

WINTER 1972



VIET NAM TODAY

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Back Cover: A Legend of the Sre



Pastor and Mrs. Ngo-tan-Phi whose daughter is shown on Cover in "Flight from Quang Tri"

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VIETNAM TODAY



Easter, 1972. North Vietnamese soldiers, backed by tanks and artillery, crossed the DMZ and marched into Quang Tri, the northern most province under the Republic of South Viet Nam. Masses of humanity began to flee from the barrage of war. At our request, Rev. Ngo-tan-Phi related his—

FLIGHT FROM QUANG TRI

We, the people of Quang Tri province never dreamed it would happen. War broke out all around us. People from far and near began rushing into our city. As refugees were streaming out of the Dong Ha area before it fell, one widow with four small children and a new born baby wrapped in rags was trying to board a bus. The mother was so intent on getting her small children on the bus that she did not notice the fate of her baby.

After they boarded the bus and moved south toward Quang Tri about half a mile, they noticed artillery and rockets pounding the place where they had stood. The mother looked into the bundle of rags where her new born child was supposed to have been. The child was gone. It had fallen out during the commotion while boarding the bus. Before entering the city of Quang Tri, refugees had to travel on a section of highway which ran through a large military base. Because this base was a prime target for shelling, they would run through this area as quickly as possible. One mother who was ready to deliver her child had gone as far as she could. She gave birth to the child on the side of the road. A Vietnamese captain saw her and helped the mother and baby into his jeep. As he started the engine for the journey to the Quang Tri hospital a rocket made a direct hit on the jeep, taking the lives of all three.

People from in and around Quang Tri began rushing to Hue. Many of the church members began making their way south. After the Easter service I took my wife, children and orphans to Hue for temporary residence at

the home of the Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary. I then returned to Quang Tri because a number of the Christians in the country area had not been able to get out.

After a few weeks of fighting things seemed to get much better and most of the Quang Tri people returned to the city. As conditions became more peaceful I brought back my family and most of the older orphans. Everything seemed to be back to normal. But approximately one week later the situation reversed itself. Large rockets and artillery shells began crashing into the city and there were rumors that North Vietnamese tanks were coming into the city from the east, north and west. Again the people ran for Hue. Once more I sent my family and the orphans back to Hue except for my oldest daughter who stayed with me in Quang Tri. At midnight April 28th, while my daughter and the Christian families who were staying at our place, were fast asleep in their bunkers, I began to see that the city was in imminent danger. At two in the morning of the 29th I woke my daughter and the Christians and told them we must leave under cover of darkness while there was still a chance. The highway outside was packed with people and vehicles waiting to go to Hue. After we had gone about a mile and a half I felt that it would be senseless to go any further so my daughter and I returned to Quang Tri. The Christians who had gone with us did not want to turn back so they went on with the crowds. We do not know what happened to them.

We remained in the large bunker at our home until

7 a.m. when we were awakened by a large rocket exploding next to the church outside. The two of us quickly readied the Honda motor bike and tied as many items as we could on to it in preparation for the long journey to Hue. I looked around for the last time at the church, parsonage, orphanage and school. I saw the rewards of eight years of hard work and my heart was saddened to leave it all behind. It was now 8 a.m. and I did my best to make the Honda go as fast as possible past the long row of trucks and people standing in the road. Many had only a few things in their weary hands. Others carried very heavy loads hanging from the two ends of a carrying pole. One old sick grandfather sat in a basket tied to the middle of a stout pole, two young men, each supporting an end of the pole, moved him about. Mothers transported their young by all methods. Some placed them in baskets dangling from the ends of poles. One mother tied her six small children in a line with a long rope and then tied one end around her waist so that none would be lost.

We traveled on. Only a little more than a half mile and we would be at the long bridge five miles from Quang Tri. It was here that many people had been slaughtered the day before. Some of the people we were with went very slowly; many of them stopped altogether, but we continued to press on in the crowd. My daughter sat behind me on the bike praying constantly. About 350 yards down the road an awful scene came into view. There were many bodies lying around. Some people who were still alive were crying out while the dead bodies were beginning to swell. A number of the bodies were missing legs, arms, etc. It was a scene that I will never forget. Suddenly rockets began to hit and explode among the group of people ahead of us on the bridge. We cried as we saw and heard the sounds of death and misery. In the face of all this I wanted to turn back, but my child on the back of the bike said, "Dad, you must go on if we want to live." In much fear and trembling we made it across the bridge without stopping.

As we continued down the road which many call the "Street Without Joy" we were praising God for His protection. We thought we had passed the worst part of that dangerous highway. But when we came to a small fort located on the sand dunes on the edge of Highway 1, the soldiers told us to halt. They told us that 500 yards down the road, not 30 minutes earlier, enemy gunners had killed 5 persons and forced the people to retreat. One government vehicle had been destroyed. Everyone stopped and stood there, hoping that the military vehicles would open the highway for us to proceed. Many more people arrived and waited with us on the hot burning sand for the situation to change. The long line of refugees stretched back almost 10 miles. This place was far from a village and not so much as the shade of one tree could be found. We were all spread out in the sun to bake. There was very little water.

