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LIBRARY FILE/United Press International

Veterans salute Vietnam Veterans Memorial statue after its 1984 unveiling.

## Vietnam was a war without winners

Editor: The mention of Vietnam stirs many memories of the unpleasant variety. I'm thankful to be one of the lucky few who were not seriously wounded or scarred physically or mentally as so many of my friends were. I thank God my name isn't etched on that cold slab of marble in Washington, or is it, and I just haven't accepted that fact yet?

That memorial portrays war for what it really is — a ghastly, horrible, mortal act. It is not as many today would have you believe, a la Hollywood, "The Deer Hunter," "Apocalypse Now" or "Rambo." War is a thing that people die in needlessly. Vietnam was a war that no one has found an excuse for, much less a good reason to have participated in.

For those who didn't serve there the memorial represents a personal sacrifice. There are 58,002 names etched upon it, representing children, friends, lovers, sweethearts, husbands, fathers. Not many

cannot find at least one or two names upon the wall of people we knew.

The three soldiers who now face the memorial in a way represent those of us who survived. We continue to search — for fallen buddies? for victory? for respect? for answers? The monument says that war shouldn't be taken lightly, or fought for foolish purposes. It should remind us that those who die in our wars are our flesh and blood and they do not return.

I'm proud to be a part of that beautiful memorial. What really upsets me is the fact the government that called 2.5 million of us to serve didn't build the thing! It was built by us. We raised the money, we commissioned the work, we erected it, and we presented it to a nation that has tried to ignore our sacrifices and the multitude of problems we now must endure.

And after all these years, I think I've finally figured out why. This country has always welcomed victors home from the battlefields. Brass bands have played, ticker-tape parades passed, faithful wives waited with outstretched arms, politicians gave speeches about jobs well done. It was easy to be proud of the boys who won in Europe, Africa, Korea and even Grenada. Winners are always heroes, just ask any little kid.

But this country has been slow to understand that real heroism has little to do with winning Rambo-style. It has to do with answering the call, doing the duty, and going beyond — whatever the sacrifice.

GREGORY G. BURDICK  
Arvada

The most cited reason for the drop in fatalities is the 55-mph speed limit. An unreported comparison between our year, 1981, and 1985 reveals the following:

In 1981, what is called the "unadjusted" number of 49.7 percent of our vehicles were exceeding the 55-mph speed limit on our highways. In 1985, an "unadjusted" 62.1 percent were exceeding the 55.

In 1981, our average rural injury rate speed was 56.9 mph. In 1985, it was 62.1 mph. In 1981, our average urban injury rate speed was 55.7 mph. In 1985, it was 62.1 mph.

From the "reduction" of 49.7 to 62.1 percent exceeding the 55-mph limit, and our 1985 reduction in deaths, it is difficult to conclude what the media would say.

West Germany does not have its on its rural freeway death rate of 12 years.

We, with our increased death rate, have increased our death rate.

Editor: Our interest-piquing Councilman P. At a council meeting, nuclear-freeze advocates listening to speakers and interested parties don't see why we should listen to the Russians."

My philosophy is diametrically opposite to that of Swalm, but I am 100 percent with that sentiment.

I was at the hearing for the Russians," but first and second, the lives of the people on the planet. As indicated here, the life of others of his ilk who human life that they would give on the planet in order to

Let's

Go

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Rocky Mtn Post  
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## Letters

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# VETERAN

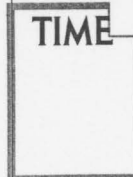


Matthew Naythons

© 1982 Time Inc.

To her, life is war.  
At 8, she has already survived horrors that most of us will never see. And there are millions of other children like her. TIME looked at their suffering and their strength to examine how war is affecting those who will soon shape our world. Week after week, TIME gives you more than news and information. It brings insight and understanding to subjects that matter to you.

Read TIME and understand.



Time  
11/8/82

# Open Forum

## Amerasian children need our help

AS THE House and Senate rush to clear the legislative docket before the Oct. 8 election recess many important pieces of legislation remain tied up in subcommittees. One such bill is the American-Asian immigration bill.

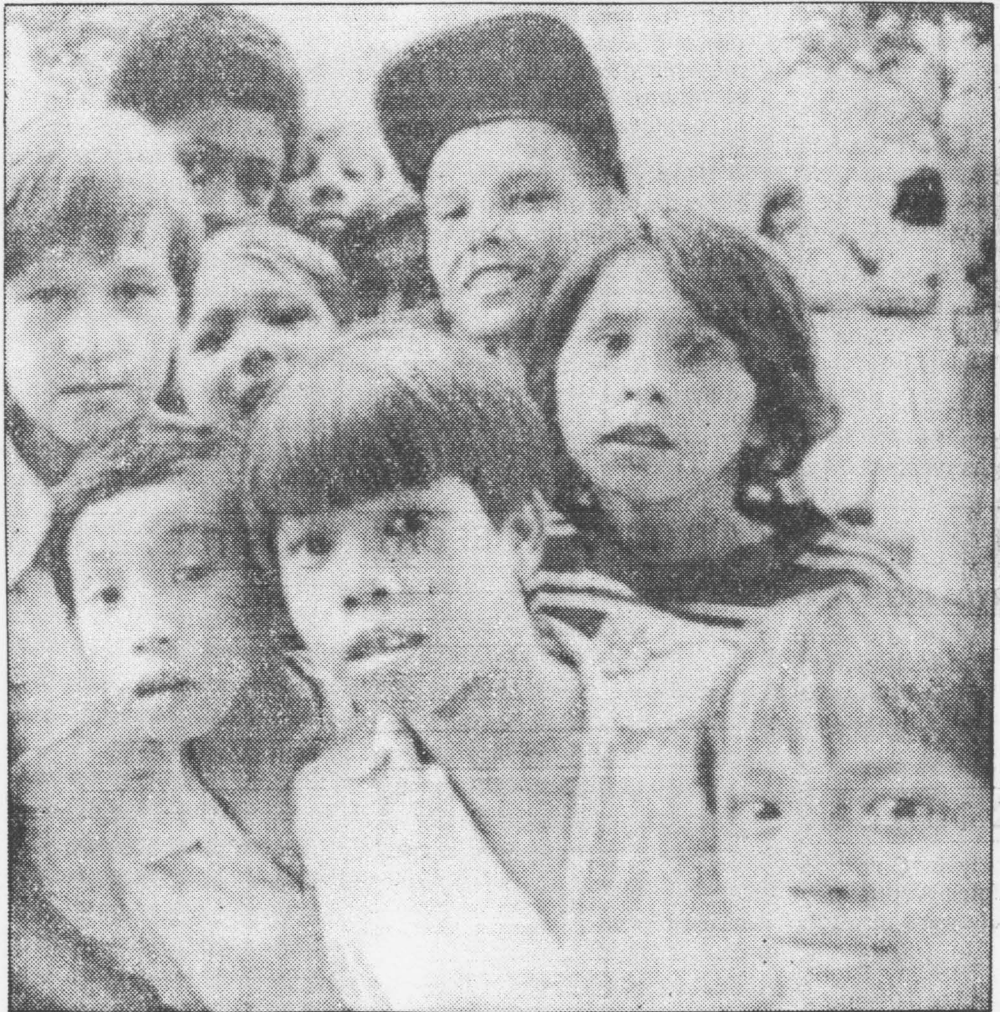
In the July 19 issue of Newsweek is an article, "Vietnam: Inside Ho Chi Minh City," with an accompanying photo of hungry, ragged American-looking children carrying posters. On each poster was a photo of a Vietnamese women with her American husband who had long ago vanished and had abandoned both her and their child. The look on the faces of each child was one of hopelessness. They are doomed to live out the remainder of their lives in absolute penury and deprivation.

Congress should pass a law which would grant immediate American citizenship to all offspring, regardless of age and marital status, of our personnel who were fathered and later abandoned overseas. Hopefully such legislation will not carry with it a clause demanding sponsorship, since the vast majority of such children will be unable to find sponsors since they were abandoned in the first place and know absolutely no one in America.

In Asia there are thousands of such children in Vietnam, Japan, Korea, the Philippines and Thailand. Such children are thought of as "racially impure contaminants" of Asian society, and believe me they are treated as such. They are prohibited from attending many schools and are barred from most types of employment. They must hustle a livelihood by themselves. Here in Korea many exist by scavenging the streets and dumps searching for refuse which can be sold as scrap.

My wife and family are so despondent of seeing American children suffer in such ways that here in Seoul we find ourselves no longer able to go out and try the cuisine of city restaurants. We somehow just cannot seem to be able to eat an ample meal and then walk out of the restaurant to find down the street American children walking along looking for refuse. Giving them money for food eases their plight for two or three days or so, but after that it's back to the dumps for them.

It is time that we Americans admit some responsibility for these unfortunate children. For us to continue to turn our backs on them is cruel and morally unjustified. If we are at least somewhat responsible for



AP Laserphoto

**In Ho Chi Minh City, children born of American fathers and Vietnamese mothers plead for immigration to the United States.**

their coming into the world, then I think we owe them the decency of at least bringing some hope into their lives by allowing them to obtain American citizenship with a minimum of red tape and hassle. It is imperative that such legislation be passed as quickly as possible since Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach told reporters on July 10 that "the Vietnamese-American children are unconditionally free to leave Vietnam." The next move is up to the U.S. Congress.

I have written many senators and representatives asking for their support for this bill. Some responses have been very positive. But most responses have read some-

thing like this: "Perhaps something should be done to relieve the plight of these *aliens* and when and if the bill gets out of committee and onto the floor I will give it due consideration." With this attitude on the part of our lawmakers it appears that our Amerasian children have nothing to look forward to but many more years, perhaps the rest of their lives, of living in cruel discrimination and within the most appalling poverty which the Asian nations have to offer.

**DR. DOUGLAS LEE SHAMES**  
Yongsan Health Clinic  
Yongsan Army Garrison  
Seoul, Korea APO SF 96301

the communist takeover of South Vietnam, about 2,000 Vietnamese children from orphanages reached the United States through the haphazard airlift organized by several service agencies and ad hoc groups. Amidst this effort of surprising and heartening success came one great tragedy, the crash of the C5A transport on April 4, 1975, killing 135 of 330 persons on board including 76 of 226 orphans.

Most of the surviving babies and children appeared at first to have suffered no permanent injuries, but as they began their American lives, their adoptive parents began to notice many of them could not stop crying for long spells, could not sit still and could not concentrate on school lessons for more than a few minutes.

Eventually, lawyers for 45 of the children filed suit against the U.S. government and the Lockheed Aircraft Corp. charging that the children had suffered brain damage from decompression and oxygen deprivation when a door of the aircraft blew out, and from the force of the crash itself. After a long series of legal maneuvers, a tentative \$13.5-million settlement was filed in U.S. District Court.

Robert DeBolt, a Piedmont, Calif., civil engineer who numbers seven Vietnamese refugees (including Tve and her fellow air crash survivor Ly Vo) among his 20 children, said, "These kids have now got another chance. I think our two kids are going to become contributing members of society."

The vast majority of babylift adoptions have been "an overwhelming success," said Cheryl Markson, director of the Denver-based Friends of Children of Vietnam, which brought 419 children to the United



Pamella Morrill of Bronxville, N.Y., with adopted son Dirk, and daughter Michelle. Dirk was abandoned in a Vietnamese hospital.

Associated Press

States. Some older adoptees have sent her their high school graduation notices.

Racial differences between adoptive parents and children have created few if any troubles, she said. Many parents have followed the agency's recommendation that they teach their children as much as possible about their Vietnamese heritage. As a result, Markson said, "a lot of adoptive kids know more about their culture than some of the refugee kids coming over with their parents."

Under the proposed terms of the air crash settlement, lawyers and parents said, each child would be entitled to about \$10,000 to treat learning problems, speech disabilities and coordination difficulties which some doctors blame on the crash. Each child also could draw on a \$50,000 trust fund for medical emergencies.

Although Oberdorfer may change the proposal, at least 50 percent of the total award would go to the children, one source said. One third would pay attorneys' fees and one-sixth would pay for medical experts and a court-appointed guardian during several years of preliminaries leading up to the decision not to go to trial. Lawsuits for five other surviving young victims were settled earlier for an average of about \$723,000 each.

Carroll Dubuc, an attorney representing the C5A manufacturer, Lockheed, said the company had argued that some children have no

injuries and that the medical problems of others were due to poor health care in Vietnam. Dubuc said the proposed settlement meant the company was "giving them the benefit of the doubt" while accepting no responsibility for the accident.

The award money from the proposed settlement would be dispensed by local courts.

Lawyers still are arguing if surviving children in Europe may have their lawsuits heard in the United States. Mark A. Dombroff of the Justice Department said the government agreed to settle so that children who need help could get it without the "tortuous process" of a prolonged trial.

Pamella Morrill of Bronxville, N.Y., said she would use the money to finance special education for her son Dirk, now 8. Dirk was abandoned in a maternity hospital in Vietnam shortly after his birth.

While waiting for his arrival from Vietnam in 1975, Pamela and her husband Tom heard the news of the plane crash "in absolute disbelief." They were overjoyed when they heard that Dirk had survived, she said, and Tom Morrill found nothing physically wrong with the baby he picked up in California.

But, she said, "Dirk had problems from the beginning." He would cry whenever left alone. As he grew older he picked fights at school and became uncontrollably upset at any change in his routine.

She said she may move Dirk into a private school with smaller classes

if he continues to have trouble in the larger classes of his public school. He has been tutored this summer, she said, "and is doing amazingly well." He knows about the crash, "and feels badly about the children who didn't make it," she said.

In the rural setting of Colville, Wash., Lori Carnie, 8, has a horse that she adores, but her own nervous disorder makes it difficult for her to sit still on the animal. Her twin brother Landon excels at mathematics, but their mother Dearnna Carnie said he "really needs help with reading."

Their father, George Carnie, a leader of the group of parents involved in the suit, first saw the twins in Vietnam. He was told their mother had died and their father was in the army, unable to care for them.

The twins' natural father has never been located, but the natural parents of a few other babylift children have been discovered still alive. Most of them remain in Vietnam.

In a few cases, natural parents have reached the United States and sought custody from the adoptive parents, Markson said. In a Connecticut case, she said, the adoptive parent retained custody. In an Iowa case, a child was returned to its natural mother.

Markson said some Vietnamese mothers gave their children to orphanages to get them out of the country and they have established contact with the U.S. parents who adopted their children. But, she said, "I know of not one who has ex-

ceedings, her father said, she was agitated during the takeoff to be held down.

DeBolt, 50, and his wife, 58, have another daughter, 21, who also survived the crash. She suffered severe physical injuries, broken bones in her legs and internal injuries. Childhood trauma had long before crippled her at the waist and she had moved from the orphanage on a skateboard to the orphanage on a skateboard, wearing mittens to protect her hands as they propelled her.

Tve was rescued from the orphanage on a paddy and put on the next boat to California. But Ly had to go to a hospital near Saigon and put in a full body cast because the communists took Saigon. DeBolts heard nothing from her. She assumed they would never

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# rs of 'Operation Babylift' Crash



Associated Press

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The twins' natural father has never been located, but the natural



By Carl Viti for The Washington Post

Twe DeBolt, survivor of the "Operation Babylift" crash, discovered talent for music.

pressed any regret at sending their children out."

Twe DeBolt, 21, whose natural parents died in a bomb blast, has not recovered from the memories of the plane crash. She still shakes in fear whenever she must ride in a car or an elevator. When she had to fly to Washington, D.C., for legal proceedings, her father said, she was so agitated during the takeoff she had to be held down.

DeBolt, 50, and his wife Dorothy, 58, have another daughter, Ly Vo, 21, who also survived the crash but suffered severe physical injuries, five broken bones in her legs and severe internal injuries. Childhood polio had long before crippled her below the waist and she had moved about the orphanage on a skateboard contraption, wearing mittens to protect her hands as they propelled her.

Twe was rescued from the rice paddy and put on the next flight to California. But Ly had to be taken to a hospital near Saigon's airport and put in a full body cast. When the communists took Saigon and the DeBolts heard nothing from Ly, they assumed they would never see her.

"Then we got a call three days later from Travis [air base], saying, 'We've got your daughter here,'" DeBolt said. Somehow Ly had caught the last medical evacuation plane out of Vietnam and arrived in California the day before Mother's Day.

The plane crash left Ly with recurring severe headaches and sudden memory losses, still an occasional handicap when she takes examinations at school. She also developed a bone disease that may have been caused by the multiple fractures.

But she graduated from Piedmont high school and soon will begin her second year of junior college. She wants to be a doctor.

Like all of the DeBolt children, she is helping pay her way through college. Despite her braces and crutches, she waits on tables in a Vietnamese restaurant.

As DeBolt describes it, Ly "to an extent feels like she has been born again." Having survived the polio, the bomb blast which killed her mother, the war and the plane crash, "she feels that she must have been left on this earth for some reason."

