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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Viet Nam Literature Project Programs

Website – representative works by Vietnamese authors with supporting materials for classroom and research use
Outreach – newsletter, e-bulletins, and events in major cities
Speakers – VNLP authors and staff on campuses and in classrooms
Promotion – nominations of VNLP authors to awards, honors, referral to events and publications of other organizations
Dear Friends,

Winter has hit Orange County, North Carolina. This weekend I had to shovel ice out of the horse troughs each morning and keep a hose inside the barn where it wouldn’t freeze so I could fill them again in the evening.

After two weeks of hard frosts we have already started feeding the hay I baled in October, right after the second annual VNLP event at Valerie Asher’s home in Bethesda, Maryland. Pho Ba Long and his family held twenty-five people spellbound for two hours with the story of his life.

There’s an article about that event on the next page, and another on page four about the second annual New York City event, with Linh Dinh at Carol Irving’s loft. Both parties were smash successes, and now I look forward to a winter staying close to the farm working on the VNLP website.

Our pipeline is bursting with good material. We have Pho Ba Long’s memoir, and the novel Dennis Dunivan wrote about his friend Viet Nguyen’s days as a teenager in the re-education camps. Tim Shea and his students at Pomfret school have done an interview for us with Ho Anh Thai and his translator Wayne Karlin. Elizabeth Riley and Laurent Wicker have prepared a web page on Viet Nam’s most popular serious author, Y Ban.

VNLP events, and this newsletter, help get the word out about our authors and have started to develop support, but they take time away from basic editorial work. Over the winter I will be meeting with our board and other friends to strategize about letting me spend more time in the office.

I love feeding the horses and the construction I do on a neighbor’s farm, but I don’t always have the strength to work one full week outdoors, another in the office, and travel. Serving our authors and audience by doing routine VNLP work has to become what I do first to buy groceries and pay rent.

This fall Erik Lind Harms at Duke University helped me develop an application to their University Writing Program which would have employed me as a teacher, supervising Duke freshmen writing articles for the VNLP website. The UWP didn’t hire me, but the proposal is a good idea we can shop around.

I expect VNLP to succeed, to serve Vietnamese authors and their American audience in a deliberate and effective way, by applying work and imagination. I find my confidence in our self-reliance here on the farm, where we bale hay in the summer and feed it to the horses all winter.

I find hope for art and enterprise among my neighbors in Orange County. The picture of me here, with a mouthful of sweet potato pie, was taken two miles away at the counter of the All People Soul Food Grill, which the Whitted family founded as an integrated juke joint in the 1950s.

I find strength in my mailbox when I walk out with the dogs and bring back checks. Fifty dollars from an academic colleague, one hundred dollars from an elderly exile on a fixed income, two hundred dollars from a friend I met the year the war ended, five hundred dollars from a man in New Mexico I had not yet met, all these contributions not only pay our expenses but let me know we’re doing the right thing. Please consider joining our supporters.

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Dan
Editor, Viet Nam Literature Project

Literature News Winter 2006
EVENTS

Long Family Speaks to Bethesda Audience

Valerie Asher hosted the second annual Washington, D.C. area VNLP event at her home in Bethesda, Maryland on September 30, introducing Pho Ba Long and daughter-in-law Jenifer Pho to an audience of about 25. The Pho family is working with VNLP to present the memoir On the Long Way Home at our website.

Pho Ba Long’s life 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 Hanoi, Shanghai, Saigon and the United States as he builds his own family.

Jenifer Pho, at the request of her father-in-law, spoke eloquently and at length about working with him as an editor to tell the story. Her husband Quang had prepared a slide show of family photographs. After Jenifer spoke she and author Pho Ba Long took questions for nearly an hour.

The active and engaged audience included both old friends of the Pho’s and VNLP supporters. Fred Brown and Robert Senser knew Long from government service. Dennis Dunivan, VNLP author and supporter, traveled from New Mexico for the event. Dennis has worked with his friend Viet Nguyen much as Jenifer worked with her father-in-law.

Nguyen Ngoc Bich, Truong Anh Thuy, and Dzung Senser came laden with gifts for VNLP. Dzung had sent ahead a complete set of her Co Thom literary magazine, and offered to run ads for VNLP in future issues free of charge. Bich and Thuy brought a bagful of books for the VNLP office.

