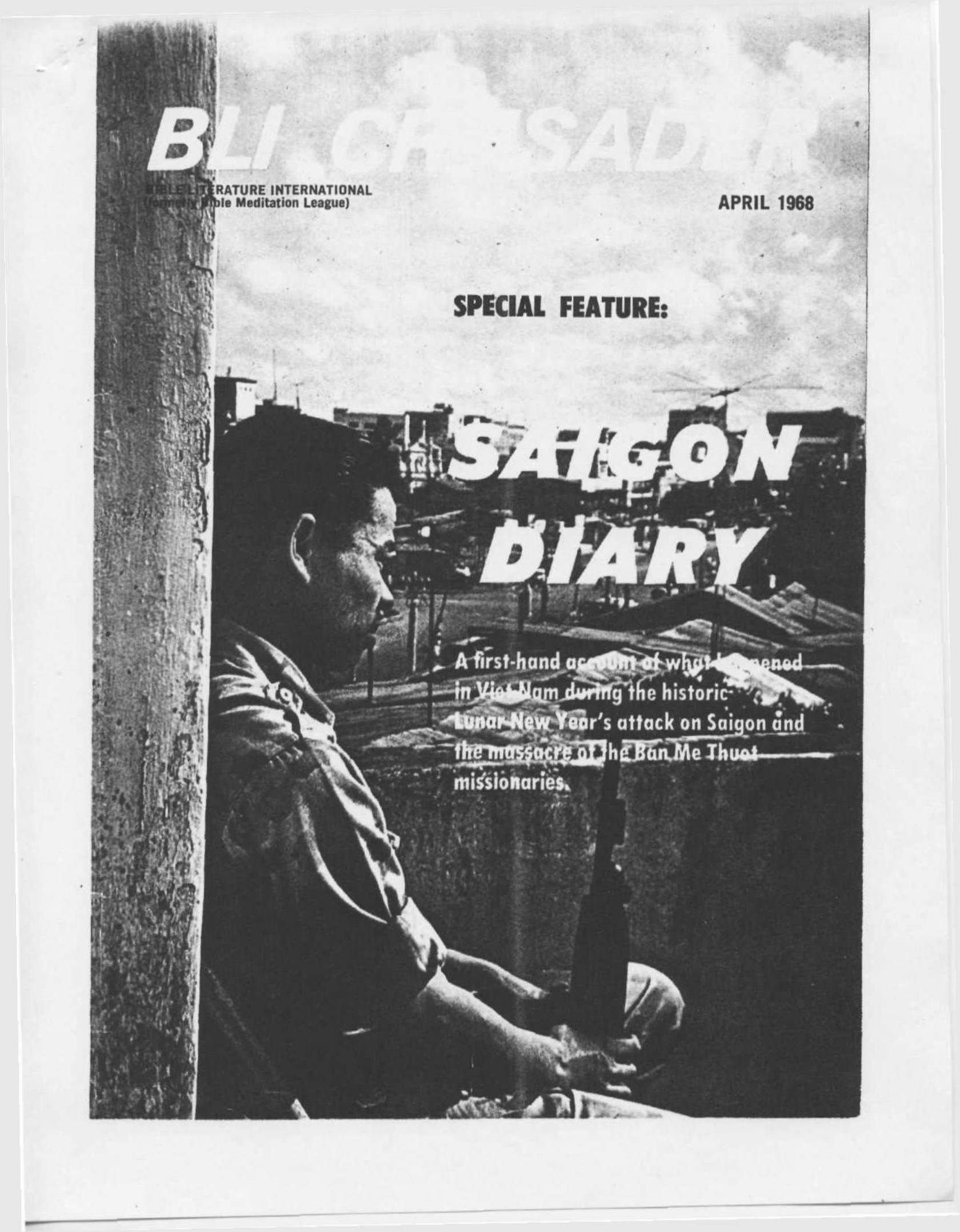


BIBLE LITERATURE INTERNATIONAL



BIBLE LITERATURE INTERNATIONAL
(formerly Bible Meditation League)

APRIL 1968

SPECIAL FEATURE:

SAIGON DIARY

A first-hand account of what happened
in Viet Nam during the historic
Lunar New Year's attack on Saigon and
the massacre of the Ban Me Thuot
missionaries.

"... Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

In 1959, I had the opportunity of visiting Viet Nam for the first time and spending a couple of days in the home of a close friend of college days, Bob Ziemer, and his wife, Marie . . . in the very home that was blown up by the Viet Cong this past February. Recently, in going through some old correspondence, I came across this letter I wrote home during that 1959 visit with the Ziemers:

"The sky was filled with a billion eyes as Bob and I drove out to a village back in the wilderness a few miles from Ban Me Thuot. Our destination was a tribal village church. I have heard about roads like the one we traveled, but I had never expected to see one. This is missionary work as I had always imagined it would be.

"After about a half hour of bumping along this 'highway', we came upon a village of thatched-roofed houses. In the middle of the village was a bamboo church built on stilts about four feet high. Its only entry was a bamboo step ladder. Inside, a single kerosene lamp was suspended above a table which served as a pulpit.

"Although we were not expected, a fine crowd soon gathered and filled the little church. Several songs were sung in Raday . . . familiar tunes, but very strange-sounding words. I had the privilege of giving my testimony while Bob interpreted it. Then Bob launched into a message in Raday. Before him on the floor was a sea of brown, upturned faces. Many of them were women with little sleeping babies fastened to their backs. All were drinking in the message. As Bob spoke, I couldn't understand much of what he was saying, but I don't know when I have been so blessed by a message.

"As I watched Bob, our days together at Asbury College came to mind. I remembered the time he almost drowned during a summer vacation, and his testimony that, as he went under the water, his only thought was, 'Now I'll never be a missionary.'

"This young man could have been a high-salaried pastor sought after by many churches in America. Yet, here he was, as some would say, 'buried' in missionary work in Viet Nam . . . way back among the tribe of the Raday.

"How many young people would be able to make such a sacrifice today? But is it a sacrifice? Bob and Marie would be the first to say a resounding 'No.'

"If you could have been with me tonight and felt what my heart experienced, you would say with me. 'This is living.' A sea of upturned faces was mute evidence of the reward far beyond high salaries, expensive cars, and large bank accounts.

"God was here. Surely Heaven could not be too great an improvement on this."

On February 1, 1968, the Viet Cong ended the lives of Bob Ziemer and five other missionaries at Ban Me Thuot. We are certain if Bob could speak to us today he would say, "As much as we love Viet Nam, Heaven is much better. This is *really* living!"

We, of Bible Literature International are determined that Bob and his co-workers shall not have died in vain.

J. M. Falkenberg, President

APRIL 1968 BLI CRUSADER VOL. 45, NO. 11

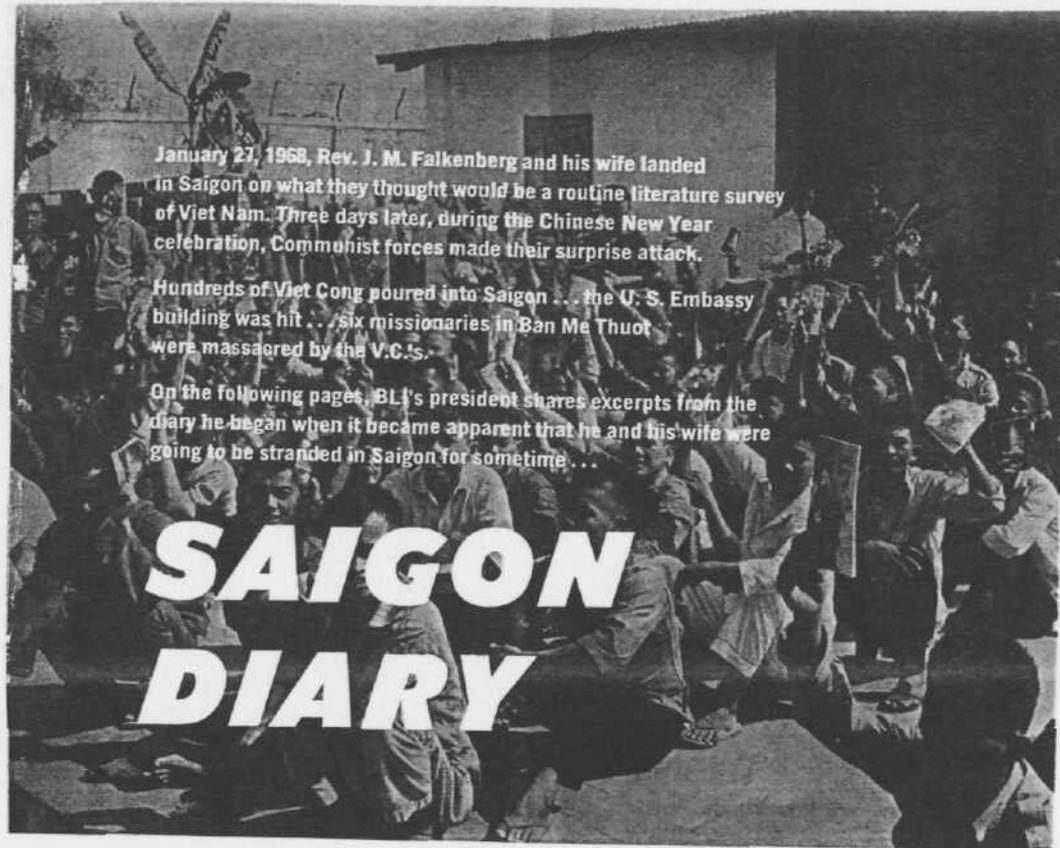
EDITORIAL STAFF: John M. Falkenberg, Editor-in-chief; William C. Armstrong, Executive Editor.