Everyone cried out with pleasure when we saw the first armored cars move out ahead and begin to cross the bridge in the distance. But after 15 minutes explosions were heard. Before long everything was on fire and black smoke filled the sky. For hours bullets whizzed past our heads.

Sometime later a group of armored vehicles came by and stopped about 500 yards down the road. Most of the people gathered behind the convoy. My daughter and I began praying for guidance. What should we do? The Bible says people put their trust in horses and chariots but we will put our trust in the God of heaven. I reasoned, "If we stay by the military vehicles the enemy will try and destroy them; then we really will be in trouble." So a small group of us traveling on Hondas, bicycles and on foot, decided to press on and get past this dangerous section of the road. We went by the numerous dead bodies and





destroyed vehicles without a major incident. Having already passed through so much danger, we thought that if we could proceed just 300 more yards we would be in a more peaceful area. The Ben Da bridge off in the distance seemed like a beacon to us. Suddenly, as thunder and lightning striking from heaven, a large explosion crashed by our side. No one gave a command but everyone turned around and began running. I slowed down and decided to remain more in the center of the road. Most of the people ran over near the convoy and immediately guns began firing in that direction. The agonizing human cries of pain and death mingling with the cracking of guns, mortars and rockets created an atmosphere of stifling fear which I had never in all my life experienced. My daughter and I quickly began digging shallow trenches in the sand with our hands. I figured these would either be miniature bunkers to save our lives or else shallow graves in which we would ever rest. We crawled into the holes and did our best to cover most of our bodies with the sand. It was extremely hot and the sand encasing us baked our skin as though we were in an oven. Many large projectiles penetrated the area where we were and exploded very near by. At this time there were many people running back and forth on the sand dunes. But I saw very few of them escape this valley of death and not one vehicle drove out of this place where the massacre took place.

It was near evening now and we were still lying there buried in the sand. We still had a long 30 miles ahead of us before reaching the old Imperial Capital of Hue. The fountain of our tears had dried up, and the moisture in our mouths had turned to paste. My daughter looked squarely in my face and said, "Daddy, please be brave. Stand up and make a break for it so that you can live and bring help and security to Mother, our family and the Church." I replied, "Daughter, it would never, never happen. I wouldn't run and leave you, my own flesh and blood, here to die." My child said, "Even though you might be wounded you still might recover." I whispered, "Then both of us must crawl away from here and leave our Honda with the hundreds of others that have been abandoned." My child disagreed. "That Honda which Roy and Nancy gave you? Dad, you can't leave it here. How will we ever get to Hue? I'll go and get it for you." She crawled very quickly towards the Honda but I was right behind her. We pushed the Honda as we crawled along, trying not to be noticed by the enemy. After doing this for about 200 yards we tried the motor. It started and we sped towards the bridge as fast as we could go. We praised the Lord as we traveled the last miles to safety because He had brought us through the valley of death and over the rivers of adversity.

On May 1st we all moved from Hue to Danang. As I visited the refugee camps there my heart was moved as I saw the crowds much like Christ described as sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless.

Today the Quang Tri people in these refugee camps are not the same self-satisfied people I had known before the invasion. The Holy Spirit has worked in the hearts of many and God has added to His Church daily. With the co-operation of the district superintendent, pastors and missionaries in our area we are teaching our new Christians, using materials of our Evangelism Deep and Wide program. Regular Sunday church services are held. Junior and Senior Youth groups have been organized. Our new Christians are trained in the use of tracts, making it easier for them to witness.

We are still far from our homes. Our beloved province of Quang Tri still has war clouds hanging over it, but the peace of God shows in the hearts of her refugees who have found Christ.

— Le Roy Josephsen



May 1 was a big Communist holiday. To cap the day off, the North Vietnamese captured their first provincial capital in South Viet Nam, Quang Tri city.

The scene is grim as thousands of refugees stream south, some to settle in Hue but most to go on to Danang, a distance of 100 miles. Every means of transportation is being used — army and civilian trucks; jeeps piled high with household effects and people crammed inside; 3-wheeled Lambrettas, tops overflowing with baggage and as many people as possible jammed in or on the vehicle; men pulling small carts stuffed with personal possessions; people carrying their meager belongings in baskets as they plod several days in their weary journey south. The road is full from the Hai Van Pass to the Danang city limits, a distance of 20 miles.

All night long the people come — not concerned about curfew or the enemy, only interested in finding a place to stop and call home for a while. Children die from hunger and exposure on the long trip. Loved ones separated from their families in the hub bub are seeking to be reunited. It may take days. People are settling everywhere — in schools (classes can wait); in abandoned U.S. military barracks; with friends, crowding as many as three or four families in a room. Some just flop down on the beach where the landing craft dropped them as they were brought by sea from Hue; some live on the backs of their trucks, or in semi-trailers that are not in use — “Any port in the time of storm” will do.

