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75-78

**Vietnamese Family Fled War,
Finds Refuge with Baptists**

By Dan Martin

DALLAS (BP)--Tran Van Bao has known and made war most of his 39 years.

His earliest memories are of fleeing war surrounding his home in the Vietnamese Delta.

Now, among his freshest memories are fleeing war with his pregnant wife and four children.

He and his four children are living in the Dallas home of L. Taylor Daniel, who retired in March as vice president of development for the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board.

Bao's wife is in a refugee camp in Fort Chaffee, Ark. awaiting the birth of her fifth child, expected soon.

The Vietnamese-American friendship stretches back to 1965 when Bao was an engineering student at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas. He was graduated from SMU in 1968 with a degree in electrical engineering and returned to his post in the South Vietnamese army.

"We became involved with him shortly after his first child was born at Baylor (University Medical Center)," Daniel said.

The friendship came about through Mrs. Daniel and the Park Cities Baptist Church Woman's Missionary Union, which was interested in foreign students.

The Daniels became the Baos' host family, helping them with the many problems foreign students face in the United States.

"A fast friendship developed. When they went back to Saigon, we kept communication with them. We were also Mrs. Bao's host family when she returned to teach in El Paso at Fort Bliss in 1970," Daniel added.

In early April, the Bao family again became an intense concern, even though the Daniels had been concerned with the events in Indochina before.

"We received a special delivery letter from the major (Bao) at 8:30 a.m., the day the presidential palace in Saigon was bombed. It was urgent, desperate, hurried," Daniel said.

Bao explained the letter: "After the communists captured Da Nang and Nha Trang, I knew I would have to send my family out. We were in danger because three of my children had been born in the U.S. and are United States citizens. I received my education in the States and my wife had taught in the defense language institute at Fort Bliss.

"I also had a high rank in the (South) Vietnamese army," he said. "The thought of leaving my family in Saigon until the enemy came scared me to death."

Bao said he knew the communists had slaughtered a garrison of army and police in a town 300 miles from Saigon.

"They marched them out---men, women and children---and shot them all down. It is their policy to kill people against the communist regime."

Daniel amplified, "The letter asked that we see to the children...to take them in and see they were cared for or adopted if something happened to Bao and his wife."

Bao was able to get his wife and children aboard a flight out of Saigon. But he did not leave until four days later when the situation became more hopeless.

When he left, the fighting had intensified around Saigon, and the Communists had cut the road leading into the delta.

Bao stayed at his post in the Combat Test and Development Center even though he had been given permission to leave.

Bao had been told he could not board an airplane in his uniform, but he also knew he could not get into Ton Son Nhut (Saigon) airport in civilian clothes.

"I went to Ton Son Nhut in my uniform, but when I got inside I took it off. I had my civilian clothing on underneath it," he said.

Twelve hours later, he flew out of Saigon to Guam.

His story is similar to many other refugees. He knew his wife escaped, but did not know where she was and was anxious about her.

Bao stayed on Guam nine days. After six days he found out his wife was safe, but he was still separated from his family.

He was able to get a call through to the Daniels and the Bao family used the Daniels as a relay station for messages as Mrs. Bao had written a card from the Philippines. It had not arrived when Bao called, however.

A few days later, Bao was sent on to Camp Pendleton Marine Base, Calif. where he continued to search for his wife.

"I thought she may have already left for Dallas when I could not find her," he said.

At Camp Pendleton, Bao met a fellow SMU graduate who cleared him on through to Dallas.

When Bao arrived in Dallas he began trying to call the Daniels.

"He was trying to call her when she was on the phone trying to call Washington about him," Daniel laughed. "She was trying to get him out of Guam while he was trying to get her to get him out of DFW (the Dallas-Fort Worth airport)."

Bao got to the Daniels family home by calling the Annuity Board and talking with Daniels son, Gen, who also is with the board.

A few days of waiting ensued.

"I knew I would hear from her because she had the Daniels' address and phone number. I just did not know when...I thought she was having her baby somewhere, Bao added.

Four weeks after the Bao's special delivery letter arrived, Daniel and Bao were reading a newspaper story about the Vietnamese when the phone rang.

"It was 8:30, almost a month to the hour from the time we got the letter," Daniel said. It was Mrs. Bao.

She was in Fort Chaffee, Ark. and was well.

"My friends said we couldn't possibly get into Fort Chaffee to get the children, but we didn't take that as an answer.

"The next morning after Sunday School, we got in my airplane and went to Fort Smith (the city near Fort Chaffee)," Daniel said.

By 6 p.m., that day, Bao had his children, had visited with his wife and in-laws and was back on board Daniels' aircraft ready to fly to Dallas.

Mrs. Bao is to travel to Dallas as soon as the baby is born.

Bao is a Buddhist and his wife is a Catholic.

"I can say thanks to God--or somebody up there--who helped us get through all of this..." Bao said.



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Southern Baptists Rally To Minister To Refugees

By Toby Druin

ATLANTA (BP)--Hundreds of Southern Baptists--local church members, pastors and missionaries--have rallied together to provide ministries to Vietnamese refugees in resettlement camps at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Fort Chaffee, Ark., and Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

More than 45,000 refugees are housed at the three bases--21,000 in tents at Pendleton--and are getting oriented to America through the efforts of Southern Baptist volunteers, who are directing Americanization programs at each base.