BLI OFFICERS: John M. Falkenberg, President; Perry A. Temple, Executive Secretary; Max Smoker, Vice President; Don B. Shively, Board Chairman; G. A. Hutchison Secretary; Robert M. Ramage, Treasurer.

BOARD OF REFERENCE: Nathan Bailey, Robert A. Cook, Ted W. Engstrom, Eugene A. Erny, George L. Ford, Jared Gerlis, William A. Gilliam, Charles Gorton, Clyde W. Taylor, George R. Warner, Thomas F. Zimmerman.

Second class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio. Published monthly by Bible Literature International, Inc., a non-profit religious corporation with International Headquarters at 957 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43205. Subscription is free. Correspondence and changes of address should be sent to: BLI, PO Box 477, Columbus, Ohio 43216. Canadian address is: BLI, 948 Marentette Avenue, Windsor, Ontario. Please send change of address at least 30 days in advance of moving date, making sure to include old address along with the new one.

PURPOSE OF BLI: Bible Literature International (formerly Bible Meditation League), founded in 1923 by Don H. Falkenberg, now President Emeritus, serves over 200 mission boards in more than 100 nations with free, colorful, evangelical literature and scriptures in over 175 languages.



January 27, 1968, Rev. J. M. Falkenberg and his wife landed in Saigon on what they thought would be a routine literature survey of Viet Nam. Three days later, during the Chinese New Year celebration, Communist forces made their surprise attack.

Hundreds of Viet Cong poured into Saigon . . . the U. S. Embassy building was hit . . . six missionaries in Ban Me Thuot were massacred by the V.C.'s.

On the following pages, BLI's president shares excerpts from the diary he began when it became apparent that he and his wife were going to be stranded in Saigon for sometime . . .

SAIGON DIARY

Sat., Jan. 27, 1968: Dot and I were met in at Saigon airport shortly after noon by R. F. Rexilius, Literature Director for C&MA, who hails from Lincoln, Nebraska. "Rex" then drove us to the home of Jim and Jean Livingston.

On the way, Rex informed us my plane reservation to fly to the missionary compound in Ban Me Thuot, 200 miles north of Saigon, on Monday had been cancelled by Air America. Too bad . . . I had been looking forward to that trip ever since the reservation was made months ago. So many of our friends are there. Also, we wanted to see the large new national church which had just recently been dedicated.

Dot was taken to C&MA Guest Home while Jim whisked me off to the Quang Trung Camp, the induction center for the Vietnamese army.

Arriving at Quang Trung, we loaded our arms with hundreds of copies of RANG DONG magazine, which we distributed in the barracks. Witnessed a hunger for literature never seen in America.

Jim told me in his Alabama drawl, "RANG DONG is the finest Christian publication in Viet Nam. I tell you, Jack, I personally use 8,000 copies of RANG DONG each month. I could use 40,000 if they were available."