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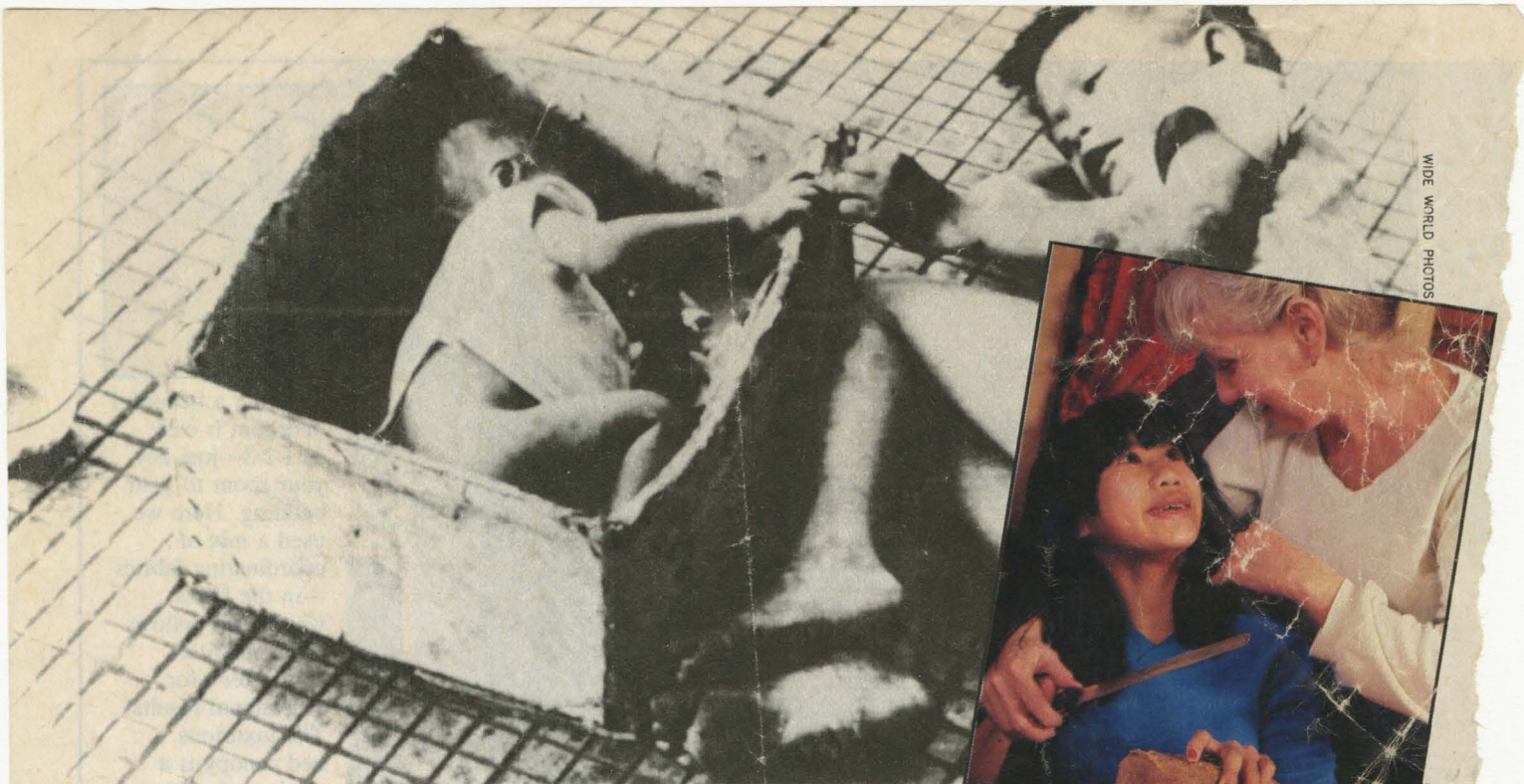
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WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



ED PIERATTI/BLACK STAR

Nhanny—then and now. Above, as an infant with her brother in Vietnam. At right, as a rambunctious 11-year-old with her adopted mother, Evelyn Heil, at home in Ohio.

**TRUE-LIFE DRAMA**

# THE RESCUE OF NHANNY HEIL

**She was found in a box on a street in Saigon, a begging bowl beside her. This is the unforgettable story of how she's been transformed into a healthy, happy American child. By BONNIE REMSBERG**

OF ALL THE photographic images that poured out of the Vietnam War, the most searing was the baby in the box. Half-naked, filthy and malnourished, she lay on a Saigon street beside her brother. She looked as if she had been thrown away.

When the photo flashed around the world in 1973, it was hard to believe that such a pathetic little waif could possibly survive. She seemed to symbolize the miseries and hardships of war. Americans saw the photo and wept.

Today, a dark-eyed, dark-haired

11-year-old bundle of energy bursts into an Ohio kitchen and announces, "I'm hungry."

Between those two scenes are half a world and more than a few miracles. For the baby in the box is not only alive, she is thriving. Life is a precious gift to Nhan Martha Frances Heil, called "Nhanny." So many times she came close to losing it. Keeping her alive took someone with boundless love and faith and incredible determination.

**T**hrowing her arms around the smiling woman in the kitchen, the child nuzzles and says, "I love you, Mommy."

"Mommy's" name is Evelyn Warren Heil. She is an intelligent, energetic woman of 52 with an easy charm—a woman who seems to have been born to be a mother. One night in Houston, Texas, in the autumn of 1974, the noise of a kitchen full of teenagers had driven Evelyn into her living room for a few peaceful minutes alone with a

cup of coffee and the newspaper.

A photo she saw in her paper turned her world upside down. It was the "baby in the box" she remembered from the famous Saigon photo. The infant had been found, transported to a Vietnamese orphanage, then flown to Houston, where Dr. Denton Cooley had agreed to operate on a hole in her heart. There she was, newly arrived at the hospital, peering out, in the photo, from a nurse's arms.

"I saw those big eyes and that scared little baby face," Evie recalls. "She was halfway around the world from where she had been born, with no mother to hold her. I thought, 'This is a sick baby; she needs somebody.'"

Evie called the hospital. She wanted a chance to hold the baby, to croon to her, to try to let her know that everything would be all right. "I had four kids," she says. "I knew how to run a rocking chair."

The hospital told her that no such child was there.

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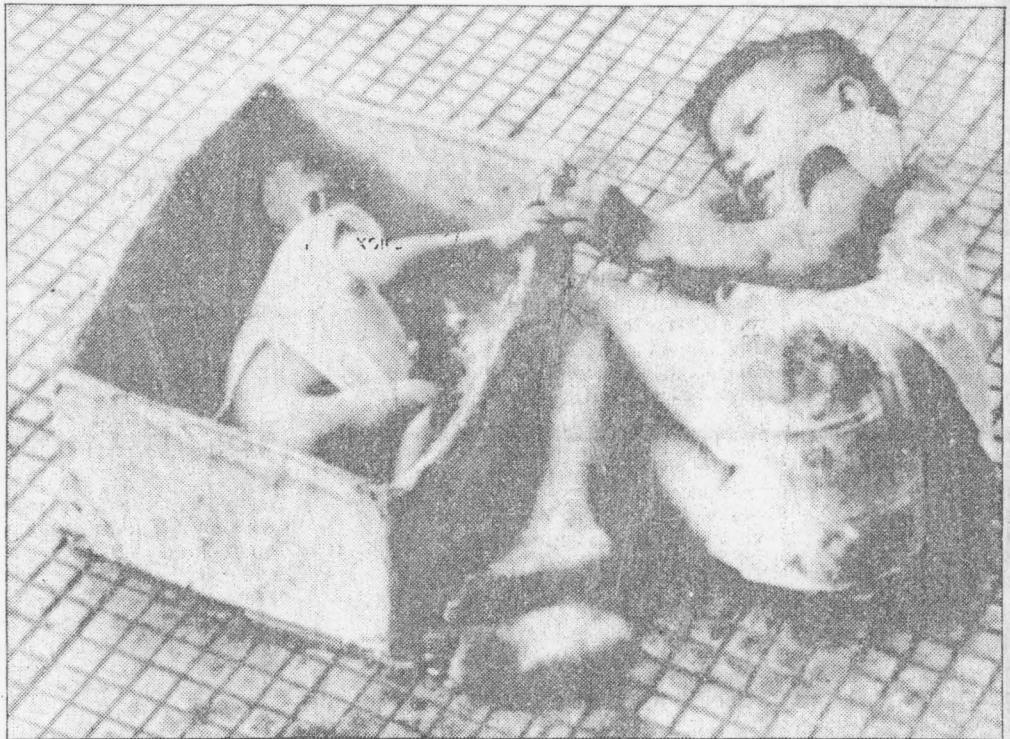
Please See SYNFUELS on 15-A

tion of the Reagan administratio,  
policy in Central America, is ex-  
pected to have only symbolic im-  
pact because the Republican-run  
Senate is unlikely to take it up.



Nhanny today, age 12.

**Nhanny's story began  
in 1973 in a box on a  
Saigon street . . .**



Associated Press

Nhanny in the famous 1973 photograph with her brother, later killed in Danang.

## Now Happy Preteen, She Meets President

By MICHAEL PUTZEL  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ten years after a photographer snapped a picture of a tiny, half-naked child crammed in a box on a Saigon street, President Reagan welcomed the girl and the American woman who adopted her to the White House on Thursday. The same photographer who changed their lives looked on.

The girl, Nhan Martha Frances Heil, now a cheerful 12-year-old, handed a white carnation to Mrs. Reagan and gave the president a big hug before they went into the Oval Office for a brief private meeting.

Nhanny, as she's now called, was accompanied up the White House driveway by her mother, Evelyn Warren Heil of Springfield, Ohio.

Standing in the crowd of reporters and photographers recording the scene was Charles "Chick" Harrity, whose Associated Press picture of Nhanny's disease-wracked body appeared on newspaper front pages around the world in 1973.

White House officials arranged for Nhanny and her mother to meet Harrity, who now covers the White House for U.S. News & World Report magazine.



Associated Press

Please See GIRL on 11-A

Meeting the president, with her mother, right, and Mrs. Reagan.

Denver Post  
7/29/83





Associated Press

Photographer Charles Harrity meets Nhanny 10 years after he took her photograph in Saigon.

# Photo of Vietnamese Child Changed Her Life for Better

## GIRL From 1-A

Nhanny, who has jet black hair and intense dark eyes, emerged from her meeting with the Reagans bearing a presidential jelly bean jar and a stick pin and bracelet bearing the presidential seal.

The president surprised Mrs. Heil by giving her two \$5,000 checks from Chicago philanthropist W. Clement Stone to help her continue to operate a private learning center she started in her home when she became frustrated with the public school system's inability to deal with Nhanny's learning problems.

Mrs. Heil had told reporters earlier that she had exhausted her personal savings and teacher's retirement income trying to keep the Warren Center of Learning open, but she had no intention of asking Reagan for federal assistance.

White House spokesman Mark Weinberg said Mrs. Reagan had read a magazine article about the Heils recently and called it to the attention of her husband, who expressed a desire to meet them.

After she met the Reagans, Nhanny told reporters she is looking forward to visiting the National Zoo and attending a service in a "big church" before she returns home Sunday.

Mrs. Heil said her adopted daughter had slept only two hours the night before because she was so excited about her trip. Nhanny yawned repeatedly and rested her head on her mother's shoulder during the session with reporters.

The Heils had stopped first at the Capitol to meet their congressman, Rep. Michael DeWine, R-Ohio, who put Nhanny in his big swivel chair and showed her how to use a remote control device to tune in House floor proceedings on his color television set.

Mrs. Heil said a call came from the White House a week ago "out of the blue."

"I thought somebody was playing a joke," she said.

Although outwardly happy, Nhanny still bears the scars of her early childhood as a Vietnamese street child.

Her hearing is impaired as a result of many years of chronic ear infections, and her development has been impeded by a series of speech and learning disabilities.

Nhanny, according to the White House, was tested at a kindergarten level when she left the public school system in 1981, but has since reached the fourth-grade level at her mother's school, where 14 students are now enrolled.

Nhanny's story began in 1973, when Harrity snapped the photo of her as a sick, malnourished child reaching out of her cardboard box to a brother lying on the sidewalk beside her with a beggar's bowl.

Harrity recalled that Nhanny was one of about six children of a homeless woman who lived with them in the streets of Saigon.

After the photo appeared, Nhanny was taken to a Vietnamese orphanage and later was flown to the United States by an international child care agency for surgery to correct a heart defect.

A news story years later said Nhanny's natural mother had died of tuberculosis and that her brother was killed in Danang, the second-largest city in what was then South Vietnam.

Mrs. Heil, who was living in Houston at the time, saw the photograph in a local newspaper and began lobbying social service agencies to obtain custody of the child.

When she met Nhanny in the hospital where the child was recuperating from surgery, she said, Nhanny was nearly 3 but weighed only 12 pounds.

Harrity said he and Mrs. Heil were astonished to meet each other. He said he had never known what became of the tiny girl he photographed. Mrs. Heil said she thought a Vietnamese photographer had taken the picture.

"It's just nice to see that something works," Harrity said.

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# THE LONG WAY HOME

By George Lurie

Once in a while, maybe driving down the road or parked along a street, an unusual license plate on a car with catch your eye. It's a Colorado plate but the numbers are smaller and are all pushed over on the right side. To the left, there is a short phrase written sideways and in script. It reads: "POW — Lest they be forgotten."

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Paris Peace Pact and the release of nearly 590 Americans held prisoner during the Vietnam War. Captured between 1965 and 1972, they returned to the U.S. in February and March of 1973 to a tumultuous, heroes' welcome. But after the banners came down and the parades ended, they were left with the formidable task of reconstructing their lives. Some have done a remarkable job. Others have not fared so well.

The snowy white decor of Dave Winn's suburban Colorado Spring's home is a stark contrast to the filthy hovel in which he spent 5½ years of his life. Sitting buoyantly on the ivory cushion of the couch in his living room, the gray smoke from a filterless cigarette wafting in lazy spirals above his head, a pet poodle, also white, sprawling comfortably in his lap, the 60-year-old retired brigadier general reflects on the meaning of freedom.

"Free people," he says, "just don't understand what it feels like to be unfree."

Winn quotes Lenin, Churchill, Solzhenitsyn to reinforce his point — his perspective more scholarly than soldierly. There was a time when such lofty principles were of little interest to the career military man.

"But," Winn says as he rubs his forehead with the flat of his palm, an ethereal glimmer in his eyes, "kneeling all day and all night on the stone floor of a prison cell gives a guy an extended opportunity to become pretty introspective."

On August 8, 1968, the F-105 fighter jet Winn, then a colonel, was piloting was blasted out of the sky above North Vietnam.

"I went down in a very open area. I hid behind a bush to cover myself but a few minutes later, an old man with an oily, antique gun and a young woman with a Russian-made rifle appeared. I had my revolver pointed right at them and really didn't know whether or not I was going to have to shoot them. I was squeezing the trigger when I felt the cold steel of a rifle barrel against my temple. I never even saw the North Vietnamese soldier



"Everything happened very fast, almost like a dream." — Art Elliott

who'd snuck up behind me."

Winn was manacled, blindfolded and driven by midnight convoy to the Hoa Lo prison in Hanoi, an old French movie lot converted into a POW camp by the North Vietnamese. Nicknamed the "Hanoi Hilton" by American prisoners, it would be Dave Winn's home for the next 5½ years.

"At the first interrogation," Winn recalls, "they were after just one thing — an answer to the fifth question. I told them my name, rank, serial number and date of birth — everything required under the terms of the Geneva Convention. After that, the torture began. It didn't stop until I answered their fifth question. It didn't really matter what the question was, or how I answered it. All they wanted to do was to get me to talk, to break the code of conduct..."

Winn spent his first 22 months at the Hanoi Hilton in isolation. "After constant interrogations and six months in solitary," he says, "I was as nutty as a fruit cake."

Bill Baugh, 49, retired from the Air Force in 1981 with the rank of colonel. His military decorations and awards included the Purple Heart, Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross; although he now dons the business garb of civilian life instead of his old Air Force "blues," there still is a military posture to him. It's apparent in the upright way he carries his 200-pound frame, the way his square jaw juts proudly forward as he responds to questions in concise, snappy replies.

In January 1967, he was flying his 51st mission over North Vietnam when his

F-4 jet was pummeled with a barrage of anti-aircraft fire. "When the plane started getting sloppy, I banked out of the formation and pulled the ejection lever. I blacked out when I hit the air stream."

Baugh was mangled when his parachute became entangled in a grove of jagged trees. "When I woke up," he says, "I was covered from head to toe with blood. My face looked like Mr. Half and Half from Dick Tracy. One side was a gory mess and the other side was fine." The injury left Baugh blind in one eye and with a 7-inch scar running from the base of his neck to the middle of his cheek. "I was loose for about 15 minutes before they caught up with me. I was so weak from the pain that I didn't resist. They just tied me up and dragged me away. It was the beginning of a very bad day..."

At the time of his capture in the central highlands of South Vietnam on April 26, 1970, Art Elliott was an infantry major serving as senior advisor to a Vietnamese army battalion. His second tour of duty in southeast Asia was four days from completion. Born in Bowie, Texas, Elliott joined the Texas National Guard at the age of 17, did a stint as a highway patrolman and then joined the regular Army in 1961. Although the walls of his Colorado Springs home are lined with military photographs, citations and medals, Elliott is reluctant to discuss his experiences as a POW. The 55-year-old retired colonel prefers to talk about golf or his plans to improve the landscaping in his spacious backyard. His dress is casual — a colorful sport shirt and plaid slacks — quite a contrast to flimsy pajamas and rubber sandals that were his POW uniform for three years.

Reticent, Elliott pulls a scrapbook of newspaper clippings from one of the shelves. It is brimming with press clippings and photographs. He leafs through the pages, singles out the articles and photos he likes best, grimaces at others. When he closes the book again, his eyes are unfocused, his expression faraway.

"I was leading a group of South Vietnamese infantry on a diversionary counterattack so that the rest of the company could get out of there," he begins. "But it didn't come off the way we had it planned. The enemy was closing in too fast."

He pushes the scrapbook aside. "Everything after that happened very fast, almost like a dream. I was hit in the leg by a round of mortar fire and crawled down a creek bed to try to escape. The South Vietnamese soldiers all around me

# THE LONG WAY HOME

were just giving themselves up. All of a sudden, the bushes erupted with North Vietnamese, their rifles pointing at my nose. I was in a state of shock. I didn't know if I'd bought it or not. First they grabbed my weapons, then my watch, then everything else I had."

Elliott was forced to march for three days to a camp in Laos where he was put in an 8-by-8-foot bamboo cell, half underground, half above. His legs were clamped tightly into wooden stocks that kept the lower half of his body submerged in pools of stagnant rain water. Meals were one skimpy bowl of rice a day served in a rotten bamboo tube and a tin of salt water. During the initial months of captivity, Elliott lost more than 25 percent of his original body weight. "I was there 30 days," Elliott says. "It was as close as I could imagine to a living hell. Every time a guard came by, I was told to bow. When I didn't, they hit me in the back of the head with their rifle butts. I drew maps to get them to stop beating me. Not to answer questions in some manner was an invitation to be shot. Even though I made up almost everything I drew on those maps, it made them happy for a while. The only trouble was that three or four days later, they asked me to draw them again and I couldn't remember where I'd put all the battalions and tanks."

From Laos, Elliott marched another 55 days through Cambodia to a prison camp 50 kilometers north of Hanoi called "Plantation Gardens."

