The Viet Nam Literature Project helps the world read, research and teach in English the literature of Viet Nam. Our overall purpose is to improve the opportunities for Americans to gain a serious understanding of our world by listening to people from somewhere else. The difficulties we address are the patchy demand in English for this literature which impedes trade publishing, academic research, and teacher training, and the lasting divisions among Americans as well as Vietnamese caused by the struggle for a free and independent Viet Nam.

Board of Directors
Dan Duffy • Thomas Enders
Stanley Katz • Pamela Rosenthal • Daniel Egger
James Friedlander • Nancy Seybold • Peter Delevett

Advisory Committee
Lucien Ellington, Education About Asia
David Thomas, Indochina Arts Partnership
Linh Dinh

Web Team
Paulette Stiles • Philip Arthur Moore

Viet Nam Literature Project Programs

Website – teachable extracts by Vietnamese authors, in English translation when necessary, with supporting materials for classroom and research use.

WikiVietlit – online reference to Vietnamese literature, written by experts, edited by poet Linh Dinh

Outreach – newsletter, e-bulletins, and events in major cities

Newsletter credits: Edited by Dan Duffy. Original design by Jonathan Hill continued by Jason Rainey. Literature News is published by Books & Authors, Viet Nam, Inc. dba Viet Nam Literature Project, email: editor@vietnamlit.org © 2009 VNLP.

This issue features Nhat Linh
Dear Friends,

Spring is about done in Orange County, North Carolina. On the morning of the last snow in early March I stumbled after Bob through a drift and uncovered daffodils blooming on the bottom land by the old homesite.

Then came days of pulling both dogs off rabbit nests, losing two foals and a mare in birth, the weeks of heavy pollen, and now the Canada goslings at the neighbors’ pond are big enough to wander off from their mother. I’ll jump out to stack the first hay any day.

Summer here is the season that builds character. This week working on the porch is heavenly bright and cool but next month I’ll be inside with the thermal blinds and curtains down.

I’ll be writing entries for Wikivietlit about scholars of Vietnamese literature and starting to follow a development plan drafted over a year’s parties and meetings with VNLP supporters. Here is a picture of me at the January party with Robert Anderson and Ocean Vuong.

Wikivietlit is our most visible accomplishment so far, a free online encyclopedia to Vietnamese literature. This summer I will also write an article for it on teaching the war through translations, the first of four essays – on teaching Vietnamese America, Vietnamese national history, and contemporary Viet Nam, in addition to the war – that will guide our translation program.

I will also be circulating the development plan for suggestions. Our goal is to join a university in training teachers who will develop a public in the United States for the literature of Viet Nam, one of the other countries that a wide range of Americans - because of the war, immigration, adoption and travel – take an interest in.

That will take organization, which will take time, which takes money. Please help us get there.

Dan

Editor, Viet Nam Literature Project
Literature News, Spring 2009
**E V E N T S**

**North Carolina Party**


**Huynh Sanh Thong Memorial**

Battell Chapel at Yale University held a memorial service for Huynh Sanh Thong on Saturday, May 2 at 1 PM. A crew from Yale AV videotaped the speakers. Joe Errington of the Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies welcomed the crowd. Daughter Thanh Nguyen introduced the Jasper Quartet (J. Freivogel, violin; Sae Niwa, violin; Sam Quintal, viola; and Rachel Henderson, cello), who played from the Beethoven String Quartet in E-flat major, Op 37. Paul Tran read Thong’s translation from Dao Duy Tu, “Where Gather Mists and Clouds.” Quynh Do, Mark Longhurst, Vi Nguyen, Ha Bui, Yen Truong, Adrian Latortue, Khi-Hoan Huynh, Robert Bailey, and Lee Nguyen, students of Quang Phu Van, joined Paul in reading excerpts from Thong’s translation of the Tale of Kieu. Jim Scott and Ben Kiernan of Yale, Michele Thompson on behalf of the Vietnamese Studies Group (Association for Asian Studies), Ngo Nu Binh of Harvard, Thomas C. Fox of the National Catholic Reporter who studied Kieu with Thong after working with the International Voluntary Services in Viet Nam during the war, and Dan spoke. The Jasper Quartet played from the Haydn String Quartet in D Major, Op. 76. Poet Nguyen Chi Thien, librarian Edith Baradi, Lee Nguyen of the Yale Vietnamese Student Association, friend Nguyen Duc Linh, and Yen’s niece Elizabeth Dulong Galaznik spoke. Robert Bailey read Thong’s translation from Nguyen Trai.

