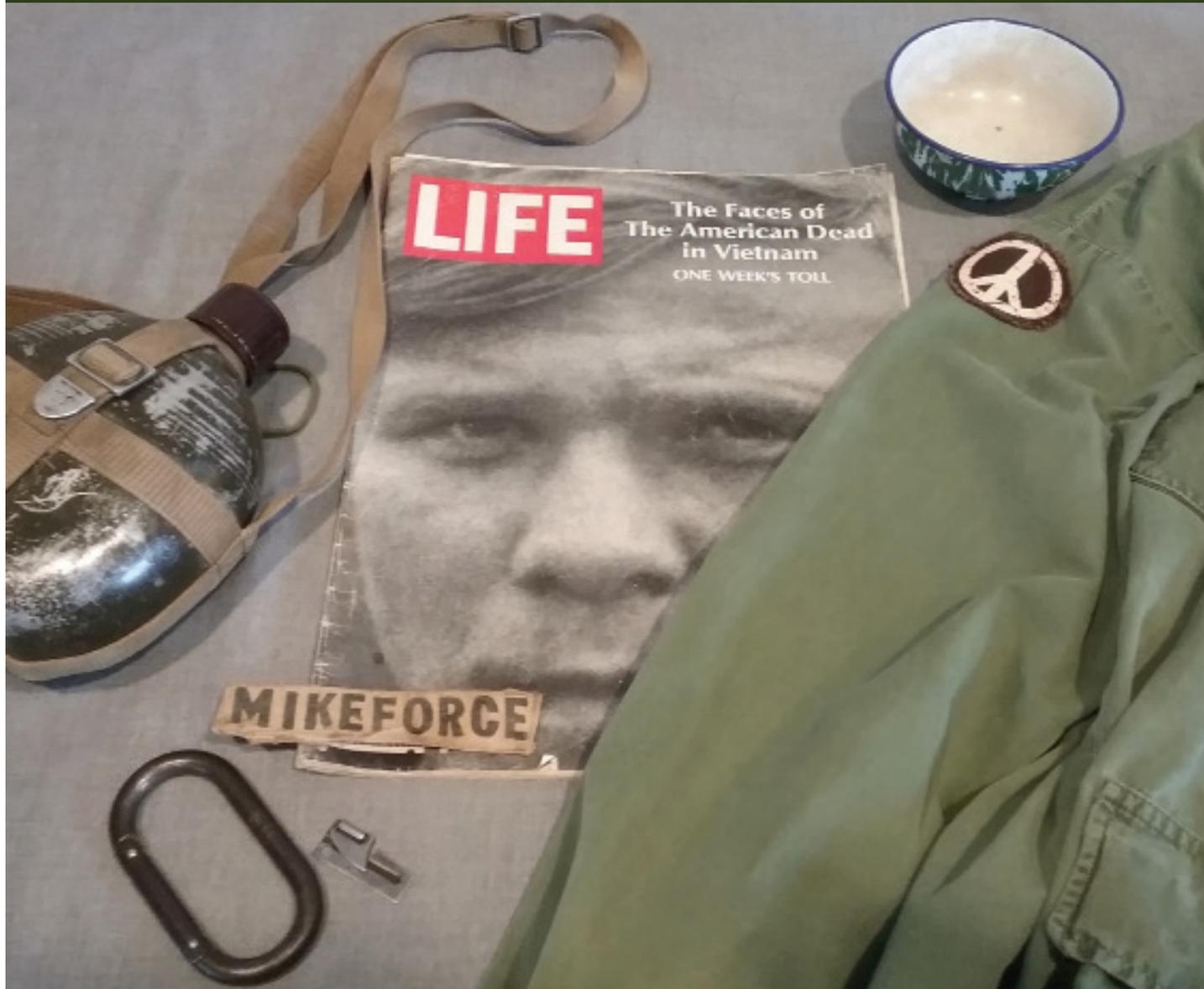


Central Minnesota Remembers Vietnam



Preface

In 2017, the Morrison County Historical Society was asked to participate in a partnership project to explore the history of the Vietnam War as experienced by those with a connection to Central Minnesota.

The project, which was funded with a Minnesota Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund grant from the Minnesota Humanities Center, was meant to capture and share history from a number of perspectives, including combat soldiers, non-combat service personnel,

protesters, refugees and the U.S. home front.

Using *The Vietnam War*, a PBS documentary series by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, as our guide, three local organizations, the Charles A. Lindbergh House & Museum, the Morrison County Historical Society, and the Minnesota Military Museum, banded together to create a series of war-related history events. There were story-gathering workshops, public discussions, educational trunks, and exhibits all presented under the title *Central Minnesota Remembers Vietnam*.

We at the Morrison County Historical Society decided to build an exhibit for the project, putting a call out through Central Minnesota for items to be loaned for the exhibit. The response was overwhelming.

The exhibit opened April 21, 2018, and ran throughout the year. In order to allow the stories and artifacts from the exhibit to live on past 2018, we have created this exhibit guide.

A sincere thank you to everyone who contributed to MCHS's *Central Minnesota Remembers Vietnam* exhibit and this publication.

One Artifact Captures the Complexity of the Vietnam War

As Morrison County Historical Society staff were receiving artifacts for *Central Minnesota Remembers Vietnam* and listening to the stories behind the artifacts, we had to make note of how we were going to display them.

We were conscious of the fact that we didn't know what we would end up with for the exhibit or which stories would be told. Conversely, that meant there would be many stories we couldn't tell because they wouldn't be presented to us. This is common even for the mu-

seum's regular collection.

While we do our best to address gaps in the collection, an exhibit, or in history, many still remain, as happened with *Central Minnesota Remembers Vietnam*. For example, we were not able to present as much on the refugee experience as we would have liked.

However, through all those who shared their artifacts and stories, we immediately grasped the complexity of the Vietnam War. Unlike World War II, which received broad public support, or

the Korean War, which is known as the Forgotten War, the Vietnam War was a lightning rod event.

Protests of the war were widespread. There were draft dodgers. Soldiers enlisted or were drafted, but many did not feel affirmed in having served their country because of the lack of public support or the outright disrespect shown by some protesters when they returned.

We created the exhibit along the east hall of The Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum, showcasing three main themes, military service, the refugee experience, and war protests. We also added household items that would have been popular in the United States at the time in order to give a glimpse of the home front.

One artifact that was loaned to us for the exhibit seemed to encapsulate the complexity of the Vietnam War. Steven Good brought us his field fatigue shirt (he called it a jungle jacket) with a large, multi-colored peace decal on the back.

