



**A COUNTRY  
STAYS ALIVE  
WHEN ITS  
CULTURE IS  
ALIVE.**

**HOPE NEVER DIES  
IN THE  
INDOMITABLE  
VIETNAMESE MIND**

- **SACEI Newsletter updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.**
- **It serves as a LINK between SACEI members and those who are interested in the Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American culture.**

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# SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



## To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

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## The Battle of the Paracel Islands (1974)

The uninhabited Paracel Islands lie in the South China Sea about 200 nautical miles from both South Vietnam and the People's Republic of China (PRC). They are in 1974 claimed by these countries with the PRC occupying the Amphitrite Group and South Vietnam the Crescent Group of the Paracels.

Following the 1973 Paris Accords, as the U.S. cut off aid to South Vietnam, the latter was forced to reduce its local forces on the islands. On January 16, 1974, during an inspection Vietnamese naval forces noticed Chinese troops and fishermen occupying a Vietnamese island of the Paracels. Reinforcements were called in.

On January 19, 1974, four Vietnamese Navy ships faced four Chinese Navy ships in the disputed area. As Vietnamese landed some troops to chase away Chinese fishermen, they were fired by Chinese troops. The Navy ships then fired on each other. After a 40 minute-engagement, all ships sustained damage. As the Chinese sent in two additional submarine chasers and jet fighters, Saigon called the U.S. Seventh Fleet for help; it was denied. The Vietnamese fleet retreated, but the HQ 10's only working engine that was further disabled during the engagement began to sink taking along with her, captain Nguy Van Tha.

Days later, Mrs. Huynh Thi Sinh, Tha's wife was notified by the Navy about her husband's death. This brought a devastating blow to Sinh who was only 26 at the time with three young children in tow. She was waiting for her husband to return home from this tour of duty to celebrate the 1974 Tet festival with the whole family.

During the last four decades Mrs. Sinh has remained a widow trying to raise her children within her modest means and with the help of friends while giving offerings to her husband's soul on each anniversary of his death. During the last few years, due to financial hardship she had moved into a small room where she was unable to set up an altar to further pay respect to her husband. That is her only wish at the present time.

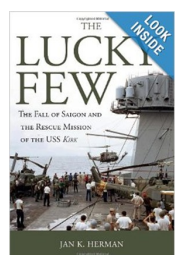
Vietnamese, especially southerners wanted to pay tribute this year to Captain Nguy Van Tha on the anniversary of his death. Hanoi wanted to go along with them, although it did not want to antagonize Beijing at the same time. Therefore, Hanoi decided to cancel the planned commemoration at the last minute because of "technical reason."



Mrs. Huynh Thi Sinh

## The Lucky Few: The Fall of Saigon and the Rescue of USS Kirk: Jan Herman

Although the Vietnam War ended in chaos and shame, the epic story of USS Kirk and her success in rendering humanitarian assistance under inconceivable circumstances is one of America's shining military involvements. The Lucky Few brings to light this relatively unknown heroic tale of a people caught up in the death throes of a nation and their subsequent passage to freedom. As the Vietnam War reached its tragic climax in the last days of April 1975, a task force of U.S. Navy ships cruised off South Vietnam's coast. The Lucky Few focuses on the role of USS Kirk in the rescue of not only the remnants of the South Vietnamese fleet but also 32,000 refugees fleeing from Communist forces to the safety of the Seventh Fleet ships offshore. Although the Vietnam War ended in chaos and shame, the epic story of USS Kirk and her success in rendering humanitarian assistance under inconceivable circumstances is one of America's shining military involvements. The Lucky Few brings to light this relatively unknown heroic tale of a people caught up in the death throes of a nation and their subsequent passage to freedom.



<http://www.amazon.com/Lucky-Few-Saigon-Rescue-Mission-ebook/dp/B00G1SRETU/>

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## Tran Van Thach (1905-1945). Fighting Oppression and Dictatorship.

Tran My Chau, Phan Thi Trong Tuyen

### A BOOK REVIEW by NGHIA M. VO

This book is written by Thach's daughter, Tran My Chau in memory of her father and his compatriots in the *Tranh Dau Movement* (Fighting Movement, *La Lutte*) of the 1930's in Saigon. Since Chau was only eight years of age--she barely knew him--when her father was killed by the Viet Minh, she set up in 1987 to retrace his life and learn about him through his writing and work. By looking for him, she also "found" her mother who was an energetic, savvy, and successful businesswoman who unfortunately became psychologically disabled following her incarceration and mistreatment by the Saigon police.