The programs offer day care for all age groups and teach basic English, American culture, geography, customs, laws, and such things as how to apply for a job.

Trueman Moore, pastor of East Side Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Ark., and coordinator of the education program at Fort Chaffee, said the education and Americanization program is not "religious."

"It's an example of James's pure religion, however," added Moore, a Home Mission Board director and former foreign missionary to Bangladesh. He quoted James 1:27--"visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

Regular religious services, however, are available at each camp.

Local coordinators have been named at each area. Moore at Fort Chaffee and James Roamer, director of Coronado Baptist Center, at Camp Pendleton are directing Americanization and education programs for the government, in addition to their own spiritual counseling.

At Eglin AFB, near Fort Walton, Fla., Lewis Myers, furloughing missionary to Vietnam, has been civilian coordinator of volunteer services, and James Monroe, pastor of First Baptist Church, Fort Walton Beach, Fla., coordinates SBC agency liaison.

Home and foreign missionaries are assisting them: Court Shepart, Home Mission Board language missionary associate, Wayne Eurich, director of missions in San Diego, and James Lassiter, former missionary to Vietnam at Pendleton; Jim Gayle, missionary to Vietnam, John Campbell and Dave Smith, Christian social ministries missionaries in New Orleans and Washington, D. C., at Chaffee; and Carolyn Brooks, Christian social ministries missionary in Pensacola, Fla., at Eglin.

Other missionaries are expected to join them. Gene V. Tunnell, missionary to Vietnam, is expected at Chaffee along with six former foreign missionary journeymen and Olive Allen, former missionary to Vietnam, who will direct day care.

At each of the three bases, a telegram from the State Department, signed by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger opened the door for Baptist ministries to the refugees.

The telegram was prompted primarily through contacts in Washington by Al Oliver and Harry Hearne, co-chairmen of the Baptist Committee of Metropolitan Washington for Refugee Relief.

Oliver, pastor of Hillendale Baptist Church in Adelphi, Md., and Hearne, director of Christian social ministries for the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, had contacted the State Department earlier and outlined a comprehensive plan they had drawn up for Baptists to coordinate volunteer services for refugee relief.

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Refugee resettlement aides liked the proposal. The telegram to officials at the three bases read in part: "This is a strong, experienced group which can organize the staff and volunteer services requirements of your official U. S. government teams and rapidly reduce dependence on troops support labor."

Earlier, before presenting the proposal, the Washington Baptist group had called together a meeting of their own committee and representatives of SBC organizations such as the Home and Foreign Mission Boards, Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union; plus an American Baptist Churches representative for Church World Services and a representative from the Baptist World Alliance.

Local churches, Southern Baptist and otherwise, are providing the volunteers to direct the education programs. Many are giving several hours daily. Some are giving their vacations.

Glerday Kraus, a member of Grand Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Smith, teaching basic English at Chaffee, said, "I feel like it's a mission opportunity that's been brought to our doorstep." Her response was typical.

James Harris, minister of music at First Baptist Church, Lavaea, Ark., his wife Sandy and her mother, Mrs. Lois Johnson, a Presbyterian, all also are working at Chaffee, and all said they were just trying to meet the missions opportunity.

The Chaffee volunteers are augmented by six stewards and stewardesses from Braniff International Airlines who were on board the planes that brought some of the orphaned Vietnamese children to the United States in the days immediately preceding the fall of Saigon.

Andrea "Rebel" McRoberts, one of the stewardesses from Houston, said they had become so attached to the orphans that they volunteered to work on their days off and on vacations at Fort Chaffee.

Monroe said they had been "swamped" with offers to help with clothing donated.

Eurich and Roamer said that churches in the San Diego area, many of whom have large military-affiliated memberships, had responded enthusiastically.

Monroe praised both the local churches and the mission boards for the spirit of cooperation in meeting the challenge.

Some opposition has arisen, all acknowledged, but it has been minimal.

"The majority have taken the position that they are here, so let's do the Christian thing and the American thing--let's help," said Monroe.

Most of the Vietnamese at the camps are Buddhists and Roman Catholics, but many are Protestants, mainly Christian and Missionary Alliance, and more than 100 Baptists have been reported to date.

At least two Baptist pastors are in the group, both at Camp Pendleton.

Religious services are being held regularly at each area. At Fort Chaffee, prayer meetings are held morning and night and visitation teams of Vietnamese Baptists visit each person in camp who indicates a Protestant preference.

"Boredom is the biggest enemy we have here," said Roamer. When the people are not in the education programs there is little else for them to do except wander about.

Frisbies and hoola hoops are popular among the children. The adults grasp eagerly for any books or magazines brought into the camps. About 50 percent of them understand English, Roamer said.

On May 16, a choir from First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, performed a musical at Fort Chaffee to a crowd of some 4,000 refugees and turned over their instruments to a Vietnamese rock group for another half hour after their performance.

Charles Collins, minister of music at First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, said that he and other ministers of music in the city will begin music classes at the camp.

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(BP) Photos will be mailed to Baptist state papers; others on request.

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