



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

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

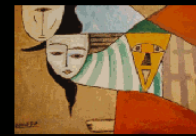
- **SACEI Newsletter** updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.
- It serves as a **LINK** between SACEI members and those who are interested in the Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American culture.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Vietnamese America	1
John Riordon	1
VN War Memorial, Westminster, CA	1
VN War Memorial Wall at San Jose, CA	2
Hon Viet: Vietnamese Spirit	3
The Lotus and the Storm	3
Commander Hung Cao	4
Gian Phan, MD	4
Si Pham, MD	4



# SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



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

NEWSLETTER # 68

JUNE 2014



**VIETNAMESE AMERICA: THE NEW FACES** Thirty nine years have passed since the South Vietnamese left South Vietnam following the fall of Saigon. This was long enough for new generations of Vietnamese to emerge in western countries and to gradually replace them. This is not to say that the first generation Vietnamese have completely disappeared or retired, they are still holding key positions in the U.S. government, states or counties, as well as in private and public organizations. And the legacy of these people keeps piling up.

What we are trying to describe in this month's newsletter is the transition between the first and the second-third generations. But before we go further, it is time to acknowledge the heritage or "gift" that has been bestowed on the South Vietnamese during this critical period. There were people like John Riordon who helped and facilitated their flight and transition from Vietnam to America/western countries (section I). There were Vietnamese soldiers and generals who sacrificed their lives so that they could live. Memorials have been erected to honor these heroes in two places in California (sections II and III). The spirit of the South Vietnamese lives forever thanks to the recording of the Hon Viet by Prof. Nguyễn Ngọc Bích.

What we are witnessing is the emergence of new faces who have been trained in the U.S. and are in general more westernized than their parents. We are presenting here four of these new faces (sections V-VIII).

## John Riordon: The Man Who Saved 105 South Vietnamese

An American banker risked his life to save his Vietnamese colleagues just days before communist Vietcong guerrillas took control of Saigon. John Riordon rescued over 100 of his colleagues as terrifying rumours spread of a civilian massacre, by pretending they were his wives and children on evacuation forms.



They now live prosperous lives as American citizens with children who are doctors and lawyers, and with grandchildren. The tale of bravery began after Mr Riordon was posted as an assistant manager to Citibank in Saigon in 1975.

He developed a close relationship with his 34 co-workers and their families and hosted barbecues at his villa. But that April, just three weeks before Saigon fell - now known as Ho Chi Minh City - Mr Riordon was ordered by Citibank in New York to burn all the important files and leave immediately.

He then set about formulating a plan just 11 days before the fall, moving his former co-workers and their families - 105 in total - into his villa and another one nearby.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBqjJla3FQ>

## The Vietnam War Memorial, Westminster, CA

<http://www.examiner.com/article/vietnam-war-memorial-westminster-a-moving-tribute-to-fallen-soldiers>

In a small corner of Westminster, wedged between the city courts the Westminster Rose Center (<http://www.westminsterrosecenter.info>), there is a small park where, at its center, is a striking pair of 12-foot high bronze soldiers, one American, one Vietnamese. This simple yet moving memorial sits in the Sid Goldstein Freedom Park; it's a quiet reflective place with a bit of a rocky past.

In 1997, Westminster City Councilman Frank G. Fry initiated the Vietnam War Memorial Project. A select committee unanimously chose artist Tuan Nguyen to sculpt and design the monument and the immediate surroundings. Tuan Nguyen, born in Saigon, South Vietnam in 1963, tried to escape Vietnam in 1988. Because of his attempted escape, he was captured by communists and put in a reeducation camp, ultimately managing to escape by walking through the Cambodian jungles to the United States. He ultimately made it to the United States where he received a fine arts degree from the Art Institute of South California in Laguna Beach, Ca. You can see some of his art here: <http://www.pcart.com/tuan/index.html>

This sprawling memorial was designed and sculpted by Mr. Nguyen. The bronze monument is 12 foot high and depicts two soldiers, an American infantryman and a soldier from the former Republic of South Vietnam standing side by side. They stand on a marble base with the flags of their country behind them.