“I You seek no Fortune and Desire no Fame.” Elizabeth’s son Thomas Galaznik concluded the service. The Jasper Quartet played a postlude, to which Thong’s old friend Eve Benda listened deeply. The family welcomed those attending to a reception just after the service at the Graduate Club. Quang Phu Van, Yale’s Vietnamese instructor who helped organize the event, Rich Richie, curator of the Sterling Library Southeast Asia collection, where Thong donated his Viet Nam library, Thong’s old neighbors Larry & Kim Berger, colleague Eric Henry, and Yale’s new Viet Nam anthropologist Erik Harms were among them. Condolences to Van-Yen Huynh. 46 Glendower Road, Hamden, CT 06517-1201.

---

Biographical info and quotes in this comic come from “Understanding Vietnam” by Neil Jamieson.
Ly Lan Update

Author Ly Lan has been busy since Lily Chiu prepared her page on the VNLP website, publishing a book a year for the last five years, free at last of translating new Harry Potter novels. In 2005, her selected poems, La Minh (Her Own) won the poetry award from the Writers’ Union of Ho Chi Minh City. She published the short stories Nguoi Dan Ba Ke Chuyen (A Woman Tells Her Story) in 2006, the essays Mien Man Tuy But (Freestyle Writing) in 2007, the novel Tieu Tuyet Dan Ba (Woman Novel) in 2008, and just launched the short story collection Hoi Xuan (Menopause) in 2009. It did so well the publisher is bringing out new editions of two of her collections for children, including Ba Nguoi va Ba Con Vat (Three Children, Three Pets, 2002). Her current project is “about Vietnamese women’s literature.”

Ly Lan with fans

Next VNLP author Le Ngoc Tra

“Protecting poetic nature to the point of hindering reason and the development of science and technology or, by contrast, sacrificing it for immediate political and economic purposes results in crippling human nature; either option brings about similar disastrous consequences.”

Le Ngoc Tra

Tran Qui Phiet, who translated the stories of Tran Dieu Hang for the VNLP website, is now polishing his translations of essays by Le Ngoc Tra, the literary critic. Tra, one of the few doctorates in literary theory in Viet Nam, came to prominence both in explaining the new authors of the doi moi period and in presenting his own criticism as a form of literature. Phiet has translated Tra’s theoretical essay, “Art and Man’s Voice”, his advocacy for social change, “Contribution to Developing Vietnamese Culture”, and appreciations of specific books to illustrate his own introductory essay on Tra. Please consider donating toward the $500 remaining costs of the Le Ngoc Tra page on the VNLP site by check or at our website.
He was born in Hanoi, but spent most of his first ten years in the rural areas of northwestern Vietnam. Returning to Hanoi in 1960, he graduated from the Teachers’ College in 1970, then taught remedial education to Communist Party officials in a remote province, Son La, a post which dragged on for years after unification. Poverty drove him back to Hanoi, where he traded in the black market and worked as a laborer. The more liberal policies of doi moi, or Renovation, initiated at the end of 1987, provided Thiep with an opportunity to showcase his talent.


**from “The Water Nymph”**

Once, Mr Chung, who had been digging a well, reported that he had dug up a bronze drum. People from the District Cultural Office came down and asked him if they could take the drum away. As they crossed the river, thunder and lightning suddenly crashed in the sky. Without warning, the waves rose and the wind blew up in a gale. “Throw the drum down here,” called Me Ca, who was swimming in the river. With the boat rolling dangerously, the people from the Cultural Office had to throw the drum down to Me Ca who sat on it and proceeded to beat it: ‘Tung, tung.’ With that the storm stopped. Me Ca took the drum in her arms and dived to the bottom of the river.

These were the kind of stories – half myth, half reality – that multiplied about Me Ca. But since my childhood was such a somber routine of backbreaking work, I did not have time to pay attention to all of them.

My family worked the fields, dug laterite, and also made bamboo hats. As everyone knows, there is nothing easy about working the fields. At fourteen I was the main ploughman in the co-operative. At 4 a.m. Mr Hai Thin the head of the ploughing unit called from the gate with instructions: ‘Hey Chuong, today plough the field down at the foot of Ma Nguy hill, OK!’