Hostess Valerie Asher’s friends and neighbors turned out, including repeat guests such as supporters Jeneva Stone, Minh Tranh Madeline McCarthy and Margarite Strolle, and new Bethesda guests like Laura Coyle, Madeline’s friend Thuy, and international educator Linda Yarr. Jeneva, who works with the long-standing collective Alice James publishing project, suggested we approach writers’ organizations to bring authors like Pho Ba Long to a wider public.
Poet and Translator Reads to Writers and Artists

Carol Irving, Pamela Rosenthal and Samuel Wertheimer hosted the second annual VNLP event in New York City at Carol's loft on the Lower East Side, introducing poet Linh Dinh to an audience of writers and artists. Linh is an adviser to VNLP, responsible for the Nguyen Quoc Chanh page on our website.

He is also the most widely and variously published Vietnamese American author. His poems and short stories have won him a reputation both in English and in worldwide Vietnamese-language circles.

You will find the books Linh read from, American Tatts and Blood and Soap, at the Amazon bookstore website, along with a dozen other items by and about him, including his write-up in Contemporary Authors.

Linh was just back from a residency at the arts colony at Marfa, Texas. Last year at this time he was a fellow at Norwich University in England. He spent two years in Italy as a member of the International Parliament of Writers, after returning to Saigon from his adopted city of Philadelphia.

His cosmopolitan career is reflected in a wide presence on the Web, including leading Vietnamese-language sites like the German talawas and the Australian tienve. A new location is the English-language International Exchange for Poetic Invention.

Linh’s posts at the IEPI blog include a link to the Nguyen Quoc Chanh page at the VNLP website. Linh began his reading at Carol’s with his translations from Chanh, and from Mien Dang and Nguyen Dang Thuong.

Carol had assembled an extraordinary audience of artists and writers to hear Linh. Valerie Hemingway, daughter-in-law of the novelist and recent author of the family memoir Running with the Bulls, and her son Edward, recent illustrator of Hemingway and Bailey’s Bartending Guide to Great American Writers joined a crowd of writers from Manhattan and Brooklyn including novelists Samantha Gillison and Robert Marshall, writers Lan Trinh, Andrew Hultkrans and Dan Halpern, documentarian Amanda Zinoman and photographer Abby Robinson. The poet Wendy Walters was there from Providence, Rhode Island.

Rit Premrath and other students of Linh’s turned out, as well as a colleague from Britain, poet Daniel Kane, VNLP author Lily Chiu, who had recently moved to New Jersey from Belgium, and historian of Viet Nam Jayne Werner. VNLP supporters Kim and Elicia Berger came for their second New York event in a row. There were forty of us when Linh started reading his translations, and nearly fifty by the time he finished reading his own poems and stories.

The evening began and ended with string band music from Sam and Karen Duffy’s band, including Emma Firth and Jeff Morris. The music, the food contributed by Pamela and Samuel, and Linh’s relaxed and powerful presentation to Carol’s guests, built a connection among those gathered that lasted until midnight.
Dorothy Fall’s memoir of Bernard

After Pho Ba Long and Jenifer Pho’s talk at Valerie Asher’s in Bethesda, I stayed on to attend the launch of *Bernard Fall: Memories of a Soldier-Scholar* (Potomac, 2006), arranged by Fred Brown at the School for Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC. He gathered journalists Don Oberdorfer, David Lamb, and Stanley Karnow with Dorothy Fall to mark this memoir of her husband, the French guerilla who became the first great American-trained political scientist of Viet Nam.

The publishers at their table told me they sold fifty copies of the book, nearly as many people as came. Most of them looked like they knew Fall, who published his classic works, *The Two Vietnams, Street Without Joy*, and *Hell in a Very Small Place*, while teaching in Washington at Howard University. In their remarks and discussion the speakers and the crowd remembered Fall in contemporary terms, as the kind of scholar we need now in the Iraq war, competent and brave.

