

Featuring Ly Lan

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The Viet Nam Literature Project promotes Vietnamese literature in English translation, when necessary, in America and to the world. We do this to help teachers, students and readers understand the social realities of the nation that has played so great a role in the life of the modern world, and to develop Vietnamese literature as a field of study in the United States. We further support the freedom and influence of Vietnamese writers by working for their public recognition.

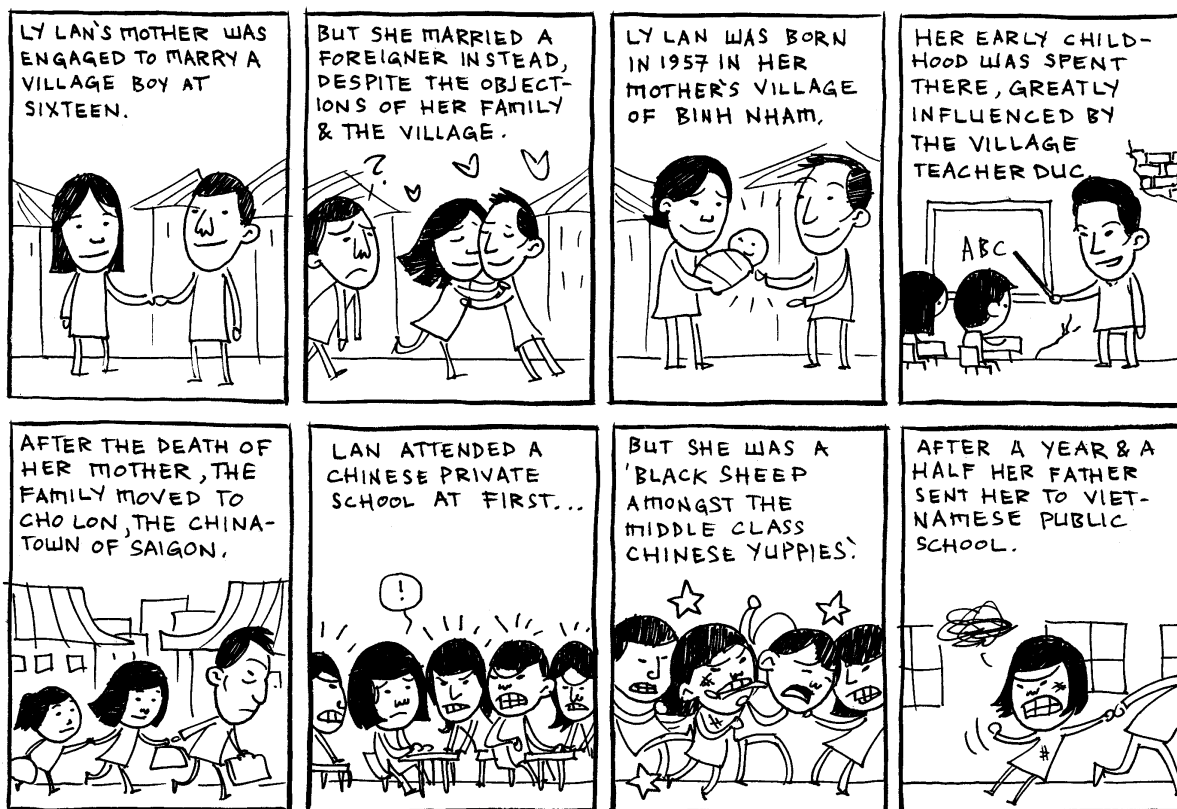
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A Very Brief Biography of Ly Lan © 2006 Jonathan David Hanh Vu Hill



A Very Brief Biography of Ly Lan continues inside...

D E A R F R I E N D S

Dear Friends,

Summer is ending in Orange County, North Carolina. The sun rises later and later each morning as I drive to start work at a neighboring farm at dawn. By noon I am back at the barn office of VNLP all afternoon before I head out in the evening to feed our landlord's horses.