"Things were better there," Elliott says. "We were allowed to exercise a little. We even got to see communist movies occasionally. We were also allowed to listen to heavily edited taped U.S. newscasts mostly composed of stories

about U.S. disasters and anti-war activities. The communists tried hard to make us think that the United States had forgotten us. But we had a strong underground communications organization that helped keep our morale high. We'd use all kind of secret signals to pass information through the camp, especially that gained from new prisoners about the situations on the outside."

During part of the Vietnam War, a secret POW camp was in operation right here in Colorado. But at this compound, there was a special twist — the "prisoners" were there voluntarily.

From 1968 until 1971, the U.S. Air Force Academy put its cadets through mock POW exercises to prepare them for the possibility of being taken captive by the enemy. As a direct result of the brutal training, five 20-year-old cadets had to be hospitalized for psychiatric reasons. According to a later report from officials at the academy, they were suffering from "psychotic breaks that resulted in temporary states of insanity." Cadets were put through mock, day-long interrogations during which they were verbally abused, shocked with electric prongs, beaten with clubs. Some were forced to crouch for hours in 55-gallon drums filled with water and ice. A medical technician stationed at the compound during the exercises said afterwards that he couldn't keep up with all of the injuries.

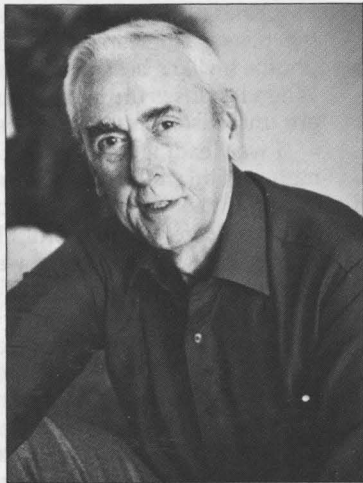
Meanwhile, in the authentic POW

camp 6,000 miles away, American prisoners weren't afforded the luxury of medical technicians or returning to dormitory havens. Their injuries, physical and psychological, festered in the humid limbo of jungle prisons while they sweltered through the years.

"The whole process was designed to make you feel guilty about being a war criminal," Winn explains. "When they asked you to talk, you either yielded or died. Sometimes you didn't know the difference. When you told them something — and everybody told them something — regardless of whether it was valid military information or not — then you'd go back to your cell feeling guilty as hell about breaking the code of conduct.

"Later on, after I'd become more sophisticated, I wanted them to come and get me and ask a question so I could tell them to screw themselves and they'd pound me and then it was clear again that it was them and not us who were the bad guys."

"Kneeling all day and all night on the stone floor of a cell, a human being is forced to confront some serious issues. I realized that I was not the center of the world and the world would go on jolly well without me. Then, I had to figure out what my purpose in living really was. I finally came up with an answer: If I was going to claim to be a morally and ethically responsible human being, it was my duty to fight against tyranny in any form I encountered it. People ask me if the sacrifice I made during those six years was worth it. Of course it was. When you're in a one-on-one confrontation



"Kneeling all day and all night on the stone floor of a prison cell gives a guy an extended opportunity to become pretty introspective." — David Winn

with the sharp edge of tyranny, any lick you can get in is worth it."

"I'll never forget my first Christmas in Hanoi," Baugh says. "The North Vietnamese woke me up in the middle of the night and pulled me out of my cell. I was led to this small room in the far corner of the camp. There was an interrogator there and I wondered what kind of special treatment they'd dreamed up. But he spoke to me kind of softly and even smiled. Over in one corner of the room was this scraggly little Christmas tree. He gave me a piece of candy and a cup of Chinese tea. Then he said, 'I allow you to go over and look at that tree. . . . That was all. It doesn't take very much to give a prisoner of war a little hope. Sometimes, even if a guard looked or acted a certain way, if he passed you by instead of beating you, you'd think, 'Hot damn, something's happening. We're going home.' If I had known that I was going to be there five more Christmases, I don't think I could have made it."

"I dreamed all day and all night," says Elliot. "It was like a never-ending movie with a Robinson Crusoe theme. It was what kept me going. One day, I'm going to write a book and call it — 'The POWs Dream.' Some guys spent all their time thinking of ways to get out, but I never really considered the possibility of escape. Even if you could get away from the camp, how would a 6-foot caucasian with blond hair and blue eyes hide in a country like North Vietnam?"

Abel Larry Kavanaugh grew up in Denver during the turbulence of the 1960s. He dropped out of East High School in 11th grade, got married and,

shortly afterwards, enlisted in the Marines. His first child was born when he was in boot camp. In the spring of 1968, he was sent to Vietnam. Several months later, while out on an evening patrol, Kavanaugh fell into an ambush and was taken captive by a band of North Vietnamese soldiers. His arms and legs were tied with steel wire and he was transported to Plantation Gardens outside Hanoi.

Unlike most of the senior prisoners, Kavanaugh and other non-commissioned soldiers were housed in a communal cell. It was there that Kavanaugh began having visions, hearing voices. One day, he proclaimed to have experienced a revelation. God had told him that he was His "13th disciple" and his sole mission in life was to end the war.

Kavanaugh began cooperating openly with the North Vietnamese. He met with visiting foreign delegations and raved about the great treatment he was getting. From his prison cell where the North Vietnamese gave him luxuries and privileges denied other prisoners, Kavanaugh wrote letters to world leaders decrying U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. On November 11, 1972, he made a broadcast over Radio Hanoi lauding the merits of Ho Chi Minh's vision and urging President Nixon to sign the Paris Peace Accord.

But Kavanaugh's anti-war diatribes got him in trouble with his fellow POWs. He

and six other "collaborators" were chastised and branded as outcasts by their own countrymen. The treatment didn't seem to bother Larry Kavanaugh.

When he finally returned to Denver in 1973, one of his former superior officers at Plantation Gardens, an Air Force colonel named Theodore Guy, accused Kavanaugh and six other ex-POWs of "aiding the enemy, conspiracy and conduct unbecoming of American fighting men." Although the government decided against initiating court-martial proceedings, the notoriety that accompanied the charges upset Kavanaugh. He accused the Pentagon of harrasing him.

In the weeks that followed, Kavanaugh found himself less and less able to cope with the constant depression and desolation of being branded a traitor. One evening late in June 1973 — two years before the war finally ended — Abel Larry Kavanaugh put a .25 caliber automatic pistol to his head and squeezed the trigger.

There was no suicide note. The ex-POW was buried with full military honors at Fort Logan cemetery. Two months pregnant with their second child, his wife issued a terse statement several days later. "Larry went to Vietnam to serve his country," she said. "The North Vietnamese kept him alive for five years and then he came back to the United States and his own people killed him."

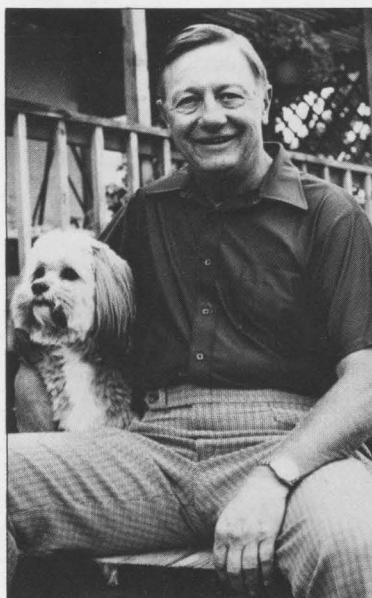
Elliott arrived at Plantation Gardens two years after Larry Kavanaugh. For a while, Elliott shared a cell with Colonel Ted Guy.

"Sure, I knew Kavanaugh." Elliott says. "He and these six other guys were always squealing on the other prisoners. In turn, the North Vietnamese granted them favors, even took them to the park once in a while. The rest of us were

*continued on page 105*

"I sacrificed but not as much as the others who never came home again." — Art Elliot (right)

"If I had known that I was going to be there five more Christmases, I don't think I could have made it." — Bill Baugh (far right)



# SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Since the end of the Vietnam War, more than 200,000 Indochinese refugees have been granted asylum in the U.S. As they settle into unexpected niches, these newcomers, quietly and permanently, are altering the pattern of the American landscape. On the bustling street corners of New York City, Cambodian green-grocers use abacuses to compute their customers' bills. In New Orleans, Vietnamese immigrants have converted their housing project lawns into lush vegetable gardens, irrigating them with the same long-handled wooden buckets they used to dip in the Mekong River.

In Denver, more than 12,000 Southeast Asian refugees also are carving out a place for themselves as they struggle to make the most of their new lives. They are proving themselves an enterprising lot. Some of the most profitable residential landscaping and lawn care companies are now refugee-owned-and-operated. Firms that have hired refugees rave about their loyalty and efficiency.

The Thang Long Grocery Store is one of the growing number of Indochinese specialty shops that have sprung up along Denver's South Federal Boulevard in the past few years. Its proprietor, Mrs. Thang, fled Vietnam in the final days of the war, forced to close her small shop there in just a few hours. Since then, her life has been a roller coaster ride; from an overflowing, squalid tent camp in Thailand, across the Pacific and through a scattered and hectic resettlement program in Arkansas and, finally, to a new life in Colorado. Mrs. Thang's has been an epic journey — one that epitomizes her resiliency and overwhelming determination to survive.

Besides the grocery store, the Thang

family also run a jewelry business just down the block. Mrs. Thang reports that business in both of her shops is growing, but her expression remains forlorn. "You see," she says, punching up another sale on the cash register, "life here is just so much different than it was in Vietnam. . . In America, we do the best we can. If I could, I'd close up this store in a minute, profit or no profit, and go back to my country. That will always be my dream. I miss my home. . . very, very much."

Some refugees have even named their children in honor of their new homes. One 38-year-old factory worker named his newborn son Denver Nguyen; another, Arkansas Bo after the resettlement camp at Fort Chaffee, Ark. But perhaps the most heartfelt name is the one a 31-year-old sewer worker, Tran Van Kinh, bestowed upon his child: Tran Pilot. One day, Tran Kinh hopes, his son will be a pilot and fly him back to Vietnam.

A guerrilla fighter in the jungles during his youth, later a political strategist and emissary for the most powerful men in his country, Nhi Lang fled Vietnam just 30 minutes before the fall of Saigon. He made it out on a rickety cargo boat with 2,500 other terrified people.

A Colorado resident for the past eight years and an American citizen since 1981, the 55-year-old Lang now serves on the Colorado Refugee Advisory Council and works as an electronics inspector for Storage Technology Corp.

Lang's conversation, flavored by a French accent, is a slow-motion explosion of static, emotional bursts. He dresses in

three-piece suits, smokes imported cigarettes and wears a gold ring on his finger with the Chinese character for "happiness" engraved upon it. He lives with his wife and elderly mother-in-law in the cellar of a suburban home. "Living down here in the basement is a new experience for us," Lang says as strains of rock music filter down from the stereo of the college students living upstairs. "In Vietnam, there are no basements. . ."

"Most of us work two jobs here," Lang goes on. His wife is employed as a librarian during the days and a company clerk most evenings. "After I pay the bills here," Lang says, drawing hungrily on another cigarette, "I send anything I can — cash, material things, anything — back to relatives still in Vietnam. Since the U.S. does not have formal relations with the Communist regime, I have to go through a Canadian middleman.

"Life," Lang says, "may not always be easy here, but believe me, it's much more difficult for those still in Vietnam. . . Now I have a nice home, a good job, my own transportation. But most important, I have my freedom."

As another of the 6,000 members of this city's Vietnamese refugee community, Dinh Van's odyssey brought him to Denver in 1977 when he was recruited by the Denver Public Schools as a special consultant to their growing bilingual education program.

"Coming from a tiny agricultural country like Vietnam to a highly industrialized, advanced nation like America was a big shock," Van says. "People here take things like television and cars and automatic dishwashers for granted. In Vietnam, most people consider themselves very fortunate if they have a bicycle or an ox."

"For most of us," he says, "life as a refugee has meant starting over again, socially and economically. I know a man named Binh. He used to be a colonel in the South Vietnamese army. He lives in Denver now too. You know what he has to do for work? He's a janitor. He makes his living sweeping the floors at the Aurora Mall."

Van receives occasional letters from his father who is still in Vietnam. "There is very strong censorship of all personal letters coming in and out of the country," he explains. "When my father writes, he has to use a special code. I got a letter from him just the other day saying that things were fine under the Communists. He told me not to worry — everyone was as fat and healthy as Uncle Duk. And the lime tree in the yard had finally blossom-



"The kids seem to adjust the best."

► — Vic Chinsomboon

"In just a split second, I'd been transformed from diplomat to refugee. . ."

— Lo Poc



ed and was full of the biggest, best fruit ever. Everyone, he said, had plenty to eat.

"But you see," Van goes on, "our Uncle Duk has always been very thin and sickly. And the only thing in front of our house is a cement lot. There is no dirt, no grass, no yard and certainly no lime tree. So it's clear what my father's real message is. . . It makes me so sad when I read those letters."

For 25 years, Lo Poc served as the Cambodian ambassador to Australia, Sri Lanka, Japan and, finally, South Korea. During that career, the 67-year-old diplomat distinguished himself as one of the finest statesmen in Southeast Asia. He remembers a certain day more than eight years ago: "I was sitting in my office in Seoul," he begins, gesturing animatedly, his English polished, "I was working on a report when one of my assistants came in and told me that our country's government had just fallen. It took some time for it really to sink in, for me to realize that in just a split second, I'd been transformed from diplomat to refugee. . ."

Poc gazes up at his office ceiling. "My brother and sister were still living in Cambodia," he goes on. "They were not as fortunate as I was. They were executed by the Communists."

Approximately 1,500 Cambodian refugees live in Denver, and Lo Poc, chairman of the Cambodian Buddhist and Christian Society of Colorado, devotes much of his time to helping them make the transition from the war-torn rice paddies of their native land to the urban neighborhoods of northwest Denver.

"It's hard on them, especially at first." Lo Poc says. "But it's never hopeless. Even though Cambodians might not understand or like everything about America, only a fool would throw away a second chance in life."

There are approximately 1,000 Lowland Lao refugees living in Denver, and this year, the Colorado Lao Association's annual party took place in the Mullen High School cafeteria. Somehow, the sterile, fluorescent-lit cafeteria seemed an odd setting for festive gathering. There, amid a sea of shiny formica tabletops and plastic chairs, a team of four traditional Lao dancers entertained, gliding and whirling gracefully through an ancient

tribal dance. Entrancing melodies pulsed from a portable tape player. The performers' rainbow costumes and flowing sashes punctuated each movement with a delicate sense of the exotic. A circle of onlookers clapped fervently and shouted encouragement.

Since they began having these parties six years ago, the dance has always kicked off the evening's festivities. But when the performance ended, the momentum of the gathering quickly shifted. The female dancers retreated to an outer hallway, there was a short welcoming speech by the association's president, and four teen-age musicians, all Lao refugees, mounted a makeshift stage in the front of the room, strapped on electric instruments and cranked up the decibals.

The music brought a smile to the faces of Philachanh Ngeunh and Somsaic Nontaveth, the party's organizers. Ngeunh and Nontaveth, both 40, arrived in Denver penniless in 1975. They took work where they could find it, and eventually, both saved enough money to bring the rest of their families here from the Indochinese ghetto in Los Angeles. Now, both are employed as factory technicians for Tharco Container Corp.

"When people say that we are taking jobs and other opportunities away from American people, I don't think it's fair," says Ngeunh. "We have been driven away from our homes. We have to start life over again — from the beginning. We have the right to work too, don't we? I don't want to spend the rest of my life taking handouts. . ."

According to the Colorado Department of Refugee Services, nearly 2,500 Laotian highlanders or Hmong also live in Denver, the majority in Westminster's

public housing projects. Their abilities to traverse the dense jungles and mountains of that country almost invisibly is legendary, and, during the war, they were recruited secretly by the CIA as covert messengers and spies. But, because of their relative lack of job skills and persistent difficulty learning the English language, they remain Denver's poorest refugees.

Fu Ly, 62, brought his large family from California to Denver in 1978. Ly used to be a major in the Laotian army and had been working as a machinist in Denver. But he was laid off recently and isn't quite sure of what he's going to do to make ends meet.

"Hmong are farming people." Ly says, his English broken. "Except maybe in pictures, we never see big city. Now, we are living in one. We have no choice. The work is here. But we only get low-paying jobs. How can we pay all the bills? Everything is big here in America. . . especially the bills."

Gov. Lamm is a strong advocate of tougher immigration laws, and the Colorado legislature has passed a new law cutting off all refugee assistance (except food stamps) after 18 months of residence in the state. Ly is thinking about returning to California, where the majority of his people already live and where the assistance period is still three years.

"Being a refugee is very hard on some of these people," says Vic Chinsomboon, himself an immigrant from Southeast Asia and owner of Thai Groceries, the leading supplier of native foodstuffs to Denver's Indochinese community. "The kids seem to adjust the best." His 4-year-old daughter is absorbed by a nearby video game. "They can go to school and make friends, learn English, the American way. Before you know it, they're going around saying things like, 'Right on,' and 'Gimme a hamburger.'" □

"I've lived most of my life by a different set of rules and standards." — Nhi Lang



By George Linde

# BOB BROWN, SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

BY BILL HOSOKAWA



The time is 1974 and your name is Bob Brown. You are 42, the wild years are about over, and life seems to be passing you by. Your skills have limited market value and consist mostly of a master's degree in political science, an unpublished book manuscript and service in Vietnam as chief of a Green Beret team. What you've accomplished so far seems to be no more distinguished than your name. So what do you do next?

If you are Robert K. Brown of Boulder, Colo., you exploit something you've noticed in a couple of decades of knocking around: The American macho spirit is alive and well. There are a lot of guys out there who like guns, enjoy reading war stories and fantasizing about combat derring-do and think the Commies are a bunch of dirty rats.

Some of these people might move their lips when they read, but Brown saw them as a potential market for a special kind of literature. Prodded in large part by what he calls the "desperation factor," he set out to found a hairy-chested, hard-core adventure magazine. At the time, his assets were limited to a few thousand dollars in cash, some courageous partners and a conviction that the old frontier fascination with violence could be satisfied profitably.

The following spring, Brown published the first issue of *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. It had been put together by Brown, one employee and several part-timers in a small rented office. He had checks from 4,400 charter subscribers who were willing to pay \$8 for four issues of a quarterly magazine no one had ever seen. He took a deep breath and asked the printer for 8,500 copies. The magazine was a crude effort, but it sold out.