Dorothy’s book presents a public man she married and remained in love with. Bernard wrote his first book about Viet Nam in love letters home to her while he was in the field. Her memoir draws on substantial research she conducted in France and the United States soon after his death almost forty years ago, and on the files the FBI created on the Viet Nam expert as a dissident to foreign policy. She tells the story with economy and feeling informed by the passage of a life.

Best Pho Book in 125 Years

After his New York reading at Carol Irving’s, Linh Dinh sent me a new book, the catalogue of Cuong Phu Le’s recent Australian exhibition by many artists on the subject of pho. The delicious noodle soup of Viet Nam is now eaten around the world, and Cuong gathered artists and writers including VNLP adviser Phan Nhien Hao as well as Linh Dinh and dozens of others to contribute poems, articles and photographs about pho, including a recipe from Andrea Nguyen, whose *Into the Vietnamese Kitchen* has just been featured on the NPR show, Splendid Table. Contact Cuong at cuong@casulapowerhouse.com or reception@casulapowerhouse.com to order your copy of the pho catalogue.
Dana Sachs won Fulbright

Dana Sachs and her family have returned to Wilmington, North Carolina, from their year in Ha Noi. Dana had a Fulbright for research for a book on Operation Babylift, the US-sponsored evacuation of Vietnamese displaced children at the end of the war. Dana’s first book, The House on Dream Street: Memoir of an American Woman in Vietnam, recalled her sojourns in Ha Noi over the 1990s. After translating, with Bac Hoai Tran, a volume of fiction by Le Minh Khue, editing, with Nguyen Nguyet Cam, another by Nguyen Huy Thiep, and publishing Two Cakes Fit for a King: Folktales from Vietnam, with Nguyen Nguyet Cam and Bui Hoai Mai, now Dana has her own novel, If You Lived Here, scheduled for publication in March 2007.

Viet Thanh Nguyen Short Story


First issue of Journal of Vietnamese Studies out!

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 have launched the Journal of Vietnamese Studies! The first issue’s table of contents and ordering information is available online. Individual subscriptions are $45.

William Joiner Center supports VNLP Editor

The William Joiner Center at the University of Massachusetts awarded VNLP editor Dan Duffy a Rockefeller fellowship for the program “Culture, Art, Trauma, Survival, Development: Vietnamese Contexts”. He will launch a database at the VNLP website introducing the international community of Vietnamese literature scholars to one another. Joiner directors Kevin Bowen and Chung Nguyen arranged the Rockefeller fellowships to meet the situations of Vietnamese exile scholars, whose jobs often don’t allow them to take up residency in Boston. Dan, with his obligations to farmwork and VNLP, benefits from this innovative programming. We will announce the full list of this year’s Rockefeller fellows in the next issue, after Joiner does.

Host a VNLP Party

We hold parties in private homes to build an audience for our authors and contacts for our organization. A VNLP author makes a personal appearance, everyone has a good time, and we take names for our mailing list. We started with New York and Washington, DC, the national capitals, and with our home base of Durham, North Carolina. We seek hosts for more parties in these cities and new locations. Contact Dan at 919-383-7274 or editor@vietnamlit.org

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In the fourth quarter of 2006, Katharine Walton introduced Dan to Shannon Ravenel of Algonquin Books, who in turn introduced her daughters the Ngo sisters of Washington, DC and New York. Valerie Asher hosted a VNLP party for Pho Ba Long and Jennifer Pho at her Bethesda home. Jeneva Stone attended and suggested we bring VNLP to writers’ conferences to get the word out. Dzung Senser, who had just donated a full run of Co Thom literary magazine, came and told us that she will start running free ads for VNLP. Nguyen Ngoc Bich and Truong Anh Thuy brought a bagful of their Canh Nam books for us. Nancy Seybold and her new husband Alan Dynerman came for dinner at Valerie’s the night before and offered to host an event at their Washington, DC, home. Dennis Dunivan flew from New Mexico for the event and took Dan out for dinner that night. Hong-Phong Pho invited Dan for dinner at home with his father Pho Ba Long and mother the next night. Fred Brown came to Pho Ba Long’s event at Valerie’s and invited Dan to his book launch and reception for Dorothy Fall at the School for Advanced International Studies the next week. At the reception, Do Tran introduced himself and asked after the horses I take care of.