Steven was drafted and served in the 2nd Battalion, 319th Artillery of the 101st Airborne Division. He was stationed at Phu Bai and at a location about 50 miles south of the DMZ and went to the DMZ a couple of times. He saw combat during the war.

When he returned to the U.S., he modified his jungle jacket by adding the peace decal on the back and a patch with a peace sign on one sleeve. He also joined in marches for peace wearing this shirt and continues to advocate for peaceful solutions to conflict. He has become an Associate at the Franciscan Sisters' Convent in Little Falls. The Franciscans have long been formal advocates for peace.

Because this everyday combat shirt shows the struggle between war and peace and the complexities of the Vietnam War, we knew we had to open the exhibit with it. And we did.



Field Fatigue Shirt (Jungle Jacket) featuring peace decal and peace patch, worn by Steven Good during his service in Vietnam.
Courtesy of Steven Good.

The Vietnam War by the Numbers

November 1, 1955 - April 30, 1975
Dates of U.S. involvement in the War

1,077 - Number of Minnesotans killed

97 - Number of Minnesotan POW/MIA

225,000 - Approximate number of refugees to the U.S. from Vietnam, plus refugees from Cambodia & Laos

Key Dates During the War

1954 - Vietnam is split into North and South at the Geneva Conference

1964 - Gulf of Tonkin Incident: U.S. claimed North Vietnamese patrol boats fired on two U.S. Navy destroyers

1965 - 200,000 American troops arrive in South Vietnam

1968 - Tet Offensive

1970 - Peace talks begin in Paris

1975 - Fall of Saigon

Documenting the War The Soldier's Perspective



Bernard Yasgar aboard ship with his 35mm camera. Most of the photos he took during his service in Vietnam were taken with a Kodak Instamatic camera. Even after purchasing this 35 mm, he would use the Instamatic in the field because he didn't want to damage his "good" camera.

Courtesy of Bernard Yasgar.

We received many photos for the *Central Minnesota Remembers Vietnam* exhibit, so many that we couldn't use them all. Thanks to soldiers and other military service personnel, there is extensive photographic documentation of the Vietnam War.

Navy Beach Jumper Bernard Yasgar was a particularly prolific photographer during the war, sharing close to 500 photos with the Morrison County Historical Society. He shot images of military operations, everyday life of soldiers, and the Vietnamese people and countryside.



Steven Good with powder charges around his neck at his firebase in Vietnam. Steven served at Firebase Gladiator. An ammo pit is in the background. Courtesy of Steven Good.



Photo of Vietnamese locals taken by Bernard Yasgar while on an operation with the Marines.

Courtesy of Bernard Yasgar.

Uniforms, Gear & Souvenirs



Canteen, Rice Bowl & Knife

As soldiers found abandoned gear, they collected it for their own use. This canteen and rice bowl, both of North Vietnamese issue, were used by Bob Lundell.

The knife was Handmade by the Koho Montagnard (Montagnards were referred to as Mountain Yards or Yards by U.S. soldiers).

Canteen & rice bowl courtesy of Bob Lundell; knife courtesy of Mike Erkel.



Bob Lundell served in the U.S. Marine Corps in Vietnam from 1968-1969. He was a platoon commander in the Infantry and also served as a combat engineer in an engineering unit.

This photo, dated April 1969, shows him using some Vietnamese gear, which he said was sometimes better than the gear he was issued. During his time in Vietnam he got malaria and had to be medevaced out. He said, "People take your gear when you're gone, so I lost some interesting items, like four etched canteens."



South Vietnamese Wooden Comb (left) and Chinese oil holder (right). Courtesy of Butch Fietek.

The Humble P-38



Measuring only 1 5/8 inches long and less than 3/4 of an inch high, the humble P-38 can opener was crucial gear for military personnel. It gave them access to food in the form of cans of C-rations. Note the hole in the can opener, which allowed it to be carried on a chain with a soldier's dog tags. Courtesy of Steven Good.



The P-38 can opener next to a U.S. Army D-ring for comparison. The D-ring was used for rappelling out of helicopters. Courtesy of Steven Good.





Mark Persons, who served in Vietnam from 1968-1969, shown here in an avionics shop, March 1969. Courtesy of Mark Persons.



Vietnam-era Medium Alice back pack with waterproof food bag inside. Courtesy of Bradley Dexheimer.



U.S. Army Dress Uniform with Airborne Patch worn by Steven Good. Steven no longer has any of the medals he earned during his service. They were stolen when he was on his way home. Courtesy of Steven Good.

Uniforms, Gear & Souvenirs (cont.)

The Green Beret & Martha Raye



This Green Beret (right & in photo above) was worn by Mike Erkel, who served in Special Forces in Vietnam from 1968-1969. Mike served in two different A camps, Camp A-231 at Tieu Atar on the Cambodian border and Camp A-232 at Tan Rai.

Photo & Green Beret courtesy of Mike Erkel.

Martha Raye (1916-1994) was an American comedic actress and singer who entertained U.S. military personnel in three wars, World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Trained as an LPN, she also tended to wounded soldiers in Vietnam. Because of her service, she was made an honorary colonel in the U.S. Marines and an honorary lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army. She is the only civilian buried at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

↔↔ Martha is pictured here with Mike Erkel at a camp in Vietnam near the Cambodian border. Mike said Martha was adopted by Special Forces with President Lyndon Johnson making her an honorary lieutenant colonel of the Special Forces in 1966.



Grenade launcher, April 1969.
Photo courtesy of Mark Persons.



Practice Grenades & 20mm Vulcan Cannon Casing -
The practice or "dummy" grenades are almost identical to live grenades. The blue handles and empty bottoms reveal that they are not live. The one with the textured surface is a Mark 2 pineapple grenade. The other was called a "lemon" grenade because of its shape. It is a concussion grenade.
Courtesy of Bradley Dexheimer.



Utility Shirt & Dog Tags, worn by John W. Kircher. John served in Baumholder, Germany from 1967-1969 (18 months), United States Army Europe, 293rd Engineers Battalion, Company A. John's grandson Kayden says, "I believe he was a specialist 3 or 4 [and] he wasn't very fond of his time in the Army." Courtesy of Kayden Kircher.



Roderick "Butch" Fietek served in the 4th Infantry Division of the Army while in Vietnam (1966-1967). He referred to himself as a Ground Pounder. His Light Weapons Infantry Division, carrying 60 pounds of equipment on their backs, had to clear an area, set up a basecamp, work from the basecamp for 2-3 weeks, move to clear another area and repeat the cycle, eventually returning to the original basecamp again. Much of his 11 months of service was spent in Mountain Yard villages in South Vietnam. His unit would have to destroy everything in the village, looking for grenades and weapons. As they were searching for weapons, they would pick up souvenirs. Villagers would hide things in rice bins, including the bamboo money holder below.