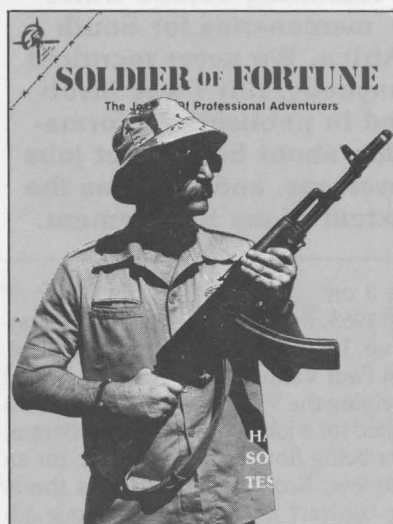
Eight years later, *Soldier of Fortune* is a slick-paper monthly, full of pictures of weapons and people using them, with a national circulation upwards of 200,000. With a sister monthly called *Survive*, *Soldier of Fortune* is housed in an unstylish but utilitarian two-story building on Boulder's eastern outskirts, which Brown recently bought for about \$1 million. The corporation that publishes the magazine and runs subsidiary enterprises, such as a mail order business, is called Omega Group Limited.

Brown, behind a large cluttered desk, in cowboy boots, faded jeans and cotton shirt, slipping a bit of Skoal under his lower lip from time to time, says with a small smile of satisfaction, "I own them all." At age 51, his sandy hair is thinning. He peers out of wire-framed glasses. He carries 176 pounds on a 5-foot-10-inch frame. He keeps as lean and hard as the

people *Soldier of Fortune* writes about by running daily and occasional parachuting and scuba diving.

No desk-bound editor, this mini-tycoon of the publishing business heads frequently for the locale of some distant insurrection or outbreak of violence to seek out information that will appear in *Soldier of Fortune*. Various reports indicate the magazine is read with great interest by the Washington defense establishment. One week, Brown returned from El Salvador and prepared to rush off to London. He likes that. By nature, he is more comfortable in a bunker or jungle village or the back booth in a dimly lit bar than around a table with lawyers, bankers and accountants.

But that is getting ahead of the story, which began with Bob Brown's birth Nov. 2, 1932, in Monroe, Mich. His father



**"I was just a dumb, naive gringo," Brown says. "I knew nothing about the way Cubans operate. I didn't know anything about revolutionary movements. I was too impatient. Of course, I didn't see Castro."**

was a steel worker, his mother a school teacher. The upper Midwest was deeply mired in the Depression. The Browns moved to Chicago, then to Highland, Ind., where Bob was graduated from high school in 1950. He enrolled at Michigan State University briefly before heading for the University of Colorado, where he was graduated in 1954 with a major in history and a minor in political science. He was hardly qualified for white-collar employment.

If Brown had remained in school another semester, he could have won a

commission in the Air Force Reserve. But he knew his poor eyesight would prevent him from flying. He enlisted in the Army, was accepted for Officer Candidate School, won his commission and was assigned to counter-intelligence.

This was a sleepy time of peace between the Korean War and Vietnam and the job was a bore. "I was essentially a doorbell-pusher," Brown recalls. "I was doing background investigation on people applying for federal jobs."

After completing his tour of duty, Brown returned to CU to work on a master's degree. This time, he switched priorities — a major in political science and a minor in history. During the 1957 Christmas break, he went home to Chicago. One night, drinking in a beatnik bar, he wandered into a back room that was used as a forum for political discussion. Some Cuban revolutionaries were orating on the evils of the Fulgencio Batista regime and urging support for a democratic young patriot named Fidel Castro. Brown was impressed that night and still impressed the next morning when his judgment cleared.

The experience made him a campus activist. Back in Boulder, he organized anti-Batista rallies. Before long, he was fed information that illegal machine guns could be had for a price. Brown passed the word on to the revolutionaries in Chicago. They indicated great interest but could produce no money.

Castro was reported hiding out somewhere in the rugged hills of Cuba. Brown decided he'd try to meet him. "I was just a dumb, naive gringo," Brown says. "I knew nothing about the way Cubans operate. I didn't know anything about revolutionary movements. I was too impatient. Of course, I didn't see Castro."

Brown's work on his master's degree moved slowly. Chronically short of money, he was interspersing classroom time with stints as a logger, hardrock miner, construction laborer, armored car guard, private investigator and free-lance photojournalist. The thesis he hoped to write had to do with the transfer of power from revolutionaries to government. In 1960, shortly after Castro ousted Batista, Brown went to Havana for some first-hand research.

What he saw alarmed and disillusioned him. Even then, there was evidence that Castro, far from being Cuba's liberator, was becoming a Red dictator. The deeper he probed, the more convinced Brown became that Castro was betraying the Cuban people. "It was apparent," Brown now says, "that Castro wasn't pushed into the Red camp. He was a Commie to begin with."

Brown changed the thrust of his still-



unwritten thesis to something like "The Communist Seizure of the Free Cuban Labor Movement" and went to Miami in 1962 for more research among Cuban exiles. It took no particular gumshoe skill to discover that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency was trying to oust Castro by every means short of a new Bay of Pigs invasion. That didn't disturb Brown as much as his estimation that the CIA was inept, bumbling, ineffective and screwing up badly.

Brown came home and wrote an article that Mort Stern, then editor of *The Denver Post's* editorial page, published under the headline "Cuban Exiles Learn to Hate the CIA." Several days later, Stern telephoned Brown with word that Charles Bartlett, a syndicated columnist with close ties to the John F. Kennedy administration, had called to say that the president had read the article and was raising hell with the CIA.

That was the beginning of a love-hate relationship between Brown and the CIA. Brown endorses some of the CIA's objectives, but he is frequently critical of the way the agency operates.

**B**ecause *Soldier of Fortune* seems to glorify the kind of undercover work popularly associated with the CIA, Brown has been accused of being in CIA pay. Is he? He snorts at the idea. "I wish the CIA would send me a check once in a while," he says with a laugh. "We've been accused of recruiting 10,000 white mercenaries for South Africa. We never recruited anybody. But I was involved in publishing information about how to get jobs overseas, and that was the extent of my involvement."

Brown got into the publishing business quite by accident. While in Havana in 1963, he met a Spanish Loyalist agent who claimed to have trained Castro in Mexico. He had written a pamphlet titled "150 Questions for a Guerrilla." It was a guerrilla warfare handbook of sorts. Brown found it interesting enough to get a friend to put up \$400 to print 1,000 copies in English. He sold them by mail through a company he called Panther Publications. The company, publishing and selling other leaflets and pamphlets about war and organized violence, struggled on the verge of bankruptcy over the next decade. In a spiritual sense, it was the predecessor to *Soldier of Fortune*.

Meanwhile, Brown had been working on a book manuscript identifying some 30 CIA operations in southern Florida aimed at overthrowing Castro. While he didn't have much quarrel with the objectives, he deplored the methods. It was a position that would please neither the right nor the left and no publisher would



**"We've been accused of recruiting 10,000 white mercenaries for South Africa. We never recruited anybody. But I was involved in publishing information about how to get jobs overseas, and that was the extent of my involvement."**

take it on.

By 1965, the war in Vietnam was heating up. Inspired by the record of Lt. Col. John Paul Vann, a Coloradan dedicated to helping the Vietnamese people, Brown applied for a job in the U.S. aid program. After being flown to Washington for an interview, Brown was offered a three-year contract as assistant province adviser provided he passed his security check. He flunked. His Cuba activities apparently raised too many questions.

The Army was less particular. Brown applied for active duty and was sent quickly to Vietnam as a captain of infantry. He spent six months as a battalion intelligence officer with the 1st Division north of Saigon. Then, Col. Vann arranged for his transfer to the Green Berets. Brown found himself in charge of a Special Forces team at Tong Li Chon, near the Cambodian border. He had a dozen Americans, a similar number of Vietnamese and 500 Cambodian mercenaries under his command.

This period in the jungle was one of the high points of Brown's career. "In effect," he says, "I was defense minister, minister of health, education and welfare, superintendent of roads and everything else in my district. I was responsible for the safety of all the Vietnamese villagers. Interdicting North Vietnamese supply lines was only one of our duties. I felt I was doing something useful."

Why had he volunteered for duty in Vietnam at a time when many other Americans were running off to Canada to evade the draft? Without cynicism, he replies: "I wanted to help keep a totalitarian regime from taking over another totalitarian regime; I wanted to keep the Reds out. And I was anxious to know how I would react in combat. I found out. I shot back."

Brown came home to find Panther Publications, which he had left in charge of a friend, in dire straits. He struggled to keep it alive. For a while, he worked as an instructor at the Boulder Athletic Club and, at night, slept on the massage table. Panther published out of a drafty \$15-a-month cabin in a ghost mining camp west of Boulder ironically named Wall Street. In winter, it was so cold there that Brown worked bundled up in a greatcoat and gloves.

In 1974, Brown sold his interest in Panther Publications and used the money to go to Madrid where a friend had promised to help him get the CIA manuscript into publishable form. The association was short-lived. Brown turned to Rhodesia. He knew that a number of American mercenaries, who had learned of opportunities there through Panther Publications, had enlisted with government forces. Before leaving, Brown sent queries to flourishing he-man magazines like *True*, *Argosy* and *Saga*. Would they like to see a story on American soldiers of fortune fighting in Rhodesia? If they replied at all, the editors said, "no thanks."

Brown went anyway, and the most interesting thing he found was the rumor that the oil-rich Sultanate of Oman, busy with a leftist insurrection, would be the next job opportunity for professional soldiers. Back in Boulder, Brown dispatched a letter to the sultan asking for details. Presently he received a fat packet of materials, including terms of employment.

Brown reproduced the packet and bought advertisements in several gun magazines offering all necessary information for getting well-paying jobs in the Omani armed forces for \$5. A national news magazine ran an item on Brown's ad, and presently, he was receiving inquiries from all parts of the world. However, the Omani deal didn't work out. The Omanis unexpectedly announced they weren't hiring American guns. Brown suspects the State Department put pressure on the sultan.

But the Omani caper provided Brown with a small nestegg and the idea for a magazine that would appeal to the kind of men who would spend \$5 to find out how to get a job fighting Oman's wars.

He reasoned that, since even the so-called he-man magazines weren't interested in stories about American mercenaries in Rhodesia, there must be a place in the marketplace for a publication that specialized in such material.

Brown and friends designed a colorful brochure and invested \$500 to get it printed. What they promised was a quarterly magazine about war and fighting and weapons and daring. Because they didn't expect to get much advertising, they set the cover price high — \$2. They bought a subscribers' list from the gun magazines and sent out a mailing. By the time the first issue was ready for the printer, they had 4,400 one-year subscriptions. But until he was sure the project would fly, Brown kept the checks in a shoebox so they could be returned if necessary.

Almost from the beginning, *Soldier of Fortune* received a lot of press, much of it critical. Brown welcomed any kind of attention. As word spread, circulation grew. The additional income enabled Brown to expand his operations, and, before long, he had writers who were willing to risk their lives for exclusive combat zone stories. Some of them were notable scoops.

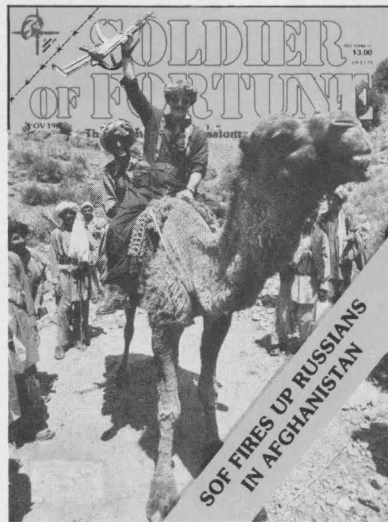
**A**n international arms dealer told Brown the Soviets were using a secret new gun in Afghanistan. Brown assigned writer Galen Geer to do the Afghan resistance story and asked him to keep his eyes open for the Soviet weapon. Geer came out with a story, a captured AK74 rifle, 5,000 rounds of ammunition and other Soviet equipment, including a biological and chemical weapons filter used to protect occupants of their personnel carriers. Another writer, Jim Coyne, brought back a new type of Soviet mine. Brown published their stories and turned the equipment over to the Pentagon for testing.

*Soldier of Fortune* has had a continuing interest in the possibility that American prisoners are still being held in Indochina. The magazine has dispatched several teams to seek out the truth. Brown was a member of one team that entered Laos and, among other things, brought back samples of "yellow rain" residue, which also were given to the Pentagon for study to determine whether the Soviets or their surrogates are using toxic chemical weapons.

When James G. (Bo) Gritz was making headlines with a flamboyant mission to seek evidence that Americans still are imprisoned in Indochina, a *Soldier of Fortune* team, led by Managing Editor Jim Graves, hurried to Thailand. At one time or another, six members of the team, including Brown, slipped into Laos to

check Gritz' claims. That project resulted in a special POW/MIA issue. The conclusion: There is reason to believe Americans still are being held in Vietnam, but Gritz provided no proof.

*Soldier of Fortune's* recent Salvadoran mission was a private foreign aid project. "Congress is restricted in the amount of assistance it can provide our friends," Brown says. "El Salvador is short of supplies and equipment. We took a team of 12 carefully selected volunteers, including medical personnel, all but two of whom are Vietnam vets. They got board and room for a couple of weeks and airline tickets. The medics treated civilians. The others trained Salvadoran troops in the care and use of weapons, ambush tactics and all the rest." The magazine now is collecting medical supplies for Salvadorans as well as Afghan



**"We are strongly anti-totalitarian, which currently means anti-Communist. Back in 1939, we would have been anti-Fascist. We believe the U.S. was right to have been in Vietnam and history will prove that point of view correct. There's no difference between the North Vietnamese seizure of the South and the Nazi seizure of Poland."**

freedom fighters.

Asked to state his and his magazine's philosophy, Brown says: "We are strongly anti-totalitarian, which currently means anti-Communist. Back in 1939, we would have been anti-Fascist. We believe the U.S. was right to have been in Vietnam and history will prove that point of view correct. There's no difference be-

tween the North Vietnamese seizure of the South and the Nazi seizure of Poland. We support Americans who fought in Vietnam and recognize them as heroes. We support aid for Afghan freedom fighters, the Contras in Nicaragua, the Miskito Indians and other movements opposed to totalitarian oppression.

"We support a strong defense establishment in the United States. We favor dealing harshly with terrorist organizations. We are pro-law enforcement. We are neither pro-left or pro-right. We are pro-right to bear arms."

*Soldier of Fortune* obviously has become a viable commercial and ideological endeavor. Brown does not deny published reports that his organization grossed \$6 million last year. Part of that income is produced by spin-offs. *Survive*, the sister magazine, is edited for those who believe it is prudent to be prepared to cope with any emergency in a hostile world. The September issue featured part three of a series on protecting oneself from radioactivity, subsistence hunting, a how-to article on adapting refrigerators to an alternate energy system and a consumer report on knives and kettle-stoves for backpackers.

Neither the content of his magazine nor his income had much influence on Brown's lifestyle. He drives a '79 Oldsmobile. He lives in a four-bedroom ranch-type house, in a middle-class — well, maybe a cut above middle-class — development, a half-mile from the office in the flatland part of Boulder. Brown bought it in 1976. The house has the obligatory patio, the furnishings are standard mid-American, and there are no guns or hunting trophies on display. Those things are left at the office along with his professional life. Brown was married briefly, then divorced in 1964. He doesn't like to talk about it. He has a daughter, Janice, from that marriage, who lives at home, works at the magazine office and has been studying for a master's degree.

Some 40 men and women are on Brown's payroll. Among them is the Vietnamese who was Brown's interpreter. Brown managed to get him and his family out after the Communist takeover and put him in charge of the company warehouse that stores and ships the unit patches, sweatshirts, caps and other items distributed by the mail order department.

It's a young and happy staff dedicated to the boss and his philosophy. Its members are encouraged to keep fit through sky-diving and scuba classes. The company picks up the tab. After all, there's no telling when those skills might be needed to cover a story. □

**'Babylift' Lawyers Probed**

The Justice Department is investigating possible misconduct by government lawyers in connection with a lawsuit seeking damages for orphans injured in the 1975 "Operation Babylift" crash near Saigon.

Rep. Timothy Wirth (D-Colo.) requested the probe following disclosures that a department lawyer allegedly failed to tell a judge for several years that many photographs of the plane crash had been destroyed by the Air Force.

The probe is being conducted by the department's Office of Professional Responsibility, the agency's internal watchdog unit. A department spokesman declined to confirm or deny that there is an inquiry.

However, the department informed Wirth earlier this month that it had opened an inquiry into allegations of misconduct by department lawyers, according to a letter obtained by United Press International.

The case involves the crash of a Lockheed aircraft that was carrying about 240 Vietnamese orphans to their new families in the United States and Europe. Many of the 150 orphans who survived suffered brain damage as a result of cabin decompression, loss of oxygen and trauma.

Lockheed was sued by the surviving orphans in 1976, and the cases involving children adopted by U.S.

