

2008 Vietnam Trip

黃火 (知用22屆)

Hello, my beloved family and the Church members in Evansville, IN:

The following is a report of my visit to Vietnam in April 2008 with my wife. The trip was very relaxing and comforting. Saigon is very busy – all the cars, busses, motorcycles, tour busses, bikes, and people are rushing all the time. We became braver about crossing the streets as each day went by, but in the end it was still scary. In the morning, we went to a park close by the hotel and saw people exercising, walking, jogging, or like us, just watching. It seems like a healthy life style. If we go to Saigon again, we hope to join their morning exercise. There is a vendor at the park who sells tow-hua (silky tofu), which we both liked very much. The hotel offered free breakfast with many options: Vietnamese noodle soup, bread with eggs/omelets/pate, and coffee/tea, and bananas.

One day we took a local bus (with AC) to Cholon. Tickets cost less than 20 cents US. Cholon (means “big market” in Vietnamese) was named appropriately; the mercantile mania is breathtaking. The largest of Cholon markets is Tran Phu’s five-story An Dong, built in 1991, and the newer and equally vast An Dong II. While there, we visited Chee-Yung High School. CYHS was renamed Truong Ly Phong. The school has been expanded but the old stomping ground is still there. We met and chat with an alumnus who is a vendor by the school. For dinners, we walked through the park to the open market restaurants. Once, we had a whole herbed black Cornish hen, clam soup, spinach, fried rice, plus a big local beer and fresh coconut for a total bill of less than US \$8. Amazing!

The next day, we joined a tour to Mui Ne Beach, a 20-km sweep of golden sand where you find Vietnam’s finest coastal resorts, one of the most attractive golf courses, and water sports. We stayed at a hotel, which is so close to the beach that I felt like being so close to heaven. At night we could hear the surging waves pounding on the beachfront. Our room is about 30 feet from the retaining walls, which are right at the seabed sand. The walls were built with concrete bins and

enforced steel I-bars. Due to high tides, the pounding wave from the East Sea flashed over the top of the retaining walls all day long.

Mui Ne has a long and beautiful stretch of white sand with lovely swaying palm trees. For travel-weary tourists, as well as residents of Saigon, Mui Ne offers a welcome change of pace. Although Mui Ne has seen an extraordinary increase in the number of beach resorts, it has yet to suffer the commercialization and social ills of other beaches. After a long trip of crossing the Pacific Ocean, South China Sea, and the East Sea, it's all become worth it to enjoy that beautiful beachfront: a natural God's creation! We see tourists walking, swimming or sun bathing.

At noon, the electricity (and AC) at the hotel was turned off. We thought it would be uncomfortable but it turned out okay because of the ocean breeze. Every morning, we had a very hearty breakfast buffet at a nearby hotel. They serve Western and Vietnamese food, soups, fruits, juices, and drinks. For dinners, we went to a nearby family restaurant.

The highlight of our trip was returning to my hometown Dau Tieng, approximately 55 miles NW of Saigon. We rented a minibus with a driver for \$56 a day. We left Saigon about 8 a.m., stopped to pick up some flower arrangements, and arrived Dau Tieng about 11 a.m. The old home is now the government's telecommunication center. Dau Tieng has many new and nice houses. The Michelin Tire Company has set up a natural rubber plantation there many years ago. In 2005 Michelin earned US \$50mil from this facility. Lake Dau Tieng is the largest irrigation reservoir in Vietnam.

We really enjoyed the trip and hope we can visit Vietnam again soon, preferably in January, when it's not too hot.

(Yellow Submarine, Class of TriDung 22)