Currency



Above: North Vietnamese currency featuring the image of North Vietnamese Communist leader Ho Chi Minh. Courtesy of Mike Erkel.



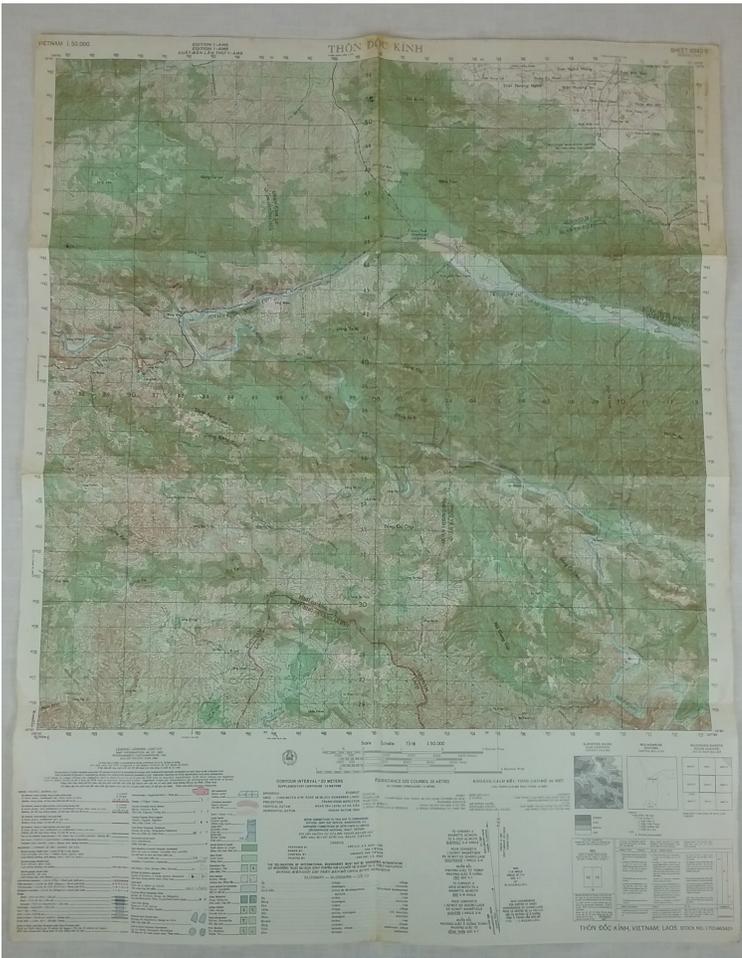
Right: South Vietnamese currency & U.S. Military Payment Certificates with bamboo holder. Courtesy of Butch Fietek.

Maps of Vietnam

Thon Doc Kinh, Vietnam

Topographical map of Thon Doc Kinh. Maps like this helped soldiers get around in Vietnam. Bob Lundell said he put his maps into a plastic bag to carry around with him in the field. Bob was going to become a cartographer, so he kept his topographical maps, including this one.

Courtesy of Bob Lundell.

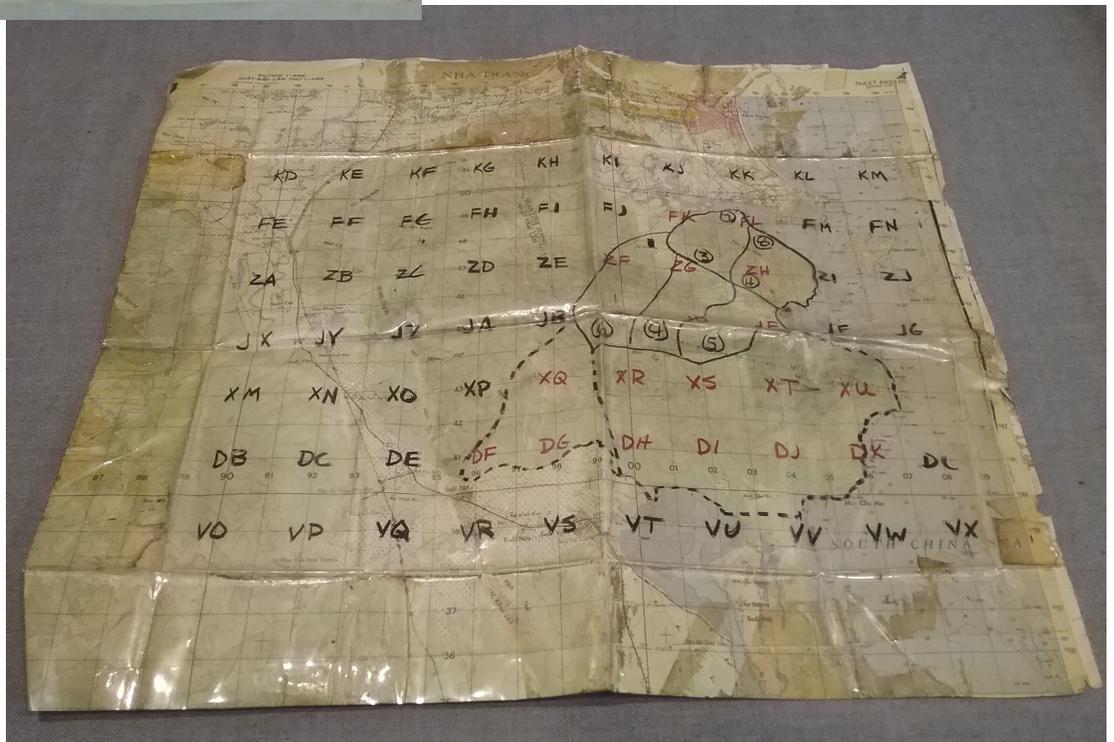


View of Nah Trang from Special Forces compound.
Photo courtesy of Mike Erkel.

Nah Trang, Vietnam

The handwritten letters on this topographical map of Nah Trang served as coordinates for dropping bombs.

Courtesy of Butch Fietek.



Cartographer to the Rescue



Map of Vietnam courtesy of Vanessa Baez & East View Geospatial, 2018.

After receiving two topographical Vietnam maps (see previous page) for the exhibit, museum staff were wondering how to figure out where these areas were within the country.

As luck would have it, Vanessa Baez stopped by the museum one day

just to look around. During conversation, she mentioned she was a cartographer. Staff took the opportunity to show her the Vietnam maps and she said she could help us identify these areas in the country.

She took the Sheet Number in the

upper righthand corner of each map and, with the assistance of the resources of her employer, East View Geospatial, she created this map of Vietnam showing the locations of Thon Doc Kinh and Nah Trang.

