

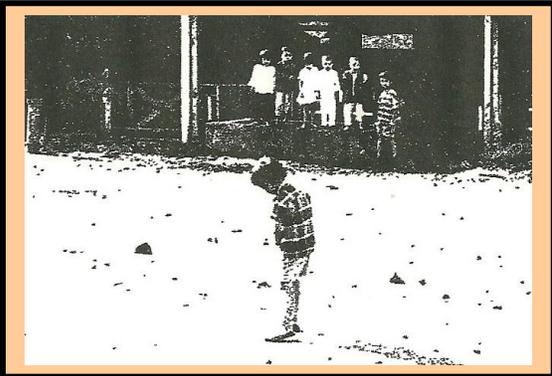
A Humanitarian Non-profit Organization Approved by IRS Code 501(c) 3 & California Section 23701D

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August 2011 Newsletter

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"I recall clearly the isolation and loneliness" **Painful recollections from someone who's walked in their shoes**



Please join us in welcoming our newest FVSO Board member, Janette Maring (her bio is now available on the FVSO web site). Having spent the first years of her life at Tu Tam orphanage (known today as Sao Mai) in Vietnam, she brings a unique prospective to our mission that will benefit the children of the Vinh Son and Sao Mai orphanages. Janette has been kind enough to share some of her feelings and memories of what it is like to be an "orphan."

At Left: Unknown orphans, circa early 1970's, at the orphanage in Pleiku, where Janette first lived

Regret

As a child, I would often try to recall the contour lines of my mother's face and the sound of her voice. Despite my relentless efforts, I could not, and I felt that I had undoubtedly failed in some unexplainable and peculiar way. I wanted to remember, as any devoted and loving daughter would, my mother.

Sometimes, when I am restless at night, I often dream of the ghosts that visited me since I was a small child. Although they did not frighten me, their sadness and despair are seemingly difficult for me to cope with.

Longing

I recall clearly the isolation and loneliness that I felt, learning of my grandmother's passing, and the painful experiences of losing my entire family once again. I could never quite recover from the losses, which profoundly handicapped me for most of my life.

As I think of my homeland and of my childhood, I reflect on our last days in Viet Nam, of my grandmother and I walking aimlessly in the night with only the moon serving as our guide in Saigon, of the debris on the unpaved dirt roads and the smoke that engulfed us. I have a vivid image of grandmother's sister, Ba Sau, stumbling into the tall forest of trees with an impaired leg; of my grandmother's teary eyes as our cart drove away without her sister. It was the last time that I saw Ba Sau, as our paths would not cross again. I think of the things left unsaid, a painful reminder that life is very fragile.

Fear

An orphan fears loss and abandonment; I don't think we ever fully overcome that.

We also experience fears of not fulfilling expectations, of a life not worthy, a disappointment or failure to those who sacrificed their lives for us.

Nostalgia

I miss the warm embrace and smile of my surrogate grandmother Nguyen, her words of encouragement and the raspy sounds of her coughs in the middle of night.

I miss Mrs. Gilson, my English tutor, whom patiently taught me the alphabet using Alpha-Bits cereal and sent me her handwritten letters.

Project Updates

Recent & Upcoming Expenditures

- ❖ \$1,500 to fund the Dental Program for VS 3, VS 4 & VS 6 to have the children visit the dentist in Pleiku. This project is facilitated by Thien Nguyen, Board Member of Friends of the Central Highlands, USA - VN.
- ❖ \$17,039 for Basic Needs, Medicine, Diapers and to replace the Water Filters at all 6 sites for the period July 2011 - October 2011, which are joint projects with Orphans of Kontum, the Netherlands.
- ❖ \$7,000 to partially fund a new Dining Room and Kitchen at VS 6. This is a joint project under construction with Derek Smith, Australia and Patrick Désir, France.
- ❖ \$3,000 to partially fund the Dental Clinic put on by East Meets West, USA - VN, in August for VS 1, VS 2 & VS 5. This is a joint project with East Meets West, USA - VN, and Friends of the Central Highlands, USA - VN.
- ❖ In August we are investing in the future by sending \$1,680 to fund the school year 2011 - 2012 for 6 Sisters attending the University to study teaching and accounting.
- ❖ In August we will send \$8,340 to pay the Government School fees for all 6 sites, a joint project with Orphans of Kontum, the Netherlands.

Continued from page 1

I miss the face of a kind, young American soldier who shared his chocolate candies with me on the street of Nha Trang. He affectionately remains in my thoughts and heart every day.

I miss frolicking in the murky rice paddy fields of my Viet Nam homeland, the heavy raindrops dancing on my face, a country so unfamiliar and unrecognizable to me now.

I often reflect fondly on the memories of eating fruit cocktail and singing songs with American GIs in my new American homeland, particularly during times of difficulty when I was a child. They live in my memory and are precious keepsakes. At the time, they provided assurances that there is goodness in the world, and helped me to persevere despite the obstacles.

Hope

I hope to be, one day, at peace with myself, to forgive those who have hurt me, and to be forgiven as well by those I have hurt.

I hope that God grants me enough time on earth to repay the debt I owe for my freedom, for my family and for my existence.

I hope that no child will ever be deprived of an affectionate embrace, words of praise, love, and guidance, or the gentle caress of another human being.

Looking ahead

I treasure the blessings of genuine friendships and the love for God, my family, my homeland and adopted country.

I am grateful for this opportunity to serve the children at Vinh Son and Sao Mai, for there was a time when I was one of them.

Janette (Trang) Maring



Vinh Son 6
Photo's by M. Ido (A4K)

**Our annual appeal is right around the corner.
There is still so much to do, and that's why we'll be counting on you!**

Vinh Son & Sao Mai Orphanage Facts

- Population – approximately 730 Montagnard children in seven orphanage facilities
- Administered by the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal & St. Paul Chartres
- Location – Kontum/Pleiku, Vietnam
- \$12 feeds, shelters, and educates one child for one month

Officers

- President** - Dave Chaix
Secretary - Dennis Coyne
Treasurer - Colleen Sands
Senior VP - Pat McKee
1st VP - Sr. Marie Dominique
2nd VP - Michael Little

Board

- Hank Gonzales
 Rich Lahey
 Clyde Lewandowski
 Bart Ruud
 Patrick Leary
 Pat Keegan
 Alan Brooks
 Janette Maring

Donation Information

- Please make checks payable to FVSO or Friends of Vinh Son
- Donations are gratefully accepted year round
- 100% of administrative costs are paid by the Board and Officers