The Vietnamese people of Danang went to work. The government registered the people as rapidly as possible, attempting to control the numbers in the various camps that were set up. This was successful until Quang Tri city fell; then there was such a mass exodus that schools and camps were filled to far over capacity. One 10-room school housed 1,000 people. A camp with a comfortable capacity of 5,000 people, had 11,000. Danang city, with a normal population of 500,000 swelled to 800,000 in a matter of a week or so.

Can you imagine the implications, if, due to a disaster, the population of Akron was suddenly added to Columbus, Ohio? This is similar to what happened to Danang. More



REFUGEE

vehicles crowded the roads; more food; more water, more electric power, more sanitation facilities were needed, yet could not be provided. All was taxed to the limit. But again, the government moved quickly, aided by various private groups. Water was hauled to the refugee areas by tankers and dispensed to the families. Latrines were dug. Wells were dug by hand. Rice was distributed.

Christians pitched in to help. The Christian Youth Social Service baked and distributed bread (25,000 loaves a day at the height of the invasion) to the camps of their responsibility. The National Church gave money, rice, fish, soy sauce and noodles to the first heavy influx of refugees. Later, the Church received small kerosene stoves from World Vision





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and distributed these to the areas where firewood was scarce. Viet Nam Christian Service gave meat, sleeping mats, kerosene containers and soap to the National Church to give out to the needy. The Viet Nam Mission of the Christian and Missionary Alliance sent emergency funds to purchase rice and other commodities.

In addition to the task of meeting physical needs, the National Church began preaching and showing Gospel films in the various camps. The Josephsens, who had to leave Hue, brought with them the Pocket Testament League sound truck equipped with projector, lights, loudspeakers and platform. The International Protestant Church in Saigon provided funds for evangelism and follow-up. The movie, "The Peacemakers" which

had been filmed by Ken Anderson in the Hue-Danang area was available.

An evangelistic team began preaching the Gospel nightly, using all these resources. They received more invitations than they could handle so a second team was formed. Pastors spoke to over 3,000 people each night. The film, "The Peacemakers" was widely used and welcomed by all. Catholic priests asked that it be shown to their congregations; they said that it showed so clearly the Biblical way to Christ. President Doan-van-Mieng of the National Evangelical Church came up to Danang and preached three nights to 10,000 each night. Since the young people could not go to school (the schools being filled with refugees), they gave themselves to the task at hand. One hundred worked directly with the Christian Youth Social Service in social welfare work. Fifty gave their time to tract distribution and personal witnessing. Every Home Crusade brought their sixteen laymen from the five northern provinces for two weeks of saturation visitation in all the camps. They used the youth groups to help them, giving them valuable training in visitation efforts. They visited a camp by day, giving tracts to each family, then returned in the evening with an evangelistic team of pastors. All was beautifully coordinated for the best results. Hundreds became Christians in the many areas around Danang.

The next problem was follow-up. How and where to begin? It was decided to begin in the place that Rev. Meing had preached. Pastor Phi was to lead the training classes. He printed up simple chorus sheets, used the Evangelism Deep and Wide training material, and began his first class. One hundred came. The second week he held the same classes for eighty more. The third week he added a higher level training class and sixty people attended for ten days. This encouraged other pastors to do the same and now they are holding training sessions in six other camps for the hundreds of new converts.

There is still much to be accomplished, but much has been done. Praise the Lord! The Church has exhibited in the refugee program in Danang a love for God and a love for its neighbors. Pray that God will grant wisdom and strength as it continues to look for opportunities to be of service to God and to its own countrymen.

— Woody Stemple



CHINESE

Ancestral rites must be performed by male descendents. Therefore male children are looked upon as the greatest of all blessings. They continue the clan, and, by sacrifices, assure the happy after-life of the ancestral spirits.

If sincerity and zeal in worship alone could bring salvation, certainly the Chinese people would have hope for the future. The daily burning of incense sticks at family altars, the making of good offerings on the first and fifteenth of each lunar month as well as on many special feast days throughout the year, and the honoring of their countless deities, all require a great deal of effort and money.

In order to reach these people for Christ we must understand ancestor worship with a sympathetic heart. For the Christian, where he used to worship ancestors, now he worships the living God. In order to worship God truly, there is need to remove sacrificing to spirits, gods and ancestors — remembering the ancestors but not worshipping them.

Scripture describes superstitious people as "darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them" (Ephesians 4:18). Satan has long blinded the minds of many Chinese, keeping them from seeing the light of the Gospel. Only through much believing prayer in the name of Jesus will this power be broken. Will you pray?

"Three ways to one goal" is a phrase common among Chinese to explain why they practice the rites and revere the divinities of Buddhism and Taoism, and follow the ethics of Confucianism. The fact that there is mutual contradiction in the teachings of these three religions does not seem to disturb their followers.

For the past 200 centuries Chinese intellectuals have been Confucianists. They emphasize ethics and the maintenance of the social order of Chinese society. They do not want people to think they believe in gods and spirits. However, the common people are different. They have combined elements of Buddhism and Taoism with animism. They

WORSHIP

By Elizabeth Arnold

worship heaven, earth, spirits, gods and ancestors.