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# BECOMING AMERICAN

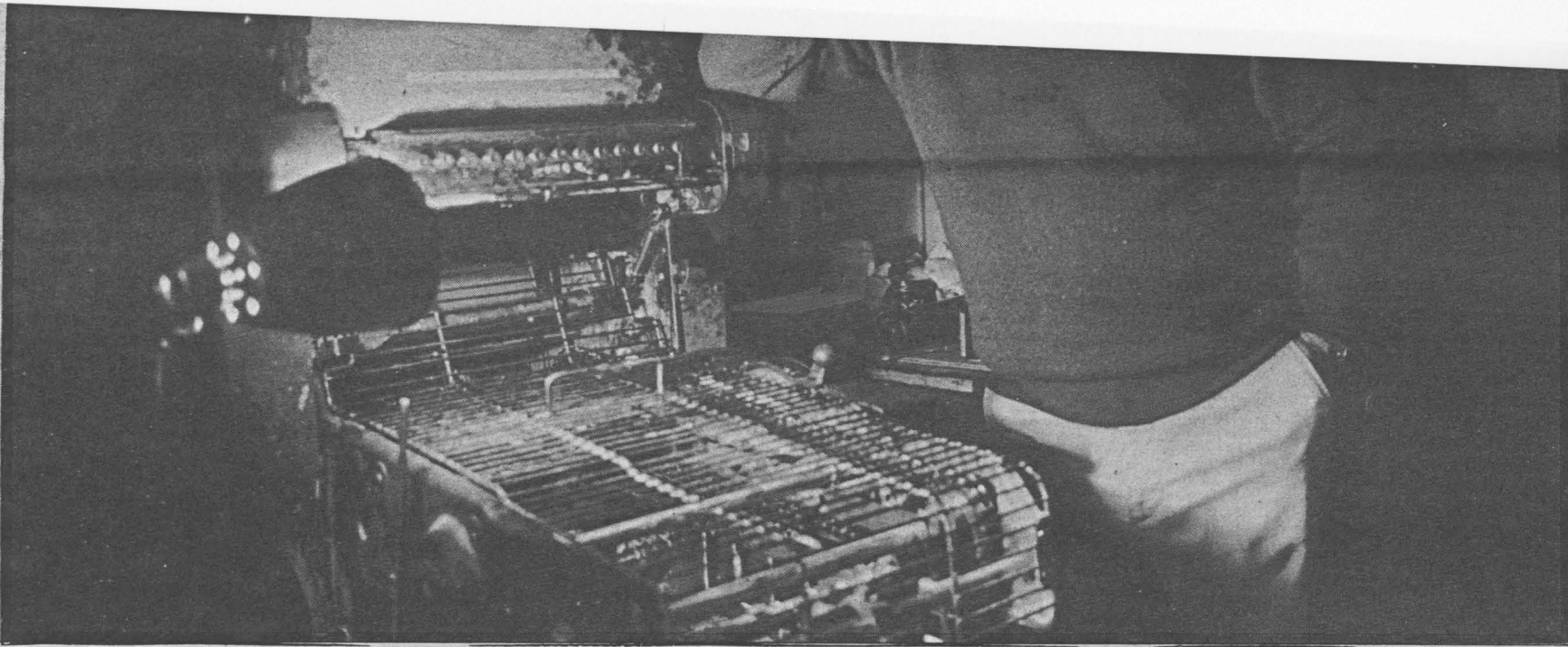
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*Stories By David McQuay • Photography By Eric Bakke*

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Denver Post 4/8/84



The Sunday Denver Post / Contemporary / April 8, 1984

*Dzung Do, who owns a printing business on South Federal Boulevard, is thankful to be alive after his sojourn to America in 1977.*

**W**HEN THE Communists arrived in Danang in April 1975, a 26-year-old medical student named Dzung Do started walking south. With him were two physicians, two South Vietnamese officers, and a law student. They walked for 11 days through jungle and abandoned towns, meeting children so thirsty that they sucked the moisture out of bamboo. The sun was ruthless. Measuring an inch between his thumb and forefinger, Do said, "People would have killed for this much water."

They walked more than 600 miles to Saigon. The morning after they arrived, the Communists came. Do waited two years to see what would happen to his country. When he saw that South Vietnam was without hope, he bought a 60-foot boat and left with his wife, whom he had married after the fall of Saigon, and 13

other people. His wife was nine months pregnant. Do's blind father, almost 80, stayed.

They were picked up by a Greek freighter and taken to Yokohama, Japan, where Do persuaded immigration officials to take them in, even though the country was not accepting any refugees. My wife, Do told them, is going to have a baby any day. The Japanese softened and granted an emergency landing. Their papers were stamped: Stateless. Three days later, their baby was born without a country.

Do and his family arrived in the United States Nov. 3, 1977 — the date is branded on his memory. It was some place called Denver. He had \$27; a Lutheran Social Services worker gave each of them \$10, bringing the family's total income to \$57.

Do was able to land three jobs — caretaker during the day, janitor in the evening, delivery man on weekends — and his wife had two. By 1981, he had saved

enough money to buy an old offset press for \$1,500 and start a printing company in his garage, making cards and newsletters. Do knew very little about printing, but he saw that the service was needed on South Federal Boulevard, and in the following year, with a couple thousand dollars borrowed from his wife's cousin, Lion Press was born, joining dozens of Asian businesses — grocery stores, seafood markets, restaurants, doctors' offices, an insurance company, a video shop, and an auto-repair garage — that have sprouted up within a half-mile stretch (between the 600 and 1100 blocks) of South Federal Boulevard in the last nine years.

The small office cubicle at Lion Press is festooned with business cards and restaurant menus as colorful as Japanese lanterns, and Do's copying prices are modest — 2 to 8 cents per page. But he's doing well enough to expand his inventory to include office equip-

ment, publish a handsome, bimonthly anti-Communist newsletter called *The Voice of Indochina*, and donate \$100 a month to refugee organizations.

"But I'm alive," he said.

Lion Press is Do's piece of the American Dream, just as a grocery store is Thong Vinh Luong's, and a job in the May D&F stockroom is My Tran's.

But dreams can be troubling. Do's shop windows have been peppered with bullets three times. Vandals have dumped a few gallons of white paint on his sign. A few weeks ago, the headlights of his wife's car were smashed and the windshield wipers snapped off. Do is stoic. These things happen, he says, when you run a business.

What bothers him more is that his two children, 6 and 3 years old, have no knowledge of Vietnam. (He also has two Vietnamese foster children aged 19 and 15.) Do is teaching them Vietnamese. As they grow up, he wants them to think about the Vietnamese dream that didn't come true.

And therein lies the problem. How does an Asian family hold onto the traditional values of the East and enjoy the freedom and unabashed materialism of the West? How does a culture that prizes the family above everything live in a land where a family breaks as easily as a pencil? Where the elderly wind up in nursing homes, children in day-care centers and parents in divorce court?

FOR NEARLY a decade Vietnamese and other Indochinese refugees have crammed into boats — any kind will do: U.S. Navy ships, Greek freighters, ramshackle 16-footers — and fled into the sea like lemmings. At least 600,000 have drowned. Thousands of the Vietnamese who stayed were sent to "re-education camps," which Denver's Vietnamese say are more like concentration camps, where both disease and psychological torture run high.

"The Communists don't have to kill you," said Canh Le, who runs the Unicorn restaurant with his wife in Littleton. "It can be worse than that. A broken man is worse than a dead man."

Church groups and peace agencies in this country have helped resettle more than 600,000 Indochinese refugees since the fall of Saigon, when Americans had great sympathy for the victims of war, and perhaps great guilt over U.S. involvement. In Colorado there are approximately 6,000 Vietnamese, 2,700 Laotians (including the highland Hmong) and 2,000 Cambodians, 90 percent of whom live in the Denver-Boulder metropolitan area. A significant number have applied for U.S. citizenship.



The Vietnamese have gotten a jump on other Asian refugees in adjusting to American life because the Cambodians and Laotians are generally not as educated or Westernized as the South Vietnamese, many of whom were military officers or businessmen who dealt with Americans. (Not all educated Vietnamese have adjusted well, however. A man who held a high post similar to U.S. speaker of the House is reportedly still bitter over the war and has refused to learn English since coming to Colorado in 1975. He remains a recluse near Fort Collins.)

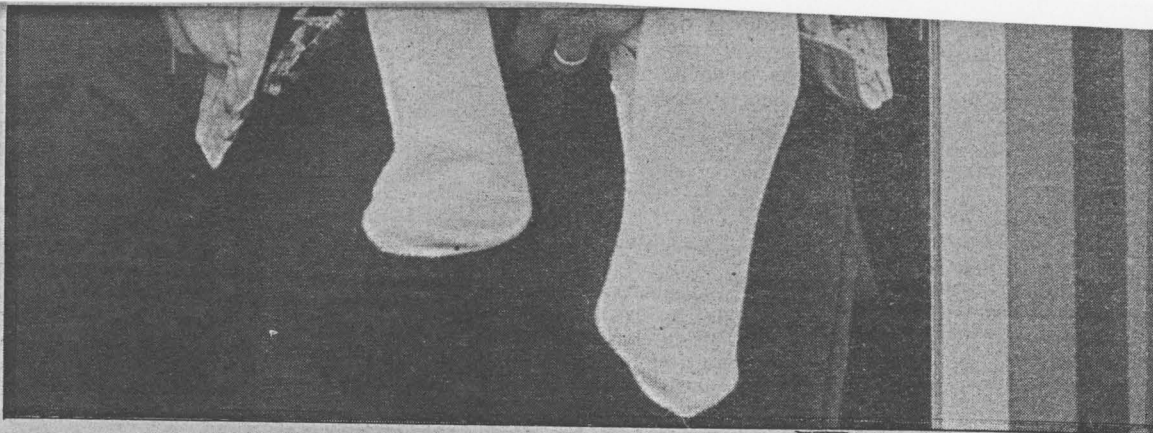
For a Cambodian farmer who lived in a village, or a Hmong family who lived in the mountains of Laos and had never seen a city, walking out of a plane and into Stapleton International Airport approached science-fiction. They needed help: from learning how to use the telephone and toilet, to getting a job and an apartment, to learning English, which is painfully hard for them. By March, 1981, Colorado refugee welfare recipients numbered 5,000.

"How," said Sister Mary Nelle Gage, who resettled refugees for Lutheran Social Services for almost nine years, "can you take people from the 17th, 18th, 19th centuries and put them on a 24-hour plane ride and expect them to be successful without helping them?"

In California, some of the help has backfired. Loose welfare laws have created towns of unemployed refugees supported by the federal government. Three dozen physicians, druggists, and medical aides, all Indochinese refugees, were arrested there in February on charges of defrauding California's medical welfare program.

THE PICTURE is sunnier in Colorado. Hard-working and determined, the refugees learned the language and found jobs — in three years the refugee welfare roll has plunged from 5,000 to 940. Laurie Bagan, coordinator for the Colorado Refugee Services Program, attributed the sharp decline to an improved services

Please see REFUGEES, Page 12

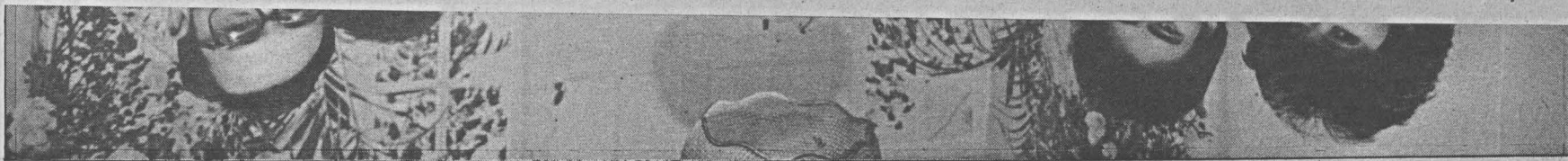


*Cam Nguyen proudly holds her youngest child, Anthony. Many Indochinese are giving their newborn children American names.*



*The majority of the Vietnamese refugees are Catholic. Vu Bien's home on the West side is adorned with crucifixes, pictures of Archbishop James Casey and the South Vietnamese flag.*

The Sunday Denver Post / Contemporary / April 8, 1984





*Canh Le and his family pose in the Unicorn, their French-Vietnamese restaurant in Littleton.*



From Page 11

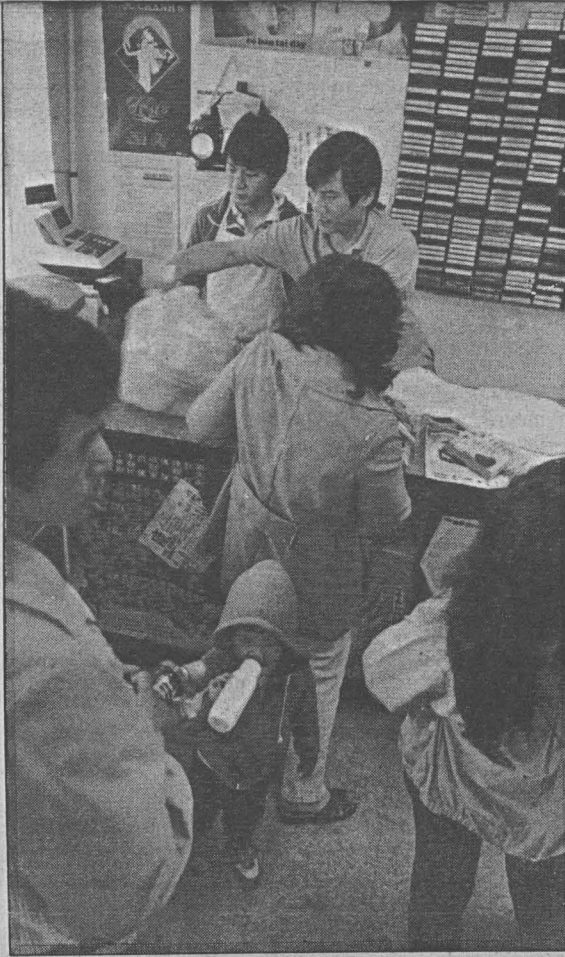
system (language instruction, job placement), a decline in the number of refugees arriving in Denver since 1981, and changes in welfare eligibility requirements. With their wages, the refugees have bought homes, started businesses and are building new lives in their new country.

But there are complaints that the Asians are taking jobs away from Americans, and as unemployment has increased, so has resentment of refugees. President Reagan has ordered an annual ceiling of about 52,000 Asian refugees resettling into the United States. According to government figures made available to the Colorado Refugee Services Program, 10 illegal aliens and seven legal immigrants enter the country for every one refugee. (A refugee is defined as a person living outside his country, who is unable to return to his country due to fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.)

In Denver, what police and civic leaders have described as a competition for jobs and government aid has fueled an occasional firestorm between the Chicanos and Vietnamese. Fights, vandalism, and incendiary words between the minorities hit the South Lincoln Park and Las Casitas housing projects, where many Vietnamese lived following their arrival here, in 1979 and 1982. Phat To, a liaison at the state refugee agency, once was asked by a Vietnamese living in one of the West Side projects what to do when times became tense.

To's answer: "Get the hell out of there."

A recent incident went unreported in the newspapers. In the wee hours on Nov. 25, the morning after Thanksgiving, a Vietnamese man was sitting in his car at East 25th Avenue and Clarkson Street when two men joined him. One drove the car while the other man beat the Vietnamese in the face. They picked up a hitchhiker who got out of the car and called police, saying that one of the men wanted to kill the victim because his brother was killed in the war. Two men have been charged with second-degree kidnapping, robbery, and third-degree assault and are scheduled to



Thong Vinh Luong works in his market seven days a week.

be tried in Denver District Court on April 30 and May 14. Whatever the outcome, the Spanish surnames of the two men will not improve goodwill between Chicanos and Asians.

"The American way of life has gone downhill since they came," said Dorothy Gonzalez, who has lived in the South Federal Boulevard neighborhood for 14 years, longer than "they" have been here. "When they first came here, they were willing to work for less money. Jobs held by American workers were replaced by Vietnamese who would work for less money." Gonzalez is unemployed. "I can't find a job," she said.

"The Vietnamese take jobs that American people walk away from," Canh Le said. "We have to work hard to survive." Military officers have worked as janitors, doctors have become busboys. The Vietnamese often make their own jobs by opening small businesses — like many of those shops that line South Federal Boulevard.

When Le first arrived in Denver in 1975, he applied for a janitorial job in a Denver hospital and was turned down. He went to bartending school, was interviewed by a television news reporter who was doing a story on the refugees, and because of the exposure got a job at an export company. He formed his own export company, but it failed. Now Le is working at the Unicorn, his wife's French-Vietnamese restaurant. Their four children wait on tables.

In recent years, many of the refugees who arrived in Denver in the mid-'70s have been able to buy houses in the suburbs, where there is less violence. Canh Le and his family live in Aurora. But with the refugees scattered from Northglenn to Littleton, the community is not unified, except through the church.

In Denver, three-fourths of the Vietnamese are Catholic, and one-fourth are Buddhist. Between 300 and 400 Vietnamese Catholics worship each Sunday at Presentation of Our Lady Church, 665 Irving St. The Rev. Can Dinh says Mass at 1 p.m. for children and 3 p.m. for adults. "The parish has been real hospitable," said the Most Rev. George R. Evans, auxiliary bishop of the Denver Archdiocese.

Dinh, who was appointed head of Denver's Viet-

ment, publish a handsome, bimonthly anti-Communist newsletter called The Voice of Indochina, and donate \$100 a month to refugee organizations.

"But I'm alive," he said.

namese Catholic Community by Denver Archbishop James V. Casey three years ago, also holds Mass on Saturday evenings in private homes. Someday he hopes to have his own parish — but that is “many years away,” he figures.

Dinh is in close contact with his parishioners. Each day he travels from his simple, white-framed house near the church to Denver’s sprawling suburbs, providing spiritual guidance for families caught between tradition and changing values. “In Vietnam, the husband is first, and the wife is second,” he said. Here they are equal. It causes trouble for them.”

Parent-child problems are also becoming more frequent, as the younger generation learns the American Way, some going so far as to give their own children American names. “In Vietnam, a father and mother have power over their children,” Dinh explained. “Here, no.”

TO UNDERSTAND the Vietnamese, it is essential to understand their sacred sense of family and Taoist philosophy of harmony. “The value of the family is very high,” said Phat To. “First there is family and then there is country.”

