



Spring 2004

Viet Nam Friendship Village

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

The Year in Review VFVP Director's Report

by Becky Luening

During 2003, Lt. General Tran Hanh, Vice President and General Secretary of the Veterans Association of Vietnam, sent regular reports to the International VFVP Committee highlighting the year's ongoing activities at the Friendship Village. Finally, on December 30th, we received the official "VFVP Director's Report."

Population

A total of 393 people were served during 2003—135 children and 257 veterans. Patients came from 24 of Vietnam's 61 provinces; of the 393 total, 270 received services and returned home, while 123 remained in the village as of December 2003. Normally, 130–150 people reside at the village at any one time.

Medical services

Everyone who is treated at the village is first given a physical examination at the Ministry of Defense (MOD) Medical Nuclear Research and Radiation Protection Center. A variety of traditional and modern medical treatments and techniques are then utilized at the village to treat patients, including surgery, acupuncture, drugs, traditional herbal medicine (produced from herbs grown in the village), massage, physical therapy, and exercises done with and without special exercise equipment. One patient even underwent brain surgery in 2003. Although the details of that particular operation are not known, it was reported that 95% of those served by the Friendship Village experienced improved physical condition as a result of the care they received.

Two women, one from Holland and one from Sweden, have been volunteering as physical therapists at the Friendship Village for several years. While on summer vacation at home this past year, they managed to raise \$2,500 USD for the village, which was used to buy ultrasound equipment. Subsequently, two physicians were sent to Hanoi hospitals and one to the medical university to learn how to use the equipment.



BILL DEAN

Playing "Simon Says" during English class. Teachers of English as a Second Language regularly volunteer at the Friendship Village.

Educational services

A number of educational and vocational activities were ongoing at the village during 2003. These included one class for developmentally disabled children (20 students), basic education classes for elementary (12) and secondary students (13), an embroidery course (16), a flower-making course (11) and two tailoring (sewing) courses (43). The village director reported in July that 15 of the 17 students who completed one of the earlier tailoring classes had already found employment.

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World Veterans Federation Awards "Rehabilitation Prize" to Friendship Village

On October 27, 2003, Lt. General Tran Hanh received a letter from Dr. Marek Hagmajer, Secretary-General of the World Veterans Federation (WVF), informing him that the Federation's 2003 Rehabilitation Prize had been awarded to the Vietnam Friendship Village. The ceremony of attribution took place on December 3, 2003 at the 24th General Assembly of the WVF in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Created November 15, 1950 in Paris, today the World Veterans Federation is the largest veteran federation in the world, with over 170 veterans and war victim associations in 85 countries, totaling approximately 39 million veterans. In keeping with its credo, "None can speak more eloquently for peace than those who have fought in war," the WVF has the highest advisory status with the United Nations.

In the words of Vietnam Friendship Village Project President Rosi Höhn-Mizo, "This prize...confirms our efforts to show that peace and reconciliation among former enemies is possible, that international cooperation and friendship are possible and that working together really can make a difference and set a positive example."

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2003 Director's Report ...continued from page 1

Visitors

Public relations is becoming an ever more important and time-consuming activity at the Friendship Village as its reputation spreads around the globe. During 2003, village directors welcomed 132 groups of foreign visitors from 29 countries, as well as 130 local groups. The U.S. Committee receives regular inquiries through our website from people who wish to visit the Friendship Village, many of whom would also like to volunteer while they're there. While it is difficult to accommodate volunteers unless they are trained health providers, we appreciate the gesture, and the Friendship Village is very welcoming of visitors who want to see firsthand the wonderful healing work being done there.

Cultural enrichment

Several of the reports from Vietnam this year included details about entertainment events that had been arranged for the residents of the village. On the occasions of mid-Autumn Night Festival and at the beginning of the new school year, Friendship Village children were given opportunities such as joining in summer camp activities with disabled children of Xuan Phuong Village, socializing with students from the Hanoi International School, seeing Water Puppet dance performances, and engaging in cultural intercourse with student clubs from several schools.

Financial summary

A detailed two-year financial report from the village will be presented later this year when the International Committee meets for its biennial meeting at the end of October. The total amount in U.S. dollars raised internationally during 2003 was \$122,736. Most of this came from the established national committees in the U.S., France, Germany, Japan, Canada and Britain. In addition, \$6,435 came from Vietnamese visitors; \$2,000 came from Korea, and \$300 came from Brunei.

Self-sufficiency

The contribution of the village's own self-support activities was also reported. The total amounts of food raised on site in 2003 included 1400 kg. pork, 408 kg. chicken, 202 kg. fish, 77 kg. geese, and 12,000 kg. eggs. In addition, herbs, fruits and mushrooms were also grown at the village. Although it wasn't included in the director's report, we know from personal visits that much of the food prepared at the village is cooked using methane gas produced onsite from pig manure.