But, no matter which of these three religions a Chinese may profess to follow, ancestor worship is a creed to which Chinese, in general, pay reverence. Intellectuals insist that this is not a religion, but a social order to show respect to parents and ancestors. But to the common people ancestor worship is a religion. As early as 1500 B.C. this form of worship was actively practiced. In order to guarantee the continual existence of ancestral spirits and insure their aid, appropriate sacrifices and certain rites are practiced.

Man is said to have both an animal and a spiritual soul. At death, the animal soul remains with the corpse, drawing nourishment from offerings

made at the tomb. However, when the body decays, the animal soul sinks into the underworld, continuing as a shadowy existence. The spiritual soul ascends to the palace of the "Supreme Ancestor." In order to reach it safely, evil forces must be overcome, requiring sacrifices and prayers by living members of the clan. Upon reaching heaven the ancestral spirit becomes a powerful and helpful deity.

Existence of both souls depends upon sacrifices. If offerings cease or are insufficient, the animal soul becomes a ghost and is hostile to all living people. Neither can the spiritual soul continue to be happy if ancestral sacrifices cease. It, too, becomes a ghost, condemned to eternal misery.



REVIVAL SPREADS

IN THE HIGHLANDS

"All week long the Lord has been closer to me than He was before."

The pastor of the church where the December revival began among the Koho tribal people had just told me of an experience of his, in reply to my query as to how things are nowadays in his church. He related that six days earlier he had accidentally walked into something that drove a very rusty nail into the top of his foot. It was very painful and he was quite concerned because he knew the danger of tetanus. He said that every morning he kept his quiet time with the Lord, but that he had forgotten it that day. Right away he asked God to forgive him for this and to heal his foot. The hurt went away. Now he showed us where it had been — entirely healed.

When revival broke out at the Nhatrang Bible School early in December, the five Koho students there were filled with the Spirit. Returning to Dalat for Christmas week, they shared with their friends what God had done for them and for others. After the Dalat Christmas program, two of these young men gave their testimonies and urged the young people to get right with the Lord. Soon scores of them were sobbing as they confessed sin to God and to one another, and prayed one for the other. Gradually there were shouts of "Hallelujah!" and "Praise the Lord!", then singing of praises to Him who had transformed them. It was 3:30 a.m. when I left this meeting; many of the young people remained until 7 o'clock. Next day they returned to their villages for Christmas. Empowered by the Holy Spirit they reported what God had done for them.

The Holy Spirit brought conviction of sin and confession in many churches, with numerous all-night prayer meetings. Usually, where the pastor went down before the Lord in repentance and confession of sin, the church followed. As Christians confessed sins, they forsook old heathen fetishes and hidden charms, some having been passed down from generation to generation. These totaled several million piasters in value. They began to pay back to God tithes they had withheld from Him.

Then He filled His cleansed children with the Holy Spirit. Sparked by the youth the revival spread from village to village like wildfire. Hundreds of conversions and healings were noted. Some young people were so changed at this time that they spent

their full time going from village to village to share with others what Christ had just done for them.

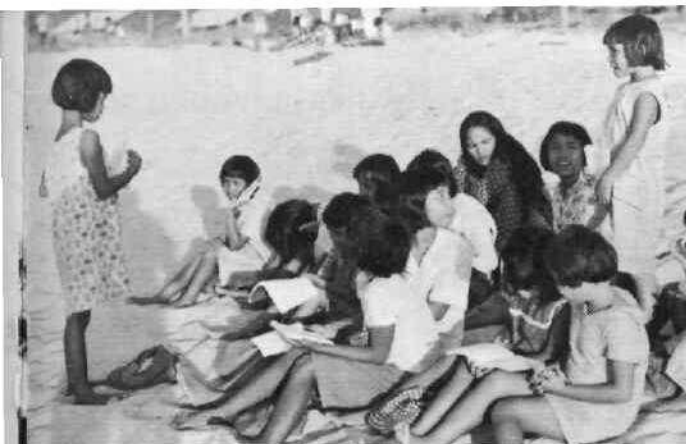
During the Spring months revival continued to spread as a slow-burning fire in the Koho area. But other tribal groups were being included. The nearby Chru people of the Don Duong area experienced revival in most of their churches. A team of teenagers went to Banmethuot to share with the Raday what God had been doing in the Dalat area. A few Raday Bible School students were set a flame with the fire of the Holy Spirit. One went to a village, told what had happened and many people turned to Christ in faith and repentance. Another went home to his Mnong tribe. He with others, became instruments of the Lord in bringing over 500 people to trust in Jesus Christ. Two Mnongs have been raised from the dead with the result that many more heathen have become Christians.

Later Pastors Sau and Kar and a son of the former went to Banmethuot. The timing was right; revival fires broke out in many of the Raday churches. A young Raday couple serving the Lord in a Jerai church had a wonderful revival in their midst, and thus the Pleiku district began to experience a visitation of God's Holy Spirit.