Smoking Paraphenalia



- 1) South Vietnamese Metal Mountain Yard Pipe made of rifle shells, “used for smoking marijuana & other things.” Courtesy of Butch Fietek.
- 2) South Vietnamese Bamboo Mountain Yard Pipe. Courtesy of Butch Fietek.
- 3) South Vietnamese Lighter. Courtesy of Butch Fietek.
- 4) Zippo Lighter with engraving: “Battle does not determine who is right or wrong but who is left.” Courtesy of Mike Erkel.

Smoking cigarettes and pipes was a popular social pastime during the Vietnam War era. Smoking paraphenalia, from ashtrays to specialty lighters, was abundant.

According to Mike Erkel, who served in the Vietnam War from 1968-1969, everyone carried a lighter. “When you could die at any time, smoking wasn’t a big deal.”

Meanwhile, back in the United States, there was a concerted effort to create smoking bans in public places due to the

hazards of secondhand smoke. According to the *Little Falls Daily Transcript* dated Monday, August 4, 1975, the Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act went into effect the previous Friday. The Act “[was] meant to prohibit smoking in a public place or public place [sic] or public meeting except in designated smoking areas where ventilation can be used to minimize smoke in adjacent non-smoking areas.”

Morrison County Ashtrays

The *Central Minnesota Remembers Vietnam* exhibit included very few items (five altogether) from the Morrison County Historical Society’s collection. Three of these items, all ashtrays from county businesses, are pictured here.

- 1) Ashtray from J.D.’s Liquor, Royalton, MN, MCHS collections #2009.70.14.
- 2) Ashtray from Bowlus Liquor Store, Bowlus, MN, MCHS collections #2016.50.2.
- 3) Ashtray featuring pinup art “Slip Knot” by Gil Elvgren from Kate & Don’s on Highway 10, Cushing, MN, MCHS collections #1987.43.2.

Viking Glass Lighter

The 4th item in this photo is a Viking Glass lighter. Viking Glass became enormously popular in the United States during the Vietnam War era. It features vibrant colors, like the blue in this lighter, which is referred to as “Bluenique” by the company. Courtesy of Erik & Mary Warner.



Goods from Overseas



"G.I. Special" - Sansui Receiver

During the Vietnam War, military personnel often purchased Asian-made stereo equipment like this Sansui receiver because it was so inexpensive and shipped it back home for use after their time in the service. This equipment was often referred to as a "G.I. Special." Photo courtesy of Erik & Mary Warner.



Southeast Asian Art

Upon learning of the *Central Minnesota Remembers Vietnam* exhibit, Rebecca Strahl brought these pieces of art from Southeast Asia to the Morrison County Historical Society to donate them to our collection. They were sent back to the United States by her husband, Carroll Strahl, who worked with the State Department. He served in Vietnam from 1967-1968 and 1970-1971. He was sent to Vietnam, rather than Laos, because he had to replace someone who had been assassinated. He worked with resettlement camps for the Vietnamese and Hmong. Civilians like Carrol were allowed to bring back more items from their service time because they had more space to store it.



The three lacquerware plaques above feature young women. The image at right features a village scene that appears to be painted on glass.

Courtesy of Rebecca Strahl, now part of the MCHS collection.

Housewares Back Home

The Vietnam War spanned almost two decades, from November 1955 through April 1975. This period was culturally and politically tumultuous in the United States. Within this timeframe, the U.S. experienced the Cold War and McCarthyism, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, the rise of the Women's Movement (second-wave feminism) and passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, and the first moon landing.

Following World War II, manufacturers launched citizens into an era of mass consumption, offering a large number of consumer products using new manufacturing methods and materials, including the now-ubiquitous plastic.

These factors inspired a number of stylistic design movements, including modernism, Pop Art, and Atomic-Era designs.



Siesta Ware Glasses in Caddy - Siesta Ware was trademarked by the Benner Glass Company in 1963. Fancy glassware was popular during the mid-century and Vietnam War era, with cocktail parties encouraged for showing off your glassware.

Courtesy of Erik & Mary Warner.



Pyrex Pink Daisy Divided Dish - While Pyrex was developed by Corning Glass Works in 1915, the colors and patterns introduced in the 1940s-1970s became iconic of the era. This Pyrex divided dish features the Pink Daisy pattern, which was introduced in 1956 and was produced until 1962.

Courtesy of Erik & Mary Warner.

Apron

When the Vietnam War began in 1955, the United States was still in its "Leave It to Beaver" phase, with the expectation that women would stay at home with the kids while their husbands would put in the 9-5 at work. While history tells us this wasn't the reality for everyone, many women did spend time taking care of their homes while wearing aprons such as this one.

By the end of the Vietnam War, massive societal changes, including the feminist movement of the 1950s, '60s and '70s and the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment by both houses of Congress (not yet fully ratified), would have women removing their aprons and heading into the workforce.

From the MCHS collection.



Mirro Aluminum & Wood Serving Dish



Within the span of the Vietnam War (1955-1975), the United States witnessed the Space Race, with the first visit to the moon, and the Atomic Era, dealing with the ethical & global implications of nuclear weapons. Both of these larger societal issues impacted designers. This aluminum & wood serving dish from Mirro showcases the Atomic Era with the gold starburst and the fascination with space in its flying saucer shape.

The original price tag is still on this serving dish. It cost \$5.99.

Courtesy of Erik & Mary Warner.



Branchell Color Flyte Melmac Dishes

The mid-century era (1940s-early 1970s) saw an increase in the use of plastics and other manufactured materials to create housewares and furniture. The Branchell Company produced a series of melamine (Melmac is the trademarked name) dishes in bright colors beginning in the mid-1950s. This series, designed by Kaye LaMoyné, was called Color Flyte. Melamine or Melmac dishes were commonly found in U.S. kitchens throughout the Vietnam War era.

Courtesy of Erik & Mary Warner.

Alarm Clock

The Pop Art and Psychedelic Art Movements of the 1950s and '60s ushered in a trend for using brighter colors in design, such as the bright yellow and red of the large alarm clock included in the photo above..

From the MCHS collection.

Vietnam War Era Patches



Patches signal identity, particularly in military service. However, patches and decals were also used by protesters during the Vietnam War to show their opposition to the war. Peace symbols were popular among protesters due to their desire to see the war end.

In some cases, members of the military who served in Vietnam came home and became war protesters. (See page 2 for Steven Good's story and the peace patch below for Thomas LaSotta's story.) They adopted protest patches, often applying them to their military uniforms to signal their complex feelings surrounding the war.

1) South Vietnamese Mikeforce Patch - Mikeforce was made up of South Vietnamese Army personnel and were like the American Green Berets. They were a tough unit and did all of their fighting at night.
Courtesy of Butch Fietek.