Tran Van Thach, Nguyen An Ninh, (Nghia M. Vo. *Saigon. A History*, 2011: 101-102) Ta Thu Thau, Pham Van Hum, Duong Bach Mai, Nguyen Van Tao, Phan Van Chanh were the main people behind the *Fighting Movement* and its official newspaper, *la Lutte*. Of all the above members, only Thach was a leftist nationalist. The goals of the *lutte* movement were: 1) to promote and support the fighting movements of workers and the people in general, and 2) to denounce the oppression of the French colonial regime of the time. It should be noted that another political group, Bui Quang Chieu and his *Constitutionalist Party* was also fighting the French colonial system using legal constitutional means. (Nghia M. Vo. *Saigon*, 97-101)

The author went through many libraries to look for documents about her father including the archives of the University of Toronto and archival departments of Paris, Aix en Provence, and Saigon. She even interviewed the Viet Cong Tran Van Giau who had ordered the liquidation of many members of the *Lutte* Movement, including her own father. Giau did not like neither members of the Third and Fourth International Movements nor the Trotskyites, which these people represented in the 1930's.

The author discovered that her father was not only a person who could tell good stories, a well known teacher of French language, a respected Saigon councilman, a good writer who could criticize the French delegates of Cochinchina (South Vietnam), but also a politician whose name once graced one of the streets of Saigon during the First Republic of South Vietnam.

This book gives us an insight into the Saigon political and social realms of the 1930's and early 1940's and the role played by Vietnamese students educated in France when they returned to Vietnam to challenge the French colonial regime in Saigon. Most of these students turned-politicians were either killed by the communists (Tran Van Thach, Ta Thu Thau, Pham Van Hum,...) or the French (Nguyen An Ninh). The book is in a sense a tribute to the heroism of these young men who sacrificed their lives to lay down the foundation to destabilize the French colonial empire.

The book is 437-page long and includes two sections: Tran Van Thach's biography is written by Tran My Chau and Thach's writing has been transcribed from French to Vietnamese by Phan Thi Trong Tuyen. It is hoped that the author would one day publish an English version of her book so that overseas Vietnamese and western researchers could have access to this rich historical material.



## Huynh Van Lang About the First Republic

Prof. Lang made the following remarks:

1. Diem and Nhu adamantly opposed the 1962 Geneva Accord on Laos, which was promoted by Averell Harriman because they were convinced that once Laos became a neutral country, the communists would use neutral Laos to infiltrate into South Vietnam.

Sure enough, Hanoi never removed their troops out of Laos--one requirement of the Accord--but began building the so called Ho Chi Minh Trail to conquer South Vietnam. The neutralization of Laos basically gave Ha Noi the means build the HCM Trail that eventually brought down South Vietnam.

What was worse was that the "wise (or unwise) man" Harriman, upset at Diem's and Nhu's criticisms, did his best to later bring down Diem-Nhu.

2. The Ngos and Washington from that time onward never saw each other eye to eye. Instead of working on a friendly basis toward the same goal, they second guessed each other: "the misalliance" soon brought the Ngos down and led to the downfall of Saigon.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-LVggPqt38>

## A Vietnamese Fighter Pilot in an American War: Hoi B. Tran

As a former Vanguard Youth Troop in Ha Noi, North Viet Nam, who passionately sang "who loves Uncle Ho more than us children" to praise Ho when he seized power in 1945, the author says: "Ho was a villain." This book is a truthful account of what actually happened in Viet Nam from 1945, Dien Bien Phu in 1953 to its demise in April 1975.

Available on Amazon

<http://www.amazon.com/Vietnamese-Fighter-Pilot-American-War-ebook/dp/B004X1VR7C/>





## Viet-American Helping Filipino Victims



Nhan Vo, Chairman, International Central Committee of Vietnamese Scouting (ICCVS), in Tacloban on January 4, 2014. He is one of many who mobilized the Vietnamese-American Community to help Philippine typhoon victims.

Genuine hospitality is a natural and instinctive trait of the Philippine people. Genuine gratitude is a gracious and timeless virtue amongst the Vietnamese, especially those who have come to the U.S. The recent generous donation of \$400,000 by the Vietnamese community in southern California for the Philippine victims of typhoon Haiyan is very much in character. Other Vietnamese communities in the U.S. are raising funds as this is written. In addition to donations from California, the US-Philippines Society has received contributions and pledges from Vietnamese-American groups in the Washington, D.C. area, New England, and Louisiana totaling nearly \$300,000, funds that are flowing to typhoon victims and their families.

Shortly after the fall of Vietnam to communism in 1975, the Philippines graciously welcomed and accommodated over 300,000 Indochinese refugees over a 20 year period.

Many of the refugees were Vietnamese "boat people" who attempted a treacherous South China Sea escape in search of freedom after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. Once past the dragnet of communist guards and patrols, the fleeing refugees risked drowning or dying from thirst, hunger, and harsh elements. Terrifying pirate attacks were also a danger for those desperate and courageous enough to make the perilous sea journey. Some 200,000 Vietnamese "boat people" were presumed to have been lost at sea, while over 796,000 made landfall in South East Asia and several other countries. The 51,000 boat people who made it to the Philippines were lucky indeed.