In February when most of the Nhatrang Bible School students were home for Tet vacation, a young Koho student joined his Bru friend going to the Quang Tri area. During the week there, over 50 tribal people accepted Christ, while many Christians got right with the Lord. How graciously God timed this working of His Spirit, to prepare the Bru people for the North Vietnamese invasion which came about a month later. The Stieng tribe in and around An Loc also experienced revival blessing before the terrible fighting and siege of that city.

Gradually the high emotional pitch of the earlier month of revival has settled down, but I believe that in many of the churches the spiritual plane is higher than it was before the revival came. The spectacular things that became almost common last winter are not as evident now, but the Holy Spirit is still at work in hearts. As revival continues to spread in the Highlands, we praise God for what He has done. We pray that this will be but the beginning of a moving of the Holy Spirit that will spread throughout all of North and South Viet Nam for His glory.

— Helen Evans



SON HA ORPHANAGE

Ten years ago Dr. Stuart Harverson and his wife were living in a Hrey village ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of the Hrey tribesmen. But due to the increased activity of the Communist guerrillas, Dr. Harverson knew that his work in the villages would be limited if not impossible. He and his wife prayed that the Lord would give them young people who would learn to read, then teach others. As they traveled from village to village they saw many young boys busy farming distant fields or fighting in the militia. Then the guerrillas closed the roads around the hamlets. Hungry orphans began to appear. When it became impossible to care for them in the hills, Dr. Harverson flew them to the coast where he established the Son-Ha Orphanage near the city of Danang.

During the first years the Harversons tried to teach them all together from the few Hrey books they had translated. More recently he has chosen twelve older children to be "captains." Each captain chose his "lieutenant" and together they chose eight "soldiers" to be on their team. Says Dr. Harverson, "That solved all the problems of attendance and attention in meetings."

Each morning at sunrise the twelve little groups meet on the beach to sing and study the Bible. They have already studied most of the New Testament books and a book of Old Testament characters. After prayer and

singing they take turns reading the verses; then each one memorizes a verse. The "captains" give a short message followed by another hymn and prayer. Even the six year olds can take their turn at participating in the meetings.

After breakfast they all attend the regular Vietnamese elementary school. The older children study English and various instruments. One day U.S. Marine major walking on the beach half a mile away was startled to hear a trumpet playing "What a Friend we have in Jesus!" After the evening meeting the 24 captains and lieutenants meet for prayer. They are hoping to spend a few weeks of their vacation to return to their villages in the hills to teach their people to read. They want to share what they have learned in the Bible lessons. But to get there they will have to fly over the heads of the encircling Communist forces. The children are praying for a way to get there and back again.

Says Dr. Harverson, an Englishman affiliated with the United World Mission, "We do not know what the future holds for these young people. Most of the original Hrey tribal area is held by the Communists. May Christ be magnified in these young lives, whether by life or by death."





GOD SPARES A YOUNG MAN

FROM BUNKER TO BLESSING

By Marion Collins

As Dieu Huynh and his fiancée, K'Sup, huddled in the crowded bunker, they thought of the day they had chosen for their wedding. Instead of marriage and a day of joy with friends, they knew loneliness, fear and danger. "It was the saddest day," said Dieu Huynh, recalling May 14, 1972.

Dieu Huynh, a young Stieng tribesman, pastor to his own people, was trapped in the city of An Loc during the assault by the North Vietnamese army.

Thousands of rounds of rockets and mortars were pounding the city. A group of religious leaders — Buddhist, Catholic and Protestant — decided to flee for their lives and Dieu Huynh and his fiancée made plans to go with them. The day before the group was to leave, Dieu Huynh narrowly escaped death as one of the many rockets falling into the city exploded in the branches of a mango tree just over his head. Now seriously wounded, he was unable to leave. The others went on without him, only to be captured by the North Vietnamese soldiers.

He was taken by friends to the province hospital where conditions were crowded and unpleasant. Lack of supplies resulted in inadequate care during the five days he spent there. The shrapnel wounds in his side and heel received fresh dressings only twice during the next two months.

Friends became deeply concerned for Dieu Huynh's life as it became apparent that the enemy was concentrating rocket and mortar attacks on the hospital. One rocket landed in a room only ten feet from where he lay in his bed. Although he was far from well, friends felt constrained to move him and carried him to one of their homes. Just a few hours later, that very night, a rocket landed directly on the bed where Dieu Huynh had been. The young soldier who had moved into the bed was killed.

Heavy attacks on the city continued. Dieu Huynh was in a home that seemed to be in grave danger. Once again friends moved him, this time to the home of the Vietnamese family that had lovingly cared for him as a young boy.

Hearing of another group of people who were planning to leave the city, K'Sup urged Dieu Huynh to go too. But when the time came to leave he felt so weak with pain it was impossible for them to move him. Longing to escape, they were held back. Later it was learned that everyone in the group that left was either killed or captured by enemy soldiers.

The Province Chief gave an order that no one was to attempt to leave the city unless permission was given and it was considered safe. In spite of the order, sometime later, a group made plans to leave. Dieu Huynh, now somewhat better, was invited to join the little exodus. He wanted to take his fiancée out of the city but felt within his heart he should not leave. It was clear to him that God was telling him not to go.

