

This issue features **LINH DINH!!!**

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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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THE POEM
'ACADEMY' OF FINE ARTS
★ SELECTED FOR
COMIX ADAPTATION
BY THE AUTHOR
LINH DINH
ADAPTED BY
★ JONATHAN ★
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the comic continues inside...

D E A R F R I E N D S

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



Dan and Whitteds at All People Soul Food Grill © Timothy Duffy

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.

Dan

Editor, Viet Nam Literature Project

Literature News Winter 2006



E V E N T S



Jenifer Pho and Pho Ba Long present *On the Long Way Home*

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 Ha Noi, 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.



Audience at Valerie Asher's



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



Hostess Carol Irving with LinhDinh



Poet Linh Dinh

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 **tienvie**. A new location is the English-language **International Exchange for Poetic Invention**.

Lin'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.



Musicians Emma Firth, Sam and Karen Duffy, (Jeff Morris cut off)

A U T H O R S

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.



Dorothy Fall's memoir of her husband Bernard Fall



Fred Brown introduces Dorothy Fall at her SAIS book launch

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.



Cuong Phu Le's catalogue of her show about pho

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 Nien 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.

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

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

University of Southern California professor, fiction author, and **VNLP** supporter **Viet Thanh Nguyen's** short story, "A Correct Life" has just been published in *Best New American Voices 2007* (Harcourt). The story concerns a Vietnamese refugee in San Francisco in 1975. In June, **Viet** is off to Rikkyo University to start a tour, sponsored by the American Studies Association of the United States and the Japanese American Studies Association, lecturing on his research project, "Memories of the Bad War: Viet Nam in the Global Imagination."

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

VNLP Financials

2005

Year One - Annual

Income	14,194.85
Expenses	13,203.70
Net	991.15

2006

Year Two - Through September 30

Income	13,489.22
Expenses	13,582.77
Net	-93.55

T H A N K S

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 **Jenifer 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. **Rosemary Tran** was out of town, but had already called to discuss holding an event at her Virginia home or doing some fundraising, after meeting **Valerie Asher** at another party. While **Dan** was in Washington, **Debbie McGill** explained in a phone meeting how VNLP can apply to the **North Carolina Arts Council** for funding. It's not very much money, and we have to match it, and it's a lot of work for an uncertain outcome, to support events we wouldn't do on our own, so we will apply after we have other funding and employees. We appreciate **Debbie's** patient interest. Back in North Carolina, **Erik Lind Harms** of **Duke University** met with **Dan** to review his draft application to teach VNLP as a writing project to first-year students at the **University Writing Program**. Another instructor, **Maya Parson**, reviewed the final proposal. **Michele Thompson** considered holding a 2007 VNLP party at her 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 Maza** 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 Herndon** 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 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**.

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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Four programs fulfill these goals:

Website • Representative works by Vietnamese authors with supporting materials for classroom and research use

Outreach • Print newsletter, e-bulletins, and events in major cities.

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

Literature News

The Viet Nam Literature Project Newsletter



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*.

☐ **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.