*Continue on next page*

## The Vietnam War Memorial, Westminster, CA



## The Vietnamese Memorial Wall at San Jose, CA

This Memorial Wall honors the great sacrifices of millions of citizens of the Republic of Vietnam in defending liberty during the Vietnam War from 1950 to 1975.

Hundreds of thousands of military personnel, civilians, government cadres and officials died on battlefields or in communist prisons. Hundreds more chose to kill themselves rather than surrender.

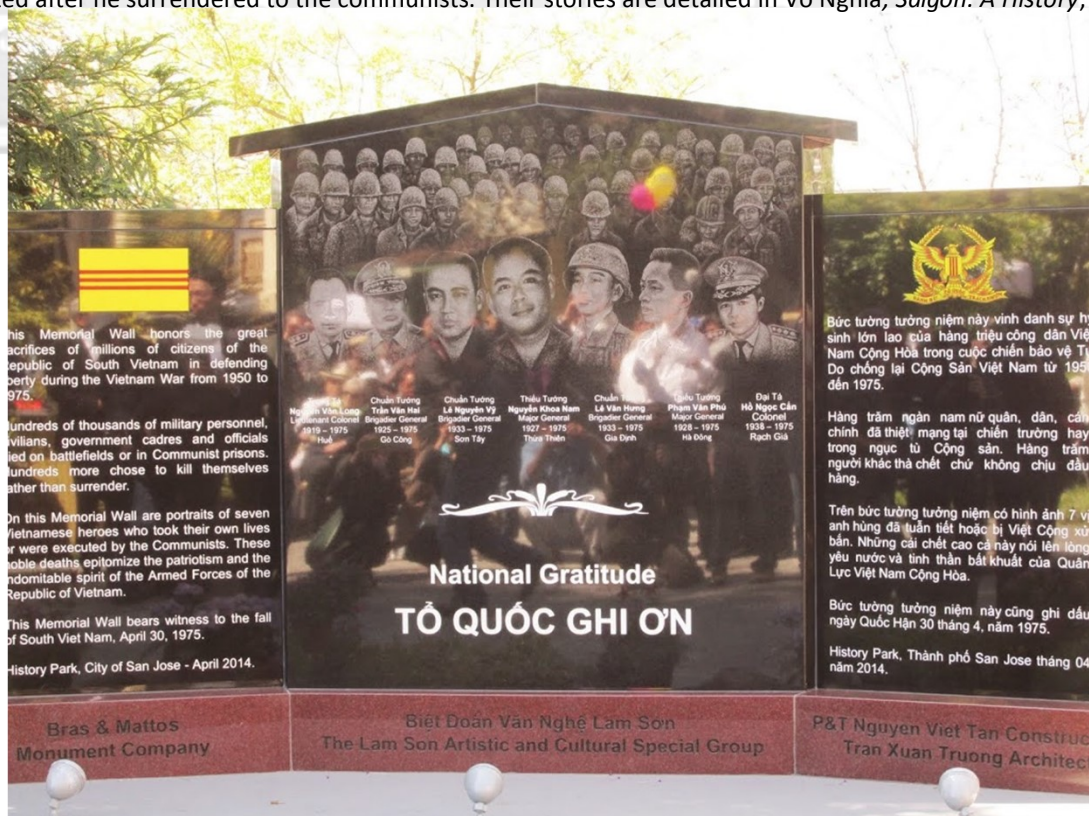
On this Memorial Wall are portraits of seven Vietnamese heroes who took their own lives or were executed by the communists.

These noble deaths epitomize the patriotism and the indomitable spirit of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam.

This Memorial Wall bears witness to the Fall of South Vietnam, April 30, 1975.

History Park, City of San Jose, April 2014.