A few days later, the Province Chief announced that it was safe to leave. Walking along the road outside the city, they saw the bodies of the people who had left earlier. The North Vietnamese soldiers had killed them all.

Dieu Huynh and his K'Sup made their way to Saigon where the government assigned them to one of the refugee camps. They were married on July 2, 1972.

Since then many Stieng have accepted Christ into their lives in the refugee camp. Previously they had refused to listen in their villages near An Loc. Each week over 800 Stieng refugees meet to study the Bible. These are divided into 26 prayer cells. Dieu Huynh teaches the weekly lesson to the 26 cell leaders and they in turn teach the people in their groups.

Dieu Huynh feels that God has brought the Stieng out of An Loc in order to have another opportunity to hear the preaching of the Gospel. Pray for him and the lay leaders he is training.



DIARY of a MISSIONARY

By Dick Phillips

FRIDAY. August is considered not at all too early to begin practicing Christmas carols. Since the Mngong hymnal has been newly revised but not yet printed, we decided it would be important to put out a mimeographed edition of the Christmas section. Lillian typed the stencils and decorated the covers with pictures. In the evening a group of Mngong church leaders marched round and round our dining room table assembling the pages and stapling them in the colored covers.

SATURDAY. The preachers left Bannmethuot by bus early in the morning. They picked up the young people in their villages and took them to Quang Duc for the conference. I planned to travel there by air, since the road is unsafe for foreigners. But it is the rainy season, and after waiting for hours at the airport I was told that the plane had been cancelled. The next possible flight is not till Tuesday.

I put the box of hymnals on a bus going to Quang Duc. At least it will arrive for the conference, even if I don't.

SUNDAY. After church I was thankful to get a seat on a plane to Saigon. Saigon is far out of the way to Quang Duc. But it does have more flights to Quang Duc — and also better weather — than Bannmethuot.

MONDAY. Thank the Lord for a flight to Quang Duc this morning, though all the seats had been sold out for days. Someone must have cancelled out . . .

The conference was already in progress when I arrived. There are seventy Mngong here, fellows and girls in their teens and early twenties — a wonderful group. I started teaching right away on a survey of God's plan of the ages. There is keen interest. Many of the young people are looking for God's plan for their own lives.

For some reason the box of hymnals hasn't arrived yet.

The Vietnamese missionary to the Mngong has been carrying most of the load so far. He was having double vision and severe headaches last week but is better now. Last night his wife, who does the marketing for groups like this, was taken violently ill. The youth have been having special times of prayer for her.

TUESDAY. She was better this morning.

I'm no artist, but it seems helpful when I make crude drawings to illustrate my lessons. How do you illustrate Abraham's call to go to the Promised Land? I have him tugging on a camel. Unfortunately, the camel bears a strong resemblance to Snoopy in the comic strip.

This morning a Viet Cong mine exploded on the highway five miles from here. It killed eight people and wounded 25, and demolished the truck they were riding. Someone remarked that there is a VC incident close by during every Mngong Village Bible School session or conference. Thankfully all of the conference delegates have already arrived. But the province hospital is a sad place today.

The two older Mngong pastors are helping with the teaching. Just after one had finished his class this afternoon, a messenger rode in on a bicycle from his village to tell him that his sick child had just died. He left for home immediately, with the prayers of the group surrounding him. One of the really hard things for Montagnard pastors who have gone forth to preach the Gospel is to have to bury their dead in a village that is not their own. It seemed to help when one of the young people pointed out that there are missionary graves in Bannmethuot.

Late this afternoon the hymnals finally arrived. What a welcome! Everyone was eager too to sort through the Christmas cards that I suggested they paste on the covers.

WEDNESDAY. The young people are practicing a song with 2-part harmony. It is a new experience for most of them. After learning their parts in separate buildings, the two groups tried it together. The aim seems to be for each side to shout out the other!

A more heartwarming kind of noise comes from the prayer sessions. The whole group prays out loud, like in a Korean prayer meeting. A new Mngong term I have heard coined recently — "shout-and-pray" — pretty well describes the result. Revival fires, kindled in the churches during the past several months, have brought a real confidence in God and a hunger for righteousness. A dozen or two of the young people have been skipping their noon meals here for extra time to pray.

The District Superintendent arrived this afternoon after a bone-jarring bus ride from Bannmethuot. It took seven hours to do the 100 miles. He almost didn't make it; the bus left without him, and he chased it on a motorbike as far as the first highway security check station. We appreciate his coming.

This evening a young man told of how he and his family were converted seven years ago. It was through a tract, the first Mngong tract I ever wrote. Now he is one of the few Mngongs that have reached high school, and his aim in life is to serve the Lord.

THURSDAY. The Superintendent was invited here especially to speak on "Yielding Your Life to God." The Christians in this tribe have multiplied beyond the ability of the few preachers to shepherd them properly. New church workers are desperately needed.

At the close of the meeting three young men stepped forward. One is an impetuous, outspoken person who has already offended several church leaders with his misdirected zeal. What a firebrand he could be under God's control!