BILL DEAN

ABOVE: An embroidery student practices her craft.



BILL DEAN

LEFT: Suel Jones (with back to camera) visits during a physical rehabilitation session. Standing on either side of Suel are Natasha Moehasan from Belgium and Ellen Laugesen from Denmark. These two women have been providing volunteer rehab services at the Friendship Village for several years.

A Time for Celebration

by Suel Jones

Clowns and university department heads visited the Friendship Village last December and they were there for the same reason; to improve the lives of the children. The clowns, with painted faces, big red noses and oversized shoes, gave them a reason to laugh, play and forget their disabilities for a couple hours, while the university department heads with testing equipment and briefcases hoped to help them learn better.

Upon his arrival in Hanoi shortly after Christmas, VFVP-USA board member



SUEL JONES

Bill Dean wanted to say thank you to village staff for their year of hard work. As for the children, he just wanted to put a smile on their faces. So, with the aid of his friend **Lan Phuong**, he brought in a family of performers Phuong knows who build their own bamboo musical instruments and perform in native costume. The mother, father, daughter and two sons played for about an hour as many of the older vets and staff sang along. Traditional culture is still a strong element in this quickly changing society. People seem to maintain their ties to village life no matter how long they have lived in the city.

After the musical performance, the kids poured out of the conference room onto the village playground where six clowns from the Hanoi Circus awaited. Immediately two clowns began playing music by tapping on bowls of water and tap dancing on boards. The kids laughed and pointed as the clowns fooled around with each other. Despite

all the clowns' hard work, however, it was the dancing dogs in silly little dresses that finally won the hearts of the children, especially after the show ended and they had a chance to pet and play with the dogs for a while.

On a more serious note, educators from the University of Hanoi Special Education Department have been testing the children to determine their learning ability so they may be grouped according to ability as opposed to being grouped by age. They have also been training the staff and volunteer teachers at the village in how to work with developmentally disabled children. Some are so severely disabled they can only learn to dress and clean themselves, while others are able to learn complex crafts such as embroidery or artificial flower making. The university consultants are in the process of creating a model for the staff to follow in evaluating each child that comes to the village.

This program, coupled with the new rehabilitation vocational building that will be completed this summer, will bring more positive changes to the village leading to more educational opportunities for the children. Soon we'll be able to teach many of the children a skill to take home. Presently the village has 30 sewing machines for its tailoring class, but after construction they will have 100 machines with 70 being supplied by the **Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation** (VVAFF) for a factory. Some of the children will be able to earn a daily wage while the factory will produce an income for the village. There is discussion about offering courses in small engine repair and computer IT training.



SUEL JONES

VFVP-USA, in partnership with the **Vietnam Children's Fund**, is funding the construction of the new vocational building, with each party supplying half of the approximately \$30,000 required for its completion. **Michael Cull**, VFVP-USA board member from Wasilla, Alaska, has agreed to be responsible for raising much of the \$15,000. This commitment is over and above the money we will raise this year for daily operations of the village. As a whole, the International Committee has committed to raising \$75,000 for operating expenses. Once we meet these commitments, we would like to get a big headstart on the \$60,000 needed for the medical clinic expansion (see enclosed letter).

VFVP-USA's financial contribution to the Friendship Village has been growing steadily. Our past fiscal year has been, by far, the best year we have had for raising funds. I want to thank each and every one of you for all of your hard work and for your generosity.

I invite you to come to Vietnam and to visit the Friendship Village so you can see firsthand how lives are being changed thanks to the dedication of a few people.



SUEL JONES

Update from the Canadian Committee

by Marina Percy

The past few months have marked an exciting time for the Canadian Committee! Our work through Autumn '03 and Winter '04 has generated some fantastic results in terms of building our capacity, clarity and continuum as an organization. We are in better shape than ever to actively support the Vietnam Friendship Village Project.

Creating our Footprint

The board recently participated in its first ever strategic planning session. During the full-day workshop, we broke some exciting new ground for the Canadian Committee, including creating new vision, purpose and values statements, and setting out long-term and short-term objectives and action plans. All of the board members were really inspired by the progress we made in this workshop. And to top it off, we were treated to an educational seminar about how to do successful fundraising, presented by **Susan Evans**, one of Vancouver's top fundraisers. We all learned a lot!