It has been a quiet season of busy afternoons, adding names of supporters to our database, getting the first newsletter in the mail to their addresses, and going out in person to gather more names and addresses. Our two big events this summer brought Saigon author **Ly Lan** to new supporters in Durham, and introduced me and VNLP overall to a summer colony in upstate New York.

We have an article about **Lan** and the Durham party on page three, to go with **Jonathan Hill's** original comic strip about her throughout this issue. Here's a photograph of me at the **Norman Thomas Hall of Three Arrows**, founded in 1937 by the **Socialist League of New York City**.

Norman Thomas spoke for democratic socialism in the United States throughout the twentieth century, helping to establish the **American Civil Liberties Union** and other basic American institutions. The crowd of more than twenty-five that gathered at his hall at **Three Arrows** for my VNLP presentation



Dan at Norman Thomas Hall, Three Arrows photo © Allen Duffy

was sophisticated about the ups and downs of writers in the struggle for a just society.

I showed them the VNLP website pages on bitter anti-communist poet **Nguyen Chi Thien** and on **Ly Lan**, the positive, forward-looking Vietnamese feminist and proud citizen of the **Socialist Republic of Viet Nam**. We talked for two and half hours.

Everyone left with his or her own opinion, but certainly I gathered fifteen names of people to send this issue of the newsletter to, and to invite to the VNLP party for poet **Linh Dinh** in New York this fall. Building our mailing list and event audience has been my focus all summer.

We need a face-to-face network and postal mailing list to support our website programs. Response to the mailing of the first, summer, issue of *Literature News* to about two hundred and fifty people has prompted gifts from eight new donors and one repeat gift totaling \$1125.

That's a great start. Now that routines are in place to put out the newsletter, hold events, take names, send out mailings and thank-you notes, I am turning my attention back to editorial matters, to new pages on new authors on our website.

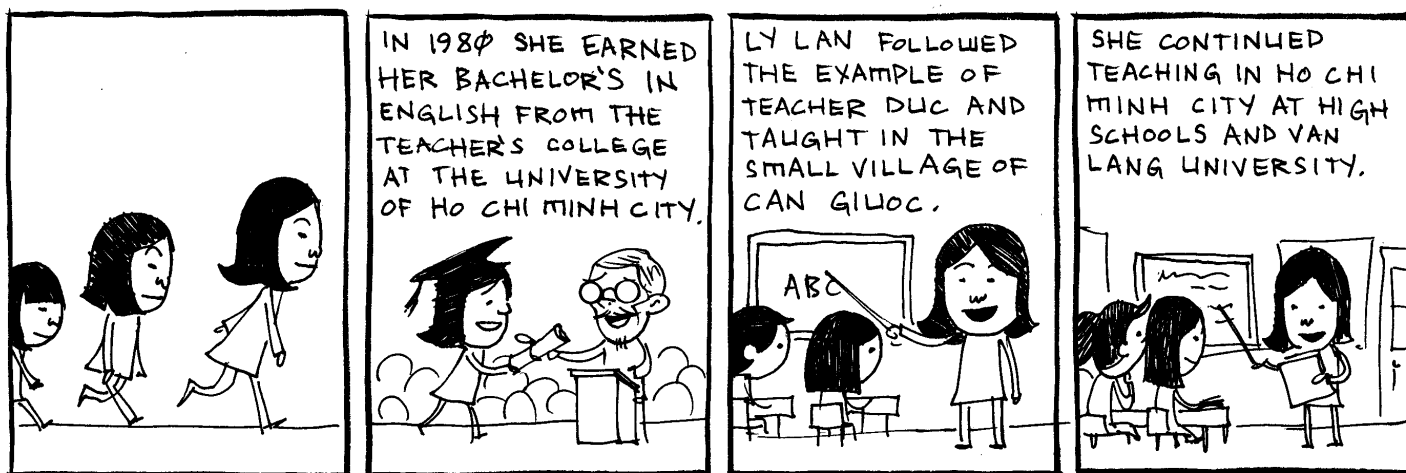
We plan to bring out more authors this fall and to settle into a steady annual pace of ten next year while we further expand the website with a reference tools, links to related sites, and other features to promote our authors' work. We will take another long step to making the full variety of the literature of the people of Viet Nam available to readers in English.