The Viet Cong are looking for recruits too. They entered a nearby village last night and forcibly led away 30 of the able-bodied men.

The classes are going well. Many of the students have copied my drawings illustrating turning-points in Bible history. Their camels are even wilder creations than mine, but at least the pictures should serve as memory prodders. The kids love the carol they have just learned, "Angels We Have Heard on High."

I paid a call on the Assistant Province Chief and the head of elementary education. We have talked before about the Mngong language textbooks that I have prepared. Today I was delighted to hear that these books will be issued to all the Mngong schools in the province beginning with this school year. I have already trained the teachers in how to use them. This will be a real boost for Mngong children who want schooling but would have great difficulty starting out in Vietnamese. It will also develop a large readership for the Christian literature we have prepared.

FRIDAY. This was the last day. A young man told how God had completely changed his ambitions. He now wants to be a zero, that together with God, he will make 10. The crowd listened intently. The Lord was speaking to many.

The District Superintendent's sermon today was on forgiveness. It must have been divinely directed. Afterwards there were pairs and groups standing here and there, with prayers and tears and handclaps, mending relationships that had become strained, and clearing the ground for God's blessing.

We had a fellowship feast in the evening. It concluded a wonderful week in which Mngong young people sought and found a purpose for their lives — God's purpose.

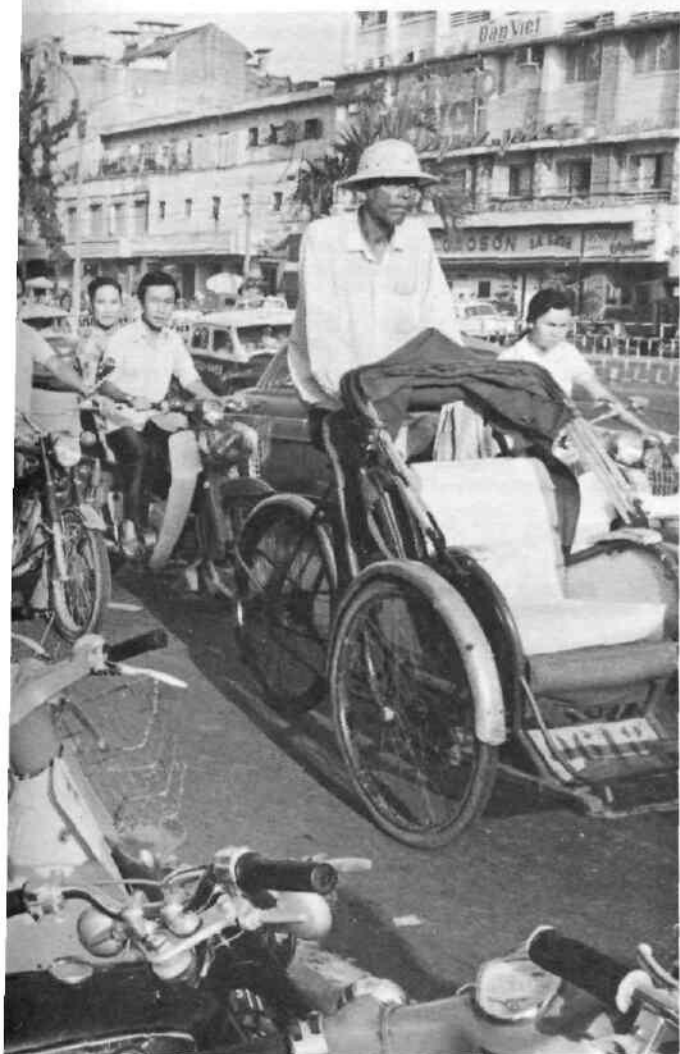


SAIGON

In the year 2000, just 28 years away, if the population of Saigon continues to grow unchecked there will be 11 million people in that great metropolis. To say this another way — in the year 2000 there will be as many people in the Saigon metropolitan area alone as there were in all of Viet Nam North and South, when the first Protestant missionaries arrived 60 years ago.

South Viet Nam's primate city had unpretentious beginnings. A century ago it was little more than a rural town of 25,000. Some of its now-famous downtown streets were still canals. Saigon then became the capital of France's first and only out-right colony in Indochina. The French expended considerable energy and expense in building it into a modern city. The Protestant missionaries who came to Saigon in 1918 were amazed to find road and rail systems befitting the best cities in Europe. They remarked frequently on its park-like beauty reflected in its broad, tree-lined boulevards and spacious tropical gardens. The accolade, "Pearl of the Far East," they agreed, was one that suited Saigon.

Saigon continued to grow along fairly controlled lines until 1940 when there were about half a million people — the number the city was originally designed to accommodate. But then, due mainly to the war, the population rocketed out of control. It quadrupled in two decades bringing the 1960 total to more than 2 million! Another million and a half was added during the 1960's bringing the present population to 3.5 million. Because of continued rural to urban migration and sporadic war-refugee movements, Saigon continues to mushroom in jerry-built confusion at a rate three times faster than the general population. The condition





The most unchurched city in all of free Asia. . . Will she remain that way?

is hard to imagine unless one has walked through one of Saigon's countless alleys and witnessed the wall to wall homes with end to end tin roofs.