Building Capacity

The board has established five sub-committees to help fulfill the vision, purpose, values and objectives we set out at the planning session. The sub-committees are: Communications/Marketing, Fundraising, Finance/Treasury, Legal, and Education. Each sub-committee includes at least two board members, and plus anyone else who wants to participate. Each sub-committee is currently setting out its action plan for the next 12 months, and getting started on some exciting initiatives right now! A full report on each sub-committee's action plan and work to date will be published in the next newsletter. If you want to know more about what a sub-committee is doing or if you are interested in getting involved with a sub-committee, please contact the appropriate board member as follows:

FUNDRAISING: Michelle Mason

604.692.0083 or cypress-park@shaw.ca

COMMUNICATIONS/MARKETING: Marina Percy

604.736.9717 or marina@freshstrategy.com

EDUCATION: Jeff Schutts

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FINANCE/TREASURY: James Dean

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LEGAL: Thomas Boivin

604.926.3261 or tboivin@hatfieldgroup.com

Some of the projects the sub-committees are working on right now include:

- Canadian Committee website
- Fundraising Tool Kit
- Education events for youth
- Fundraising events in the Lower Mainland
- Outreach events in Canada and the U.S.
- Charitable status

Connecting with Youth

The Canadian Committee is pleased to announce the addition of a new member to our board. **Krista Riley** brings her expertise in youth communications and initiatives. She will be participating on the Education sub-committee as the youth program coordinator for the Canadian Committee. Krista brings comprehensive experience with **War Child** and other international projects to the Board. A warm welcome to Krista!

Enroute to Charitable Status

The Canadian Committee is finalizing its work to secure charitable status in Canada. While we already have status as a legal not-for-profit society, the Canadian Committee still needs to secure full charitable status so that we can fundraise for the village and provide our donors and supports with tax receipts. We have been working with one of Canada's top charitable law experts, **Richard Bridge**, to prepare our final application for charitable status in Canada. Richard has been providing legal services to the Canadian Committee at significantly reduced rates. We anticipate announcing our charitable status in the next newsletter!

Congratulations

The Canadian Committee would like to extend a special congratulations and best wishes to board member **James Dean**, who will be taking some much deserved time off this spring . . . to get married to his wonderful girlfriend, **Janet Allan**. Janet and James have been active supporters of the Friendship Village and have contributed as participants of Canadian Committee initiatives since our inception. The Board and the Canadian Committee would like to wish James and Janet our warmest congratulations!

Stay Tuned

Can't wait for your next newsletter to learn more? You can get news updates by checking out our interim web pages at <http://www.cypress-park.ca/> or contact the sub-committee contact person [see list above] or contact **Michelle Mason**, Chair, Canadian Committee, 604.692.0083 or by email at cypress-park@shaw.ca.



Michelle Mason and Jeff Schutts during a relaxed moment.

SUEL JONES

Hatfield Continues Agent Orange Work...

by Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk

In November 2003 Hatfield Consultants Ltd. (HCL) held a project kick-off meeting in Hanoi for the project entitled "Identification of War Chemical Contamination Hot Spots in Southern Vietnam." The one-year project is funded through the Ford Foundation Office for Vietnam and Thailand and will be managed in Vietnam by the 10-80 Division (Ministry of Health), and executed with the technical assistance of Hatfield Consultants Ltd. (West Vancouver, Canada) and the American Friends Service Committee (Hanoi, Vietnam). The project is designed to identify chemical reservoirs/hot spots and assist and educate local people to minimize further contamination.

During the Vietnam conflict, over 72 million liters of defoliant herbicide was sprayed over forests and crops of southern Vietnam to deny their use by opposition forces. Sixty-one percent of the chemicals used was Agent Orange, a 50:50 mixture of 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4,5-T) and 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D herbicides). The defoliant was contaminated with a very toxic form of dioxin

(TCDD) known to have adverse effects on human health and has been linked to cancer, birth defects and other illnesses in humans. Dioxin has been classified by the US Environmental Protection Agency as a carcinogen.

Hatfield's ongoing studies on Agent Orange have revealed that dioxin continues to contaminate the soil some 30 years after cessation of herbicide use in Vietnam. Contamination has infiltrated the food chain and humans in certain areas of the country. Hatfield has, through their multi-year investigations, shown that former U.S. military installations are the "hot spots" of high dioxin contamination to this day. Their studies have documented dioxin levels as being the highest in soils, foods, human blood and human breast milk samples collected from villages situated in close proximity to a former U.S. military base in central Vietnam.

Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk, one of the Hatfield Consultants, is a board member with VFVP's Canadian Committee. An overview of the history of Agent Orange written by Dr. Dwernychuk can be found via the Agent Orange links on the VFVP-USA website, <http://www.vietnamfriendship.org/>.

