

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

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December 2014 Newsletter - Volume 11 Issue 11

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2014 Donation Update

We asked you to take advantage of the Matching Donation Program, and you did! The program was a huge success, generating \$67,000 and putting us over the top for the year. Although we've exceeded our annual goal, donations are still appreciated and will assure our success to meet the needs in 2015. Your trust and support means everything to us.

Meeting Agenda Jan 2, 2015

10:00AM – 1:40PM - 339 45th Street, Richmond, CA

All contributors are welcome to attend this semi-annual Board meeting, featuring a wide array of topics.

1. Introductions and Sign-In Sheet
2. Short Prayer
3. Update Vinh Son I, II, III, IV, V & VI
4. Soi Mai Orphanage Update
5. Project Update
6. Recent Electric Fund Transfers
7. Website Update and Statistics
8. Financial Update & Progress to Goal
9. Joanne Glah's Christmas Card Project
10. Educational Sub Committee
11. Other non-profits working at Vinh Son
12. Newsletter and Advertising Plans
13. Pleiku Dentist 2014 and 2015
14. East Meets West Dental Mission 2015
15. FVSO 2014 Fund Drive and Challenges Update
16. Return envelopes with newsletter
17. Revenue Target 2015
18. Endowment Fund Ideas
19. Revenue Generation Ideas
20. Any Trips Planned for Vietnam
21. Succession Planning
22. Open Discussion
23. Thanksgiving Prayer

Total – 4:00 hours



This photo was taken at last year's Vinh Son Christmas celebration, an event that will be repeated this year thanks to a \$1,000 contribution from FVSO. These Christmas parties are supported by many generous individuals and organizations.

For veterans, Christmas away from home has never been forgotten

War-time Christmas Memories

Over the years, it's not easy for most of us to distinguish one Christmas celebration from another, but for soldiers away from home, it's impossible to forget that special day. It was a Christmas like no other. FVSO president, Dave Chaix, and Board Member, Bart Ruud, share their personal Christmas experiences below.

Dave has guided FVSO since its inception. Little did he know in '67 that he would one day be helping to provide a special "Christmas" to the 800+ children of Vinh Son and Sao Mai.

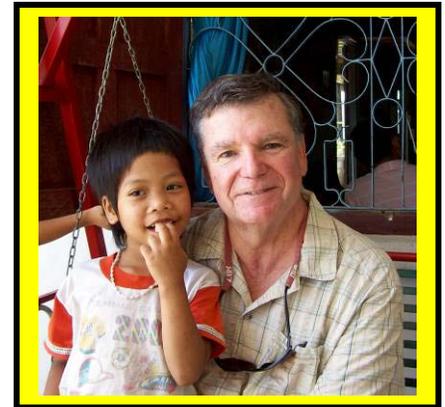
Dave's Christmas

Christmas Eve 1967, we arrived at a small Fire Support Base which was west of Ban Blec and north of Ban Me Thout on the Cambodian Border. Christmas Day was a ceasefire, so we hunkered in for a couple days – Christmas Eve dinner was C Rations.

Christmas Day, we met a small group of Montagnards who had arrived just outside the wire. They brought an earthen jug of their rice wine brew and after a ceremony involving a chicken, we partook through straws. A pleasant visit, but hold the rice wine.

The day after Christmas, we were at base camp (Camp Enari) west of Pleiku to find the Bob Hope Show was to be there in the afternoon. It was a great show.

We were gone again by dark.



(right) Dave then and now; (left) Bart with his special tree



Bart's Christmas

Christmas Day 1971 was a sunny and quiet day, quiet because a cease-fire for the day was in effect. Having previously not been through a declared cease-fire, my team members and I were suspicious of whether the cease-fire was real. We were on edge, alert for the sound of incoming artillery fire with its Doppler effect. We had come into a base camp outside DaNang for a traditional Christmas dinner with all the trimmings. Alas, the mess hall ran out of turkey before we were served but we did enjoy some of the other fare like mashed potatoes and green beans.

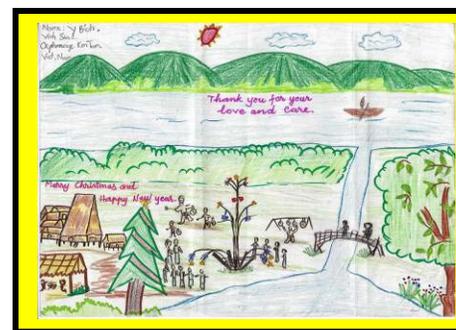
The Mess Sergeant made no apologies for the shortage but it was later determined that some of the allotted turkeys, while issued at central supply, never made it to the mess hall because they were apparently traded on the black market for illicit drugs. After our Christmas dinner I went alone into the very small camp chapel for a reflective moment of prayer. No other person from my team of seven, to my knowledge, went into the chapel. With respect to that, I do not remember any organized Christmas service. Such might have occurred before we arrived at the base camp. Later, a chaplain asked me why none of my team attended services at the chapel and all I could tell him was we knew of no service.

I had received a two-foot Douglas-fir, sent in a mailing tube from California, and we decorated the tree with small ornaments and lights sent from home. When it was fully decorated, we sang Christmas carols in a rather off-key manner. It was a sentimental time, rather sad, in fact. Later, the guys stood in line for hours to make timed one-minute phone calls home, courtesy of MARS, a system which used volunteer Hamm radio operators in the United States. I remember asking my Dad what the weather was like at home and that was about our only dialog in our brief conversation.

The little girl with the spoon in her bowl (3rd from the left) has been the face of our 2014 fundraising efforts, and we thank her for reaching into the hearts of our donors



Holiday Drawings: Each year, the children of Vinh Son create beautiful scenes of Christmas within a backdrop of their cultural heritage. They send these drawings to us so that we can share them with you, their way of saying “Thanks” for supporting them throughout the year. FVSO has selected three of the very best (below) and sincerely hope you appreciate the spirit for which they represent. On behalf of everyone at the Vinh Son and Sao Mai orphanages, **Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!**



Long-term supporting organizations

- 189th Assault Helicopter Company
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 535, Nevada County, CA
- Counterparts
- 14th Combat Engineer Btn. Assoc.
- MilSpec Tours
- Fr. Luke Tran (VN-SHEP) Social Health Education Projects



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** - 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

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