

**Subject: Re: Vietnamese War Dead**

**Date:** Sat, 23 Jun 2001 19:02:33 +0700

**From:** Vern Weitzel <weitzel@undp.org.vn>

**Organization:** United Nations Development Programme

**To:** tomdisalvo@worldnet.att.net

Hi Tom,

I guess Viet Nam has been something of a special interest of mine for some years. It is really a nice palce, though like every country flawed. Had there been more reasonable behavior 40 years ago, maybe many terrible things would not have happened.

Nguyen Tat Thanh is an important revolutionary name. A lot of good people died for the South. There are one or two websites to find some. You could include President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother who were assassinated. Diem was quite a bureaucrat, but many recognise him as a patriot. Though, I have at least one friend who had to relocate relatives outside Vit Nam because of fear of the Diemists. Politics is tooooooo terrible here sometimes.

I have a few names from My Lai, its real name is Son My. The tourist book "A Look Back Upon Son My" gives some names, almost all women and old men. I don't always believe propaganda, but I suspect this is probably true enough. There are some sources in libraries. Several books are out on the subject of My Lai. I visited there earlier this year with a couple guys who are in my opinion really great: Hugh Thompson and Larry Colburn, the helo crew whodefended civilians against the madness.

Here are the names given in the book with notes:

- ✓(Mrs) Vo Thi Mai - raped, killed with children
- ✓(Mrs) Vo Thi Phu - killed with child
- ✓(Mrs) Ngo Thi Mai and
- ✓(Mrs) Ngo Thi Mot - sisters killed with grenades
- ✓(Mrs) Nguyen Thi Thi - shelter collapsed over her
- ✓(Mr) Vo Toan - killed with family
- ✓(Mrs) Nguyen Thi Doc
- ✓(Mr) Truong Tho - aged 72
- ✓(Mr) Muç Lai - old
- ✓(Ms) Phan Thi Mai - aged 14, raped and killed
- ✓(Ms) Do Thi Nguyet - aged 12, stabbed in the stomach
- ✓(Mrs) Truong Thi Dau - aged 60, raped (?) and killed
- ✓(Mr) Thich Tam Tri - Buddhist mong killed (name Do Ngo)

That's a few of the 504 people known to have died that day; indeed, the same number of Australian soldiers who died during the entire war.

I don't thing about that war much these days, even when my wife sings after along with all the war praise on TV. There are important problems, some with Agent Orange (one ofmy personal interests), some with the destruction of their family life because of the war. I'm just proud that some of us made it out alive.

Stay in touch. I'll help if I can.

Vern

Tom Di Salvo wrote:

>

> Dear Vern,

> Thank you for your generous email. I had emailed the Socialist Republic

> of VN through their Washington D.C. embassy website, so I think I had  
> the right place. I use regular hardware store lettering stencils to  
> stencil text onto my canvas, so the names will have to be transliterated  
> into Western style alphabet. I think the painting will make its point  
> even without the absolute accuracy of the accents, important as they may  
> be from a cultural and literary perspective. As I think I may have  
> written before, the names I was able to come up with through my limited  
> research were mostly of leaders like General Giap and Nguyen Tat Thanh.  
> If it is not too much trouble for you to find it, I would appreciate  
> about a dozen of the names of the victims of the My Lai massacre.  
> Florida is a place I chose to live to be close to my elderly parents,  
> one of whom passed away two years ago. Now I've built a studio here as  
> an addition to my mother's home so I can look after her, so I have roots  
> here now, though I've also lived in New York City for ten years and in  
> Europe for an equal amount of time. I would like to find out more about  
> your work, which from the listings alone on your internet website, is  
> truly a prodigious amount of publications covering many different  
> disciplines. Perhaps we can continue to correspond in the future.  
> Right now time presses me to look after a few of my current projects.  
> Thanks once more for the generous amount of time you dedicated to your  
> reply to my query. Best wishes. Tom

> Vern Weitzel wrote:

>>  
>> Hi Tom,  
>> Your artwork is very interesting indeed. Thanks for showing me the  
>> site. You must enjoy Florida. I've been working in Ha Noi the last  
>> several years.

>> I'm not surprised that the Embassy didn't answer because the  
>> Republic of Vietnam Hasn't been around for some time. Socialist  
>> Republic of VN is what it is now called.

>> Yes, of course there are war memorials here, dotted among the  
>> towns showing how many people lost their lives in all of the wars  
>> of this country. The memorials of the Southern government are now  
>> disused. One think about Vietnamese names is that no matter  
>> what name you choose, there's a good chance that it is someone  
>> who died. It probably doesn't matter much north or south.  
>> So many people are still missing. My wife's elder sister just  
>> brought her husband back hme a couple years ago. He died in  
>> Da Nang in 1974.

>> Just so long as you get the diacritical marks (phonetic and tone  
>> marks) correct. I may have a list of the people who died at  
>> My Lai - but in English. On second thoughts, since you are  
>> a long way away, perhaps you should ask the local Vietnamese  
>> community. You'll probably need help getting the words correct.  
>> Just one other thought. a lot of people from different countries  
>> went to Viet Nam. I lived in Australia for a long time - just  
>> over 500 Australians died in that conflict.

>> It may be surprising that I don't have much research material  
>> here living in Viet Nam. And maybe it is a little depressing to  
>> visit a graveyard.

>> I think that you have a great idea and a tremendous talent to  
>> go along with it.

>> cheers, Vern

>> Your Name wrote:

>>>  
>>> Dear Vern,  
>>> I am a 56 year old American artist who is finally coming to terms with  
>>> his Vietnam war era experience by painting a self-portrait as reflected  
>>> in the American Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. If you visit  
>>> my website at : <http://home.att.net/~tomdisalvo>, you will see that I use  
>>> stenciled text in my paintings. I would like to include the names of 30  
>>> or so Vietnamese war dead (from both the North and South) among the  
>>> names of the American boys who were killed there, since my painting is  
>>> going to be about war in general, and not just about the American side  
>>> of this war. I have emailed the Embassy of the Republic of Vietnam in  
>>> Washington, but have not received an answer. Are there memorials in  
>>> Vietnam to their war dead and are the names of the dead soldiers listed  
>>> on the monuments or anywhere else? Thank you for any information you  
>>> can provide to help me complete the research for my painting.

> > >  
> > > Sincerely,  
> > >  
> > > Tom Di Salvo  
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> > --  
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