Six of these heroes (Generals Nguyen Khoa Nam, Le Van Hung, Le Nguyen Vy, Tran Van Hai, Pham van Phu and Colonel Nguyen Van Long) killed themselves on April 30, 1975 instead of surrendering to the communists when Saigon fell. Colonel Ho Ngoc Can was executed after he surrendered to the communists. Their stories are detailed in Vo Nghia, *Saigon. A History*, 2011: 195-198.



## Hon Viet: Vietnamese Spirit

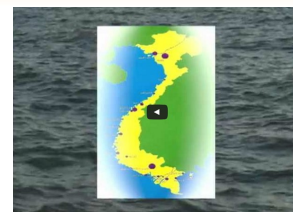
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahEbIKNhUVw>

Producer: Prof. Nguyễn Ngọc Bích

Script writer: Col. Phạm Bá Hoa (Ret.)

Music: Le Van Khoa

Narrator: Ngọc Hà



The history of the South Vietnamese Flag and Anthem is described in this YouTube presentation.

## The Lotus and the Storm

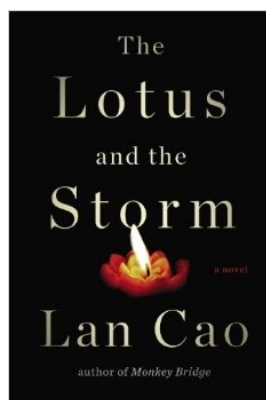
*To be released on Aug 2014 by Viking*

Professor Cao joins Fowler School of Law after more than a decade on the faculty at William & Mary Law School, where she was the Boyd Fellow and Professor of Law. She clerked for Judge Constance Baker Motley of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. She practiced with Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton and Garrison in New York City. Professor Cao was a Ford Foundation Scholar in 1991. She has published scholarly articles in the area of international trade and finance, international economic development, finance and culture in law. She is also the author and co-author of several books and supplements, including the novel *Monkey Bridge* (Penguin 1997), about the Vietnamese War and its impact on a young Vietnamese American girl.

The Lotus and the Storm is a novel about war and its casualties. On one level, it chronicles the downfall of a country marred by political intrigues and ravaged by a war fought on its land but controlled and managed somewhere. On a more personal level, it is a deeply intimate story about love and longing, deception and betrayal, trauma and madness. But most of all, it is about loss of a country and the deep imprints it has on its children's lives in ways that ripple across time and space.

The novel tells the story of a family whose lives are inextricably bound to and altered by the tragic events that led to the Fall of Saigon. The chapters alternate between the life of a once decorated soldier who now lies forgotten in one nursing home in the Virginia suburbs of Washington D.C. and that of his daughter, Mai, who grew up in Saigon's twin city, Cholon.

Lan Cao: Law Professor & Novelist



The book opens in 1963. In the bustling commercial district of Cholon lies Mai's story. Vietnam is at the brink of a historical turning point. Under the watchful eyes of a Chinese nanny, Mai carves out a safe and wondrous existence of childhood innocence unaffected by events that take place on the outside. It is an existence lived vicariously through her sister, her love and constant companion. Timid and unadventurous, Mai gives herself completely to her sister's whims and impulses. Together, they immerse in the world of hide and seek and explore the forbidden labyrinth of the crooked alleys of the Chinese town. They befriend an American soldier who shares rock and roll music with them. On special evenings, their mother reads Arabian nights and other bedtime stories to them. Occasionally, their mother's brother, a Viet Cong visits and the family is confronted with the Viet Cong's agenda of anti-foreign, anti-American and anti-Chinese nationalism. Despite the presence of war and family divisions, their lives are normal until several explosive events shatter the family and the country.

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Available on Amazon

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Lotus-Storm-A-Novel/dp/0670016926/>



### Commander Hung Cao: Commander Naval Diving and Salvaging Center

Commander Cao was born in Saigon, Vietnam. After immigrating to the United States in 1975, his family relocated to West Africa, returning to the United States in 1982. He graduated with the first graduating class from Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in 1989, then entered the Navy as a Seaman Recruit. He was commissioned from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science in Ocean Engineering and immediately commenced training in the Navy's Special Operations program.