Please consider supporting *Literature News*, or extending your support to our other operations. We provide a donation form on page eight. We are bringing Vietnamese literature to the United States entirely with private support so far, grateful for your help.

Dan

Editor, Viet Nam Literature Project

Literature News Fall 2006



E V E N T S



Pho Ba Long with birth family at Ha Noi, circa 1934



Pho Ba Long with his own family at Da Lat, 1964

September Party in Bethesda with Pho Ba Long

Valerie Asher will host a party for **Pho Ba Long** and his memoir *On the Long Way Home* at 3 PM on Saturday, September 30, 2006 in her home at 5702 Roosevelt Street near Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, the Maryland suburb of Washington, DC.

VNLP will mount *On the Long Way Home* at www.vietnamlit.org this fall. **Pho Ba Long's** memoir blazes a highly individual path through the history of the twentieth century, following the Roman

Catholic, English-speaking son of a mandarin brick manufacturer through Ha Noi, Shanghai, Saigon, and the United States as he builds his own family.

Jennifer Pho, who married into this Vietnamese family, will appear to introduce her father-in-law and take questions about working with him on the memoir. VNLP editor **Dan Duffy** will emcee the event. Refreshments will be served.

November Party in New York with Linh Dinh

Carol Irving will host a party for Vietnamese American poet, translator, anthologist and fiction writer **Linh Dinh** in her loft at 143 Avenue B, Apartment 2B, in Manhattan, on the evening of Wednesday, November 15. Carol is an artist with extensive ties to Viet Nam, a former Saigon resident.

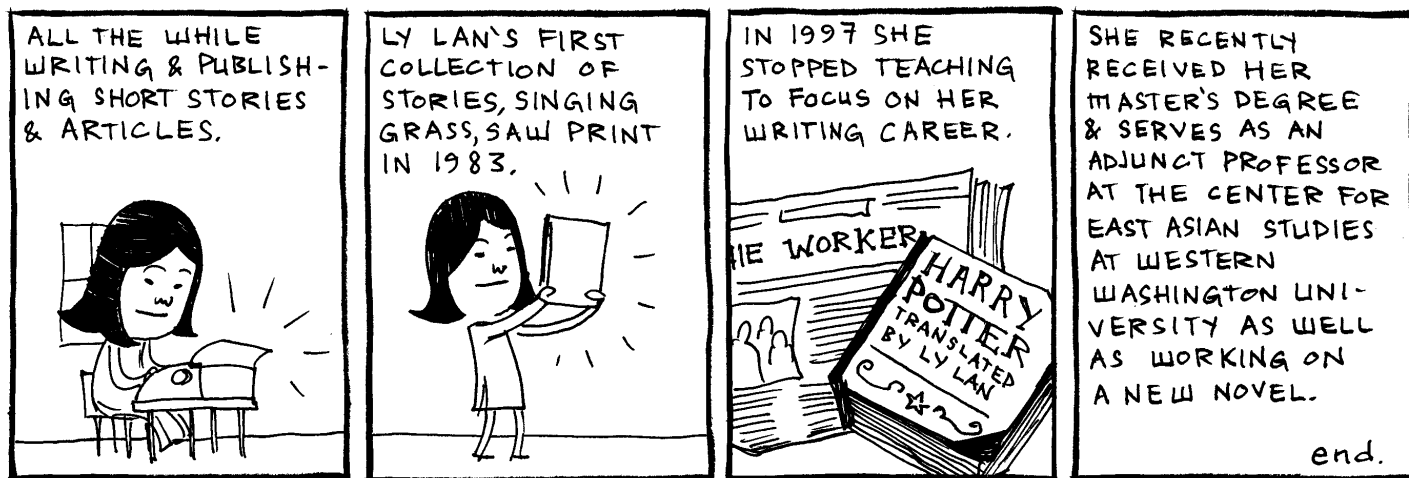
Linh Dinh is the most widely and variously published Vietnamese American writer, prominent for his own work in both English and Vietnamese, as well as an active translator in both directions. He will read from *American Tatts* and *Blood and Soap*, his recent collections of poetry and short fiction, and discuss his work with VNLP to present Saigon surrealist **Nguyen Quoc Chanh**.