AGENT ORANGE "Collateral Damage" in Viet Nam

Photographs and text by Philip Jones Griffiths

Philip Jones Griffiths is a world renowned photojournalist. His epic book, *Vietnam, Inc.*, published in 1971 and recently re-published by Phaidon Press, is recognized as pivotal in changing U.S. attitudes to the war. No one who has seen it will forget its haunting images. Griffith's new book, *Agent Orange* (Phaidon Press, 2003) is, in some ways, his epilogue to that great work, and reflects not only his commitment to a valid, if cataclysmic, explanation of war, but also to the people of Vietnam. In the words of writer Gloria Emerson:

"In these pages are the Vietnamese and Cambodians that the American tourist never see, never hear about. Here are the results of the U.S. spraying Agent Orange over these countries. Never has its effects on humans been so clearly shown as in this book by Philip Jones Griffiths, one of the great photographers of the war, who feels we should see what Agent Orange has done.

"It is almost unbearable, but to turn away and not see the photographs is to compound the crime."

The text and quotation above were taken from the *Agent Orange* website <http://www.agentorangevietnam.net/>, with permission from author Philip Jones Griffiths. For more information about the book visit the Phaidon Press website at <http://www.phaidonpress.com/>.

AGENT ORANGE NEWSFLASH

Three Vietnamese who say they or their families became ill from Agent Orange filed a lawsuit January 30, 2004 in a New York court against Dow Chemical Co., Monsanto Co., and 20 other makers of the defoliant used by the U.S. in the war nearly 30 years ago.



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR!**
*The effects of
Agent Orange
are far from
the minds of
these revelers
maneuvering
through city
streets jammed
with motorcycles
and pedal cabs
during Hanoi's
2004 Tet holiday.*

PHOTOS
BY SUEL JONES



2003 Brings Changes to U.S. Committee Board

The U.S. Committee's Board of Directors lost two members in 2003, and gained one.

Good-bye and Thanks, Earl and John

In January 2003 we received the resignation of **Earl Huch**, father of Jeff "Paco" Huch who served as volunteer director of the US Committee until his death in 1996. Earl represented the U.S. board at the Friendship Village's Grand Opening in October of 1998, and at that year's international meeting. In his words, it was "a memorable experience for me to be part of the organization that my son was so intimately involved with and worked to make viable. . . . My best wishes to you and the children and adults at the Village along with our partners in Vietnam and other countries. It is a truly worthwhile endeavor."

John B. Hopkins' two-year term as a board member expired in December 2003. John served in Vietnam with the First Infantry Division in 1968. He brought to the project "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." We especially appreciate the regular financial contributions John made both before and during his tenure on our board.

Welcome Aboard, Jaime

Thankfully, VFVP-USA also gained a board member in Sept. 2003: **Jaime Vazquez**, who served as a USMC corporal in Vietnam in 1967-68. Last August, Jaime returned to Vietnam for the first time since the war. There he met up with VFVP-USA board members Suel Jones, Bill Dean (also making his first return visit), and Michael Cull. Turns out Michael and Jaime have a friendship dating back to the 1970s when they both lived in Jersey City (see story on page 7). Jaime described his latest visit to Vietnam as a "cleansing experience." Like many of us who have traveled to Vietnam recently, he affirmed that Vietnam is not a war—it is a country and a society, a culture and a people.

Jaime wrote in his diary about

meeting **Lt. Gen. Dang Quan Thuy**, President of the Veterans Association of Viet Nam (VAVN). "General Thuy and the VAVN's message was clear and simple. We are all veterans of the war known in America as the "Vietnam War." That war is long past and we are men and women in our middle and elder years. We must learn from our past mistakes in order for us not to repeat them in the future. We must learn the one lesson that

we can from war and that is to fight and struggle for peace, cooperation and understanding. We must put the war in its proper place in history and continue on from there to work for a better future for our children and future generations."

A Visit to the Village

Jaime delivered 250 pounds of medical supplies to the Friendship Village, along with some candy for the children. He observed, "Friendship Village is a wonderful place for those who are lucky enough to be accepted there for treatment. The staff not only treat the patients for their medical conditions, but they also share their love and respect with the children and vets there.

Mr. Nguyen Khai Hung, Director at



Vietnamese journalists pose in front of Friendship Village sign with VFVP-USA board members Michael Cull (second from left), Suel Jones (far right), and Jaime Vazquez (third from right; Jaime joined the board in September 2003).

MICHAEL CULL

Friendship Village, and the entire staff were very happy and grateful to receive the medical supplies. . . .

"I believe that what is happening at Friendship Village can best be described in the way Suel Jones was received by a 4-year-old girl who is blind, hearing and speaking impaired. Somehow the child knew that Suel was nearby and immediately went to him and buried herself in his arms. The love expressed by both Suel and the child was real. She knew he was in the room by his body aroma. Yes, she smelled him and went to him. She knows that Suel genuinely loves her.