After Dive School and Surface Warfare School, he reported to *USS Grasp* (ARS 51) in 1997 as the Assistant Chief Engineer, then as the Operations Officer, where he conducted high profile salvage operations including the recovery of John F. Kennedy Jr. and the Civil War Ironclad *USS Monitor*. In 2001, after Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) School, he reported as Officer In Charge (OIC) to EOD Mobile Unit Two detachment 26 while deploying with Truman Carrier Strike Group for the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 2003, he reported as OIC for EOD Mobile Unit Three Detachment Southwest where he supported local and federal law enforcement agencies in over 200 emergency responses in the San Diego area as part of the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. He helped in drafting the annex to the treaty between the U.S. and Mexico for munitions recovery in Mexico and led the first two missions. In 2005, he was selected as Flag Aide to Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet/Allied Joint Command Lisbon/Strike Force NATO. During his tour, he participated in the OIC for the Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell (CEXC). This multi-national, multi-agency, and multi-service unit processed ALL IEDs in theatre for technical and forensics intelligence, averaging 22,000 items from 450 cases per month, his unit was accredited with writing over 250 arrest warrants and aiding in the conviction of numerous terrorists. In 2010, he reported to Riverine Squadron One as Executive Officer and led the Squadron's last combat deployment to Iraq. In November 2011, CDR Cao reported to OPNAV N96 where he worked requirements for Anti-Terrorism, Force Protection (AT/FP), Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS), Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense (CBRND) for the surface force. Additionally he is the subject matter expert for the Navy's Biometrics program. CDR Cao assumed Command of Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center on September 6, 2013.

<http://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/ceneoddive/ndstc/Leadership.aspx?ID=1>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=c-fv-uv64vo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=c-fv-uv64vo)



**Giao Phan, MD: NIH Cancer Surgeon** Dr. Phan graduated from Columbia University in New York with a B.A., in biochemistry and obtained her M.D., from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore. She completed her general surgery residency at Washington University in St. Louis. She further pursued a surgical oncology research fellowship at the Surgery Branch of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and a surgical oncology clinical fellowship at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, FL. She joined the faculty at the NCI Surgery Branch in 2009. Dr. Phan is board-certified by the American Board of Surgery.

**Research:** Dr. Phan's clinical and research interests include melanoma, immunotherapy, and endocrine diseases.

**Si Pham, MD, Heart & Lung Transplant Surgeon** Dr. Pham received his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine where he also completed general surgery residency, cardiothoracic surgery residency and surgical research fellowship. Following his training, Dr. Pham joined the faculty of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and became the Director of Adult Heart Transplant Service at the Presbyterian University Hospital under the UPMC Health System. Subsequently, he was recruited to the University of Miami to head the section of Thoracic Organ Transplant.

Dr. Pham has extensive experience in the field of cardiothoracic surgery and transplantation and most recently served as Professor of Surgery and Biomedical Engineering at the University of Miami School of Medicine, as well as Chief of the Division of



Heart/Lung Transplant and Artificial Heart at the Miami Transplant Institute. Under his leadership, the Heart and Lung Transplant programs had excellent outcomes and received several national awards.

Dr. Pham has made several significant contributions to the field of heart/lung transplantation. His team was the first to use tacrolimus (Prograf) to prevent rejection in heart/lung transplant recipients. He was a pioneer in the use of donor bone marrow to prevent rejection in heart and lung recipients. He has published more than 130 scientific papers in leading medical journals, and has received research grants from the National Institute of Health (NIH), the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, and the Transplant Foundation of Florida. His research interests are in the areas of stem cells and organ regeneration, transplant tolerance, and transplant vasculopathy.

*Professor of Surgery*

*Director of Heart and Lung Transplantation, University of Maryland*