



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

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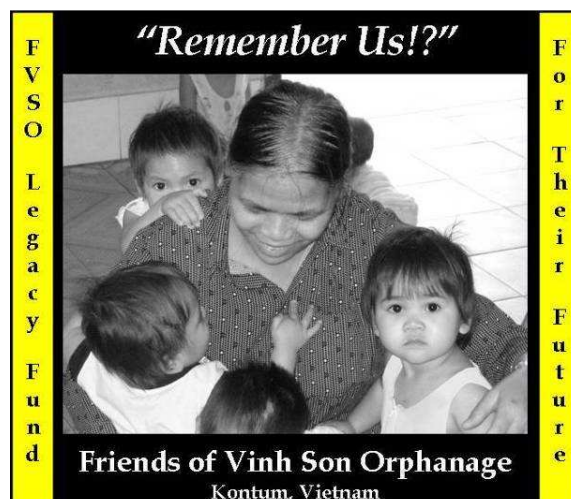
March 2017 Newsletter - Volume 14 Issue 3

- The LEGACY FUND, a key priority
- A Marine's reluctant return to Vietnam
- An Australian's story will benefit the kids

The FVSO Legacy Fund

IRS EIN 16-1724012

Here are the issues, realities and recommendations for the years ahead



First, A Short History Reminder

Friends of Vinh Son Orphanage (FVSO) had an informal beginning in 2001 with the visit of Dave Chaix and Pat McKee to Kontum, Vietnam. After returning home to California, they began a friends and family fund drive.

From 2001 to 2005 this effort continued and along the way, others in the USA supporting the orphanages in a similar fashion were identified and located.

In 2005, these groups came together to officially form **Friends of Vinh Son Orphanage** as a 501 c 3 non-profit organization.

A principle established at that time is all donations (100%) are only for the support the children. All administrative costs and expenses are paid by the FVSO Board Members.

What is the issue?

As the Board Members age, most now in their 70's and 80's, the question arises often "how long can we continue to raise funds for the children and what happens when we can't?" This has been an ongoing and internal, in-depth conversation over the past few years.

What should we do?

The right answer seems to be the establishment of a **Legacy Fund** that will continue our work after we are gone or sidelined by age. This would be a fund that would need to be large enough to be invested so that the earnings could be distributed to the Sisters on a quarterly basis.

So, what is the right level of funding?

The consensus of the FVSO Board is that it will take about \$2.0M to produce enough income to continue a worthwhile level of support.

LEGACY FUND...discussion continues

What is the FVSO Legacy Fund Timeline?

We think our window is the next 10 years beginning in 2017 and ending in 2026, with a decision point at 2021. The 2021 decision point will have a couple objectives (1) are we on track? (2) If not, what do we do?

If we are on track, we can continue our work and if not, we can pick a date in the future that we will begin to distribute the funds to the Sisters on a depreciating scale.

Other considerations

The Sisters have been working very hard to become more self-sufficient with farming, raising pigs and fish, baking bread to sell, to name a few of their endeavors. Also, there are other groups that continue to support the Sisters and children.

What has FVSO done so far and what are their future plans?

Three years ago, we presented the Sisters with a Position Paper that gave them an annual amount they could plan on receiving from FVSO. This has been most successful. It gives the Sisters certainty about their income and it gives us a budgeting process for planning. Anything received over the annual budget was deposited in CD's to create a Rainy Day Fund. Our original goal was to build this Rainy Day Fund equal to a one year budget. Our last two years of fundraising have been extraordinary, well beyond our traditional trends. This has been our inspiration, to transform the Rainy Day fund to a Legacy Fund. Currently, we have \$372K invested conservatively and hope to grow it to \$2.0M over the next 10 years.

What can our supporters do to help?

1. Donations can be earmarked for the Legacy Fund.
2. Donors can leave funds to FVSO in their Estate Planning earmarked to the Legacy Fund
3. Donations of stocks, bonds of property earmarked for the Legacy Fund

Yes, we are coming to grips with our aging, but with your help, support of the children can continue long after we're gone.



Photo Left: the new rice cooker will feed the kids at VS-1. Photo Right: Sister is holding the newest addition to Vinh Son, a tiny 3-pound baby girl named Y Ai Phuong, whose mother died in the hospital.

Jim Gardner returns to Vietnam and is surprised on what he finds He shares some of his experiences below



Jim found himself “adopted”

When I was discharged from the Marine Corps at Camp Pendleton, I threw my uniforms into the first dumpster that I could find. I let my hair grow long and grew sideburns and a mustache. Few of my college friends were aware of my military service. I got busy drowning my fears and nightmares in alcohol and drugs. Gradually over time, my nightmares were pressed back into the recesses of my mind. These things were discussed less and less frequently and then only with trusted friends. And so, when Dave and Al walked into the winery and I saw their Friends of Vinh Son Orphanage shirts, I knew that I was finally ready to return to Vietnam and to a more healing closure to the most nightmarish chapter of my life. After 49 years of hatred, fear and mistrust, who would have thought that I would find so much love and peace coming from the Vietnamese people and the children of Vinh Son.

