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This issue features Nguyen Du

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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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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

Dear Friends,

Spring is here in Orange County, North Carolina. We're still feeding hay to the horses but they are nibbling at new green shoots.

January and February were spent inside, printing our first book, the mini-comic of the life of **Nguyen Chi Thien**, reviewing the website, doing a mailing to past donors for renewal gifts, planning events, building **Wikivietlit** and talking to the board.

March has been a month of coming out and opening up after a couple months working indoors. In the first week **Dana**

Sachs came over from Wilmington to launch her first novel, *If You Lived Here*, at VNLP events in Chapel Hill and Durham.

The next week we went north to join **VNLP** supporters for a tour of the new **Smithsonian Institution** exhibit on Vietnamese Americans. **Asia and Pacific American** director **Franklin Odo** came out to join our group.

That week also saw the launch of **Wikivietlit**, the on-line reference guide to Vietnamese literature. Editor **Linh Dinh** and Deputy Editor **Hai-Dang Phan** contributed more than one hundred articles on Vietnamese authors before we went on-line.

I announced **Wikivietlit** at the meetings of the **Association for Asian Studies** in Boston, where I spoke about **VNLP** to the business meetings of



Dan and Eric Henry with Dana Sachs at her UNC reading to launch her NI P events in About Asia.

The following weekend, April 1, **Eric Henry** came out to the barn with more than a dozen **VNLP** supporters and members of the **Triangle Yale Club**, to discuss the *Tale of Kieu*, the Vietnamese national poem. A cloudburst rattled the tin roof as **Eric** started his talk on the porch and a honking pair of geese flew onto the pond nearby as he finished.

Now it certainly is spring. **Philip Arthur Moore**, who joined us for the year in **January** and built **Wikivietlit**, will join me in rebuilding the rest of the website. We will put **Jonathan Hill's** work for this newsletter all over it, to show the community that is growing around our events and publications.

Over the spring quarter we will resume publication of new author pages at the website, after a year's pause. We plan a schedule by historic period, rotating by quarter through ancient, colonial, wartime, and contemporary Vietnamese literature.

As board member **Daniel Egger** remarked in March, during one of a series of conversations with backers I have had over the winter, it is now obvious what we are doing. This newsletter, **Wikivietlit**, the website, and our events add up to a project to promote Vietnamese literature in the United States.

Won't you join us? So far about 40 individuals have provided all

the support for our work. When our ducks are in a row, in June, we will start a reasoned and sustained campaign for foundation support and in the fall we'll have our first capital campaign. At the Christmas season we will offer **Jonathan's** book for sale.

But right now we need your help, and we always will. Please consider joining our supporters.

Dan



HER FACE A MOON, HER EYEBROWS TWO FULL CURVES, HER SMILE A FLOWER, HER VOICE THE SOUND OF JADE, HER HAIR THE SHEEN OF CLOUDS, HER SKIN LIKE SNOW.

YET KIEN POSSESSED A KEENER, DEEPER CHARM-SHE EXCELLED VAN IN TALENT AND IN LOOKS.



HER EYES WERE AUTUMN STREAMS, HER BROWS SPRING HILLS. THE FLOWERS AND WILLOWS ENVIED HER FRESH HUE.





Tour guide Nguyen Ngoc Bich with cutouts at the Smithsonian show



Valerie Asher, Thuy Dinh, Catharin Dalpino, Franklin Odo, Nguyen Ngoc Bich and Dan Duffy at the Smithsonian show

Nguyen Ngoc Bich Leads Tour of Smithsonian Exhibit

Nguyen Ngoc Bich met a group of VNLP supporters and a television crew on March 14 at the S. Dillon Ripley Center, the international exhibition hall at the Smithsonian Institution, to lead us through the Vietnamese American Heritage Exhibit.

Bich is known to **VNLP** readers as the translator of the **Nguyen Chi Thien** poems on our website. The retired chief of the Vietnamese section of **Radio Free Asia**, he serves as chair of **Boat People S.O.S., Inc.** and on the board of the **National Congress of Vietnamese Americans.**

Franklin Odo, in charge of the Asian Pacific American division at the Smithsonian, came early for the tour and told how when Vietnamese community leaders had suggested the exhibit, he had sent them out to raise funds. They came back with one hundred thousand dollars so quickly that not only was Franklin able to hire a curator, Vu Pham, and mount the show, but Vietnamese Americans will soon have their own one-million dollar endowment at the **Smithsonian.**

The exhibit sounds a note of triumph. You can see in one photo here **Bich** in front of some of the larger-than-life cutouts of Vietnamese Americans, successful in many walks of life, that take up one whole wall. The exhibits around the other walls document the arrival of the Vietnamese as refugees and the ways they have flourished in the United States.