VNLP editor **Dan Duffy** will emcee the event. Refreshments will be provided. **Sam Duffy and the Potstickers** will provide incidental music. Come have a good time.



Linh Dinh born 1963 in Saigon, on his wedding day there in 2000.

All are welcome at no charge to both events, but seating is limited. If you would like to come, please telephone VNLP editor Dan Duffy at (919) 383-7274 or send email to editor@vietnamlit.org.



biographical information about Ly Lan from unpublished article 'The Village Teacher' by Ly Lan

Feminist Author Speaks to Artists, Activists and Families

Anna and **Steve Wilson** hosted the first annual Durham, North Carolina **VNLP** party, introducing Saigon author **Ly Lan**. **Lily Chiu's** translations and interview with **Lan** are the most recent addition to the **VNLP** website.

Lan became famous in Viet Nam after convincing publishers there to bring out her translations of the **Harry Potter** books. She thought they would be good for the children of Viet Nam. Her overnight success came after twenty years' work as a journalist, short story writer, novelist and poet, documented on her page at the **VNLP** website.

Anna, a prominent musical director and arts impresario in Durham, and her husband **Steve**, a Coast Guard veteran of the war off Viet Nam, brought in a crowd with a variety of interests in **Lan**. Neighbors included **Sandy Mills**, retired administrator at the **Duke Literature Program**, who scheduled Ha Noi writer **Nguyen Huy Thiep's** visit to North Carolina ten years ago.



Ly Lan talking with party guests

Arts supporters included **Richard** and **Jacqueline Morgan**, of **Morgan's Imports**, founded by **Richard** with goods he bought at Guam on his way home from Viet Nam thirty years ago. Longtime friends of Viet Nam and the **Vietnamese Women's Union** included **Trude Miller** and **Howard Machtinger**, active on public health and the Agent Orange issue.



Ly Lan, arts administrator Debbie McGill and children's author and librarian Jackie Ogburn

The audience engaged **Lan** in spirited discussion about her own writing, and her purposes in writing for children. Children's author **Jackie Ogburn** was just one of the librarians, publishers and writers talking with **Lan**.

After **Lan's** talk we all continued chatting, with many diverse outcomes. **Rick** and **Allison Martin**, one of the adoptive families of Vietnamese children attending, will reprint **Lily Chiu's** interview with **Lan** from the **VNLP** website in their newsletter **Chao Ban**.

Debbie McGill of the **North Carolina Arts Council** urged Dan to investigate opportunities for a fellowship to translate one of **Lan's** own children's books, and to support **VNLP**. Duke administrator **Jen Phillips** suggested looking for a **VNLP** partnership at such institutions as the **John Hope Franklin Center**.

We all had a good time, ate two melons, a plate of grapes, and many spring rolls while the children ran around. I followed up with **Lan** this week by telephone from her home with husband **Mart Stewart** in Bellingham, Washington.

She is busy canning the fruit and vegetables she spent the summer gardening. When the rains start in the Pacific Northwest **Lan** may start translating again, this time from her own work, for the children of the United States.



Host Steve Wilson, husband Mart Stewart, Ly Lan and hostess Anna Wilson

A U T H O R S

Authors, editors, and translators have been in touch since we launched, with work we hope to bring attention to at the VNLP website, www.vietnamlit.org. It's easy now, on the Internet, for readers to buy small press books, privately published books, and books from overseas, but first they have to know the authors and their works exist. Here is a sampler from writers we are in touch with and plan to promote.



