

# Sidelights On Viet Nam

(ED. NOTE: Dr. W. Wyan Washburn, administrator of Royster Memorial hospital in Boiling Springs, is in Viet Nam and has written "Sidelights On Viet Nam" which appears in

today's edition of The Herald).  
By DR. WYAN WASHBURN  
SIDELIGHTS ON VIET NAM  
TO ALL CONCERNED:

This is Saturday night, April 2, 1966 and once it begins, night falls rapidly in the tropics. There is a short twilight and usually not much color in the clouds. Most of the residents of Da Nang go indoors early, tho there are a few late ones on the streets.

About nine in the evening we hear a weird noise coming up the street. It sounds eerie and high-pitched. It is the man with the evening "sleeping pills". He begins the rounds early and then comes about every half hour until curfew at 1 a.m. It sounds like he is saying "Ho peet low" but the "low" is long drawn out. His pills are not pills at all, but fermented duck-eggs. They take duck eggs and bury them in the warm earth for 21 days and when they have really ripened they are ready for sale. They say there is something in the fermented contents of the egg that lets people go to sleep. I haven't tried one of the eggs, but some-

one said one of the previous doctors did and it made him so sick he couldn't work for a week.

About the same time as the egg man is the "noodle" man. He is also a street vendor who travels only at night. His trademark is a little instrument that makes a clicking sound a little like horseshoes on the pavement or the "cricet" snappers we used to take to school. I may try the noodles some night. They smell good.

We are eating native food most of the time. For breakfast we have eggs, so small it takes two with bacon, from their pigs, not odrs. It is always fresh. They have no way to cure it. Also French bread and green tea. Occasionally we get regular tea. Most of the doctors drink coffee. I prefer tea. Sugar is US and so is the PREAM. For lunch we may have shrimp sausage fried in rice-paper. Very tasty and quite good. There will be a vegetable or meat soup, sometimes with rice, sometimes with noodles. There will be a white Yam cake, a little like mashed pota-

toes, but spicy. Or there will be beef (water-buffalo) with tomatoes and occasionally bamboo sprouts and something that tastes so much like asparagus, I believe it is asparagus. For supper we have another soup, fried rice, fried shrimp or a piece of fish and salads of lettuce, onions, cabbage, etc. I go slow on the salads because of the danger of bowel infections, but the cooked foods are always good. We always have the baked French bread which is brown and chewy. There is always a dessert, of fruit cooked or fresh, or bananas fresh or fried in butter and brown sugar or about half cooked in a sort of syrup. This is why I probably am not losing weight. The meals and laundry and pure drinking water cost about \$3 per day.

One of our doctors recently operated on a village chief, amputated most of his leg. While the chief was in the hospital the Dr. with several Marines went out to the village, 13 miles into the jungle, to pay his respects to the parents and the man's wife. It was sort of a social call and something thought to be good public relations. One problem, the jeep only went five miles. They had to walk the remaining eight miles out and eight miles back. While there the family invited all of them to eat dinner.

The soup and rice and fruit were fine, my doctor friend said, but when they killed the suckling pig and let the blood drain out on the dining room floor, then carved out the meat (raw) and offered him a rib, he suddenly felt quite full and told his host he "couldn't eat another bite. The Marines ate theirs.

As you may know from the papers Da Nang is in the center of a province who dislike and do not completely trust their central government at Saigon. Being over 400 miles away and mostly Buddhist they distrust the Catholic South. Recently one of their generals, General Thi (pronounced "tea"), was voted out of the ruling group of 10 generals of the country. The people up here, especially the hot-heads and Buddhists are going on strike, they call their government names and have begun anti-American propaganda.

At a parade this week there were about 500 vehicles, trucks, buses, etc. and over 1,000 bicycles, all carrying banners for General Thi and a few carrying banners saying "Down with Americans" and "Yankee, go home". They think the Americans support the South (the gov. at Saigon) which they do, but they also support this province with 30,000 Marines and other Army, Navy and Air Force units.