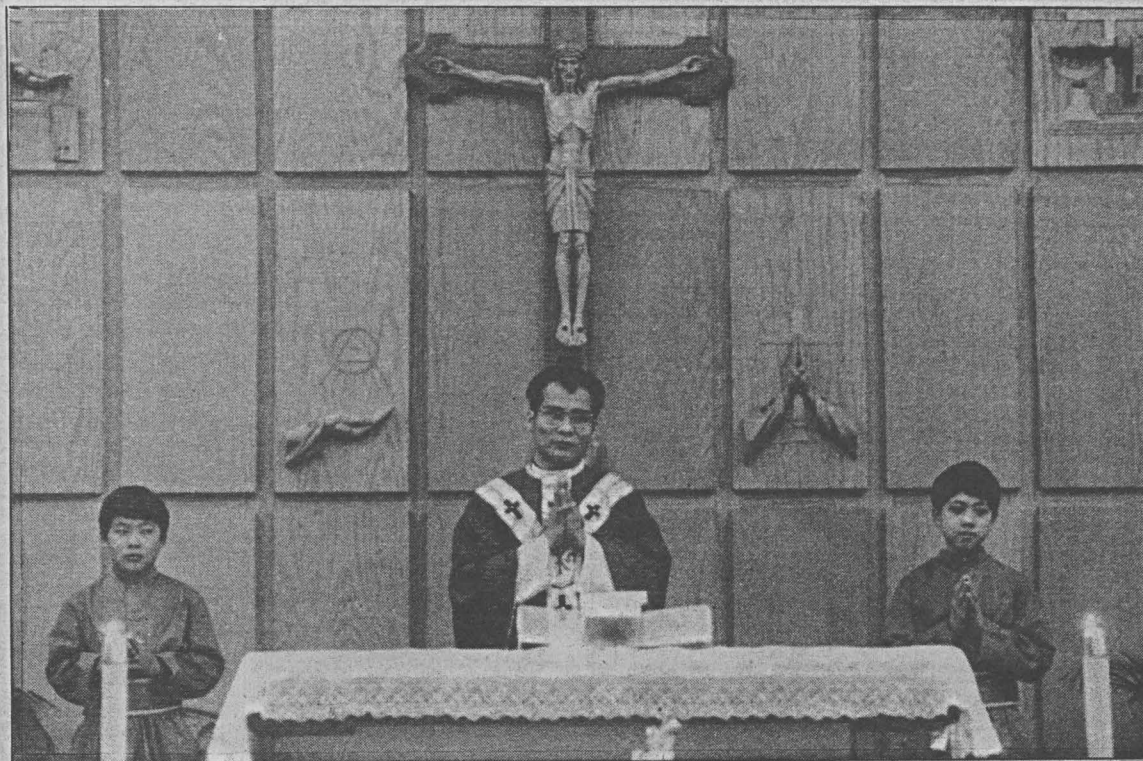
It is hard to imagine two American brothers, say, Billy and Joe, and their Uncle Elmer, chipping in and buying groceries, much less a house or a car. But among Asian families, communal money and property is not uncommon.

“I could live on \$150 a month. A Vietnamese can survive on three bowls of rice a day and a few leaves of cabbage,” said To. “If I have only \$150, I get another \$150 from my brother, and another \$150 from my cousin.”

Le Xuan Khoa, the associate director of the Indo-Chinese Mental Health Project at Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute, has written that the Taoist philosophy of harmony helps the Vietnamese adjust through the rough times. Harmony emphasizes the relativity of human values and the acceptance of opposite values — for example, the spiritual and the material.

“Harmony is the essence of our life,” Phat To said. Harmony makes it easier for a Vietnamese to live in the United States, he says, than an American in Vietnam, even before the Communist takeover.

“I don’t think that the average American could sur-



*Father Can Dinh conducts Sunday Mass in Presentation of Our Lady Church in West Denver.*

are on the honor roll,” said Gwen Craig, a tutor at West High School in Denver. “They’re very assertive in their studies. They’re not too involved in school activities. Theirs is a shier culture. They are more timid, but then they get Americanized. It takes about a year.”

“I tell people that I have the Vietnamese children and the American children,” Phat To cracks. He is a 50-year-old, ex-lieutenant in the South Vietnamese Air Force with seven children ranging in ages from 12 to



vive."

Former South Vietnamese lieutenant Thong Vinh Luong arrived in Denver after serving in the South Vietnamese Army, and found work as a busboy at the Top of the Rockies. "When you're at the top in Vietnam," he said, "it means nothing here." He and 15 relatives lived together in his uncle's four-bedroom home for six months. King Soopers hired nine of them (his wife, Mei, still works in the bakery shop) and they pooled their money together. Within a few years he had opened the first Vietnamese store on South Federal Boulevard. He was busy 16 hours a day, waking up at 3 a.m. to work in the meat-cutting department at King Soopers and then going to his own store. He worked hard because "I was big brother" in the family. "My young brother, young sister count on me."

As South Federal Boulevard became a magnet for Asian — and non-Asian — shoppers, Luong's store was successful, and he was able to open another store in Aurora and buy a house in Littleton. The Federal Boulevard store is crammed with vegetables, fruits, spices, herbs and tape cassettes, including one called Elvis Phuong, and on weekends it is so busy that it resembles a miniature Asian King Soopers. Luong speaks fairly good English but with a heavy accent. Pictures of his parents, wearing traditional robes, are near a small statue of Buddha in the living room of his home.

But Luong is distressed that his children "are more American than Vietnamese. Let them have American freedom and let them keep Oriental custom," he says. "The Oriental custom, there's something good and something bad. You keep them in the house, it's not too good. But too much freedom, it's not too good."

Upstairs in 15-year-old Oai's room is an electric guitar; 13-year-old Hung's drums are perched in the basement. They think the Rolling Stones are over the hill; Oai has vaguely heard of Jimi Hendrix. Their favorite band is Rush, and they have practiced their renditions so loudly in the backyard that a Littleton neighbor phoned their parents and complained about the decibel level. Hung wishes that they would buy more pizza. Oai lifts weights and skis. When their father mispronounced "uncle" as "ankle," they chortled and corrected him. They would not have done this in Vietnam.

But the kids work as hard in school as their parents do in business. "Quite a few (Southeast Asian) students

29. The oldest ones combine the cultures; the youngest ones hardly remember Vietnam. To would be shamed if one of his children lived with a lover without being married, or if one got divorced.

"In a Vietnamese family, a divorce brings shame to the entire family," he said. Homosexuality is another Vietnamese taboo, although it is a sign of friendship for men to hold hands, which can be misunderstood by Americans of various sexual persuasions.

But of all the erosion of Vietnamese custom, America's rock music is perhaps the most visible. Vu Bien lives in a four-bedroom, federally subsidized apartment on the West Side. He works in a typewriter-ribbon factory and couldn't afford a stereo, so the relatives and kids pitched in and bought one: a \$2,000 state-of-the-art model. This way everyone enjoys it — except the parents, when the disco thump and the din of the Bee Gees' dolphin-high voices short-circuits their Asian calm.

While the Bee Gees blared on a recent afternoon, uncles, aunts, sisters, brothers, nephews, nieces and friends of the family bopped in and out of the apartment. There were infants everywhere. On one wall was a rosary and inexpensive tapestry of the Last Supper, on another a picture of Jesus with a shining blue heart. The Vietnamese flag and pictures of Archbishop James Casey hung on another wall.

Vu Duc Thanh, one of Vu Bien's sons, is majoring in electrical engineering and computer sciences at UCD. He has moved out of the house and is living with a friend — but not with his girlfriend. "Marriage is the most important thing," he said. He wants to marry after college and get a good job with an electronics company. But right now he tinkers with a mini-computer he bought from the money he made tutoring math.

My Tran, who came to the United States with his wife, nine children and three other families on a 50-foot boat, works in the stockroom at May D&F, where he has won the employee-of-the-month award. They lived at the Sun Valley housing project for three years where twice, his apartment was broken into. The first time his coat was stolen. The second time nothing was taken "because there was nothing to steal." Tran never took the family out to dinner or a movie, saving his hard-earned money to buy a modest house near South



*Between 300 and 400 Vietnamese attend Mass each Sunday.*

Federal Boulevard. His furnishings are spartan, and the family still doesn't go out to eat. My Tran looks like a tired but happy man. What he likes most about America is this: "You got money, you can buy everything." He sounds pleased when he says that his brother is a welder in Chicago and makes \$11 an hour.

Tran's 19-year-old daughter, Thuy, is very traditional. She never goes out on dates, hardly ever goes out with friends. "Watching television at home is enough," she said. She is studying pre-pharmacy at the University of Colorado, at Denver, still goes to church with her parents every week, and is in the choir.

Her family's dreams sound small: making enough money to make the house payments, putting the kids through school, holding onto sacred family values — things that Americans who grew up during the Depression hold dear.

"We consider ourselves a wasted generation," Phat To said. "We consider ourselves fertilizer to make the younger generation grow. It's like fertilizing the orchard trees. Someday it will pay off."

The Sunday Denver Post / Contemporary / April 8, 1984

# Lone Vietnamese is like driftwood

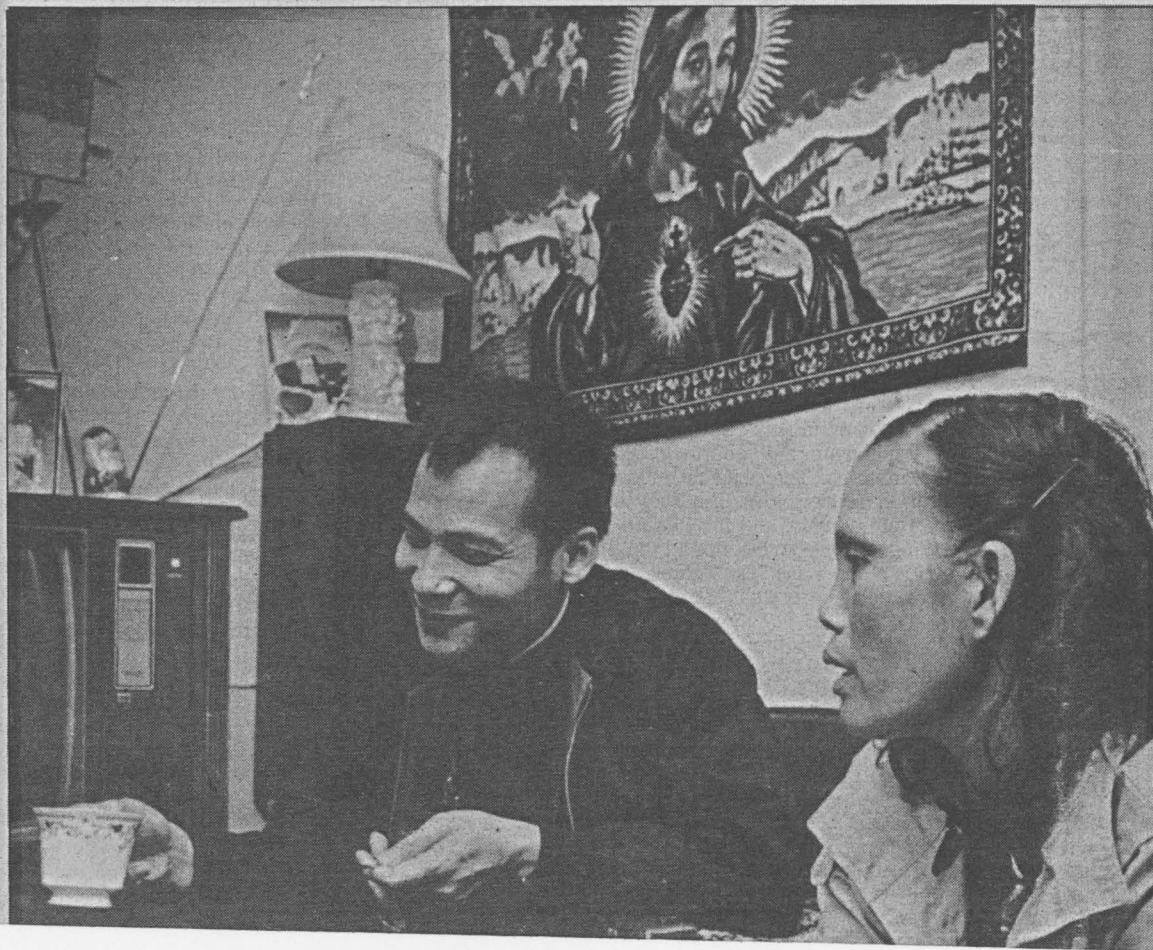
**I**N VIETNAM, Buddhist monks protested the war by self-immolation. But it was years after the war when a refugee who had lived in Colorado and moved to Ohio poured gasoline over himself and lit a match. A Denver refugee deliberately walked in front of a truck. One Vietnamese perched on the roof of a Denver housing project with a sword and waited for the Viet Cong to invade Denver.

They were single Vietnamese men who couldn't cope with being separated from their families. The American family has unraveled in the past 25 years, but the Vietnamese tradition is strong as redwood. As a family, the Vietnamese are very adaptable to new culture; but without family support, the lone Vietnamese is like driftwood.

"THEY LOST their families. They get a letter from them and they get depressed," said Chuong Nguyen, a 27-year-old counselor at the Asian Pacific Development Corp., a mental-health center funded by the state with about 200 Asian out-patients. He believes that 10 percent to 20 percent of the Indochinese in Denver are chronically depressed, and more than 50 percent are experiencing culture shock.

"I think the American public as a whole doesn't understand the importance of family in these cultures," said Karalyn Smythe, who resettles refugees through Ecumenical Refugee Services.

Most of the clients at Asian Pacific are separated from their families. Psychiatry is still an exotic concept in Southeast Asia: The family or the Buddhist temple handles problems. America has as many hills and valleys of psychiatric treatments as you want to climb.



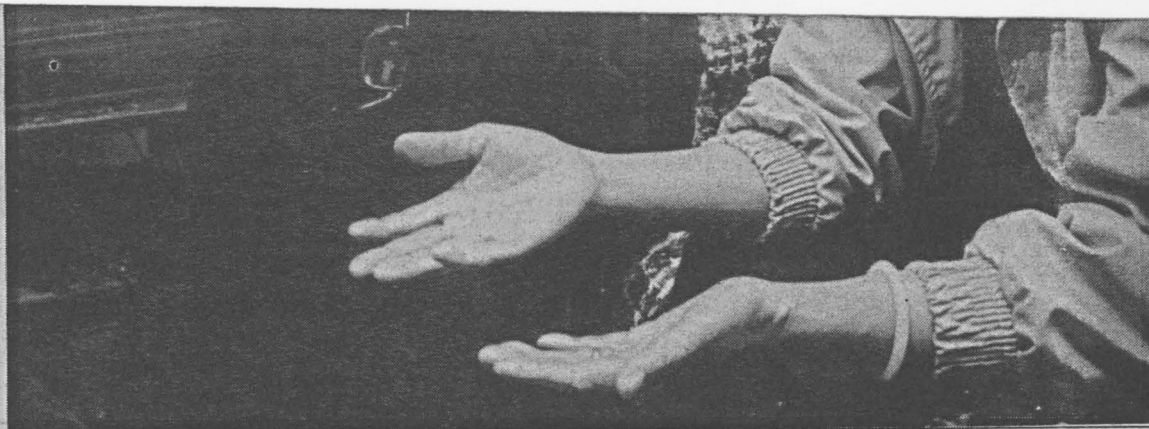
ABOUT A DOZEN people take group therapy twice a week, and there is a staff of three psychiatrists and four psychologists. Virtually all the patients suffer from severe depression. One young man shows homicidal tendencies. A woman is retarded and has a hearing problem. A Chinese-Vietnamese woman who has worked at strip clubs and takes lithium wants to join her seven brothers and four sisters in Houston. A 54-year-old man can't find a job, and his children have grown independent in the United States and are not caring for him. A 66-year-old man has heart problems and must wear a pacemaker, and his children don't want him in their home.

"In Vietnam, children belong to parents," counselor Chuong said. "Then parents belong to children." He means that it is the children's responsibility to take care of their aged parents. "Young people adopt this culture very quickly. In Vietnam the family system is very strong. Parents control children: 'If you don't listen, I will beat you!' But here the life is more independent.

"Parents hate the family system of the West. Kids are independent, they look to their peers. Kids work with the parents in Vietnam. Mothers don't work in Vietnam. Some mothers go to work here. In Vietnam, women are secondary. Here, women stand up. They get more independent. In Vietnam the men say, 'You belong to me!' Now it's 'I belong to her.'"

CHUONG CAME to the United States alone in 1975. He used to have nightmares about the war. "I have to keep busy," he said. Forty-five minutes before the Communists reached Saigon, he left on a boat that held 4,000 refugees. Four years after living in this country, he sent a letter to his parents, who did not know what had happened to him. Chuong waited to send the letter because he was afraid of Communist retaliation against his family for his flight. He finally got a letter back, which said that the family is working on a rice farm.

The patients at the center are slowly improving, Chuong says, and his own nightmares have stopped. When he's lonely, he reads a Vietnamese magazine or goes shopping. And he, like the patients, tries not to think about the past.



*Father Can Dinh spends several hours each day counseling Vietnamese families and individuals who are having trouble grasping the American way of life.*



*Huong Nguyen had a job for two years, but was laid off and is having trouble dealing with unemployment. Father Can visited Nguyen recently, just to see how he was coping.*

## U.S. congressmen to visit Indochina for first

By Agence France-Presse

HANOI, Vietnam — Senior U.S. congressmen will visit Indochina shortly for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War nearly a decade ago, diplomatic sources in Hanoi said Wednesday.

They said two U.S. congressional

teams would make fact-finding missions to Indochina, with the first arriving Sunday.

Washington and Hanoi have no diplomatic links, but the tours would follow visits by unofficial U.S. teams that have been increasing in recent months as Hanoi reaffirms its readiness to begin nor-

malization talks with Washington.

The two congressional delegations will successively tour Vietnam and its two Indochinese allies, Cambodia and Laos, the sources said.

The first team, headed by Rep. Gillespie V. Montgomery, D-Miss., is expected in Vietnam on Sunday,

while the second, headed by Rep. Stephen J. Solarz, D-N.Y., is to take place before the end of the month.

Montgomery is a member of the House Armed Services Committee and chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Diplomatic sources said he

17A

## time since end of war

would head a team of 40, including politicians from both the Republican and Democratic parties and experts on U.S. servicemen missing in action.

Solarz heads the Asian and Pacific subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The exact dates of this delegation's In-

dochinese tour were not immediately known, but diplomatic sources said the tour would take place before the end of the month.

The last high-level U.S. official visit to Hanoi was that of a delegation led by Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage for talks on missing servicemen.