VNLP supporter **Valerie Asher** brought up in discussion with **Franklin** how other ethnic groups have moved on through celebration of their prosperity to bear down on documenting everyday life. For instance, a Holocaust museum has collected her own family's home movies.

Valerie was especially taken with a flattened child's pool toy, an inflatable ring a son gave his

mother before her escape alone on a boat from Viet Nam. For more than an hour, **Bich** brought all the exhibits to life, for instance singing the Christmas carol he wrote for the first holidays in a refugee camp in Pennsylvania.

One literary critic came with us, after sharing a concern that the exhibit's success stories were in business, rather than the arts. I was happy to see that writers permeate the show, with quotes from **Andrew Lam** and **Kien Nguyen** and a cutout of film-maker **Tony Bui**. Names and photos of such towering cultural figures as **Pham Duy** and **Nguyen Chi Thien** quietly decorate the exhibit.

The show will begin a three-year tour later this year to as many as fifteen venues, after closing at the **Ripley Center** on April 1. Each host community must contribute about \$4,000 costs and 150 linear feet of exhibition space. To explore hosting the **"Vietnamese American Heritage,"** please contact **Franklin Odo** at the **APA** office of the **Smithsonian:** (202) 633-2690.



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F E A T U R E D A U T H O R

Eric Henry Lectures on Kim Van Kieu at Joint Yale Club Event



Eric Henry speaks on Kieu

Erik Harms called it "the closest thing to a Vietnamese Studies rock concert I have ever witnessed." University of North Carolina professor Eric Henry held an audience of eighteen spellbound through a cloudburst and two hours beyond with an exposition of the prosody of Nguyen Du's poem, *Kim Van Kieu*.

He paused once when the rain stopped beating on the tin roof of the porch of the **Viet Nam Literature Project** barn and two Canada geese made a honking descent on the pond nearby, and again to grab a candle to read his notes when the sun went down. The audience called out several times to call him back from leaning back through the porch rail and into the **VNLP** compost pile one story below.

But **Eric** marched us through nine illustrations of the principles of **Nguyen Du's**

luc-bat (six-eight) couplet, leaving even those who don't know Vietnamese with clear understanding. He compared three English translations of the famous Nhung Bich Pavilion episode, when **Kieu** gazes sadly out at the river.

His lecture built to a detailed, passionate understanding of the recent translation by **Vladislav Zhukov**, the Australian infantry study trips through Viet Nam.

Eric had given **Diem** a ride out to the farm from Chapel Hill. When it was time for Eric and his wife the teacher **Joan Garnett**, who had arrived separately, to go nearly the whole party adjourned out to the paddock where they had parked. **Norra Church**, who had come late from showing real estate with wonderful wine, stayed to wind down with



Nguyen Ngoc Diem, Barbara White, Erik Harms (hidden), Christian Lentz, Martha Scotford, and Ben Kiernan listen

veteran whose English verses closely mimic the Vietnamese. Early in his talk **Eric** had sung for us a **Trinh Cong Son** song influenced by **Nguyen Du**, and he finished by playing a tape of a setting of the poem to music by his friend the great **Pham Duy**.

Then we moved inside the VNLP barn apartment to eat and talk. Our neighbors the Duke Asianists Bruce Lawrence and Miriam Cooke, and local lawyer Faith Herndon, had to run off, but the rest of Faith's reading group from the Triangle Yale Club stayed, including pastor Bill Dahl, UNC clinical trials researcher Barbara Dahl, North Carolina State University graphic design professor Martha Scotford, and Research Triangle Institute epidemiologist Suzanne Lea.

Yale's professor of Southeast Asian history, **Ben Kiernan**, working for the year at the **National Humanities Center** on a new history of Viet Nam, also stayed. With **Duke** anthropologist **Erik Harms** was his **Cornell** graduate school friend **Christian Lentz**, just back from field research in Saigon.

They were delighted to meet the Saigon citizen **Diem Ngoc Nguyen**, the **Hubert Humphrey** fellow in **Public Policy** at **UNC**. They all were able to advise **UNC** undergraduate **Libby Longino** and recent graduate **Josh Glasser** who are planning **Dan** and software designer **Barbara White**, who had brought a cooler of drinks, taken off the apartment door to make more space for the crowd, and photographed the lecture.

