

Fifty-Eight



Family Gram

23 January 1967
Camp Haskins, Danang,
Republic of Vietnam

Greetings:

Since arriving in Vietnam, we have learned a great deal about the people and their traditions. You may be interested in some of these facts.

The Vietnamese people are somewhat reserved and very polite, but become warm and friendly with people they like. Those of us who have come to know Vietnamese people respect and like them. They take pride in their culture and national identity, but their primary social outlook revolves around family and village. The importance of family is evident in the many terms used to denote family relationships. In addition to the usual ones - like father and mother, sister and brother - the Vietnamese have words to show relative age, parental side of the family, and other niceties of relationship.

The people celebrate frequently throughout the year. The Tet or New Year's festival is the big event; it occurs in early February this year. The Trung Sisters, Tran Hung Dao, and Le Loi are honored as National heroes. Doan Ngo is celebrated to avoid disease, and the Feast of Wandering Souls is celebrated for those dead who have no living family to pray for them. Ong Than Lang honors the spirits of the fields.

The diet of Vietnam consists basically of vegetables, with rice being by far the most popular dish. Fish, fruits, meat and poultry also make up part of the meals. Tea is the popular beverage, served for any occasion.

Our daily routine has become a way of life with us, with work to be done six and one-half days a week. Our day begins at 5:15. Quarters is at 6:45, thereupon we start to work. We knock off at 11:30, have lunch, and are back on the job by 12:30. Work ends at 5:30, but we work later when conditions require. Only on Sunday is the schedule different; we sleep in until 7:00 and knock off work at 12:15. The afternoon is ours to relax as we please.

A question you may have is "How do we get the news?" We have several ways. The "Pacific Stars and Stripes" daily newspaper gives a rundown on world happenings, with emphasis on Vietnam. Other means include Armed Forces Radio and Armed Forces Television. Both offer newscasts as well as music, sports and entertainment. Our Special Services has purchased several television sets to take advantage of the TV.

One of our newest projects is the rebuilding of a Vietnamese village destroyed by a tragic airplane crash on Christmas Eve. We are building 32 new houses for those people who were left homeless after the crash. This, along with other projects mentioned in previous Family-Grams, are progressing well despite almost continuous monsoon rain. Your Seabee is doing a tremendous job. I know you are as proud of him as I am.

Sincerely,

W. W. DeGroot
W. W. DeGroot 111
COR, CCC, USN
Commanding Officer