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# L.A. WEEKLY

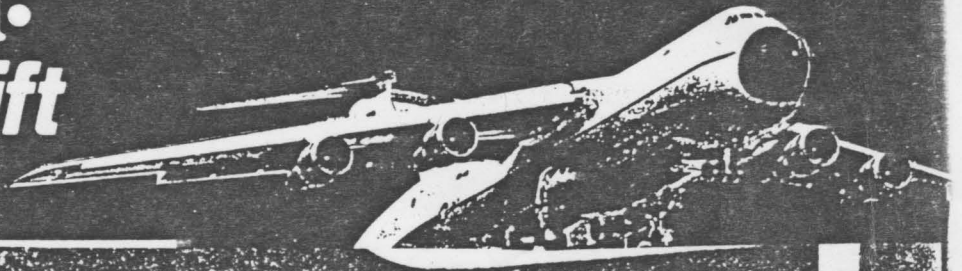
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May 4-10, 1984 Vol. 6, No. 23

## VIETNAM: The Babylift Aftermath



PLAINTIFF'S  
EXHIBIT  
2(7)

PLUS:  
The Untold Story of Operation Babylift  
By Danny Schechter

# THE CONTINUING SAGA OF OPERATION BABYLIFT

by Danny Schechter

**P**lane crashes invariably make splashy news. So when the world's largest plane crash-landed in Vietnam — during a war that ended nine years ago this week — with a cargo of Vietnamese orphans destined for new homes the West, it was front-page copy, and was featured on all the network newscasts. The incident became one more symbol of failure in Vietnam.

"The disaster was almost too unbearable to believe. It was laden with a sense that Americans were somehow cursed in Vietnam, fated to bring only tragedy even when trying to do good," writes Arnold Isaacs of the *Baltimore Sun* in *Without Honor*, a new history of the war. Ninety-eight of the children who were being "saved" perished, and now there are claims that most of the 150 tiny survivors were brain-damaged as a result of a horrifying mid-air disaster and catastrophic landing that has since faded from public memory.

This tragedy has ended up in the courts with law suits filed on behalf of the surviving children. Their attorneys assert the young crash victims are being victimized again in what they characterize as a deliberately protracted legal "war of attrition" against the children by the company that built the plane (Burbank-based Lockheed Aircraft Company) and the Air Force that flew it. (The U.S. government is a third party.) Lockheed and the government deny the charges.

Court records now fill in many untold details of a shocking episode of the Vietnam war. They have raised new questions about the accident and its aftermath, about relationships between military contractors and the Air Force, about the legal system's ability to adjudicate.

Lockheed's lawyers no longer contest the role that defects in the plane may have played in the accident, even though they have contended that Air Force maintenance practices were the immediate cause of the crash. They have already stipulated before the court that liability per se is no longer an issue, in effect conceding the point.

But two questions are still hotly contested. Were the surviving children really hurt in the crash? And if so, what price tag should be placed on their injuries?

And there is another issue: that of collusion and cover-up. Lawyers for the children believe there has been a con-

spiracy between Lockheed and the government to suppress evidence, conceal the causes of the crash, cover up legal misconduct. To explore this issue it is necessary to review a time many Americans would prefer to forget.

**S**AIGON, 1975: Suddenly it seemed as if there was a small child to lead the U.S. out of Vietnam. In Saigon, a number of childcare agencies were scrambling to find planes to fly the orphans in their care out of the country. The U.S. embassy initially was of no help, because Ambassador Graham Martin reportedly feared any official evacuation would stir panic. Enter Ed Daley, the late pistol-packing, sometimes sober president of World Airways, who offered the agencies a free ride out on one of his planes.

But Daley's requirements turned his would-be benefactors off. "Among his indiscreet conditions," they revealed in a book published later, "was the obnoxious demand that the evacuation be 'performed' in an 'action-packed' manner for effective television coverage." Sadly, conforming to these egomaniac demands was to be the only option after Pan Am and Air France showed no initial interest in providing airplanes, even as pre-paid charters.

In desperation, officials of the childcare agencies agreed to Daley's offer. But the U.S. government declared Daley's planes unsafe, and prevailed on the women organizing the flights to let the Air Force fly the kids out. A bitter Daley denounced the women — "broad" he called them — for being ignorant about his safety record. Referring to both the embassy and the childcare workers, he thundered, "Let it be on their conscience," prophetically as it turned out.

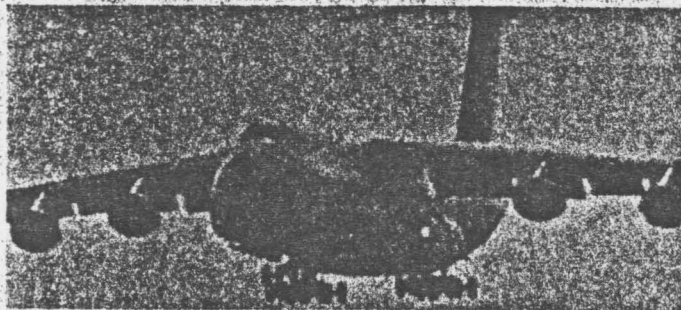
But if Daley had ulterior motives for staging the airlift, so did the agency that cut him out of the action. A highly publicized, officially backed airlift might stimulate a wave of renewed sympathy for the plight of South Vietnam, or so some U.S. policymakers hoped. The Ford Administration seized on the idea, christening it "Operation BabyLift," a program that would bring the orphans to America and in the process dramatize and humanize the attempt to save Saigon. "Marvelous propaganda" is how Ambassador Martin reportedly described it to an aide.

Several of the orphanages accepted Daley's offer despite the government's warning. Ironically, Daley's orphan flight

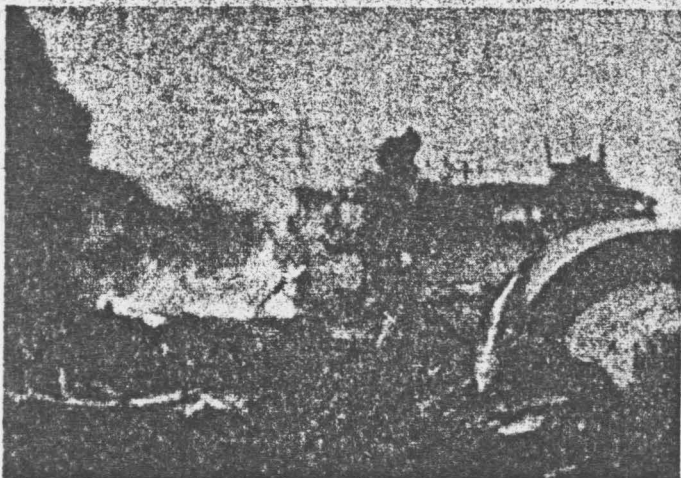
Continued on page 28



Vietnamese children strapped in for flight of "Operation BabyLift."



A C-54 landing.



The aftermath of the crash.

TV Photos, courtesy ABC News 20/20



## Babylift *continued from page 27*

on the allegedly "unsafe" DC8 did get through without incident.

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Anh Traer, born Bui Thi Kim Hoa, is 11 years old now. She's a pretty girl who wears large glasses. She was one of the children brought to America via Operation Babylift.

Anh has emotional problems, and her doctors have diagnosed them as symptoms of a syndrome called Minimal Brain Dysfunction, or MBD. It's not the kind of problem that shows up on an X-ray. It's an incapacitating illness characterized by an often intense hyperactivity, serious learning disabilities, and frequent emotional tantrums, including uncontrolled crying spells.

Through a process of intensive neurological and psychological exams, doctors retained by the plaintiffs in the lawsuit have found that virtually all of the crash survivors show some MBD symptoms. One is now institutionalized; at least two are suicidal. Anh's story is one of 150. That's how many children survived.

\*\*\*

The plane arrived during the lunch hour on April 4, 1975. A big plane, six stories high from wheels to tail, it had a 223-foot wingspan. "I never saw such a big plane," one of the kids, Ly Vo, would say later. "We didn't think it would get off the ground." "What a big mother," was one nurse's reaction. The "big mother" was a C-5A. The C-5 is almost as long as a football field, and capable of carrying 250,000 pounds. As many as 50 Cadillacs could be flown in its giant underbelly.

C-5 number 80-218 had been flown in from the Clark Air Base in the Philippines, its last stop on a flight that originated in California, hopped east to Georgia to pick up a load of Howitzers, and then flew west to Saigon to drop them off and pick up its new cargo: babies.

Newsmen at the airport filmed the unloading, watched as the vast rear doors swung open and a giant ramp clanked down into place. Trucks drove right into the plane's belly to drag the artillery pieces onto the runway. To open the doors, a loadmaster had to unlock a complex system of 14 interconnecting latches which had a tendency to slip out of rig.

After the accident, the lawyers for the survivors would discover just how dangerous this system was. It was so complex that many mechanics couldn't understand or fix it. In 1971, an Air Force study called it a "monster system," which, if unrepaired, could lead to a "catastrophe." These are strong words for a military study. But not much was done. There were many subsequent malfunctions. Both Lockheed and the Air Force knew about the problems, but there was no "fix" prior to the accident because of a quarrel about who would pay for it. According to pretrial depositions, even Lockheed's own engineers had recommended improvements, but the company's management vetoed the work until the Air Force agreed to pay for it. The Air Force rejected one Lockheed proposal for a cost-plus contract for just such a fix because the military procurement officials felt it was Lockheed's responsibility to build a safe plane. This pre-crash skirmishing was low-key and bureaucratic.

Captain Dennis Traynor was the plane's veteran commander. He had received the order to pick up the orphans only a day earlier during a stop-over at the Clark Air Base. In a statement incorporated in the accident report he noted that he was expecting to "combat load" as many as 1,000 children. He did his best to ready the plane for its new mission: he had containers of milk, box lunches, and baby bottles loaded aboard. Flight nurses and medical corpsmen were assigned to the flight, which had been designated a top-priority mission. In fact, the plane was dubbed "the President's plane" in honor of the man who would be meeting it upon its arrival in the U.S.

Much of the pressure to launch the babylift quickly was coming from the highest level in the chain of command. The Commander in Chief, President Ford, had unveiled Operation Babylift only two days earlier at a press conference in San Diego. In Palm Springs on a golfing vacation, Ford was preoccupied with the rapid-fire events in Vietnam. Only the president could authorize the use of Air Force planes to carry civilians.

Oddly, when Ford announced the airlift that day, he specified the precise type of aircraft to be sent: "I have directed that C-5A aircraft and other aircraft especially equipped to care for these orphans during the flight be sent to Saigon. It's the least we can do," Ford noted, "and we will do much, much more."

A contradiction went unnoticed. The C-5A is a cargo plane, not at all "especially equipped" to care for people, much less tiny babies. It was a plane that for years had been involved in controversy over massive cost overruns, design and safety

problems. Why this plane?

It is not a question that can be answered with certainty even now. Speculation ranges from the banal to the conspiratorial. Those who say the choice was not unusual cite the plane's size and flying range, the fact that it was built for airlifts and dispatched by the Military Airlift Command that was assigned to operate the babylift.

Lawyers who represent the surviving children put forth another hypothesis in their briefs: that the C-5 was sent to rehabilitate the aircraft's image at a time when Lockheed was on the ropes financially and politically, a time when Congress was being asked to spend millions more to repair the plane.

A successful mission of mercy, they argue, would show the world how vital the Lockheed jet could be. They believe there was collusion between Lockheed and its friends in the Air Force to use the babylift to give the C-5 publicity. Lockheed has denied this.

I tried out the "conspiracy" suspicion on retired Air Force Col. William Gulley, who at the time acted as Air Force liaison in the White House. I was surprised when he didn't dismiss it outright. Could Lockheed and some of the C-5A's boosters in the Air Force have suggested that the president send the C-5, which after all was a symbol of U.S. power? Might they have wanted to "show off the plane" in the same way that the military like to "show the flag" to project our presence abroad? Gulley said he had no evidence that it happened, but then cautioned me: "Don't be naive."

**W**hen the government finally found an available C-5A to use, the

women organizing the airlift were uncomfortable with the hasty manner in which the operation was put together. Christine Lieverman, who was organizing the evacuation of the children for some of the nurseries, recalls having second thoughts. She remembers embracing a co-worker while boarding the plane, wondering if they were doing the right thing. The crowded C-5A was a far cry from the Pan Am 747 they had expected.

Although the C-5A can be configured to fly passengers in its cargo hold, the optional seating modules were not available at Clark Air Base when the orders for the babylift came through. And no attempt was made to "jury rig," or improvise, an oxygen supply.

The boarding was a loud and noisy affair. The C-5 had two decks. The troop compartment upstairs had 75 seats and was filled first. The infants were strapped in, two to a seat. Lieverman and the others tending the children had to stand. Downstairs in the giant double-decker, the scene was even more chaotic. More than a hundred older children, some medical corpsmen, and embassy personnel being evacuated under babylift cover were stretched out on the steel floor. Cargo straps were substituted for seat belts. There were no toilets and not enough air sickness bags, which would soon be needed. What's worse, there was no oxygen supply for emergencies.

"Try and picture a hundred children, screaming, hollering, carrying on — lots of confusion," Lieverman recalls bitterly. "Children aren't cargo. Children are people. They belong in seats. They don't belong on the floor of the airplane, particularly with luggage strapped in on one side of them."

This was to be a 20-hour flight. President Ford planned to greet the children when the plane arrived at Travis Air Force base near San Francisco.

With the passengers on board, the crew prepared for takeoff. In the cockpit, they discussed a high-altitude flight plan, climbing up to 37,000 feet to get up over some turbulent weather. Incredibly, there were crew members with second thoughts about the safety of the mission. A cockpit recorder taped a discussion among crew members before take off: "If we are up at

heard the explosion. Susan Derge, who had volunteered to help out on the flight and was standing toward the front of the troop compartment, heard a more muffled sound. Medical technician Phil Wise was downstairs in the cargo area. He just happened to be looking toward the back of the plane.

The locking system failed. There was an explosive decompression. "We had no warning," Wise says. "It was just a loud explosion all at once, and I looked back and saw the doors falling off like they

children first becoming quiet, and then passing out. The oxygen masks upstairs popped free of their compartments, but many didn't work. They were designed for adults and were too big for the infants' tiny faces. Most couldn't reach them, anyway, and had to be picked up and held close to the masks. Some were turning blue. Air Force personnel worked with the other attendants, sharing whiffs of oxygen with some of the babies. "Most of the children were unconscious at the time of the descent," Derge remembers.

Oxygen masks on, the captain and his crew faced a formidable task. Not only were the doors gone, but a flying piece of metal had severed the control cable. Their navigational capabilities were severely limited. Somehow Capt. Traynor managed to turn the C-5A around and head back toward the airport. By banking and rolling, increasing and decreasing power, he managed to get on an approach to the runway. But the 300,000-pound plane was losing altitude fast. Traynor had to keep the nose up. He applied power as it was going down, a risky and only half-successful maneuver. "I had to add max power in the dive," he reported afterward. "The nose pitched down rapidly and the addition of maximum throttle would not bring it back up."

They were at twice normal speed when they touched down in an open rice paddy just two miles short of the runway. The plane was going too fast, and couldn't stop. It bounced back into the air and crossed the Saigon River, hitting an irrigation dike. The wings kept flying. The cockpit went one way, the troop compartment another.

## Lockheed would not concede on the liability question directly, but in an acceptable legal flim-flam agreed not to contest causation if the plaintiffs promised not to press for sanctions for misconduct and punitive damages.

37 and we have a rapid decompression, we're gonna lose someone," one man said. They noted the lack of oxygen below. "Those babies, they ain't gonna get 'em all out in time." Despite these recorded reservations, the operation continued. At 4:03 p.m., the 75-ton machine lumbered down the runway and rose toward the clouds. In 12 minutes, the 80-218 would reach an altitude of 23,752 feet, four miles high.

Christy Lieverman was filling up baby bottles in the rear galley upstairs when she

never were attached. There were blankets and debris flying throughout the aircraft, bodies flying, tumbling, and a lot of screaming."

In three-tenths of a second all the oxygen was sucked out of the pressurized aircraft. But not just air. Wise saw crew members standing near the door sucked out of the plane. Wise estimated that he passed out within 20 seconds.

Upstairs, a floor above the exploding clamshell-like doors, Lieverman remembers the plane getting cold, the

## Babylift *continued from page 29*

**T**he plane had literally come apart into four sections. Most of the crew walked away from the cockpit. The tail was torn off and the wings flew on by themselves until they burst into flame. The troop compartment filled with children slid at least a thousand feet, many of its occupants shaken, some hurt, but alive.

The downstairs — the huge, cavernous cargo hold — was pulverized. Only six children and a few adults miraculously

survived.

Helicopters arrived on the scene first. The area was littered with parts, human and mechanical. Many of the babies had been thrown into the mud. Some were crying, most were abnormally still. Surviving crew members helped the childcare workers, including Christy Lieverman, load them onto choppers which rushed them to the airport. From there, they were raced by ambulance to a nearby Seventh Day Adventist hospital. Christy remembers being on the last helicopter out and yet arriving at the hospital first. She alerted the emergency room that a

holocaust was coming.

UPI correspondent Alan Dawson reported U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin's reaction to the crash in *55 Days*, his book about the fall of South Vietnam. "Martin took a call telling of the crash in his embassy and he received the news calmly. 'The C-5A has crashed,' a U.S. official told him during a brief emergency phone call by embassy radiophone. 'Yes,' said Martin. 'Thank you.' Then he hung up."

Naomi Bronstein, a Canadian childcare worker who helped load the C-5A but decided not to take the flight, helped

break the news worldwide, consciously inching towards the TV cameras because she thought that would be a way to alert her husband and friends in Canada that she was alive. Someone in the government had already suggested the possibility that the plane had been sabotaged, a Viet Cong atrocity. Naomi refuted the story. She told reporters what the crew had told her about what happened. Nevertheless, Pentagon officials stateside would still be talking sabotage for weeks afterward.

It would take years for the children's doctors to understand what happened. Dr. Steven Feldman, a Rhode Island pediatrician/psychiatrist who examined some of the children and studied all of their records on behalf of the parents who were suing Lockheed, concluded that "the plane crash caused the Minimal Brain Dysfunction by exposing these infants to a variety of conditions: a degree of lack of oxygen; a degree of what's called deceleration or slowing down; a degree of explosive decompression; an impact, fumes, and a number of factors in the crash which we'll probably never fully understand, which caused damage and insult to their brains."

Often, pediatricians without special training do not diagnose MBD symptoms. One Colorado family was advised by their

**One judge died while hearing the case. The current judge has called it "one of the most protracted, costly, and unpleasant litigations in the history" of his federal district court.**

small-town doctor to just keep spanking their hyperactive, disobedient child. When they told him it wasn't doing any good, the physician asked, "How red is his behind?"