## Colonel Thomas Nguyen: Artillery Brigade Commander

COL Colonel Thomas Nguyen was born in Saigon, Vietnam. His family immigrated to the United States in April, 1975 during the fall of Saigon. He

is a native of Annapolis, Maryland and a 1991 Graduate of Towson University. He was commissioned a Distinguished Military Graduate through the Reserve Officer Training Corps at Loyola College of Baltimore, Maryland. Colonel Nguyen holds a Master of Science Degree in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College and a Master's Degree in Administration from Central Michigan University.

Colonel Nguyen's assignments include: Stinger Platoon Leader and Battery Executive Officer, 5th Battalion, 3rd Air Defense Artillery, 1st Armored Division, Germany; Battery Commander and Assistant Division Air Defense Officer, 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Battery Commander, 6th Battalion, 52nd Air Defense Artillery, Ansbach, Germany; World Class Opposing Force Plans Officer, Battle Command Training Program, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Brigade S-3, 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, Fort Bliss, Texas; Battalion Executive Officer, 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery, Gwangju Air Base, Republic of South Korea; G-3, Chief of Air Defense Artillery and G-7, Chief of Training and Exercises, NATO's Rapid Deployable Corps-Valencia, Spain; Chief of Signals Intelligence and Electronic Warfare Operations, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Kabul, Afghanistan; Battalion Commander, 2nd Battalion (Air Assault), 44th Air Defense Artillery, Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Air Defense Artillery Branch Chief, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Colonel Nguyen's deployments include: Operation Northern Watch, Battery Commander, C/6-52 ADA, Incirlik, Turkey; Operation Enduring Freedom 07-08, NATO ISAF CJ2, Kabul, Afghanistan; Operation Enduring Freedom 10-11, Battalion Commander, 2-44 ADA, Kabul, Afghanistan.



35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade Commander

Colonel Nguyen's military education include: the Air Defense Artillery Officer Basic Course; the Short Range Air Defense Weapons Course; the Patriot Transition Course; the Armor Officer Advanced Course; the U.S. Army Command and General Staff Officer Course; the Joint and Combined Warfare School; the United States Army War College; the M1A1 Tank Commander Certification Course; the Joint Firepower Command and Control Course; the Airborne Basic Course; the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division's Jumpmaster Course, and Fort Campbell's Air Assault Course.

Colonel Nguyen's awards and decorations include: the Bronze Star Medal; the Defense Meritorious Service Medal; the Meritorious Service Medal (3OLC); the Joint Service Commendation Medal; the Army Commendation Medal (1OLC); the Army Achievement Medal (3OLC); the National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star; the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Campaign Star; the Global War On Terrorism Service Medal; the Korean Defense Service Medal; the Joint Meritorious Unit Award; the Meritorious Unit Citation; the NATO ISAF Medal (2nd Award); the Spanish Cross Medal; the U.S. Army Senior Parachutist Badge; the Air Assault Badge; the British Army Parachutist Badge, and the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge (Gold).

Colonel Nguyen is married to the former Jill Louise Hefty of Mount Horeb, Wisconsin. They are blessed with three children, Claudia (14), Jackson (10) and Hattie (5 months).

**KRASNAYA POLYANA, Russia** — The opening ceremony of the Sochi Olympics was a few days away but Allen Tran, the chef for the United States Alpine, snowboarding and Nordic teams, was dashing through the streets in full competition mode.

"We were in battle with the Koreans who bought out all the rice noodles in Sochi," Tran said. "They spent \$35,000 in groceries. But luckily, we knew about an alternative market, so we responded. We got our game on, too. It's an international competition not just for the slopes but for groceries."

Tran procured the rice noodles, as well as chicken, flour, sugar, salmon and Asian fish sauce, he needed for the 100 athletes and staff members he is feeding at the United States team's hotel in the mountains. For a chef trying to make three familiar, popular and nutritious meals a day in an unfamiliar, remote place with an exotic food culture, it was another food disaster avoided.

"We can't let four years of hard work go to waste because of a bad cold or food poisoning," said Tran, 28, who is a registered dietitian and a former professional chef and has a master's degree in exercise science.

"I am personally going to be bringing one luggage that is dedicated to special ingredients and special spices," he said. "Things like sriracha sauce, which is a big hit and makes even the worst food somewhat appetizing. When I found out that the supply of sriracha sauce was going to be limited because of a production shut down, I quickly went to the Asian market near me in Salt Lake and bought up several cases to bring just in case. We've got 70 pounds of it."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/09/sports/olympics/us-ski-teams-can-now-order-in.html?hp>

<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/olympics/news/20140131/sochi-olympics-nutrition-q-and-a/>

## Allen Tran: US Team Chef in Sochi



<http://nhattam.tumblr.com>

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-12-16/vinalines-former-executives-sentenced-to-death-in-vietnam-trial.html>

Although two former executives of Vinalines had been convicted of embezzlement and kickback and sentenced to death, it unlikely the \$3.2 billion dollar-loss this state company has incurred over the years were the work of two lone executives.

Vietnam Infographics has suggested some of the money has gone into the pockets of party members. Despite the removal of the executives involved, Vinalines is still losing about \$100 million dollars a year.



## Vietnam Infographics