2) 4th Infantry Patch. Courtesy of Butch Fietek.

3 & 4) Thomas J. LaSotta, a member of the U.S. Navy, put these patches on one of his utility shirts when he returned from service. He served on the USS KITTYHAWK aircraft carrier from 1967-1971, including a tour in Vietnam.

The Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club was a tongue-in-cheek reference to the Gulf of Tonkin incident on August 2, 1964, that led to further engagement in Vietnam by U.S. forces.

Both patches courtesy of the Minnesota Military Museum.

Peace Patch

Thomas J. LaSotta, a member of the U.S. Navy from Royalton, MN, put this peace patch on one of his utility shirts when he returned from service on the USS KITTYHAWK aircraft carrier from 1967-1971.

Courtesy of the Minnesota Military Museum.



Protesting the War

As images and stories of the Vietnam War beamed into U.S. citizens' homes via television, the death and destruction motivated people to protest en masse, with young people leading the way. When young men could be drafted into service based on the draw of a number for an unpopular war with an uncertain outcome, there was plenty to protest.

The Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls have long been advocates for peace. Here is Sr. Carol Schmit's remembrance regarding protesting the Vietnam War.

Just a few memories. I got a call as a faculty member at St. Francis High School from a kid at the Senior High School--John Malcolm. He asked me if I would be willing to join a protest at the Post Office Park. I was scared to do it, but I credit that call as my first public stance for something I believed in.

Pat Powers, Rita Bartl, Jean McLeod and some of us became members of "Clergy and Laymen Concerned" -- shortly after the name was changed to "Clergy and Laity Concerned." We were just becoming aware of many issues at that time.

Our group's most public statements were probably in the 4th of July parades. One year we had a cute little mail truck with the message -- "I dream of the day when children will ask, 'Mama, what was War?' I think Sister Tonie printed it. Not an original quote, but it attracted attention.

One year when military use of resources was a focus, we got hold of a hay wagon, and with a large cardboard box created the 'conversion' factory. We put airplanes, bombs, etc. in one end, and out of the other end came schools, clinics, etc. It happened to be a windy day, so even our factory was consumed by the end of the parade!

One year, Sister Ignatia rode her three-wheeled bike in the parade with a sign on the back of the bike. She was part of our rag-tag group. There was always tension with the many families and friends who were employed at Camp Ripley. In people's minds it was

hard to separate support for our soldiers with opposition to the war.

The DFL Conventions are also memories. There were sub-caucuses that could be formed specifically to change the outcome of the vote. Half of the group would pick up their chairs and meet in a corner. Then others joined, sabotaging the stand of the original group. Steve Wenzel was up and coming. I guess politics has always been a little crazy and at the same time motivating.

Courtesy of Carol Schmit, OSF

**“In people’s minds
it was hard to
separate support
for our soldiers with
opposition
to the war.”**

Major Protests in the U.S.

November 27, 1965: SANE March on Washington. Estimated 250,000 people in attendance.

February 5, 1966: Over 100 Veterans march to the White House in an attempt to "return" their service medals and discharge papers.

October 21, 1967: The National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam hosted a March from the National Mall to the Pentagon. Estimated 100,000 people were in attendance.

August 28, 1968: Riots are held at Grant Park in Chicago outside of the Democratic National Convention.

November 15, 1969: March Against Death hosted by the Vietnam Moratorium Committee in Washington. Estimated 500,000-600,000 in attendance.

May 4, 1970: Kent State shootings. 4 Students killed, 9 wounded.

Major Protests in Minnesota

August 5, 1967: A Peace March was held in Minneapolis to protest the United States' increased involvement in Vietnam.

February 28, 1970: The Beaver 55 Group broke into 3 Twin Cities Selective Service offices.

May 1970: Several protests were held on the St. Cloud State University campus in an attempt to shut down the campus; none were successful.

July 10 & 11, 1970: The Minnesota 8 were arrested for attempting to break into the draft offices of Little Falls, Alexandria, and Winona.

April 16, 1972: 1,500 students at the University of Minnesota occupied the ROTC building on campus and the Air Force office located in Dinkytown.

May 9, 1972: 3,000 Students protested at the University of Minnesota for two days.

Minnesota Conspiracy to Save Lives

The Minnesota 8

As the Morrison County Historical Society was busy constructing the *Central Minnesota Remembers Vietnam* exhibit and preparing for its opening, we received an email from Chuck Turchick. "Who is Chuck Turchick?" you might ask. He is one of The Minnesota 8, a group of men arrested at three Selective Service offices in central Minnesota in July 1970. Chuck wondered if we were going to include the story of The Minnesota 8 in our exhibit. After hearing about it from Chuck, we did our research and added the story, which we tell in part below.

The Minnesota 8 were part of a group called The Minnesota Conspiracy to Save Lives, whose mission was to disrupt the activities of Selective Service offices in drafting men into the Vietnam War. On the night of July 10-11, 1970, they were arrested after breaking in to Selective Service offices in Little Falls, Winona, and Alexandria in order to destroy draft records.

The Minnesota 8 included Brad Beneke, Frank Kroncke, Don Olson, Pete Simmons, Bill Tilton, Mike Therriault, Chuck Turchick, and Cliff Ulen.

Frank and Francis Kroncke and Michael Therriault were arrested at the Selective Service office in Little Falls on the night of July 11, 1970. The FBI had staked out the office, which was in the upper level of the Y Block (where Pete & Joy's Bakery is currently located at the corner of East Broadway and Second Street Northeast) with assistance from the Morrison County Sheriff and Little Falls police department.

"Therriault has reportedly said he feels strongly that the draft is unjust and that it discriminates particularly against poor people. ... The youth also reportedly had done research that showed that the draft fell particularly heavily on rural areas and small towns, taking a higher proportion of men from those areas." (*Little Falls Daily Transcript*, July 13, 1970) It is for this reason that The Minnesota 8 targeted draft offices in small, rural towns.

The men arrested in the Winona office included Brad Beneke, Donald Olson, and Peter Simmons. William Tilton, Clifton Ulen, and Charles Larry "Chuck" Turchick were arrested in the Alexandria office.