I came back here to the Guest Home for dinner. After dinner tonight, we were sitting around the table with missionary friends, including Marie Ziemer, Bob and Peggy Gunther, Ruth Thompson, Dave and Helen May Douglas, Dick and Marge Pendell, Fred and Carol Henry, Franklin and Doris Irwin, and Fred Zoeller. The phone rang. It was Bob Ziemer, beloved friend of Asbury College days, calling from Ban Me Thuot. His wife, Marie, was called to the phone.

Quang Duc had been hit by the Viet Cong. Dave Douglas breathed, "My brother is there." Ruth Thompson murmured, "We're building a home there."

This is a nation at war. It's beginning to come home to us.

Sun., Jan. 28: "Family Day" at Quang Trung, a day when relatives visit the soldiers in training here.

A mob scene almost developed as some soldiers scuffled briefly to get their copies of RANG DONG.

An unforgettable experience this afternoon . . . the Livingstons took Dot and me to Binh Bien Cong Hoa military hospital. Walked through ward after ward. Here were the amputees, the blind, the deaf, the maimed . . . casualties of the strange war in Viet Nam. They really appreciated our coming. Again, RANG DONG was the feature performer.

We were told of a soldier whose ear drums had burst when a VC shell exploded near him, leaving him totally deaf. Receiving a copy of RANG DONG in his ward, he was introduced to Jesus Christ. Coming to the hospital chaplain's office, he met the assistant chaplain, a Vietnamese national Christian who had also been wounded in action. Through an exchange of notes with the assistant chaplain, he accepted Christ as his

"Here we are in the large Quang Trung military induction center giving out copies of RANG DONG magazine. This 52-page, full-color magazine, printed with BLI funds, was the feature performer everywhere we went. Jim Livingston told us, 'RANG DONG is the finest Christian publication in Viet Nam. I personally hand out 8,000 copies each month. I could use 40,000 if they were available.'"

personal Saviour. To think that soldier has never heard of Christ and never will, but now he reads constantly of Him.

This afternoon, Marie Ziemer and Ruth Thompson flew back to Ban Me Thuot to join their husbands there.

Climax of day was evening chapel service at hospital. From all over the grounds, the men hobbled into the chapel on crutches and canes. Just before the service, here came Jim Livingston cradling in his arms a double amputee. It was almost more than I could take after an emotion-packed day.

Mon., Jan. 29: Tonight began the celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year, TET, with the wildest display of fireworks we've ever seen. At midnight, we were up on the roof overlooking Saigon when it seemed like everything broke loose. It sounded like a million fire crackers going off. A pall of smoke hung over the city. We were told that each merchant tries to outdo the other in his fireworks display. It is like Christ-

mas, New Year's, and the Fourth of July all rolled into one.

Finally, went to bed at 1 a.m.

Tues., Jan. 30: The uproar of the exploding fireworks continues all over the city.

This afternoon, continuing a long-time custom in Viet Nam, all of the Saigon missionaries met at the Guest Home and then went in several cars to call on officials and pastors of the Saigon churches.

7:30 p.m.—Enjoyed a time of fellowship in Guest Home with many of the Saigon missionaries. Everyone in a rather festive mood.

Wed., Jan. 31: The Viet Nam war came to Saigon last night!

The Communists chose this time of the TET celebration to launch a surprise attack during the night. The mortar bursts and automatic weapons fire were far different from the firecrackers of the previous night.

Announcement was made on the radio during the morning that all Viet Nam is under martial law and all planes in and out of Saigon have been cancelled. The airport was attacked by VC's Tues. night, as were the American Embassy (19 VC's and 8 Americans killed), Vietnamese Navy base, and six other key installations. During the morning, we saw dive bombers bomb the Viet Cong. Sky was filled with helicopters.

Two jeep ambulances went roaring by Guest Home, each with wounded soldier in plain view.

The VC's were under fire two blocks from here. Tracers went by Fred Zoeller's window at 1:30 a.m.

Thurs., Feb. 1: Went downtown with "Rex" Rexilius. We were stopped by U. S. jeep and reminded by GI's that Saigon is under curfew.

4:30 p.m.—Jim and Jean Livingston are here at the Guest Home. They and their children spent all last night on the floor of their house. The VC's were all around their neighborhood. Their home was hit many times with bullets.