This kind of emotion cannot be faked or staged. People are happier and better off because of what is happening at Friendship Village. Much still needs to be done. I wish that all veterans and Americans who lived through the war and still suffer from the pain, hatred and violence they experienced, could come to Vietnam today and see the country and people for what they really are and the good they represent."



Bill Dean and Jaime Vazquez share an emotional moment of reflection at the Friendship Village. This was the first trip back to Vietnam for each of them.

BILL DEAN

EDITOR'S NOTE: In our next newsletter we will share stories from board member Bill Dean's return to Vietnam, along with more of his beautiful photos.

Alaska Updates *by Michael Cull*

Village Receives Television Exposure

The Anchorage PBS affiliate, with **Bill Bacon's** permission, aired *Friendship Village: A Place of Healing* as part of Veterans Day programming on November 10, 2003, the Marine Corps Birthday, and on November 11 for Veterans Day. People all over Alaska got an unusual picture of goodness in Vietnam today: Veterans doing reconciliation and healing work instead of glorifying the endless addiction to war.



Bill Bacon

Fall Fundraiser a Success

A fundraiser hosted in early November by **The Fly by Night Club**, Alaska's most famous nightclub, netted \$600 for the Friendship Village. During the winter the club supports nonprofit organizations on Tuesday and Thursday nights, giving 50% of admissions. After the show, Michael Cull & Co. presented the owners and cast with scarves from Vietnam along with copies of Bill Bacon's film. They invited us back on April 13, 2004 for an even bigger event.

Healing for Alaskan Vets

One Alaska veteran, who prefers to remain anonymous, made a substantial donation to the Friendship Village after seeing Bill Bacon's video. The veteran said he wanted to "give back to the kids" a portion of his disability payment in gratitude for his faith in Jesus, which he believes saved his life in Vietnam.

Another Alaskan, **Michael LeMay**, recently made the trip to Hanoi. Another Army veteran visiting Vietnam for the first time since the war, Michael brings great energy to the Vietnam Friendship Village Project. LeMay plans to develop a major conference in Homer, Alaska in September 2005 to bring together healing and reconciliation groups from Vietnam and the U.S. While in Vietnam he visited with officials from the Veterans Association of Vietnam and the Vietnam Friendship Union (a Vietnamese NGO) to enlist their support, and in the fall a small group of Vietnamese officials will visit Homer to scope out the conference site. This event may receive maximum exposure nationwide. Watch for more news on this as it develops.

Alaskans who wish to become more involved with the U.S. Committee's efforts to raise funds for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project may contact **Michael Cull** via email: mwcull@mtaonline.net.

Urban Studies Motorcycle Gang Attacks Hanoi with Peace and Friendship

HANOI—Jaime Vasquez and Michael Cull, two founding members of the notorious Freedom Freaks from Jersey City, New Jersey, enjoyed a unique reunion in the capital city of Vietnam recently. Their mission was to deliver medical supplies and donations to the Vietnam Friendship Village.

Jaime learned of the project when he attended a ceremony at the United Nations last September. He presented a "Proclamation of Friendship" from Jersey City to visiting officials representing the Veterans Association of Viet Nam (VAVN), including the retired generals who also direct the Friendship Village Project.

The reconnection came when Cull read the U.N. report about the ceremony and realized he would never escape Jersey City karma, despite the fact that he left JC over 28 years ago and now lives in rural Alaska. Over a six-month period the two vets planned for Jaime to return to Vietnam for the first time since being discharged from the U.S. Marines in 1968 with a Purple Heart for taking 70 pieces of shrapnel and many citations for bravery.

The physical reunion took place at Noi Bai Airport north of Hanoi on August 14, 2003 when

Michael welcomed Jaime to Vietnam with a bear hug and shed silent tears for the years the two had spent on parallel paths as warriors for peace and reconciliation after their war experiences in Vietnam.

Michael and Jaime's mission was to bring medical supplies and donations to the Vietnam Friendship Village where 120 children and 40 adult veterans are treated for defects caused by Agent Orange. Presentations of these gifts to the residents and staff with met with great appreciation. The two US veterans were welcomed with grateful smiles and respect by the same officials who had met Jaime at the U.N. ceremony. (*Read Jaime's observations about his visit to the Friendship Village on page 6.*)

Jaime presented miniature Statues of Liberty to the Secretary General of the VAVN. With typical Jersey City modesty, Jaime made it clear that the Lady of Freedom resides NOT in New York but in fact in JERSEY CITY. Similar ceremonies took place in an official visit to the City Director and Peoples Committee of Hanoi and the Vietnam-US Friendship Association.

