heart, in the spirit of peace and friendship. And you can be sure that each dollar we send to Vietnam is received in the same spirit.

Vietnam Friendship Village Project-USA thanks you for your support!

Listed below are all who made donations since our 2001 newsletter. Please let us know if we overlooked anyone.

Jerry Adame & Karen Williams
Robert Anker, Attorney at Law
Thomas Bayard, IV
Katherine Beiers
Valerie Bengal
Diane Bigelow
Richard Blanchfield
William Bornhuetter
Amira Bramson
Mona Bregman
Burger, Inc.
Leonard Burkhardt
Col. James Burkholder, USA, Ret.
Sarah Burr & Gary Gillespie
Debbie Cahoon
James & Judith Callan
Juliet Cassone
Leslie Caulfield
Robert Clark & Andrea Story
Cathleen Clements
Thomas Congdon
Charles Conway
John & Lenore Cooney
Ruth Crawford
Steve Crawford & Liliane Floge
Robert & Lois Crowley
Frances Cull
Michael Cull
Catherine Curtis
Ric Davidge
Christopher DeMurias
Elena DeMurias
Roz Dimon
Gerald Dunbar &
Christine Pasquariello
EARTH
Janice Eldred
Joseph A. Eno
John Finley & Linda Stahl
Tim & Ginny Fitzmaurice
Michael Foster
James Fox
Wendell Garton
Nicola Geiger
Lawrence Geller
Pamela George
Daniel Gerard
Bernard Greening
Gail Gremse & David Rose
Hilde Grey
Thompson Grunwald
Richard Guay & Nancy Dennigan
Donna Haggarty
Eugene & Deanna Handler
John Hannay & John Palenicek
James A. Harris
Don Hartley, Jr.
Joseph & Joan Heckel,
Witness For Peace
Amy Henry
Elizabeth & David Henry
Jane Higgins
Tim Honan
Jack & Faye Honor
John Hopkins
Jeffrey Horney & Dorothy Raymer
Joshua & Elizabeth Horowitz
Paul & Laurie Howard
Earl Huch & Lois Eldred
Ruth Hunter
Charlene Indelicato
ISR Communications
Jill Jackson & John Maas
James Jeffery, III
Leo & Frances Kaye
Pita Kelekna
Alison Kelley

Scott Kennedy
Lenore Kodef
Robert Charles Ladner
Gudrun Lang
Genevieve Leib
Harold Levey
Lorraine Levitz
Michael Lubin, MD
Regina Ashmore Lukievics
Helen Lukievics & Ernie Lendler
Janes & James Luongo
George Lynch & Maureen Curran
Margaret MacBeth
Grace & Jim Malley
Virginia Manbeck
Cheryl Mandala
Chris Matthews, Poet & Patriot
Keather McLoone
John McMillan
A. McNamee
Mary Helen McNeal
Myron Meinhardt, M.D.
Mekong Restaurant Corp.
Anne Miller
James & Lynne Minton
Diana Morris
Mary Morris & James Anderson
Lynda Moss
Manny Motashaw
Jim Mulherin
Br. Rex Anthony Norris
Laura Norvig
Lynn O'Connell-Wiebe
Anna Patricia O'Sullivan
Thomas Owens Jr.
Helen Peters
Sally Pleet
Dennis Potocnik
Jim Richmond & Leah Weckler
Roger Ricklefs
Abby Rockefeller & Lee Halprin
Bill Roller
Rosen, Preminger & Bloom
Peter Rubin
Dennis Sadowski
Estelle Salberg
Bruce & Char Sanderson
Edward Scharff
Urania Schoennauer
John Shafer
Jeanne Shea
Steve & Karin Slaby
Helen Smith
Teresa & Dean Solomos
Edie Solow
Euclid Sperow
Jack Stanzler & Laurie White
Frances Steadman
Patricia Stryker
Ann Sugrue
Nina Swidler
Adam Swidler & Gigliola Zhemali
Tom Taylor
Bentham Thompson &
Nori Grossman
Richard Tracy
Jean Weaver
Fred Webber
Silas & Constance Weeks
Marc & Elaine Weller
Jeff Wells
Keith Wiger, Ph.D.
George Winslow
John Wodynski
James & Katie Wolf
Roy Wolff
Arthur & Irma Zigas