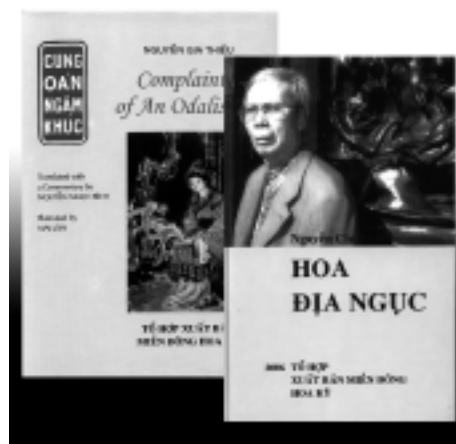
Wondrous Land and Vietnamese Poetry by Kim-Vu

Kim-Vu's Bilingual Works

On the walls of a temple in Viet Nam you may see parallel inscriptions, one in Chinese and one in Vietnamese language. On the wall of the VNLP office we have computer printouts from **Kim-Vu**, one in Vietnamese and the other in English, offering precepts attributed to **Buddha**. **Kim-Vu** would rather call them “humanist.” His own works reach out warmly in both languages. *Mien Dat La/Wondrous Land* offers Vietnamese poems and their English versions, face to face, about travels outside Viet Nam. *Viet Nam Nhung Ang Tho Tuyet Tac/Vietnamese Poetry: a Sampler* is a bilingual introduction to Vietnamese poetry from early days. We look forward to working with **Kim-Vu** as a translator and adviser.

Translator Nguyen Ngoc Bich

Nguyen Ngoc Bich graduated from Princeton in the 1950s, served his country back and forth between Saigon and the United States, settled here as an exile after 1975 and retired as director of the Vietnamese service of **Radio Free Asia**. Throughout, he has tirelessly translated literature, especially in his *A Thousand Years of Vietnamese Poetry*. An early and unrelenting advocate of dissident poet **Nguyen Chi Thien**, **Bich** has recently published the definitive collection of **Thien's** poems, *Hoa Dia Nguc*, and **Bich's** own translation of **Nguyen Gia Thieu's** classic *Complaints of an Odalisque*. VNLP is proud to have **Bich's** translations of **Thien** at www.vietnamlit.org



Complaints of an Odalisque by Nguyen Gia Thieu and Nguyen Chi Thien's Collected Poems



Co Thom literary journal and a memoir-novel by Nguyen Thi Ngoc Dung

Not in English Yet: Nguyen Thi Ngoc Dung

Kim-Vu introduced us to his friend **Dzung Senser**, whose pen name is **Nguyen Thi Ngoc Dung**. Writing under a pen name is normal Vietnamese practice. **Dung** has edited the Washington, DC literary journal *Co Thom* since 1991, and is author of several volumes of short and long fiction, essays, and poetry. VNLP is acquiring a full set of the journal for reference here in the office, and reading through **Dung's** own works for possible collaboration. We look forward to meeting her at **Valerie Asher's** event for **Pho Ba Long** in Bethesda on September 30.

A N N O U N C E M E N T S

Farewell Yen Do

Yen Do, a great figure in Vietnamese publishing in our times, died this summer. He founded and ran *Nguoi Viet*, the large Vietnamese-language daily in Westminster, California. He leaves behind him a solid institution in the hands of his daughter **Anh. Seth Mydans**, who covers Southeast Asia for the *New York Times*, had recently profiled **Yen** and **Anh**, and wrote the obituary in the *Times*. **Yen Do's** friend **Jeff Brody**, author of a book about *Nguoi Viet*, wrote another obituary for the *Orange County Register*.

Welcome Back Dana Sachs

Dana Sachs and her family have returned to Wilmington, North Carolina from her year in Ha Noi. Both **Dana** and her husband had Fulbrights, Dana's for research on adoption from Viet Nam. Her memoir, *The House on Dream Street*, concerns the house where she first stayed in Ha Noi in the 1990s, after the trip when she and sister **Lynne Sachs** made the film *Which Way is East?* After translating a volume of fiction by **Le Minh Khue** and editing another by **Nguyen Huy Thiep** for Curbstone, Dana has her own novel *If You Lived Here* scheduled for publication in March 2007.