Even though we have been back from Vietnam for over three weeks, my head is still buzzing from all of the visual stimuli that at first assaulted and then began to slowly seduce my brain. The sights, sounds and smells of Vietnam gradually gave way to the smiles of the people and their willingness to share their homes, their schools and their lives with us. Eagerly they engaged us in conversation even when their knowledge of English was very limited. The children, especially, would grasp our hands and lead us into their gardens, their piggeries and their bakeries. Early on I lost track of which orphanage was which but the children were all different and all of them special. And they seemed especially interested in the large returning American War Veterans.

Two young girls, who could easily have been twins, grabbed my hands and lead me out to show me their carefully tended garden. Before I could stop them, they had located and picked me a fresh cucumber from right off the vine. We had been warned repeatedly not to eat anything from outside of our hotel unless it came from a bottle with a sealed cap on it but!

And then the Nuns brought out freshly baked bread, warm and tasting faintly of bananas. Ummm, and then to top that off, the Sisters brought out a bottle of homemade brandy. Brandy, so smooth and warm that I wanted a case to take back home. The children's love was warm and unconditional, the kind that you might receive from your favorite pet. But the love was real and it came from the adults also and what I'll call the Spirit of Vietnam. It was an open friendliness, a willingness to allow total strangers to come into their lives and become their New Best Friend even if only for a few minutes.

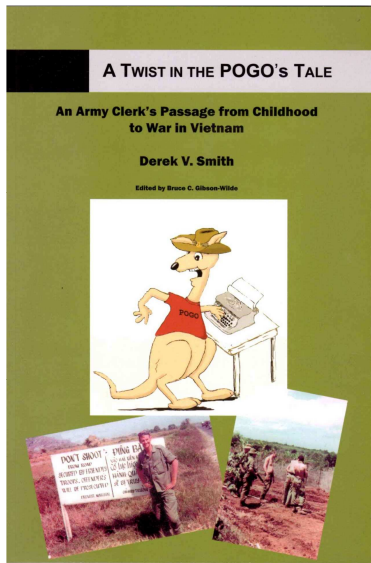
Tano, our Vietnamese tour guide, came up to me and said “Welcome to Vietnam, Thank you for your service to my Country.” At first I thought that maybe he was just saying that to encourage a bigger tip. I soon came to realize that his comments were genuine and that maybe some of the things that the United States tried to do in Vietnam had not been in vain. I began to see the spirit of the Vietnamese People coming through. They had survived the French, they had survived the Americans and they would survive the Communists too! The people may not have a lot by our standards but they seem to be happy and well adjusted.

The last night we spent in Kontum, we had dinner at the restaurant with the short legged tables and chairs. The whole family was involved in running the restaurant, and the college age daughter brought out her guitar and began to sing and play “Hallelujah” for us. I was filled with a great feeling of joy and love. They had opened their home and their hearts to us. And then, the next morning as we were leaving the hotel, we drove down the street past their restaurant. They were all there...Mom, Dad, brother, sister and little Tom-Tom...they were outside, smiling and waving, proof indeed that they appreciated what we Veterans and our families were doing to help the Vietnamese people. The Friends of Vinh Son Orphanages, and those of us who support them, have a lot to be proud of.

Enjoy a fine read & help the kids

Derek Smith is the President of ASK, our Australian partner who does great work in Kontum. Like many of us, he is a Vietnam Veteran. He has written a book titled *A Twist in a POGO's Tale* (spelling is intentional!), now available through AMAZON. It is more than just his story. He has made it into an "everyman" tale. It is something diggers and GI's can certainly relate to. It is a solid story of our passage from youth to tested adulthood through the military and Vietnam. A good read.

Proceeds from the sales goes to the VS orphanages.



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Long-term supporting organizations

- 189th Assault Helicopter Company
- 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion (A and D Companies)
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 535, Nevada County, CA
- Counterparts Association
- 14th Combat Engineer Btn. Association
- MilSpec Tours (800-953-5812)
- Fr. Luke Tran (VN-SHEP) Social Health Education Projects
- Fr. Relihan, Sacred Heart Church, Lone, CA
- Rotary Club of San Juan Capistrano, CA

Words To Live By

Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbor . . . Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.

-- Mother Teresa

Vinh Son & Sao Mai Orphanage Facts

- Population – approximately 830 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 – Pat Leary
Secretary - Open
Treasurer – Open
Senior VP - Pat McKee
1st VP - Sr. Marie Dominique
2nd VP - Michael Little

Board of Directors

Hank Gonzales
 Rich Lahey
 Clyde Lewandowski
 Bart Ruud
 Dave Chaix
 Colleen Sands

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