Peace and Friendship WORKS . . . *when you work it!*



Festival Screenings

Michelle Mason's (VFVP-Canada) award-winning documentary film *The Friendship Village*, about George Mizo and the village, continues to make its way around the U.S. and abroad, in a series of festivals and locally organized fundraisers since the summer. *The Friendship Village* screened at several international festivals in the fall, including the United Nations Association Film Festival (Stanford University), Pacific Rim Film Festival (Santa Cruz), the Vermont International Film Festival (Burlington), the Santa Fe Film Festival, the Empire Film Festival (Saratoga Springs, NY), and the Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival (Ithaca, NY).

Many people contributed to the success of events organized around the **Pacific Rim Film Festival's** screening of Michelle Mason's *The Friendship Village* on October 12, 2003 in Santa Cruz, California. Santa Cruz locals **George Ow** and **Jane Yett** chipped in to make Michelle's attendance at the festival possible. After the film, Michelle was joined by VFVP-USA board members **Carl Stancil** and **Becky Luening**, and former Santa Cruz mayor **Katherine Beiers** for a panel discussion with the film audience. Later in the evening, a wonderful reception was held at Katherine's beautiful Victorian home. **Sherry Conable**, a long-time supporter of Santa Cruz veterans, organized a great party, and gave a heartfelt testimonial on behalf of VFVP. We thank Sherry and Katherine for their help in making the reception a success and in getting the word out. Special thanks also goes to caterer **Al Fresco**, for their generous provision of yummy Asian-style treats. Additional food and wine was donated by **Staff of Life**, **Emily's Good Things to Eat**, **Asian Rose**, **Shopper's Corner** and **Zachary's**.

Although we already had a strong support base in Santa Cruz, where our office has been based for many years, this screening took our exposure there to another level. We were very impressed with the Pacific Rim Film Festival folks who organized a top-notch festival. Organizer **Cori Houston**



TO ORDER

Michelle Mason's *The Friendship Village* (50 mins.) or **Bill Bacon's *Friendship Village: A Place of Healing* (30 mins.)**
 email us at info@vietnamfriendship.org
 or call **Becky Luening** at 707-826-9197.

was especially welcoming to all of us involved with the Friendship Village Project and went above and beyond the call of duty when, after the film, she sat at our table to help collect donations. Between the screening and the reception, almost \$3,000 was raised!

Don and Donna Winstone also screened *The Friendship Village* at their first **Global Justice Film Festival** in central Canada last November (Winnipeg, Manitoba), helping to disseminate the film and information about the project afterward. As well, the film screened at a special Toronto International Women's Day event in March as part of a tribute to Canadian women filmmakers (**Female Eye Film Festival**).

The Friendship Village also screened at the **Hazel Wolf Environmental Film Festival** in Leavenworth, Washington on March 20. The festival was held at the Sleeping Lady Mountain Retreat in Icicle Canyon, a stunning spot in the Eastern foothills of the Cascade Mountains. We can always use help at festivals passing out information about the Friendship Village to potential supporters. You can learn about upcoming festival screenings on Michelle's web site at <http://www.cypress-park.ca/>.

Grassroots Fundraisers

Since our summer newsletter appeal to hold micro cinema screenings and fundraisers in local communities, several events have happened on the grassroots level, and more are in the works.

The **Taos, New Mexico Chapter of Veterans for Peace** screened *The Friendship Village* on Friday November 14th at the Metta Projects Theater in Taos. Organized by VFP members **Helen Dixon** and **Eddie Richardson**, the benefit was cosponsored by **Peace Action New Mexico** and **Pax Christi**. The event also featured **Joan Newberry**, a Vietnam Veteran Air Force Nurse who served at Cam Ranh Bay. Joan talked about personal experiences with unexplained health problems and the struggle to have veterans injured by Agent Orange compensated and treated by the Veterans Administration. An article about the film was featured in *The Taos News*, a local weekly, and Helen reported that, for such a small town, the event was well attended and very moving. A total of \$583 was raised through donations and the sale of embroidery by children at the village, as well as Vietnamese silk scarves.. Thanks to Helen and all the Vets for Peace organizers who helped out.

The textiles sold at the Taos fundraiser were brought back to the Canadian Committee by **Beth Marie Murphy**, a nurse during the Vietnam War who is now a professor at the Divinity School at the University of Saskatchewan. She visited the village last summer, and is also helping to raise awareness about our project in the Canadian Prairies, holding screenings and discussions in the education and church communities.

Rand Kokernot and **Nelly Higginbotham** organized a screening of *The Friendship Village* in Paonia, Colorado. Their "Friday Night Video" event took place on November 21st at the Blue Sage Center for the Arts. Rand writes that the film "was a portrait of real courage and drew good comments. We can heal." The \$25 netted after expenses was donated to the Friendship Village.

cont'd on page 9...