8:00 p.m.—Tonight's news report indicates heavy fighting in both Ban Me Thuot and Dalat.

Fri., Feb. 2: 7:30 a.m.—I am back on the roof top after quite a night of waking often to the sound of bombing and automatic weapons fire.

Directly across the street are the headquarters for the National Security Police (similar to the FBI in U. S.). The cook here at the Guest Home says the VC will hit the NSP complex, if at all possible. A barricade has been set up on the street below, and the guards are frisking everyone that comes through.



"At Binh Bien Cong Hoa military hospital, we came face to face with the casualties of the strange war in Viet Nam . . . the amputees, the blind, the deaf, the maimed. They seemed to appreciate our coming, and especially receiving copies of RANG DONG."

At the barbed-wire checkpoint this morning, a man on a motor bike was found to have a gun on his person. He was marched, at gun point, to the Security headquarters.

1:00 p.m.—Just as we finished lunch, we looked out the window in time to see two Vietnamese soldiers ushering three men up the street, hands locked behind their heads and guns pointed at their backs.

As a result of Peggy Gunther's seeing two people walk across the roofs right up to the Guest Home this afternoon, four soldiers will be stationed on the roof here all night. We may have to spend the night *under* the bed, instead of *on* it.

9:15 p.m.—Dot and I got a little fright when we were met by two Vietnamese on the stairs. It turned out they were soldiers in civies about to take their post on the roof for the night! Whew!

9:45 p.m.—Just ready to step into shower when a burst of gunfire came from the roof. Shots were ringing out up and down the street.

We threw on some clothes and inched our way outside. The street was swarming with soldiers. Two men were being searched. They were then blindfolded with their own black shirts, and hauled away to Security headquarters across the street.



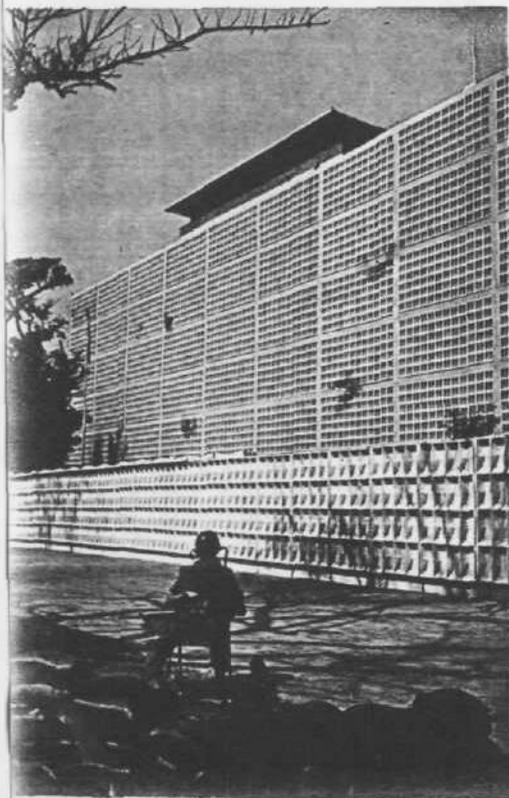
Sat., Feb. 3: 7:30 a.m.—A fairly quiet night. A period of heavy bombing occurred around 3:00 a.m. not far away. Then, a burst of machine gun fire nearby at 6:00 a.m.

7:45 a.m.—Dave Douglas just knocked on our door to bring tragic news. Several good friends were killed at Ban Me Thuot last night.

Our dear friend, Bob Ziemer, was killed. His wife, Marie, was wounded and is in the hospital at Nhatrang. Carolyn Griswold was wounded and died in the hospital. Her father, Leon, was killed. Others killed were Ed and Ruth Thompson (Ruth was in the Guest Home with us only last Sunday) and Ruth Wilting. Betty Olsen, a single missionary, was captured by the Viet Cong and is listed as missing.

Except for Marie Ziemer, this wipes out the entire staff of missionaries at Ban Me Thuot. Dave Douglas reminded me that evidently it was the Lord's will that we were not able to go up country last week . . . that there would have been

"This is the U. S. Embassy building in Saigon. During the Communists' surprise attack at the time of the Chinese New Year's celebration, nineteen VC's and eight Americans were killed here. The building still shows battle scars where VC rockets hit."



two more casualties. I admitted that this had occurred to me . . . a sobering thought.