Bob and Betsy got the leftover sweet potatoes in the drippings from the ham, making it a great night for the **VNLP** coonhounds as well as our guests. *Kieu* is not a poem about having a good time. It is about accepting the ravaging of a lovely and talented woman by fate, although if you could express the act of acceptance in so many words there would be no need of the poem.

Suzanne Lea expressed how moved she was by her first reading of the classic Vietnamese verse novel, and agreed with **Dan** that it would have been good to talk it over together with so many cultivated adults. But **Eric's** rigorous exposition of prosody and translation conveyed **Nguyen Du's** insight, and the beautiful setting and good fellowship will help us remember how he said what he had to say.

May these few rustic, careless-compassed thoughts have filled

With solace those dull times when sentry-drums are stilled and darkness weighs...

A U T H O R S

VNLP Launches Dana Sachs' First Novel

VNLP supporter Dana Sachs launched her first novel, *If You Lived Here*, at VNLP events in Chapel Hill at the University of North Carolina, sponsored by English & American Studies, the Carolina Asia Center, and Asian Studies, and at The Regulator, Durham's famous independent bookseller.

About ten people came out for the afternoon campus event on March 6 and about twenty in the evening at the bookstore on March 7. Both crowds included adoptive parents and children interested in Dana's theme of adoption.

If You Lived Here follows a Wilmington woman who leaves her older husband, a veteran of the war in Viet Nam, to adopt a boy in that country. A friend accompanies her, the local grocer, a war refugee who is returning for the first time to her own family in Ha Noi.

Dana has recently returned to Wilmington from Ha Noi, where she brought her family for a year of **Fulbright** research for a non-fiction book on **Operation Babylift**. Her first book, *The House on Dream Street*, is a memoir of the early days of Americans returning to Viet Nam. **Dana's** dead-on grasp of Vietnamese and Americans always captures a sense of growth and change in people's lives.

Dana earned degrees from Wesleyan and the University of North Carolina and has studied works of Vietnamese literature as a professional. Over the years she has translated, with Bac Hoai Tran, a volume of fiction by Le Minh Khue, edited, with Nguyen Nguyet Cam, another by Nguyen Huy Thiep, and published, with Cam and Bui Hoai Mai, the folktales collection Two Cakes Fit for a King.

Lisa Bobst came out with her daughter Katie to the Chapel Hill event, as another adoptive mother of a child from China came out to **The Regulator.** The rest of the crowd at Chapel Hill included the **English** department's bookkeeper, **Susan Marston**, an adoptive mother of a grown Vietnamese child, as well as students from **Creative Writing** and **Asian Studies** classes. **VNLP** supporter **Wee-Teng Soh**, the anthropologist, brought her students **Will West** and **Sandy Pham.**

Trude Bennett, professor of Maternal and Child Health at UNC, came out to both



Dana Sachswith audience at UNC

events, joined at the **Regulator** by **Howard Machtinger. Rick & Allison Martin** of **Families of Children Adopted from Viet Nam** were at the Durham event, along with **Duke** writing teacher **Erik Harms, VNLP** supporter **Sandy Mills,** and **UNC** writing students **Gabriella Miyares** and **Will Halicks.**

Rick & Allison joined Musicmaker Relief Foundation supporter Norra Church and Dana's classmate from Breadloaf Writers' Conference, the emergency room physician Paul Austin, her host in Raleigh Devon White, and Barbara White, who got everyone's names, and Dan, for drinks afterwards. It was a pleasant end to two wonderful days.

As we are finishing this article **Dana** called from the Oakland airport, on her way home from a ten-day book tour of California with well-attended readings at the independent **Dutton's** bookstore in Los Angeles and at the **Barnes & Noble** in Oakland's Jack London Square. **USA Today** just this morning (April 12, 2007) reviewed her book, which has gone into reprints already due to repeat orders. She is preparing the proposal for her new book for publishers.



Katie Bobst with If You Lived Here

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

Julie Thi Underhill's Cham Photos

Julie Thi Underhill will show her photos of Cham life in Viet Nam at the International Conference on Champa, sponsored by the Islamic Council on Champa on July, 2007 in San Jose. Julie's work with her mother's family has been supported by a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship through the William Joiner Center at the University of Massachusetts and shown around the country. The photographer is beginning a doctorate in Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. See work from Spring, 2006 at <www.lightstalkers.org/juliethiunderhill>. Julie says the photos will soon have their own page at her website, <www.jthiunderhill.com>.