I crawled out of bed, ate a bowl of cold rice, and left. It was still dark. Field rats rustled in the strip of maize along the edge of the field. I was half asleep, stumbling behind the buffalo as I drove it towards the shining disc of electric light that hovered like a halo over the town.

*From The General Retires and Other Stories*, by *Nguyen Huy Thiep*, translated with an introduction by Greg Lockhart (Oxford in Asia, 1992), excerpt reprinted with permission of the translator and under fair use with regard to the author.

**Support Wikivietlit**

Wikivietlit expenses, including fees for technical support and honoraria to Linh Dinh for editorial supervision, are major items in the VNLP budget. Wikivietlit also needs honoraria to new reference authors to review and extend our coverage on topics such as authors of the Republic of Viet Nam, Vietnamese authors in French, Roman Catholic and Buddhist authors. Please consider donating toward the $250 honorarium to a Wikivietlit reference author, by check or at our website.
Rockefeller Presentation at Joiner

Dan presented Wikivietlit to the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences, at the University of Massachusetts, Boston on Saturday, May 25. It was the final meeting of the Rockefeller Fellows program, “Culture, Art, Trauma, Survival, Development: Vietnamese Contexts”, which funded Wikivietlit for coverage of foreign scholars of Vietnamese literature. Dan was joined by Viet Le of the University of Southern California and the Diasporic Vietnamese Artists Network (DVAN), the musician Nguyen Thuyet Phong, scholars Nguyen Lien and Phan Cam Thuong, and prison novelist Bui Ngoc Tan, with Saigon writer Tran Thi Hong Hanh and educator Phan Ton Tinh Hai in the audience.

Write for Father Ly

VNLP translator Jean Libby is the Amnesty International (AI) case coordinator for Prisoner of Conscience Reverend Nguyen Van Ly, who was imprisoned with VNLP author Nguyen Chi Thien at Ba Sao prison in 1990 and 1991. Thien was released in 1991 after a Prisoner of Conscience campaign by AI, who also adopted Father Ly, then serving a ten-year sentence for leading an illegal religious pilgrimage.

Ly was released in 1992, but imprisoned again in 2001 for ‘failure to abide by the decisions on his probation issued by authorized State agencies’ and for ‘sabotaging the policy of uniting the whole people.’ Released in a general amnesty in 2005, Ly was one of the architects of the online petition signed by 118 Vietnamese citizens made public on the Internet on 8 April 2006.

The originators, known as Bloc 8406, call for multi-party democracy in Viet Nam. Thien was one of the first to sign the petition when it left Viet Nam. Jean was among the first 100 supporting names.

Ly was arrested again in February 2007. At his March trial, Ly, his hands tied to a chair, was gagged, carried from the courtroom, and sentenced to eight years on the charge of violating Article 88 of the Vietnamese penal code, ‘propaganda against the government.’ In commemoration of the second anniversary of the current imprisonment of Ly, now in solitary confinement for two years, Amnesty International Group 19 in Palo Alto is producing petitions and leaflets in Vietnamese as well as English. They will ask the American Embassy in Hanoi to visit Ly and inform him of the strong support among Americans for his release, as well as that of two co-defendants, Nguyen Phong and Nguyen Binh Thanh. To join in the effort contact Jean Libby at jalibby@pacbell.net.

George Mangan Gone

George Herbert Mangan died on February 25, 2009 after a long illness. Many VNLP supporters were among the more than 4,000 students he taught at Exeter after service as a linguist in Naval Security. His engagement with Christian existentialism made reading Dostoevsky and Greene or watching Coppolla lasting influences on those so fortunate as to study with him. Send condolences to his wife Jane at 47 Main Street, Exeter, NH 03833.

Lucy Nguyen

Former VNLP advisory committee member Lucy Nguyen is housebound. Old friends can call her at (413) 665-0370, write to 4 Pine Court, Sunderland, MA 01375-9424, or send email to lnguyen@acad.umass.edu.

Ken Chen wins Yale Younger Poets

Ken Chen, the new executive director of the Asian American Writers Workshop in New York and friend of VNLP, has won this manuscript competition, the oldest literary prize in the United States. We can look forward to his first book Juvenilia from Yale University Press.