According to radio, VC casualties have amounted to more than 12,000 killed since January 29 . . . by far the heaviest fighting of the entire Viet Nam war. Civilian casualties in Saigon have been heavy.

11:45 a.m.—Gordon Cathey, pastor of the International Protestant Church here in Saigon, called and offered to send a cable to the U.S. for us. I dictated one to our son, Jim. Hope it gets through OK.

2:00 p.m.—The Henrys, the Gunthers, and we moved to the Catheys' home in the International Protestant Church Compound. Though they live two blocks from the American Embassy where 19 VC's and 8 Americans were killed last Tuesday night, it seems so much safer here than where we were before.

Still hard to believe Bob Ziemer is dead. Such a shock! How thankful we are to be alive . . . that we were not able to go to Ban Me Thuot, as planned!

Sun., Feb. 4: A quiet, warm, restful day . . . for a change.

Gordon's message at the 11 a.m. service was very helpful, relative to God's providence and the "whys" of the deaths of the six missionaries.

Things look a little better for our getting out of Saigon.

Mon., Feb. 5: 9:15 a.m.—Just talked with Rex on the phone. He and his wife, Betty, live in the Cholon area where there is still strong VC resistance. They have not been out of their apartment for several days.

12 noon: Stan Lemon, missionary from Chicago, took me downtown to check on airline schedules . . . but no luck, the airport is still closed.

10:30 p.m.—Gordon Cathey visited Marie Ziemer in the hospital in Nhatrang. She gave him the following account of what happened in Ban Me Thuot.

(Readers should keep in mind that this diary was written in Saigon as the first reports were coming out of NHATRANG from Marie Ziemer, while she was still in the hospital. Minor variations in detail are coming to light as the full story is known.)

Tues., Jan. 30:

1:30 a.m.—VC's came onto missionary compound and went to house of Carolyn Griswold and her father. They were awakened by the VC's pounding on the door, and fled to the upstairs quarters.

4:00 a.m.—Griswold home was wired and blown up by VC's with Carolyn and her father, Leon, in it. Because of intense VC activity in the area, Bob



"These photos were taken in 1959 during my first visit to the missionary compound in Ban Me Thuot, scene of the recent VC massacre of six missionaries. The pink house on the right is the Griswold home, the first place the VC's struck. It was blown up with Carolyn and her father inside it. The other two homes to the left are the Ziemers' and Thompsons' which were also demolished by the VC's."

INSET PHOTO: "My beloved friend of college days, Bob Ziemer, his wife, Marie, and Carolyn Griswold. Marie was the only survivor of the recent massacre."

That afternoon, Bob painted a sign "SOS - HELP" and placed it on top of one of the jeeps in hopes that it would be spotted from the air.

All the time they were looking for an opportunity to get Carolyn to the hospital one mile up the road from the compound, but this was impossible because of the VC activity. Betty Olsen and Ruth Wilting nursed her wounds as best they could.

The rest of the missionaries could perhaps have gotten away, but, of course, they would not leave Carolyn.

It was learned later that U.S. helicopters tried to land, but were driven off by VC gunfire.

Tues. night—They spent the entire night in the bunker—except for Carolyn who remained in the servants' quarters.

Wed., Jan. 31:

In the morning, they moved from the bunker into the servants' quarters. During the day nothing unseemingly occurred.

All during the day Betty Olsen and Ruth Wilt-

Ziemer could not leave his house next door, even though cries for help were heard from both Carolyn and her father.

7:00 a.m.—Bob Ziemer and Ed Thompson along with some nationals ventured out as the VC withdrew into the jungle. They worked their way through the debris for five hours before they found Leon Griswold dead and Carolyn suffering from a broken leg, severe shock, and as it was learned later, massive internal injuries. Carolyn was carried to the servants' quarters at the rear of the Thompsons' home.

Tues. afternoon—Expecting the VC to return to blow up the other houses, Bob and Ed decided to dig a deep bunker where the trash pit was normally located at the rear of the compound. They felt they could all stay there out of sight.

ing went back and forth from the clinic to the servants' quarters to take care of Carolyn.