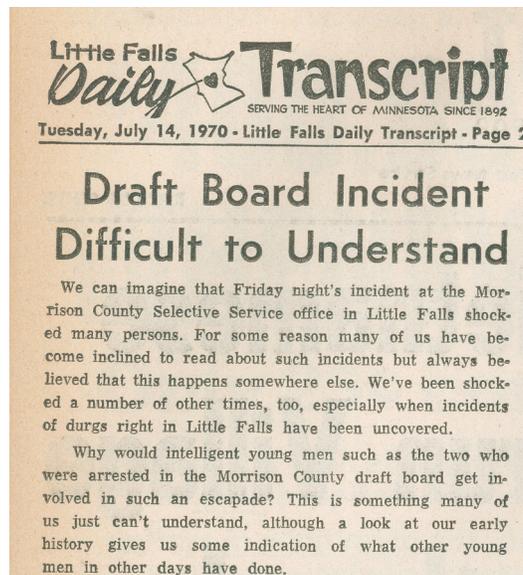
For more information on The Minnesota 8, including information on their defense and trials, visit <http://www.minnesota8.net/Minnesota8.htm>.



Headline from the Little Falls Daily Transcript regarding Frank Kroncke and Michael Therriault's arrest in the Selective Service office in Little Falls, Minnesota, July 13, 1970.



Headline from the Little Falls Daily Transcript regarding "14 persons arrested at a demonstration Saturday," including Frank Kroncke and Michael Therriault, who were arrested in Little Falls as part of The Minnesota 8, July 14, 1970.



Editorial from the Little Falls Daily Transcript regarding the draft board break-in, July 14, 1970.

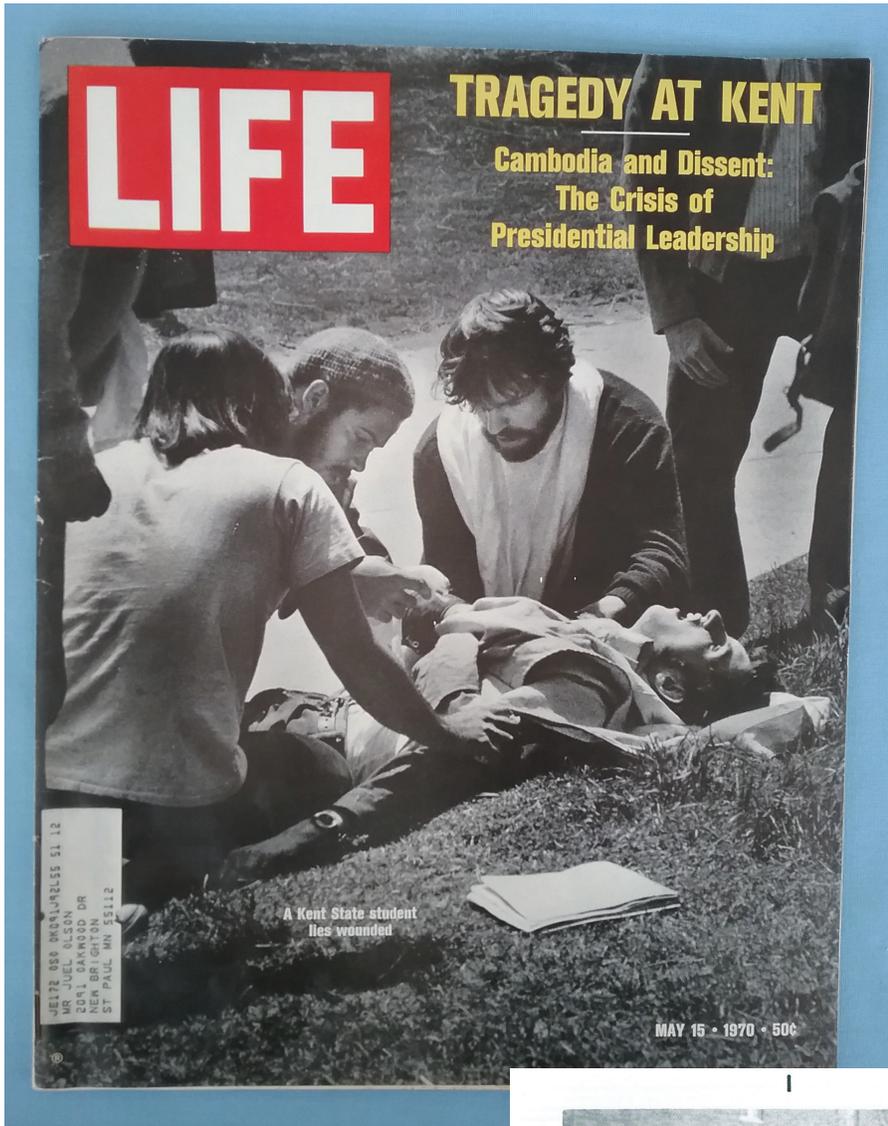


Headline regarding The Minnesota 8, Little Falls Daily Transcript, July 16, 1970.



Headline regarding The Minnesota 8, Little Falls Daily Transcript, July 17, 1970.

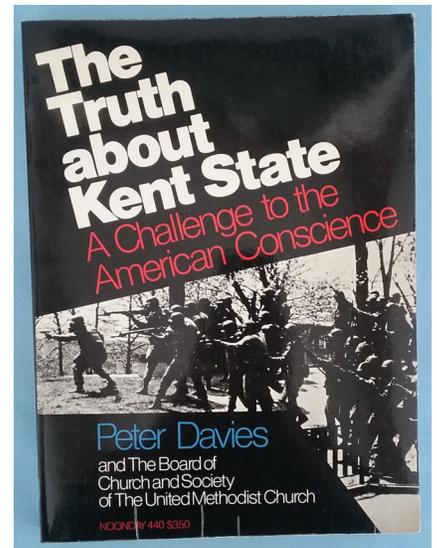
“Now They Are Shooting at Us”



Life Magazine, May 15, 1970, featuring an image from the Kent State shooting. Courtesy of Neal Kielar.

Former Morrison County Historical Society board member Lee Obermiller was attending a Vietnam War protest in the Twin Cities when he heard the news of the National Guard opening fire on student protesters at Kent State University in Ohio on May 4, 1970. He said the crowd hushed as people came to the realization that “now they are shooting at us.”

Four people died in the Kent State incident, including Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer, and William Schroeder. Nine others were wounded.



Book: The Truth About Kent State by Peter Davies, 1973. Courtesy of Neal Kielar.

Memorial to Kent State victims at the university in February 1977. Neal Kielar said this rather unassuming memorial was replaced in 2010 with a proper memorial to the events of May 4, 1970, because Kent State finally embraced this history. Photo by and courtesy of Neal Kielar.



The Pragmatic Protester

Neal Kielar attended Kent State University as a journalism student in the mid- to late-1970s. The Kent State shooting of 13 students, 4 of whom died, by the Ohio National Guard had occurred on May 4, 1970. Each year on May 4, students would hold a vigil and rally in memory of the event.