V. Brigitte Blankenhorn traveled from Tarrytown for the Manhattan event. She found Lucien Ellington, a member of a literary magazine, came and told us that she, a member of the board, is renewing gifts in the fourth quarter. At one of the fellowship for academic year 2006-7 to build a reference to South-East Asian literature, he was giving a talk at a certain center. He sent commentary in Vietnamese on some of John Balaban’s transcriptions of Vietnamese folktales. He brought a gift from Dan to his book launch and reception for his book at his home in New Haven, Connecticut. Tim Shea got in touch about his students at Pomfret School interviewing translator Wayne Karlin and author Ho Anh Thai for the VNLP website. They carried the project through in November, while Carol Irving, Pamela Rosenthal, and Samuel Wertheimer hosted a VNLP party for Linh Dinh at Carol’s loft in New York City. Sam and Karen Duffy put Dan up while he was in town, and played music all night for Linh’s party with Jeff Morris and Emma Firth, who gathered names and addresses from the guests. Dan’s high-school editor, Vladimir Klimenko, traveled from Tarrytown for the Manhattan event. Bruce Mazza of the C.E.&S. Foundation found Dan in Louisville, Kentucky on other business and said hi. Back home again, Dan got calls from translator Greg Lockhart in Australia, who told Dan how to set up Skype long-distance calling, and from translator Fred Whitehurst who told about his research in the Combined Documents Exploitation Center microfilm at the National Archives for background on the memoirs of a Vietnamese doctor killed in the war which are now a bestseller in Viet Nam. Kim-Vu sent commentary in Vietnamese on some of John Balaban’s translations. Advisory Committee member Lucien Ellington suggested ways VNLP may collaborate with his Education About Asia. Linh Dinh sent Dan a copy of I (Heart) Pho, and Eric Henry agreed to speak on the Tale of Kieu at a VNLP meeting of the Yale Club reading group, which Faith Hernon will organize. The Viet Nam Studies Group listserv offered advice on which English translation to suggest to the readers. In the first week of December, Joe Harris of the University Writing Program at Duke wrote promptly to turn down Dan’s application. Sean Lunde at the William Joiner Center did the paperwork through the University of Massachusetts for VNLP to get the check for the Rockefeller fellowship. Kim-Vu proposed a VNLP party in San Jose, California. Ly Lan sent preserves from her garden in Bellingham, Washington: dried apples, bread-and-butter pickles, and many jams. Phan Nhien Hao wrote to say he is now working at Northern Illinois University as a librarian for Southeast Asian studies. Jean Libby announced that the first issue of Literature News, with the Nguyen Chi Thien cartoon, is now for sale at her website. Throughout: Infinity Farm and Highfield Farm employed Dan; Jonathan Hill, Jean Libby and Kim-Vu distributed Literature News in Portland, San Francisco, and San Jose, and Tim and Denise Duffy at the Musicmaker Relief Foundation have offered collegial advice. Thanks!

VNLP Legal Status and Funding

VNLP is a d/b/a for Books & Authors: Viet Nam, Inc., a federally recognized 501c.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.

Lucy Duffy, Jeneva Stone, Valerie Asher, and Bernard & Penny Snow renewed gifts in the fourth quarter. Truong Anh Thuy, Philip Anderson, Laurence Berger, Peter C. Delevett III, Mart Stewart, and Do Tran responded to the second issue with gifts.

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.
**VNLP Mission and Programs**

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- **Speakers** • Appearances by **VNLP** authors and staff on campus and in classrooms
- **Promotion** • Nomination of **VNLP** authors to awards and honors, referral to publications and events of other organizations

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**Support VNLP**

**VNLP** accepts donations by **Paypal** at our website, www.vietnamlit.org/donations.html and by check to Viet Nam Literature Project, 5600 Buck Quarter Road, Hillsborough, NC 27278. All donations are tax-deductible under relevant US law.

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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**.
- **Impresario $250** provides honoraria for the authors and translators for a page on the **VNLP** website.
- **Supporter $50 or Lit Lover $100** helps us send **Literature News** to those who have not yet joined.
- **Patron $500** pays the production and promotion costs of a new author page on the **VNLP** website.