DEDICATIONS received since our last mailing

Donor	Dedication
Bill Ayars	In memory of September 11
Thomas Bayard	In honor of 66th Engineer Co. Topographic
Valerie Bengal	To celebrate the marriage of Kevin Fell & Longhang Nguyen
Debbie Cahoon	In honor of Rosi Hohn-Mizo
Fredy & Sherry Champagne	In memory of My Lai: "Never again"
Michael Cull's mother	In pure gratitude for one particular veteran who returned from war in one piece and ran up the walk yelling, "Hey Lady, I'm home!!" It was a happy day.
Jan Eldred & Peter Szutu	To celebrate the life of Jeff Huch
Joe Eno	In memory of Jack McCluskey
John Finley	In memory of Jeff Huch
Lawrence Geller	In memory of the Vietnamese people who perished
Don Hartley	In honor of Paco Huch
Jane Higgins	In memory of Jeff "Paco" Huch
John Hannay & John Palenicek	In honor of Earl Huch & Lois Eldred
John Hopkins / Augustus Construction	In memory of: Thomas McCarthy, USA Sgt. Dale Desmond, USAF Capt. James Gould, USMC —All died from the haunted memories
Scott Kennedy	In memory of Mimi Fariña
Grace & Jim Malley	In honor of Mike Cull
Keather McLoone	In support of Suel Jones' efforts and humanity and forgiveness — and feeding, clothing & healing people
Diana Morris	In memory of Geoff King
Br. Rex Anthony Norris, SSF	In memory of victims of war — civilian & military
Laura Norvig	To celebrate healing & reconciliation
Miike Oxtoby	In memory of "Señora" Laymon, Bill's mom
James Richmond & Leah Weckler	In memory of Jeff "Paco" Huch
Peter Rubin	In memory of Dr. William Eisman
Estelle Salberg	In memory of Dr. William Eisman
Don Schoennauer	In memory of James Wondro, USMC
Euclid Sperow	In honor of Bea Eisman
Frances Steadman	In memory of Bill Eisman
Nina Swidler	To celebrate the birthday of Helen Lukievics
Tom Taylor	In honor of all vets of the Vietnam War
David Tracey & Heather Ford	In honor of Earl, Lois & Melissa; In memory of Jeff Huch; To celebrate life and its eventual passing
Rick Tracy	In memory of my wife, Mary Jo Tracy
Silas B. Weeks	In hope of abolishing war
Laurie White & Jack Stanzler	To celebrate the birthday of Jessie & Eleanor March-McGee

Living in Hanoi

by Suel Jones, VFVP-USA Board Member

It's difficult creating a home in a country where you don't understand the language, and where the deeply ingrained rules of interaction are unspoken and difficult to grasp by outsiders. Trying to understand the social fabric that holds this society together, its rich, deep, complex history, or even how to buy your next meal or hire a motorbike taxi engenders a certain madness, or at least deep frustration from feeling totally inept.

Sometimes I experience a sense of aloneness, a feeling that I am in a separate universe seeing everyone through a filtered window. Yet the people are so polite and giving, warm and full of laughter; little is required for a celebration. They are open to having foreigners around and to having fun, and completely willing to interact, which is what they do with everyone and everything.

Even after living in Hanoi for six months, satisfying the simplest, most basic need is difficult at best and often impossible without help. Buying a bowl of soup from a street vendor can be as frustrating as getting a valid visa from the Vietnamese government. Everyone who visits this place experiences "Hanoi Days"—days when you repeatedly ask yourself, "What in hell am I doing here?" This question almost always arises while riding a motorbike through the Hanoi traffic. Then someone will respond in such a nice and gentle manner, or smile a greeting or help in some manner and you remember why you enjoy being in Hanoi: the Vietnamese!

I now know my way around Hanoi well enough, after much trial and error; hours spent trying to find my way home. And I have memorized enough phrases so I can usually buy what I need. But to conduct a dialogue on even the most basic subject, such as where to leave the trash in the morning, requires an interpreter. I was trying to explain to the maid that I would



HELEN LUKIEVICS

Board member Suel Jones receives the best medicine at Friendship Village.

...continued on page 9



Vietnam Friendship Village Project-USA, Inc.

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Return Service Requested



This issue is dedicated to the life and work of George Mizo

Visit us on the worldwide web at <http://www.vietnamfriendship.org>