6:00 p.m.—By this time they were all back in the bunker, when the Thompson home was blown up by the VC.

Thurs., Feb. 1:

4:00 a.m.—The Ziemer home was the next one to be blown up. Except for Carolyn, all were in the bunker.

Thurs. at dawn:—Bob and Ed decided to show themselves and ask for mercy. They then went out of the bunker while the rest, except for Betty, Ruth, and Carolyn, remained in it.

It was decided that it was risky for both of them to walk out. Bob asked Ed to return to the bunker. Bob then walked up to the VC's and asked them for permission to move Carolyn to the hospital. After replying "Yes", they immediately shot Bob through the head.

Marie, Ed, and Ruth were down in the bunker and did not see him shot. Betty Olsen and Ruth Wilting were in the nearby clinic getting medicine for Carolyn, and Betty saw Bob killed.

Ruth Wilting came running from the clinic toward the bunker, and the VC's shot her. She cried out, "I don't know what they want!", staggered, and fell into the bunker, dead.



"This is Doan Trung Tin, son of the president of the National Church of Viet Nam, handing out copies of RANG DONG to the Vietnamese troops. He symbolizes the Christian national—the one the missionaries are expecting to move out and take the spiritual offensive in Viet Nam. BLI is determined to continue its course of supplying missionaries and nationals the printed Word in this needy land."

This called the attention of the VC's to the bunker. They immediately walked over and fired two bursts of automatic weapon fire into the bunker, killing Ed and Ruth Thompson.

As Marie lay there, she kept thinking over and over, "I'll soon be with the Lord. I'll soon be with

the Lord." She also prayed, through all this, that the Lord would spare at least one of them to get the news out, of what actually happened.

The Lord saw fit that she was the one to survive. She was raked with machine gun fire from her shoulder down her left side, her leg, and into her foot. For a good part of Thursday, she lay there in the bunker.

Thurs. afternoon—The VC's came back and found Marie still alive. In spite of her extensive wounds, she was made to get up and walk down the road to the nearby village. Betty Olsen was there, as were Hank Blood (a Wycliffe translator), his wife, and three children. The VC's interrogated them all, bound up Marie's wounds as best they could, and held them as prisoners that night in a native home.

All this time, Carolyn was lying in the servants' quarters back at the compound.

Fri., Feb. 2:

Morning—The VC's gave all the prisoners rice and filthy water (Marie was fearful, even if she lived, of getting typhoid from drinking it). Then they took Marie outside and interrogated her more.

When they took her back inside the house, Betty Olsen and Hank Blood were gone. The VC's released Mrs. Blood and the three children.

Marie was then walked to a point near the hospital. Then the VC's disappeared. Marie was taken into the hospital and treated for her wounds and possible typhoid.

Carolyn Griswold was flown by U. S. forces to the military hospital in Nhatrang where she died about two hours later.

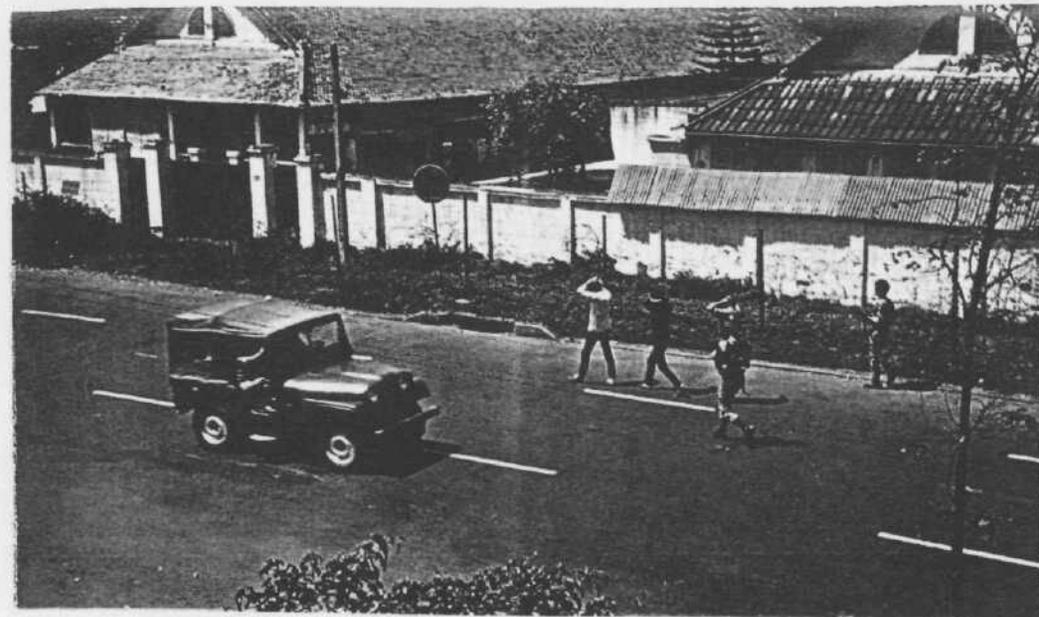
This is a deeply moving story. God willing, we will never be the same again. Lord, make it so!