A city of such size and such a rate of growth clearly presents a massive challenge for Christian missions. Less than 1/10 of 1% of its population meets for Sunday morning worship in its 42 Protestant churches. It is clear that Protestant Christianity has scarcely made an impact on Viet Nam's capital city. The Church stands at the threshold of her evangelistic task. In terms of discipling men, baptizing them and incorporating them into living churches, she has just begun.

It is true that in some ways city dwellers appear to be less responsive to the Gospel than country people. A pioneer missionary in Viet Nam remarked that city people had added the "vices of civilization" to their ancient superstitions. It is also true that in the crowded conditions and noise of urban squalor a thousand things compete with the Gospel for a hearing. Yet a careful observer sees in urban Asia advantages as well as obstacles in the propagation of the Gospel. New-comers who flood into cities come away from the close control of families and intimates. Their priests and religious leaders no longer know where they are. The old gods of the hearth, field and forest, and the evil spirits whom they feared have been left behind. Like the city dwellers of New Testament times they should be receptive to the Gospel. What is more, they are easily accessible. No week-long treks through mountains and jungles to find a hundred people. Millions in Saigon are within an hours walk or drive of missionaries and national Christians.

In the face of such opportunities what will we as Christians, both local and international have to do to

see great numbers of churches planted in Saigon? First, we must work and pray that the present churches will be revitalized by the Holy Spirit so that Christians will be driven out to share their faith, that their witness will be effective. It was an intense, fervent faith that led to the patristic capture of the great cities of the ancient worlds . . . those cities which lent their names to the books of the New Testament and made the initial Christian movement an urban one. Second, urban church planters must be unhampered by traditional methods and ideas which prevent rapid church growth. There must continue to be bold experiments in house churches, storefront churches, rented facilities and in apartment churches in multi-storied buildings. Then, the Church of Jesus Christ will have to invest her very finest apostles, her strongest and most innovative missionaries in urban evangelism. But she will not rely on them alone. Rather, the Church will have to teach thousands of ordinary men — laborers, clerks, mechanics, and truck drivers — to tell what God has done for them, to lead in prayer and to teach the Bible. When such men and women in close contact with their own people are vigorously and naturally sharing their faith, then Christ may indeed become the object of faith of Saigon's urban masses.

Missionaries and national Christians in Viet Nam have eyed with wholesome jealousy what happened in Seoul, Korea, an Asian neighbor of Viet Nam, where the number of Protestant congregations jumped from 20 in 1950 to nearly 1000 in 1970. We believe God wills to do the same in Saigon. What will you do to help?

— Reg Reimer

THE LEGEND OF THE SRE

The people of the Sre Tribe number about 30,000 and live on the Di Linh Plateau 140 miles north of Saigon. They, unlike other tribal groups who sow their rice in dry fields scattered over the mountain sides, cultivate irrigated rice paddies as do the Vietnamese. Their name, SRE, means "Wet rice field."

Once upon a time, many years ago, there lived two brothers.

One brother was wealthy, the other, very poor. Because the rich brother refused to help his poor brother, the god of the mountain did.

When the time came to plow the fields for planting, the poor brother and his wife needed a buffalo to help them, so they went to the rich brother and asked for the loan of one.

He refused. "If I loaned you an animal," he said, "I would become involved in your business affairs and that would make me responsible for any debts you might incur."

The poor couple returned to their home and sadly contemplated their unplowed field. Finally they decided that since they had no buffalo they would use their cat and dog. These were led to the field and hitched up to the plow. The two creatures just stood there in the dirt. To make them move the poor brother first struck the cat. It cried, "Miaow."

Then he struck the dog who went, "Wow Wow." When the god of their mountain heard and saw this he laughed in amusement. Out of his mouth dropped two chunks of gold, each as large as a man's forearm. Amazed, the poor brother ran over and picked up the treasure. After selling the gold he found that he not only had enough money to supply him with all the necessities of life, but he had so much left over that he was now as rich as his brother.

When the news of his formerly poverty stricken brother's good fortune reached his ears, the rich brother came for a visit to see if what he had heard was true. He was received enthusiastically by his brother who bore him no grudge. The feast that had been prepared for him lasted well into the night.

At its conclusion the rich brother said. "Now, you know we are brothers, and I love you very much. Won't you tell me the secret of how you gained your wealth?"

His brother was happy to comply with his request and told him the whole story.

The next day the rich brother returned to his home. After he told his wife what he had learned, they decided that they would have to do the same thing. He hitched up his dog and cat to the plow. As the two animals stood there unmoving, the rich brother whipped the cat. It miaowed. He whipped the dog and it barked. At this the mountain god of their area smiled broadly.

In his mouth were many pieces of silver. The rich man ran up to the god and thrust his hand into his mouth to take out the silver. But the god of the mountain closed his mouth, clamping the hand of the rich brother firmly between his teeth. The greedy man struggled and struggled, but was unable to free himself. So he died up there on the mountain and was never seen again.