Chao Ban reprints Ly Lan

Allison and **Rick Martin** will reprint **Lily Chiu's** interview with **Ly Lan** in their print newsletter for families with adoptive Vietnamese children, *Chao Ban*. To subscribe, go to www.chaobannewsletter.com. **Allison** and **Rick** met **Lan** at the VNLP party **Anna** and **Steve Wilson** hosted for her in Durham, North Carolina in June. They are founders of **Families with Adoptive Children from Viet Nam: Adoption Support Network**, www.fcvn.org, from their home in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Congratulations to Journal of Vietnamese Studies!

Mariam Beevi Lam and **Peter Zinoman**, working with the University of California Press and the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at the University of California, and support from **Helena Kolenda** and **Terry Lautz** at the Henry Luce Foundation are launching the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* this fall!

Individual subscriptions are \$45 at <http://www.ucpress.edu/journals/vs/shop.htm>, or call 510-642-9917 or email journals@ucpress.edu.

Barbara Tran in New Yorker

Barbara Tran's poem "Imaginary Menagerie" appeared in the August 21 issue of the *New Yorker* magazine. One of the handful of general interest magazines still publishing in the United States, the *New Yorker* aims for an managerial class readership with substantial non-fiction articles while aspiring for literary esteem with short stories and achieving it with poetry. They don't publish bad poems, but they don't just publish them because they're good. You have to be somebody. Publishing poetry in the *New Yorker* marks a public career **Tran** has built for twenty years, including editing the landmark anthologies of Vietnamese writing, *Watermark* and *Vietnam: Beyond the Frame*. She spent the summer writing a

novel at Hall Farm and says it has been fun to hear from people who saw the poem. Congratulations, **Barbara!**

Monique Truong Essays

Monique Truong, author of the novel *Book of Salt*, wrote from her summer residency at **Hall Farm** in Vermont to alert readers to two essays, about her father on the *New York Times* op-ed page on Sunday, June 18, and about her mother in the August issue of *Gourmet* magazine. I told the **North Carolina Collection** at Chapel Hill to collect them, since **Monique** lived in Boiling Springs here when she first came to America, and her next novel is set in our state. Both essays are radiant memoirs, accepting of a difficult past, well worth tracking down.

VNLP Financials

2005

Year One - Annual

Income	14,194.85
Expenses	13,203.70
Net	991.15

2006

Year Two - Through April 30

Income	12,914.22
Expenses	11,562.20
Net	1,352.05

T H A N K S

In the third quarter of 2006, Anna and Steve Wilson hosted a VNLP party for Ly Lan at their Durham home. Lan's husband Mart Stewart drove her there. Allison and Rick Martin came and will reproduce Lily Chiu's interview with Lan in their *Chao Ban* newsletter for families with adoptive Vietnamese children. Jen Phillips attended the party and consulted with Dan on how to work with Duke University. Debbie McGill of the North Carolina Arts Council urged Dan to apply for funding for himself and for VNLP. Jean Libby bought one hundred copies of the first issue of *Literature News* for resale. Tom Enders called to urge Dan to mount more writers at the website. Son Truong took Dan for lunch in Washington, DC and, when asked, suggested important authors for VNLP to cover. Nina and Harold Drooker hosted Dan to give a talk about VNLP at the Three Arrows summer colony. Sam and Karen Duffy drove me up from New York City and Allen Duffy took photos and got addresses from the audience. Heather Tuttle fed the horses at Infinity Farm so Dan could travel. Peter Childers took Dan along to Paul Costigan's annual wild-boar roast in Sonoma County, to meet possible supporters for a VNLP event in the Bay Area. Valerie Asher made preparations for her VNLP event in Bethesda later this month for VNLP author Pho Ba Long and daughter-in-law Jenifer Pho. Quang Pho provided high-quality scans of family photographs for the e-bulletin announcing the event, which VNLP webmaster Paulette Stiles taught Dan how to make and send on his own. Fred Brown invited Dan to stay in Washington, DC after the Pho Ba Long event to attend one at the School for Advanced International Studies for the widow of Bernard Fall. Mission Research helped us get started with Giftworks, the donor contact database Techsoup gave us. Techsoup sold us a discounted subscription to Grantstation, a fundraising reference tool. Carol Irving and Linh Dinh settled on a November date for Carol to host a VNLP party for Linh in New York. Nick Long of Crackerbox Design continued to employ Dan at Highfield Farm. Susan Peterson and Erin Whitfield moved in and took on duties at Infinity Farm, easing Dan's duties there. The William Joiner Center at the University of Massachusetts awarded Dan a Rockefeller fellowship to build an on-line community of Vietnamese literature scholars at the VNLP website. Ken Ray referred us to Matthew Holmes for advice on setting up a wiki, and Nancy Seybold counseled us on the project. Denise Duffy of Musicmaker Relief Foundation continued to give operational advice, joined by Scott Savitt, founder of *Beijing Scene*. VNLP authors and translators showed patience while Dan spent three months building the back office rather than the website. Along with a donation, Kim-Vu sent copies of his books and referred us to his friend Dzung Senser, who sent a donation along with her books. Le Xuan Khoa wrote a helpful note about the newsletter. 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 is establishing its program with private funding over the first three years, 2005-7, while developing income-generating procedures and approaching institutional partners.