In 1977, Neal took part in the memorial events but also in a protest against the university for its proposal to put an addition on the gymnasium that would cover the site of the shootings. As the university had suddenly switched course on plans to build the gymnasium elsewhere on campus, students saw this as an attempt to erase the history of the event.

The protest started May 4, 1977, and lasted until July of that year, with students erecting a tent city on the site.

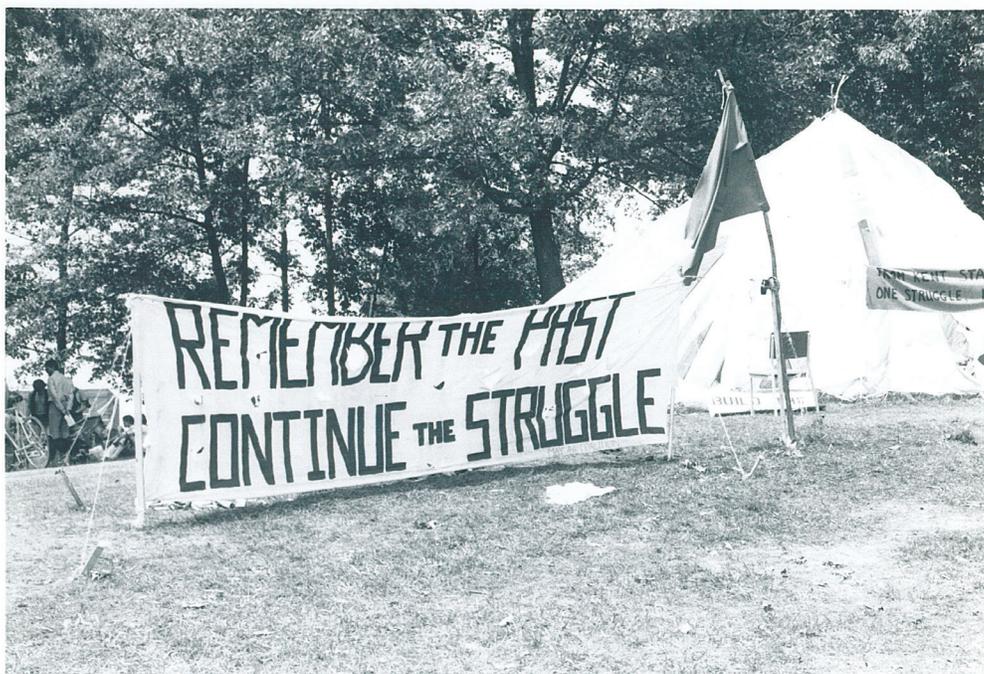
Neal was a pragmatic protester. Not only was he involved in public relations, he was also the treasurer for the student group involved with the gymnasium protests. As treasurer, he was in charge of the group's money, money that was to be used to bail group members out of jail should any of them be arrested. If Neal got arrested, he arranged with a friend to be bailed out right away so that he could access the money to bail everyone else out.

In a dramatic, on-camera protest, Neal was arrested. Because he resisted arrest in order to play to the cameras, once the police dragged Neal out of camera range, they beat him so hard he was knocked out of his shoes.

He was taken to the county jail and was the first one released. His foresight and pragmatism allowed him to bail everyone else out. After the arrests, the tent city was torn down.



Shari Casale & Neal Kielar, 1977. Shari was a friend of Neal's while he was at Kent State. She was married to one of the members of the band Devo at the time. Courtesy of Neal Kielar.



"Remember the Past, Continue the Struggle" banner at Kent State "Move the Gym" protest against the proposed gymnasium to be constructed on the site of the Kent State shootings, 1977. The tent in the background is part of the tent city the protesters erected on campus. Photo by and courtesy of Neal Kielar.

Protest in Pictures

As a journalism student at Kent State, Neal Kielar understood the importance of documentation. During the “Move the Gym” protests, he took photos and compiled them into an album. The black & white photos on pages 17, 18 and 19 are from this album. He also saved news clippings and other materials that documented the protests. He offered these to Kent State University for its archives, but the institution wasn’t ready to face its own difficult history at the time. Kent State now embraces its history and maintains the traditions of a candlelight vigil and walk around campus started by the protesters to memorialize the Kent State victims.



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Above: “Move the Gym” protesters at Kent State University, 1977.

Left: Billy Whittaker, lead attorney for “Move the Gym” protesters, outside the county courthouse in Ravenna, Ohio, 1977. Photos by and courtesy of Neal Kielar.



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Below: Kent State buttons - “Kent 25” is a reference to the 25 students and faculty indicted for crimes committed in early May 1970 related to protests. The yellow button is dated 1970 and is from the Legal Defense Fund for the “Kent 25.” The red, black & white button was produced later. Photo by and courtesy of Neal Kielar.



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Police officers taking a break during the “Move the Gym” protests, 1977. Photo by and courtesy of Neal Kielar.



Seeking Refuge in Minnesota

The exact number of refugees from the Vietnam War is difficult to pin down. According to a well-sourced Wikipedia page on Vietnamese Americans, approximately 225,000 refugees were evacuated from or left Vietnam for the United States directly following the war. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnamese_Americans#cite_note-AmeCulture-19) The Migration Policy Institute puts the estimate at 125,000 refugees but states that further emigration to the U.S. by the Vietnamese over the ensuing years has resulted in a population of 1.3 million Vietnamese in America as of 2017. (<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states-5>) The war also produced refugees from Cambodia and Laos.

Following the war, churches and religious organizations throughout Minnesota sponsored refugees, who needed sponsors in order to leave refugee camps such as the ones in Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, and Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. The Church World Service was the overarching organization that dealt with refugee resettlement.

In Little Falls, Minnesota, the Franciscan Sisters, First United Church, Bethel Lutheran Church, First Lutheran Church, St. Mary's Church, and Our Lady of Lourdes sponsored several refugee families.

According to Pastor Marvin Ediger, who led First United Church, this was the first time these six churches had come together to work on such an effort. (*Little Falls Daily Transcript*, July 30, 1975)

The first Vietnamese refugees to arrive in Little Falls in mid-July 1975 were Do Thi Hue and Nguyen Thi Cham. They were followed by Hoa Ly Hong and his wife Yen La Bach, as well as Le Thi Ban, whose husband was stuck in the Philippines, and her four young children.

Another group of five Vietnamese refugees came to Little Falls in August 1975, including Phong Ioan and his wife Cue Nguyen, Cue's sister Na Nguyen and her husband Minh Nguyen, and the couples' friend Thyet "Kim" Nguyen. Zion Lutheran Church sponsored this

group, helping them to get settled in the community. (*Little Falls Daily Transcript*, July 14 1975, July 30, 1975, and August 7, 1975)

Minnesota was a leader in accepting refugees, with Pastor Ediger saying that "of all the states in the United States that have made commitments to take in these refugees, only Minnesota has met its agreement goal. As a matter of fact, we've surpassed our goal by 37 per cent.