Tues., Feb. 6: 11 a.m.—Franklin Irwin, Field Chairman, just arrived with some good news for which we thank God.

The 34 missionaries who were trapped in Dalat have been evacuated and are being flown to Saigon. Just two hours after they left Dalat, the VC's blocked the road and occupied the entire area!

Another thing to praise the Lord for is the fact that the children in Ban Me Thuot had left the compound to go back to school just four days before the VC's struck Ban Me Thuot. A request had been made to the mission that the children be allowed to stay home through the New Year's celebration, but permission was not granted. Had it been, three of the five Thompson children and one of the three Ziemer children may have been killed.

12 noon: Gordon and I walked over to the U.S. Embassy. Saw hole through which VC's got into



"One day we looked out our window and saw these three men being marched up the street at gunpoint. We never knew what would happen next. The sound of guns was everywhere. Those were two tense weeks we spent in Saigon. Our prayer now is that our dedication to Him be complete, because of what He allowed us to experience."

grounds. An MP told me the VC's did not get into the building proper, only into the area between the wall and the building.

Wed., Feb. 7: 10 a.m.—Learned that Marie Ziemer came through surgery yesterday in excellent shape. Thank the Lord for that!

Saigon full of refugees . . . about 100,000 thus far from the fighting areas around Saigon. This city is still very tense. Beginning to get on my nerves a bit. Dot is taking things beautifully, although not convinced we're going to get out of here alive.

10:30 p.m.—Rex called from Cholon, requesting prayer. Fighting was raging in the street in front of his apartment. He said the din was terrific! All missionaries here gathered for a half hour of prayer—Gunthers, Henrys, Lemons, plus Catheys and us.

Thurs., Feb. 8: Thought we might get a flight out of here today, but it didn't work out.

Called Rex this afternoon. VC snipers were in the bushes across the street from Rex's house. He said the VC flag still flies from a nearby building down the street from his house.

Fri., Feb. 9: 7:45 a.m.—WOW! What a night . . . one of the noisiest since we've been here, except for New Year's Eve. Sounded as though bombs were dropping all night long. The concussions have shaken the house many times. Sounds like a long, drawn-out thunder storm,

only we don't see any flashes of light.

Sat., Feb. 10: 9 a.m.—Just called Pan Am. The flight is off today. They tried to evacuate the wife of the Philippines Ambassador and 19 other Filipinos yesterday, but the plane could not land because of VC ground fire. So, other people have problems, too.

11:50 a.m.—Helen May Douglas called to tell us she had just heard that Air Viet Nam was making a special flight to Hong Kong.

We rushed downtown with Stan Lemon in his VW bus and made it in record time! We made our arrangements, hurried back to pack, and then "flew" out to the airport. We were numbers 99 and 100 on the flight.

About 3:15 p.m. the wheels left the runway. The pilot put the plane practically on its tail, seeking to gain as much height as possible before crossing the river beyond the airport, from which the Viet Cong have been firing at the planes.

Soon we were cruising beautifully at 600 miles per hour heading for Hong Kong . . . out of reach of the war in Saigon, and heading home!

How good God has been to us! Our hearts are with the missionaries we came to know and love back in Saigon. Our hearts ache for Marie Ziemer, and the loved ones of the missionaries who died for the Lord's work in Ban Me Thuot.

May our dedication to Him be complete, because of what He allowed us to experience. ▲