**L**arry Kitchen found out about the crash at 6:30 the next morning, Georgia time. He was then the president of Lockheed-Georgia, the principal contractor-designer of the C-5A. He is now president of the entire corporation. He was phoned by Gen. P.K. Carleton, who was in charge of the Military Airlift Command. At 7 a.m., a half-hour later, Air Force Gen. Warner Newby, the Air Force's one-time C-5A project officer, was named as head of the official and still-secret Air Force investigation. He knew and was well-known to Lockheed's executives. The appointment of Newby would later be questioned by the plaintiffs because his association with Lockheed led them to challenge his impartiality.

April 1975 was not the best of times for the Lockheed corporation. The company, which had faced bankruptcy in the late '60s only to be bailed out by the government, was having financial difficulties, surviving on 90-day notes that were rolled

over by its bankers. Sen. Frank Church was about to launch his probe into an overseas corporate bribery scandal that would eventually topple the corporation's top management and send shock waves through several governments. The C-5 itself was embroiled in heated controversy too. Cracks had appeared on the airplane's wings, indicating they were too light for the plane's load. They had to be replaced, at an enormous cost.

Once again, the question was who would pay for the repair, who would finance what was called the "H-Mod program": Lockheed or the Air Force? Lockheed insisted it had met the government's C-5 specifications. The Air Force disagreed for the record, but was ultimately ordered to pay \$1.5 billion for the repair, which included \$150 million cost *plus profit* for Lockheed.

Although they were insured, Lockheed officials knew they could expect lawsuits and expected bad publicity because of the C-5 crash. The outcome of the accident investigation would be important for the company's reputation and its prospects for obtaining more contracts from the government.

The survivors had more immediate problems. After the crash, the dead, the dying and the injured overwhelmed the capabilities of the hospital in Saigon. A triage system was set up to isolate the most serious cases. The broken bodies were treated, but little attention was given to trying to diagnose any broken minds. There was no time for neurological exams, even though observers reported that the children looked dazed. Those not requiring hospitalization were sent back to the orphanages, where arrangements were being made to fly them out the very next day.

In contrast, the surviving crew members and some of the American passengers were flown to sophisticated medical facilities in the Philippines for intense observation. All of the surviving crew members would later be cited for heroism.

The following is from a transcript of a telephone conversation between Carleton and Newby on April 6, 1975. The subject was the initial accident report:

Newby: I just got back in from Saigon [The investigators were likely afraid to stay in Vietnam so they based themselves in the Philippines and "commuted" by air each day] we are not going to get one single instrument or panel out of the wreckage . . . it is just being carried away . . . the aircraft literally ground up into little pieces as it tore up. From the troop decks below . . . it's just flat out, not there, it's gone.

Carleton: Worn off, huh?

Newby: Yes sir, and I think there is a key lesson, boss, that we need to carefully consider and that's this, that this airplane ain't worth a damn for carrying people on. . .

**Y**ou need a strong stomach to be an aviation accident investigator. Crash sites are heavy with the stench of death. Gen. Newby's team was dealing with a particularly ghastly landscape in a country caught in the final spasms of war. The site was insecure, the investigators were afraid. The plane was being vandalized.

Crash investigators routinely photograph everything of relevance. These pictures later help analysts determine the force of the impact and the extent of the damage. According to briefs filed by the plaintiffs, the Lockheed representatives became nervous about the photos. At a later briefing for Lockheed, at which notes were taken that were later introduced into the court record, "there was discussion . . . that there should be no mention of pictures being taken and that the pictures retained by Lockheed should be marked 'legally privileged' and given to the legal department for filing."

Lawyers for the children sought all the photographs taken of the crash site, but surprisingly were given only a few that showed the condition of the C-5's troop compartment, which carried almost all of the children who survived. Although lawyers for Lockheed and the Air Force

promised the court that all evidence would be preserved, vital photographs were destroyed by the Air Force, and that fact was concealed from the judge for many years.

When questioned, the Air Force officer involved in the destruction admitted burning "tons and tons" of pictures. In depositions he said he didn't know they had to be saved, and that he had acted in accordance with routine Air Force regulations requiring the destruction of non-permanent documents. In 1984 the trial judge called this destruction "intentional" and "questionable."

Although copies of some of the

destroyed photos would be found years later, the fact of their original destruction would lead to cries of a cover-up and a demand that penalties be imposed on Lockheed and the government for misconduct.

**T**he Traer family was living in California in April 1975. Bob Traer picked up his new, adopted daughter at the Presidio, a huge park-like Army base situated alongside San Francisco Bay. The children were lying on mattresses stretched

Continued on page 32

out on the floor — “just children everywhere,” Mr. Traer recalls. Area doctors were examining the kids, but no effort was being made to separate the crash survivors from others transported out of Vietnam on subsequent airlifts. Many of the families who adopted the C-5 crash victims did not know what their children had been through.

At first Ann was quiet and withdrawn, but she clung to her new mother. “She didn’t express a great deal of emotion or feeling for either my wife or me for quite awhile,” Bob Traer says quietly. “It was only later, when some of those deeper emotions came out, as though she had locked them in. And when they came out [there was] sadness and grief. And fear

and anger came out with them.”

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In Saigon, the investigation continued. Thirty-two people probed the site. The Navy billed the Air Force \$50,000 a day for salvage operations that combed the South China Sea for the aft ramp and the pressure door that had fallen off the plane. On April 27, 1975, just three days before North Vietnamese tanks came rumbling into Saigon, they found a 20-foot by 12-foot by four-foot section. They hauled it aboard the search vessel. There, photos were taken, including one that expressed some of the sailors’ feelings about the mission and perhaps the plane. It is now a part of the official investigation report. It shows the recovered wreckage, and in one corner is the lower half of a man’s body. He is holding his penis, urinating on this object sought after by

the Air Force.

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Once on American soil, the Vietnamese orphans were a media sensation. Their plaintive faces stared out from the covers of newspapers and magazines. Special State Department phone numbers were flooded with calls from people who wanted to adopt a Vietnamese child. But a note of disquiet crept into the celebration, throwing the orphan agencies on the defensive.

First, critics pointed out there were many American orphans who were going unwanted. Others questioned the assumptions behind this intercultural and interracial adoption. And finally, Vietnamese-speaking anti-war activists discovered that some of the children at the Presidio were not orphans. They later filed suit on

behalf of these children, challenging the legality of their admission into the United States. In a class-action suit directed at Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, they in effect charged kidnapping. Sympathy for the crash survivors was dulled in the whirling controversy.

The issues raised in the class-action lawsuit against Henry Kissinger were never fully aired or resolved. Instead, the cases were dismissed on legal grounds, and then denied on appeal.

Meanwhile, on another legal front, families of those killed and hurt in the C-5 crash, and Friends for All Children, the relief agency that sheltered the children in Vietnam, began to find lawyers.

**G**en. Newby and his accident investigation board signed their report on May 23. That report is still classified under Air Force regulations designed to ensure that people questioned in connection with aviation accidents be granted confidentiality. A less comprehensive “collateral report” undertaken by an Air Force officer who was not allowed to visit the crash site in Vietnam was later released for public consumption.

While Lockheed’s precise role in influencing the accident board’s conclusions is not known, several documents in the court record indicate the corporation had an active interest in shaping its outcome, with one eye on the impending civil liability lawsuits and the other on how a negative report might influence Congress.

On April 28, 1975, Norman C. Apold, the Lockheed executive in charge of the C-5 program, phoned Newby to express his concern that accident briefings at the command level “appear to be placing excessive emphasis on C-5 lock-system design problems rather than focusing on the Air Force maintenance and cannibalization practices. I had further stated that improper inferences drawn by high-level government personnel could prove to be very serious to the C-5 and Lockheed relative to the H-Mod program, and might be especially damaging in the event of liability actions related to the accident.”

On May 29, Gen. Newby called Apold, these same issues on his mind. It was six days after his secret report had been signed, but only one day after lawyers representing Friends for All Children had filed suit against Lockheed. This conversation was considered important enough for Apold to summarize in a memo sent to his boss, Lockheed President Larry Kitchen. The memo is marked “Lockheed Private Data”: “General Newby reaffirmed that his purpose was not to impugn any one party; that Air Force maintenance actions... contributed to the events... He advised that AS A RESULT OF MY CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM [*emphasis added*], he has stated specifically . . . that the board does not consider this accident to be the result of a major design deficiency on the airplane.”

Newby, according to the document, “added that he wants to do everything necessary to avoid a major confrontation” between the Air Force and Lockheed, and “that he is sensitively aware of the seriousness of lawsuits related to liability.” Apold told Newby he would pass “his message” on to the president and chairman of the Lockheed Corporation.

Three months after the crash, there were still Air Force people probing into C-5 lock problems, and this prompted Apold to send another memo to Kitchen, this time in response to a question. Kitchen had asked, “Will it implicate [Lockheed Aircraft Corporation] — and why?”

"I feel that any verbal 'sparring' on the issue of what caused the ramp to unzip could implicate Lockheed because we can't be sure just how the Air Force would use our responses. . ." Apold wrote. "Even more important, of course, is the issue of avoiding any written analysis or position while the class-action liability suits are in effect."

**W**hen the lawsuits were first filed, it was unlikely that any of the parties expected they would be arguing over the same issues nine years later, that there would be 12 trials, 165 full-scale hearings, and several decisions by the court of appeals. In all, there were more than 150 separate cases to decide. One judge died while hearing the case. The current judge has called it "one of the most protracted, costly, and unpleasant litigations in the history" of his federal district court.

"It is a travesty that this case has not been settled even as of this date," charges Washington attorney Charles Work, who serves as the court-appointed guardian for the surviving children and was a Justice Department official in the Nixon Administration.

**When the lawsuits were first filed, it was unlikely that any of the parties expected they would be arguing over the same issues nine years later.**

"And these children, because of the delay, have deteriorated. These people have in effect perpetrated a terrible outrage on these children because these children could be better off for the rest of their lives if they had gotten treatment earlier."

Legal guardian Charles Work charges that Lockheed has pursued a "scorched earth defense," stretching out the procedures in every way they could in hopes of wearing down the plaintiffs. Lockheed brought the Air Force into the case as a third-party defendant. Together they mounted an aggressive defense, spending an estimated \$10 million, according to plaintiff's attorneys.

The Vietnamese orphans' cases were not the only ones to be filed after the crash. Another set of lawsuits involving Americans who were killed or survived were settled quickly. The Americans were taken care of — it was only the Vietnamese who had to slug it out in the courts for years.

Ten million dollars hasn't won Lockheed many acquittal verdicts in the courts, but public-interest military-watchdog groups say it has bought time with Congress, enough time for the crash to become a distant memory. The case never became a political issue, or a media cause celebre. Lockheed's ability to win new contracts from Congress was not impeded. As David Keating of the conservative National Taxpayers Union, an organization that has testified against military cost overruns, puts it: "Not only has Lockheed not suffered from this crash, but from what I can tell, Lockheed has done very well with future contracts from the Air Force not only to fix prob-

lems with the plane but, in fact, to get a new order for a whole set of new planes. [the C-5B]."

In fact, after the crash, Lockheed stuck with its position that the C-5's locking system was adequate. The Air Force nevertheless ordered modifications, which Lockheed ultimately made on a cost-plus-profit basis.

"Everyone in the Air Force that flew in the C-5 knew the damn doors rarely worked as they should," one experienced airman said, recalling flights during which wet blankets were pushed into C-5 locks to try to keep the wind from whistling in. Gen. Carleton was quoted in an internal

Lockheed document after the accident as admitting that the Air Force should have known the plane had to be fixed. He cited constant noises in the locking system. "Even the plane was trying to tell us," he reportedly told a Lockheed representative.

Rather than concentrate on defending a plane that crashed, Lockheed's skillful defense team, headed by Carrol Dubuc, a lawyer who is also a pilot, focused on refuting the claims that the children who survived had been hurt.

Lockheed's contention is simple. (Lockheed and Justice Department officials declined to be interviewed on the record because the case is in litigation.

The plaintiff's attorneys would not be quoted. The contentions of all the parties appear in court briefs and transcripts.) The children are not brain-damaged because of the accident. If the children have problems, they must have been pre-existing, a function of cultural deprivation, malnutrition, war-time conditions, and/or the stress of an intercultural adoption. Moreover, they argue, all of the kids are individuals and were affected differently by the crash. They can't and shouldn't be considered as a group or a class. The courts upheld that claim,

## Babylift *continued from page 33*

thereby determining that each case would be heard on its own merits. This decision insured that the matter could go on for years.

The thrust of the defendants' legal case has been to show that the accident was not all that severe, that the oxygen loss was not serious, the descent was no worse than an amusement park ride, the crash landing was gentle. The defendants' legal briefs take all the horror out of the tragedy, referring antiseptically to the crash as "the erosion of [the plane's] structural integrity." They dispute virtually every "fact" put forth by the plaintiffs, and deny most contentions.

The plaintiffs have the burden of proving there is brain damage, and that's not simple. MBD is not a well-known disorder. Many of the kids don't look brain-damaged. Some have very high IQs, and are even performing well in school. Some of their own pediatricians can't identify the cause of their emotional problems. Even some of the parents denied at first that their children were affected.

It was only after the medical exams brought many of the children and their parents to Washington that the parents had a chance to trade experiences. Their doctors began to identify the symptoms shared by the children. They commissioned one study that showed that virtually 80 percent of the children shared symptoms, and their only common experience was the crash. A second, independent study of all the Vietnamese orphans who came to this country indicated that only a small percentage of them had these same symptoms. It was statistical arguments like these that finally buttressed the medical case. Lockheed sought to discredit the methodology used in both studies.

In 1979, after losing several jury trials with average verdicts of more than \$350,000, Lockheed entered into negotiations to settle the cases involving the children adopted by American families. Other children were adopted by European families, and these cases are just coming to trial. At first the children's lawyers declined the offers, rejecting them as too little compensation for a lifetime of medical problems. But once it became clear that the plaintiffs lacked the financial resources to keep fighting against a vastly more well-financed opponent, they reversed their decision. Months and months went by. Legal wrangling, disagreements between the parties, and appeals kept the lawyers busy and delayed a partial settlement for years. The case continued into the '80s.

The children's lawyers were not winning despite some courtroom victories and the evidence they had amassed. They needed a new issue, a smoking gun. Unexpectedly, they found one: missing crash photographs. In a new round of depositions in 1981, they learned certain photographs thought missing were indeed available in Air Force archives, even though the defendants' lawyers insisted that they had turned over all the photos in their possession. Armed with these new disclosures, the plaintiffs threatened to argue that vital evidence had been suppressed or withheld.

At this point, on the eve of a new trial and faced with some explosive evidence, Lockheed and the government decided to settle the cases of the American families for a little more than \$300,000 per child. They would not concede on the liability question directly, but in an acceptable

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legal flim-flam agreed not to contest causation if the plaintiffs promised not to press for sanctions for misconduct and punitive damages.

This time the attorneys who had been working on a contingency basis without fees accepted the out-of-court settlement with the parents' approval. It was a \$13.5 million deal, with the government picking up a good part of the tab. Charles Work, the children's guardian, insisted on using a chunk of the money for a special trust fund for any children who would be even-

**Lockheed's contention is simple. The children are not brain-damaged because of the accident.**

tually hospitalized or severely troubled. The children's lawyers split a \$3.3 million fee from this settlement. Each family was left with little more than \$125,000.

Commented Bob Traer: "The children were victimized by the long, drawn-out process. More money has been spent on lawyers than probably has been spent on any of the children, and there was no reason for that. Essentially, Lockheed just wanted to drag it out, in my opinion, and they've done that successfully because of their resources."

This multi-million dollar "global" settlement did not settle the case, nor was it

global. Two groups of survivors still remained. One group, the 98 dead children, has a less urgent claim. The second group involves 73 cases — ironically, the largest number of children — who went to live with European and Canadian families. Medical screening conducted by the plaintiffs' doctors in Paris late last year indicated these children also may be suffering from the same problems. In fact, since many of these children are older now and in many cases went undiagnosed or treated, their problems could be more acute.

Lockheed and the government have rejected an offer by the children's lawyers to settle the European cases on the same basis as the Americans'. So new trials must be conducted, and they will be heard as if nothing had happened before. There will be no mention of the out-of-court settlements, or the de facto admission that all the children were injured or are at risk. None of this will be admissible.

This time, the plaintiffs tried to escalate the conflict by asking Judge Louis Obodorfer to allow them to introduce the cover-up issue. They sought to have the judge advise juries hearing the cases to make an "inference" adverse to Lockheed because of the missing evidence — that is, to rule that the destroyed photos would have supported the children's claims for damages. Such an "adverse inference" ruling might encourage significantly higher monetary verdicts against the corporation.

The judge did not buy their argument, but he didn't totally reject it either. In a complicated order the court ruled that for now it will not allow the cover-up issue to be heard by the jury. Obodorfer's reasoning was convoluted. He agreed important evidence had been destroyed, and there was a legitimate basis for crying foul against the Air Force, but not enough evidence to have the charges aired against Lockheed.

Oberdorfer contended that the evidence was "equivocal" and did not prove "evil intent or bad faith." He expressed the fear that the children's lawyers might become "inflammatory" in their denunciations of Lockheed, in effect putting the company itself on trial. So he acted to narrow the issues, and in the process suppressed them, at least for now. He reserved the right to rule again on this exclusive question.

Apparently, this order was not considered enough of a victory for Lockheed. The corporation's lawyers were so enraged that charges of misconduct were still being made that they filed a *new suit* against the American families, demanding that the money they gave the Vietnamese orphans be returned on the grounds that their lawyers broke the settlement agreement, which included a stipulation to bury this issue. Charles Work called this maneuver "outrageous," asserting that what was agreed to in settling the American cases did not apply to the still-unsettled European and Canadian ones. The judge has dismissed this suit for now, calling it a form of harassment, but has left the door open for Lockheed to file it again.

And so the tragedy is continued. Only those who died that spring day, innocents orphaned during a war that was not theirs, have been spared the aftermath of a "humanitarian" effort that misfired. Charles Work believes that President Ford's comment about Operation Babylift best serves as an ironic epitaph: "It's the least we can do." ■

*Danny Schechter is a producer for ABC News, and investigated this story for a report aired on ABC's 20/20 news magazine. His views and interpretations are his own and the Weekly's.*



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