At any rate, it seemed strange, incongruous and contradictory for them to be carrying the banners while driving vehicles almost all made in US, burning gasoline made in US, with US paint to letter cloth made in US. Shoes and uniforms were made in Taiwan in US built factories and their radios and loudspeakers made in Japan which is occupied by US troops and sells here by our permission. At the same time we doctors were operating on their sick or dying using US anesthetics, antibiotics and all manners of supplies made and paid for by you and other people in the US. Doesn't make sense, does it.

Anyway, that is the way the cookie crumbles today. Perhaps tomorrow will be a different day. This war is full of incongruities. The Vietnamese fought, led and died for a thousand years to free themselves from China, yet North VN now accepts China's aid to fight the South and risks Communism to do it. They fought the French for a hundred years, but now want to cling to all that is French instead of new 20th century ways. They say they want Freedom, but in 2,000 years of written history they have never really been free. Their idea of freedom is to steal from the Americans or get rich at someone else's expense. We have a long

way to go to implant Democracy and responsibility in their minds. They certainly are not ready for self-government now.

The hope lies in the young people, if they can be shown and taught a better way. Most of the intelligent young people would like to go to America and study. This week I filled out the Physical Exam papers for a young girl who has been offered a scholarship to, of all places, the University of Mississippi. She can speak three languages, fair English and says she wants to be an architect. She needs to be a teacher.

We did ten major operations today, most of them war wounds in civilians. A little boy, if he lives, faces the rest of life, if he lives, minus a whole right arm and a left hand. A young girl is minus the left eye and the other is going out. It took her 15 days to walk and bum rides to get to the hospital. She developed sympathetic ophthalmia in the right eye. If she could have had surgery the day of the accident she perhaps could have saved one eye. And on and on. For me the most touching case was a lad three years old. A grenade or a bomb blew a chunk out of his side and he was burned over all and fluid and an operation on his side. He was in a sort of daze and must have thought I was his daddy. He would hold my finger and pat my arm in confidence while the other doctors were doing a cut-down to get fluid started. He may not live, but we tried.

I thought of another little boy about 50 years ago this year, my younger brother who was burned so bad he could not live, and vividly recall the grief and sorrow and the efforts of the doctor to save him. The family, the race, the nationality or the side of the world they live on is not too important. The right to health and a safe and happy childhood is important. Perhaps we will save some.

## The Veterans Corner

EDITOR'S NOTE: Below are authoritative answers by the Veterans Administration to some of the many current questions from former servicemen and their families. Further information on veterans benefits may be obtained at any VA office.

Q—How may I get information about getting my GI insurance back in force? I am a veteran of World War II and served in the Navy. I let my insurance drop upon my discharge in 1946.

A—To be eligible for the new GI insurance being sold by the Veterans Administration until May 2, 1966, a veteran must have been eligible to have purchased National Service Life Insurance, have a service-connected disability or have a non-service disability so severe that he cannot purchase private insurance. You should contact the nearest VA office.

Q—I am a veteran of World War I. I am 65 and I am retiring in April of this year. Could you please tell me if I am entitled to non-service-connected benefits and how I go about filing for such benefits.

A—There is no benefit based on age alone. Veterans of World War I, WW II or the Korean Conflict, discharged under other than dishonorable conditions after 90 or more days service, or because of a service-connected disability, who are permanently and totally disabled from reasons not traceable to service and are unable to perform a gainful occupation may be entitled to a non-service-connected pension if their income without dependents is under \$1800 or (with dependents) under \$3000. See your nearest VA office.

Q—My father died as a result of service-connected disabilities in World War II, making me eligible for schooling under the War Orphans Educational Assistance Act. May I pursue this education at the U.S. Military Academy?

A—No, not under the War Orphans Act. However, since your father's death resulted from a service-connected disability you can apply to the President for special appointment to the Academy. The Congress provided for Presidential appointment of additional cadets or midshipmen to the U. S. Military Academy, the U. S. Naval Academy, or the U. S. Air Force Academy from those sons of servicemen who were killed in, or died later as a result of disabilities incurred in service in World War I, and World War II, and the Korean Conflict. Your selection will be in order of merit among other War Orphan applicants as established by a competitive mental examination and a physical examination.

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