The Friendship Village Plays in Pacifica

by Carl Stancil

October the 24th was a quiet Saturday afternoon in the sleepy town of Pacifica on the coast of California. As I approached the main entrance of the Linda Mar Community Center, a mild-mannered man about my age greeted me warmly. Clark Natwick is a member of the "Pacifica Peace People," a local group that organizes and sponsors events promoting peace.

As Clark and I set up the projector in the auditorium, I met activists, teachers, and other Pacific Peace People. After an emergency run to Radio Shack for some missing hardware, the sound and video checks were completed just in time as people began arriving.

We made a very short introduction and then let Michelle's documentary speak for itself. After 50 riveting minutes the audience sat quietly, stunned by the strong images and words they had just experienced. I could almost read their minds through their facial expressions. Little by little the comments and questions came:

"I had no idea," commented one woman.

"I feel ashamed," exclaimed an older man.

"Yea, it was pretty awful and we're do'n it again." said a vet.

"How can I get a copy?" asked a teacher.

Most people sought not only for understanding about what had happened in Vietnam but for hopeful and positive things they could do now. For some it was the first time they had been exposed to the history of the war and its aftermath. Others were making the connection between Vietnam and Iraq.

The event drew perhaps 100 people and although the monetary gain was not great, those who attended came away with an increased understanding of war and its consequences. I met one veteran whose son is a Theater Arts student at UC Santa Cruz. With our help, this student son organized a campus event examining the similarities between the Vietnam and Iraq wars. Maybe others who saw the film will go on to organize events of their own. Who knows where their work may lead?

As Gandhi said, "You may not see the results of what you do, but you still must do it."

Fundraisers ...cont'd from p. 8

Another helping hand this fall was **Anne Nguyen**, an ecologist at the University of Victoria who visited the village last year while she was in Vietnam doing fieldwork. She and **Jo Phillips** organized a screening fundraiser in beautiful Sooke, B.C. as part of the *Jo's Awareness* video nights in the community. They did a lot of publicity, got a good turnout, and were also able to raise several hundred dollars for the project. Thank you Anne and Jo—and **Suel Jones**, who helped bring all these great folks to the village and in connection with the project.

VFVP-USA Board Member **Bill Dean** gave a presentation to Hewlett Packard retirees on February 18, 2004. He reported that his slide show from his trip to Vietnam was well received by the 20 retirees who attended. He received requests to speak at two other organizations in town about the Friendship Village. Bill writes, "People were very interested in Vietnam and the legacy we left behind. The photos they saw of the Friendship Village brought up many questions for people and sparked a lot of interaction among the group." Bill will share his stories with us in our next newsletter.

Benefit Poetry Reading Friday, April 2nd at San Francisco Pizzeria

Friday, April 2nd at 7:30 PM, Vietnam historian and Beat poet **Gerald Nicosia** will read poetry with Buddhist poet **Gary Gach** (editor of *What Book?*) at **Escape from New York Pizza**, 333 Bush Street at Montgomery in downtown San Francisco. For \$5 listeners will receive all the pizza they can eat, and all the proceeds go directly to the Vietnam Friendship Village Project. VFVP-USA Board Member Carl Stancil will also be on hand to speak and answer questions.

Gerry Nicosia is the author of *Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans Movement*, published in 2001, the definitive work on Vietnam vets' healing and readjustment from the late 1960s to the present. For more details about the event, email Gerald Nicosia at gnicosia@earthlink.net.

Thank you, Dave!

David Rocovits, with the help of family and friends, reached his goal this winter of raising \$10,000 for Friendship Village medical expenses. Additionally, he raised \$2,000 to fund a new library, and threw in an extra \$501 for the general fund.

Dave's wonderful black & white photos of the children he met when he visited the Friendship Village in 2002 are now posted on our website, along with the article about Dave that was published in our last newsletter. To view the photographs, go to <http://www.vietnamfriendship.org/> and follow the "Meet the Children" link.

Dave is now busy collecting child-size aluminum crutches and walkers and hopes to have a good number for his brother Dan to take back to Vietnam when he visits the family this summer.



DAVE ROCOVITS

One of the beautiful black & white photos taken by Dave Rocovits. The photos will be on display at the University of Reno this coming fall.

VFVP-Canada Financial Summary

In our first year, the Canadian Committee raised \$15,000 Canadian. Thank you to everyone who made a donation this past year, and helped us get off to such a good start.