Four major donors have made a three-year commitment of annual gifts in the range of one to five thousand dollars to support initial operations: Anonymous, Lucy Duffy, Tom Enders & Elise Thoron, and Pamela Rosenthal & Samuel Wertheimer.

Six individuals have committed to hosting annual events to bring the VNLP mission to potential supporters in major cities: Pamela Rosenthal, Tom Enders, Elise Thoron, Sam Duffy and Carol Irving in New York City, and Valerie Asher in Washington, DC.

In November 2005 we made our first annual appeal by mail to addresses gathered at these events, and at VNLP appearances at conferences and universities. Those who have responded at parties, via Paypal on the website, or to the annual appeal with support are: Le Phuong Anh, Anne Asher, Valerie Asher, Kim and Laurence Berger, Donna Dennis, Nina and Harold Drooker, Denise and Timothy Duffy, Lan Duong & Viet Nguyen, Anne Frank, Chan Khuong, Robert R. Jones III, Terri Moore, Penny and Bernard Snow, Jeneva Stone, Son Truong, and David Yin.

Other income has come from speaker's fees to the editor from the Center for Vietnamese Philosophy, Culture and Society at Temple University, and the Council for Southeast Asia Studies at Yale University, and from a consulting fee for reviewing the Vietnamese-language programming of Radio Free Asia. Jean Libby purchased 100 copies of the first issue of *Literature News* for resale at her website.

Tom Enders, Son Truong, Le Phuong Anh and Anonymous renewed gifts in the third quarter. The June party for Ly Lan brought a gift from Sandy Mills, and the first issues of the newsletter provoked first-time donations from Kim-Vu, Dana Sachs, Dennis Dunivan, Kimloan Hill, Michele Thompson, Dzung Senser, Le Xuan Khoa, Noah Long, and a renewed gift from Donna Dennis.

The William Joiner Center of the University of Massachusetts has awarded Dan a Rockefeller fellowship for academic year 2006-7 to build a reference to Vietnamese literature scholars on the VNLP website. The VNLP editor has worked so far as a volunteer, supporting himself caring for livestock at Infinity Farm and doing general labor at Highfield Farm.

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Please sign up a friend to receive *Literature News*, the quarterly print newsletter of the Viet Nam Literature Project, with Jonathan Hill's comics of Vietnamese writers and news of VNLP authors and events.

Friend's Name _____ Your Name _____

Street Address _____

State, Postal Code & Country _____

VNLP Mission and Programs

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Literature News

The Viet Nam Literature Project Newsletter



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Please consider supporting the **Viet Nam Literature Project**. Private support pays for all our work these first three years, 2005-7, while we develop income-producing projects and seek institutional, government and foundation partners.

☐ **Member \$25** covers the cost of preparing and sending you *Literature News*.

☐ **Supporter \$50** or ☐ **Lit Lover \$100** helps us send *Literature News* to those who have not yet joined.

☐ **Impresario \$250** provides honoraria for the authors and translators for a page on the **VNLP** website.

☐ **Patron \$500** pays the production and promotion costs of a new author page on the **VNLP** website.