We had a goal of 180 families, and as of July 14 we have taken in 247." (*Little Falls Daily Transcript*, July 30, 1975)

Nearly 100 Vietnamese who resettled in central Minnesota in the summer of 1975 were invited to a picnic in St. Cloud organized by Catholic Charities and the St. Cloud Diocese on August 3 of that year. (*Little Falls Daily Transcript*, August 1, 1975)

First Vietnamese refugees arrive to make home here

By RON ROYER
Staff Writer

Do Thi Hue and Nguyen Thi Cham, Little Falls' first Vietnamese newcomers, arrived Thursday evening at 4 p.m. at the Franciscan Convent.

They came from teeming Ft. Chaffee, Ark., where there are some 24,000 other Vietnamese war refugees awaiting American sponsorship.

Called, simply "Hue" and "Cham," the two young women are single and 23 and 22, respectively. Their families remained at Ft. Chaffee until they too can find sponsorship.

Friday afternoon, they were treated to their first Little Falls shopping trip by Mary Schmidtbauer and Cindy Tschida. Mary is a receptionist at the convent and Cindy is an aide at St. Gabriel's Hospital day care center. The group was slated to go to Penney's, O'Meara's and Victor Clothing...if there was time, Mary said.

Hue and Cham have been with their families for two months at Ft. Chaffee. This morning, according to Franciscan Vice President Sister Carla Przybilla, a phone call from a Vietnamese representative at Ft. Chaffee helped put both Hue and Cham and their families at ease after the trip to Little Falls.

The young women, being sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters, will stay at the convent. Sister Carla says, until they feel comfortable on their own in an apartment. Meanwhile, they will work at the mother house in the kitchen and bakery and around the convent.

Both Hue and Cham have expressed desire to do nurse's aide work and each hopes to become a nurse. Both have two years of college experience, and speak English.

"When they arrived," said Sister Carla Friday, "all they had was one little suitcase." In it, she said, was all they owned.

Intercepted momentarily on her shopping trip to Penney's, Hue, who speaks English quite well, told of her arrival to the convent and interpreted for Cham, who understands English, but not as well as Hue.



Looking at American styles are Do Thi Hue (left) and Nguyen Thi Cham (right). They are being helped by Franciscan receptionist Mary Schmidtbauer. The young Vietnamese women arrived Thursday to be sponsored by the convent. (Transcript Photo by Ron Royer)

"We are most delighted that we will be able to share our life and our way with them," Sister Carla said Friday.

She added that the two young refugees are "most grateful" for

their Franciscan sponsorship.

The Franciscan Sisters, she said, "will be most happy to welcome visitors who want to meet Hue and Cham."

"First Vietnamese refugees arrive to make home here," article from the *Little Falls Daily Transcript*, July 14, 1975. Pictured from left are Do Thi Hue, Mary Schmidtbauer (receptionist for the Franciscan Sisters), and Nguyen Thi Cham.

A hurried departureand a new life in Little Falls



Shown, left to right, are Le Thi Rat Linn, Le Tni Rat Len, Le Tni Rat Ly, Le Ba Van Hiep and Le Thi Ban posing for a family picture outside of their new home.

Le Thi Ban (right) and her four children, Le Thi Rat Linn (8), Le Thi Rat Len (2), Le Thi Rat Ly (6), and Le Ba Van Hiep (4). From the article "A hurried departure ... and a new life in Little Falls," Little Falls Daily Transcript, July 30, 1975.



Hoa Ly Hong (above, left) and his wife Yen La Bach left Vietnam in dramatic circumstances. They "only had a half an hour to pack a few necessities." The boat they had boarded was being shot at by the North Vietnamese and other refugees were fighting to get aboard. Their families were too far away to make it to the boat in time to leave. Stories like this, and many that were worse, were not uncommon among refugees of the Vietnam War.

Little Falls Daily Transcript, July 30, 1975

Left to right: Minh Nguyen, Cue Nguyen, Phong loan, and Thyet (Kim) Nguyen, Vietnamese refugees to Little Falls, MN, in August 1975. Photo from the Little Falls Daily Transcript, August 7, 1975. Note that the Transcript articles on the Vietnamese refugees were inconsistent in the spellings of their names and Thyet Nguyen seems to have chosen to go by the name Kim. This shows how easily names become altered through the process of immigration.



POW/MIA/KIA Bracelets



During the Vietnam War, people at home could show their support for soldiers who were prisoners of war, missing or killed in action by wearing a bracelet with the name of a soldier who was taken prisoner, missing, or killed. The bracelets for the missing and prisoners were to be worn until the soldier was found or returned. The names of soldiers found or returned were printed in the newspaper.

Bracelets above, from left to right:

SP4 Earl R. Grove was killed in action on April 10, 1967, in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam. He served in the US Army.

Courtesy of Bradley Dexheimer.

Anne Hanson wore the bracelet for Lt. Kenneth Wells, who did return. Courtesy of Anne Hanson.

Don Hanson wore the bracelet for Major William Fuller, who was from Texas and never returned.

Courtesy of Don Hanson.

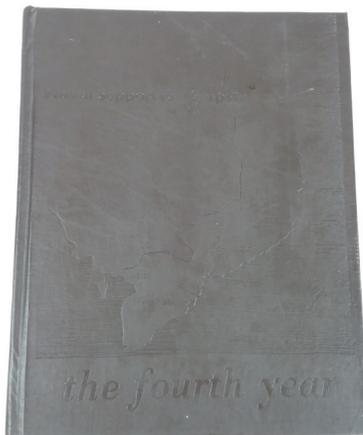


Two Vietnamese bracelets brought home by Butch Fietek after his service in the Vietnam War. Courtesy of Butch Fietek.

“The Fourth Year, cover & interior pages: Naval Support in I-Corps, Vietnam,” 1969. The U.S. Armed Services have a long history of putting together books of remembrance

for its service members. This Navy cruisebook compiles history and photos from activities in Danang, Vietnam.

Courtesy of David W. Browning.



Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Thank You!



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., was designed by Maya Ying Lin. It features the names of over 58,000 men and women who died or remain missing due to their service in the Vietnam War. The Wall, as it is informally called, was dedicated on November 13, 1982.

Photo courtesy of Judi Welle.

Do you have your challenge coin?

Vietnam-era challenge coin issued to Mike Erkel. Courtesy of Mike Erkel.



The Vietnam Women's Memorial, dedicated to the service of women, who worked primarily as nurses during the war. Located near The Wall.

Photo courtesy Judi Welle.

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