Credit and Debit Card Donations

VNLP now accepts debit and credit card donations at <www.vietnamlit.org>, thanks to the Giftworks online donations program. The page suggests contributions from $25, $50 or $100 to help cover the costs of printing and mailing Literature News, to $250, which will support a batch of reference articles at Wikivietlit, or $500 to support a new VNLP author page.
In the first quarter of 2009, Ken Chen met Dan for breakfast the day before and Mitch Bradbury took him out to lunch the day of the New York party, hosted by Oz Enders, Elise Thoron, Pamela Rosenthal and Donna Dennis, where David Moore, Jeff Ratner, and Sam Duffy played music and Dan read from his dissertation to Robert Anderson, Kim, Larry & Alicia Berger, Lisa Brainerd, Emily Clarke-Pearson, Dana Doan, Jenny Young Dupont, Seth Fagen, Samantha Gillisson, Phan Binh Wse Hanan, Carol Irving, Vlad Klimenko, Kathy Klyce, Andrew Knox, Jacques Lezra & Susanne Wofford, Michele Lowrie, Michael Lynton, David Norris, Lydia Rhodes Petty, Janet North, Andrea North, and Ocean Vuong. Elise Thoron rehearsed Dan the night before, in front of Oz, Desaix Anderson, Jim Friedlander, Cindy Prescott Kuster, Zan Ottaway, and Joanna Wissinger. Oz followed up with Larry Berger for lunch to discuss their mutual interest in health care administration and VNLP. Julie Rasmussen hosted Stu Swanson and Dan in Virginia for the Obama inauguration, which we enjoyed from the Jono Jima memorial.

Fred Brown wrote to invite Dan to speak to his Viet Nam students at the School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington and when time and strength did not permit offered to hook us up with another instructor in the fall. John & Margaret Wise hosted Dan on a visit to their Virginia farm to discuss John’s life, joined by Peyton Wise, Carl Johnston and Steady Hinckley, and Phan Binh Wse Hanan and Dan discussed the VNLP business development plan. Peyton offered to come when Dan speaks at SAIS and Steady asked him to visit in Maryland. Phan Binh, Haun Saussy, and Sam Duffy accompanied Dan, Elise & Oz to see Randy Burns sing in New Haven on a trip to discuss the VNLP business development plan. Jean Libby sent out a mailing of Literature News which brought in a new project donor. When Miriam Cooke had to decline our invitation for the May party, she offered to host another one in July. Paula Duffy put Dan up in Chicago for the Association for Asian Studies meetings, hosting a dinner with Wendy Doniger and Marshall Sahlan. Michele Thompson put VNLP on the agenda of the Vietnamese Studies Group, advisory committee Lucien Ellington put VNLP on the agenda of his Education About Asia, and Lucien commissioned a resource essay for EAA on teaching the war through Vietnamese literature in translation which will begin life as a Wikivietlit article. Kevin Davis and Barry Ragin had Dan talk about VNLP on their Shooting the Bull radio show. Mai Elliott, Victor J. Croizat, Michele, Margareet, and Peyton tried to nail down when John Wise might have witnessed a helicopter evacuation from northwestern Viet Nam to US ships in the late 1940s or early 1950s. David Willson sent ongoing editions of his “REMF Diary of Dying and Bureaucratic Complexity” and Robert Anderson sent drafts of his Persching and Seymour mss. Ocean Vuong updated and expanded Wikivietlit coverage of Vietnamese American writers working in English, and Catherine Cole. Linh Dinh, Wendy Duong, David & Mai Elliott, Alan Farrell, Viet Le, Greg Lockhart, Isabelle Thuy Pelaud, Cong Huyen Ton Nhu Nha Trang & Larry Pensinger, Quang X. Pham, and David Willson reviewed Wikivietlit entries.

In the beginning of the second quarter of 2009, Alan Farrell introduced Dan and Lewis “Bob” Sorley over lunch near the Virginia Military Institute. Bob offered to come when Dan speaks at SAIS. Chung Nguyen and the William Joiner Center invited Dan to speak about Wikivietlit at the University of Massachusetts campus. Regina Aaboni went out for dinner the next day before, and Lucy Duffy and Ruth Shapiro drove up from the Cape to listen and then have dinner. Phan Binh picked Dan up at the Hartford airport and drove to Ernie’s in New Haven where Ben Kiernan, Michele Thompson, and Rich Richie celebrated the dissertation with pizza then drinks on Mickey’s breezeway the evening before the memorial service for Huyhnh Sanh Thong. His wife Van-Yen Huynh included Dan in the service, which is reported on page 3. Quang Phu Van invited poet Nguyen Chi Thien and others back to his house after the reception. Charlie Hunter hosted Dan and Sam and Oz Enders on a visit to clear a treeline and dig Charlie’s mom’s garden in Vermont so we could further discuss the VNLP business plan. Katherine Walton & Jaimey Eisler and Tim & Denise Duffy threw a VNLP party for Dan’s dissertation in Efland, North Carolina. Adolphus Bell entertained. Guests are listed in the article on page 3. Katherine wrote the next morning to thank Dan for having a party thrown for him. Denise Duffy sent out an email of her party toast which brought in a new donor. Thanks!