VFVP-USA Financial Summary

October 1, 2002-September 30, 2003

TOTAL ASSETS beginning of year	\$ 5,919.89
INCOME	
Individual Donations	\$ 39,090.75
Interest Earned	19.34
Total Income	\$ 39,110.09
EXPENSES	
Photocopies & Printing	\$ 3,346.04
Videotape Duplication	500.00
Postage & Shipping	893.47
Conference Calls (Board)	305.31
Website Hosting	131.40
Space Rental	107.50
Bank Fees	91.87
Graphics Services	75.00
Nonprofit Incorporation Fees	20.00
Total Expenses	\$ 5,470.59
TRANSFERRED TO VIETNAM	\$ 38,500.00
TOTAL ASSETS end of year	\$ 1,059.39



BILL DEAN

People find many different ways to contribute to the Vietnam Friendship Village Project. ABOVE: Bill Dean's friend Lan Phuong volunteers time to assist the children during an exercise class.

SUPPORTER PROFILE

Thomas & Noel Congdon

In 1998 Thomas Congdon was invited to join a group of people from the U.S. for a lecture program in Vietnam called "Understanding America." Organized by Peter Warren of Denver University and begun in 1995, the program brought lecturers to Vietnam for six weeks at a time to present five-day-long courses in five different cities. Participating cities included Hanoi, Danang, Dalat, Vung Tao, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Can Tho and Hue. The Vietnamese government chose the people who would attend, and the audience included educators, military officers and media professionals.

Among the Hanoi "students" in 1998 when Thomas Congdon became involved were a few people connected with the Vietnam Friendship Village. One of these was Ho Xuan Dich, Senior Foreign Relations Expert for the Veterans Association of Vietnam. "Come on out," they said, "let us show you something." Mr. Congdon, a World War II veteran, was so touched by what he saw, he made a direct donation to the village in 1998 and again during his second visit in 1999. He and his wife Noel also made a substantial donation last year in response to VFVP-USA's spring fundraising appeal.

The Congdons have other ties to Vietnam. In September 2002 Thomas and Noel helped organize a Yale University conference on the effects of Agent Orange. The conference was sponsored by Yale Medical School along with the medical schools of New York University, University of Minnesota, Stanford and other universities, and involved the National Institute of Health (NIH). Eight Vietnamese participants from the medical and forestry professions attended the conference and presented their findings about the lingering effects of Agent Orange on Vietnam's people and environment.

During the Congdon's 1999 trip to Vietnam, Noel Congdon met PeaceTrees Co-Founder Jerilyn Brusseau and subsequently traveled again to Vietnam with Jerilyn to help rebuild the village of Dong Ha, near Bien Hoa, which was destroyed during the American war. PeaceTrees is a nonprofit organization that raises money to clear landmines in Vietnam and then plants trees in the cleared areas, and helps to rebuild villages.

Thomas and Noel Congdon have established a special relationship with Vietnam. They have contributed in meaningful ways to the improved health and well being of Vietnamese people, and to the sharing of information between Americans and Vietnamese. We are proud to be able to count them among the supporters of the Vietnam Friendship Village Project.

—Becky Luening

Vietnam Friendship Village Project thanks you for your support!

Listed below are all who donated time or money since our last newsletter, plus a few we missed last time.

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David Montgomery
Mathilde Rand
Chris and Ruben —
Poet & Patriot Irish Pub
Peter Rubin
Kate Todd
Rick Tracy
Tran Khanh Tuyet
Silas Weeks

Dedication

In honor of Jared Aaronson
In honor of the Vietnamese volunteers and vets
In honor of the 66th Engineering Co. (Topographic)
In honor of and to celebrate Cory Freedom
Driessen
In memory of Gene Becker
In honor of Khe Sang Marines;
In memory of Docs — '68
To celebrate the effort to make the world better
in some way
In memory of Bob McKeegan
In memory of Lenore Burgard
In memory of Jeff Huch
In memory of the 3 million Vietnamese killed in
the American War
In honor of Helen Lukievics and Ernie Lendler
In honor of Duoc and Han Nguyen
In support of this project for its "living symbol of
peace, reconciliation and hope"
In memory of Jeff "Paco" Huch
In memory of Bill Fisher
In memory of Bob Rusher (killed Jan. 7, 1968 TET)
In memory of Say Kanal (d. Cambodia 1975)
In memory of Ray Seetomona
In memory of Doug Rand
In memory of Bill Motto and George Mizo
In memory of Dr. William Eisman
In celebration — a Christmas present for the
Cleavenger Family
In memory of Mary Jo Tracy
In memory of Christopher N.H. Jenkins
To ask forgiveness for the wrong we did to
innocent people



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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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The Vietnam Friendship Village Project helps bridge gaps between cultures.



BILL DEAN

This picture was taken at Thong Nhat Park, or Lenin Park, originally the waste disposal area for Hanoi during the period of French domination. At its inauguration in 1960, the park was named Thong Nhat, meaning "united," to express northern hopes of reunification. In April 1980, on the occasion of Lenin's 110th birthday, Thong Nhat was renamed Lenin Park. During Tet, Thong Nhat Park is where the Spring Flower Festival is held.