Wikivietlit

Poet Linh Dinh and Hai-Dang Phan of the University of Wisconsin launched Wikivietlit at the VNLP website in March, 2007 with more than 100 articles on Vietnamese authors. Like Wikipedia, the popular web-based encyclopedia, Wikivietlit at <www.vietnamlit.org/wiki> welcomes its readers to revise its articles and to write new ones. Contributing editor Lily Chiu has started contributing a set of articles over the next few months, and Phung Nguyen and Thuy Dinh will join her in the fall. Readers Wynn Wilcox and Eric Henry and playwright Qui Nguyen have already contributed key articles. Please use Wikivietlit!

Second issue of Journal of Vietnamese Studies out!

The Journal of Vietnamese Studies has entered its second volume year with glory. The current issue offers the articles "From Patronage to "Outcomes": Vietnam's Communist Party Congresses Reconsidered", by **Martin Gainsborough;** "Manifest Socialism: The Labor of Representation in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1956–1959)", by **Ken McLean;** "Ly Toet in the City: Coming to Terms with the Modern in 1930s Vietnam", by **George Dutton;** "Resistance, Rivalries, and Restaurants: Vietnamese Workers in Interwar France", by **Eric J. Peters;** "Death, Buddhism, and Existentialism in the Songs of Trinh Cong Son", by **John C. Schafer;** and many book reviews.

However, the **University of California Press** has explained to **Dan** in patient tones, as you speak to a crank, that as a matter of policy they will not sell current or back issues of the journal. You can only order the next one. Moreover, they have not yet succeeded in filling any of the several subscription orders we have placed. Others have reported similar problems over more than a year. Still, give the business a chance to serve this fine journal: ">http://ucpressjournals.com/journal.asp?j=vs>">http://ucpressjournals.com/journal.asp?j=vs>.

Chao Ban

Rick & Allison Martin have started the fifth volume year of **Chao Ban**, the newsletter for **Families of Children Adopted From Vietnam**. The Spring 2007 issue, volume 5, number 1, features an interview with a **VNLP** supporter, the author **Dana Sachs**. Each issue features current information about adoption from Viet Nam, a kids' page, and such contributions as a recipe from cookbook author **Andrea Nguyen**. Subscribe at <www.chaobannewsletter.com>, four issues each year for \$14.99 or two years for \$29.

Nguoi Viet Supports VNLP

The oldest and largest Vietnamese newspaper in the United States, *Nguoi Viet*, has made the first corporate contribution to **VNLP. Anh Do**, president of the company, sent a check without solicitation. *Nguoi Viet*, founded by **Anh's** father **Yen Do**, has thrived by serving the Vietnamese community in Southern California and around the country. Their English-language edition, *Nguoi Viet 2* at

<www.nguoi-viet.com/nv2_default.asp>, offers unparalleled access to Vietnamese American life. Thanks, *Nguoi Viet!*



VNLP Financials

Ye	ar One - Annual	
	Income	14,194.85
	Expenses	13,203.70
	Net	991.15
	006 ar Two – Annual	
	waiting Annual	
-	port in May 2007]	