**VNLP Legal Status and Funding**

VNLP is a d/b/a for Books & Authors: Viet Nam, Inc., a federally recognized 501.c.3 non-profit corporation in North Carolina. VNLP has established its editorial program with private funding. VNLP recognizes its authors and editors with modest honoraria and pays contractors and vendors their going rate.

Seventeen friends have sponsored events to develop support in New York, Washington, DC and North Carolina: Valerie Asher in Bethesda, Maryland; Donna Dennis & Nancy Louden, Sam Duffy, Nina & Hal Drooker, Tom Enders & Elise Thoron, Carol Irving, Pamela Rosenthal & Samuel Wertheimer in New York; Anna & Steve Wilson in Durham, Tim & Denise Duffy and Katharine Walton & Jaimey Eisler in Efland.


Major gifts from David & Betty Jones & Oz Enders allowed VNLP to take steps towards professionalization in 2008. Valerie Asher, Kim & Larry Berger, Pete & Kim Delevett, Paul Dionne & Jenn Esperanza, Nina & Hal Drooker, Lucy Duffy, Anne Frank, Jean Libby, Sandy Mills, Mart Stewart & Ly Lan all renewed their support in 2008. Tin Nguyen joined as a new donor. Anh Do renewed the corporate support of the Nguoi Viet newspaper at the project level. So far in 2009, Lisa Brainerd, Jessica Hughes, Andrew Knox, Martha Moore, Lucy Nguyen, Alexandra Ottaway, Ruth Shapiro and Margaret Wise have joined as new donors. Penny & Bernard Snow and Michele Thompson have renewed their support. New donors Phan Binh Wse Hanan, Nga Nguyen, and Anonymous have provided support at the project level. Le Phuong Anh, Donna Dennis & Nancy Louden, Lucy Duffy, and Charlie Hunter have repeated their support at the project level. Renewed major gifts from David & Betty Jones and Tom Enders & Elise Thoron have supported our development in 2009.
Activity

The Viet Nam Literature Project makes Vietnamese literature intellectually accessible in English. We now offer a free online English-language encyclopedia to Vietnamese literature, Wikivietlit, and now publish translations of key authors at our website accompanied by teaching materials such as lesson plans and study materials such as bibliography and interviews.

We will recruit a university partner to offer certification in teaching Vietnamese literature through a low-residency, distance-learning, project-based program bringing instructors together with one another and with master teachers, research scholars, and living authors. We will publish the mastery products of our student teachers for widespread use.

Rationale

The long American war in Viet Nam and the subsequent Vietnamese immigration here have fed a persistent interest in Viet Nam among a variety of Americans. By addressing this interest, Vietnamese literature can educate Americans in the views of others, to promote intelligent engagement in world affairs.

The interest in Vietnamese literature in the United States is local and contextual, scattered and diffuse. It is best addressed by individual teachers responding to a particular situation, whether in home school, charter school, community college, liberal arts college, research university, community center, continuing education, or prison.

Whether they are teaching vets or immigrants, their children or grandchildren, adoptive parents of Vietnamese, adoptees, or some other group entirely, teachers know their students’ needs best. However, most teachers lack expertise on Viet Nam.

The global network of Vietnamese literature specialists working in English can educate those dedicated to teaching the literature, whose teaching materials can in turn serve the wide public of teachers and students with a more glancing interest.

Plan

Viet Nam Literature Project will provide teachers with subject expertise through reference publishing, curricular publishing, and formal instruction. Wikivietlit already provides reference assistance on 200 Vietnamese authors. We have already published such translations as instructor Lily Chiu’s presentation of Saigon author Ly Lan, with interview and discussion questions.

Our certification program will bring our experts and authors together with teachers, to improve their grasp of their chosen material, and subsequently to add the teachers’ mastery projects to our online offerings of translations with curricular materials, sharing their pedagogy widely.