T H A N K S

In the first quarter of 2007, Paulette Stiles and Nancy Seybold reviewed Philip Arthur Moore's proposal to overhaul the VNLP website. Jonathan Hill designed and manufactured a mini-comic from his documentary of the life of Nguyen Chi Thien for us to give to current donors, offer as a premium for new donors, then sell, and for the poet to give away. Patrick McCormack at the University of Massachusetts processed Dan's fellowship check from the Rockefeller program in "Culture, Art, Trauma, Survival, Development: Vietnamese Contexts" at the William Joiner Center. Tin Nguyen came out to the farm to visit Dan on the first day of Tet. Dorothy Fall sent a beautiful copy of her husband Bernard's last book. Dana Sachs agreed to launch her novel at VNLP events: one at the University of North Carolina hosted by Asian Studies, the Carolina Asia Center, English and American Studies, with sponsorship from professors Yue Gang, Kevin Hewison, Nicholas Allen and Joy Kasson, and administrative support from Patricia Maroney, Peter Landstrom, Anita Braxton, and Susan Marston; the other at the Regulator Bookshop thanks to Katharine Walton's introduction. Ben Bruton at HarperCollins provided publicity materials which Jonathan Hill made into a poster. Allison and Rick Martin sent an email about the events to the membership of their Families of Children Adopted from Vietnam, Ellen Sung interviewed Dana for her column in the Raleigh News & Observer (our first press!), Randi Davenport emailed the Honors students at Chapel Hill, Donna Bickford emailed the friends of the Carolina Women's Center, Jackie Gorman emailed the Peace, War & Defense list, Lisa Croucher told the Robertson Scholars, Jodie Gregoritsch emailed the English graduate students, and somebody emailed the Creative Writing undergraduates. Barbara White signed up the guests at the Regulator event. Techsoup sold us another year's subscription to Grantstation for next to nothing. Lucien Ellington called to offer to run an interview with me about VNLP and an article about how to teach one of our authors in his *Education About Asia* magazine. David Thomas of the Indochina Arts Partnership and poet Linh Dinh agreed to join our Advisory Committee. Board members Stanley Katz, Peter Delevett, Pamela Rosenthal, Daniel Egger and volunteer Valerie Asher each reviewed a planning document. Valerie Asher suggested a visit to Pham Vu's Vietnamese American Heritage Exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution, where Asian Pacific American Program director Franklin Odo joined us and VNLP author Nguyen Ngoc Bich, a founder of the exhibit, showed us around. Paul Dionne and Jenn Esperanza offered to host a VNLP event near Austin, Texas. Philip Arthur Moore built our wiki, Linh Dinh and Phan Nhien Hao named it Wikivietlit, Linh Dinh and Hai Dang Phan wrote more than 100 articles before launch and agreed to serve as editors, Lily Chiu, Thuy Dinh and Phung Nguyen have all signed on to write several more, and Eric Henry, Wynn Wilcox, Qui Nguyen, Hoang Ngoc Tuan, Nina McPherson and Christian Langworthy have all contributed an article or two. Michele Thompson put us on the agenda of the Viet Nam Studies Group meeting at the Association for Asian Studies meetings in Boston, where Rye Barcott of Carolina for Kibera put Dan up. In the hallway at the meetings Bogdan Leja of the Office of International Affairs at the University of North Carolina offered to hire us from a Freeman Foundation grant for some programming. Susan Peterson and Erin Whitfield fed the horses while Dan was out of town and Lou Durocher and Darlene Kershaw looked after Bob & Betsy the VNLP coon hounds. Faith Herndon, Bill and Barbara Dahl, and Martha Scotford of the Triangle Yale Club agreed to co-sponsor an event with Eric Henry on the Tale of Kieu, Bob Lesher the webmaster publicized it, and Barbara White brought drinks, helped set up, and took photos. Suzanne Lea of Research Triangle Institute gave counsel on public-health funding for education about Vietnamese literature. High Fields Farm and Infinity Farms continued to employ Dan, and Open Source Risk Management gave him new work. Tim and Denise Duffy at the Music Maker Relief Foundation suggested John Carver's books on board development. 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 alone over the first three years, 2005-7, while developing income-generating procedures and preparing to approach 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.

We began reaching out to the public with the website in the second quarter and with events in the third quarter of 2005. Six individuals have hosted **VNLP** events to develop supporters in major cities and in North Carolina: **Pamela Rosenthal, Tom Enders, Elise Thoron, Sam Duffy** and **Carol Irving** in New York City, **Valerie Asher** in Washington, DC, and **Anna & Steve Wilson** in Durham. Direct mail beginning in the fourth quarter attracted about 40 gifts from around 30 donors through 2006.

In the first quarter of 2007, Anonymous, Noah Long, Anne Frank, Tim & Denise Duffy, Sandy Mills, Nina Drooker, Philip Alperson, Lucy Duffy and Michele Thompson responded to a mailed solicitation to renew their gifts. Wee-Teng Soh, Jun Wang, and Yen Ngo made gifts and Daniel Egger made our first pledge. Anh Do of Nguoi Viet newspaper sent our first corporate contribution.

The William Joiner Center of the University of Massachusetts awarded Dan a Rockefeller fellowship for academic year 2006-7 to build a reference for and about Vietnamese literature scholars on the VNLP website, launched in March 2007 as Wikivietlit.

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**. At the end of March 2007 he started directing projects for **Open Source Risk Management**.

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Promotion • Nomination of **VNLP** authors to awards and honors, referral to publications and events of other organizations



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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		ivate support pays for all our work these first three years, astitutional, government and foundation partners.
2005-7, while we de	velop income-producing projects and seek in	istrutional, government and roundation partners.
	covers the cost of preparing and sending	□ Supporter \$50 or □ Lit Lover \$100 helps us send Literature News to those who have not yet joined.