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I. Ralph Watts & Arlind Hackett Visit Vietnam

(5th of several installments!)
Arlind Hackett <arlind.hackett@yahoo.com> June 27:
Travel Report No.
Travel Report No. 5

Dear All:

It is now Sabbath afternoon and probably the only down time I'll get for the next couple of days. So, I'm going to take this time to report on Friday and Sabbath morning.

Friday morning we were supposed to leave La Sapinette Hotel at 7:30 so that Ralph, Puong, and Pastor Giao could catch the flight back to Saigon. So, I went down to breakfast about 6:45. Pastor Giao and our driver were there when I got there, and he was wondering where the others were. We went ahead and ate. On Thursday there had been hardly anyone in the dining room, but Friday morning almost every table was full. Apparently, a lot of people came in on Thursday night for the weekend. Later Ralph told me he heard people roaming the halls in the middle of the night. I hadn't heard a thing!

Puong had told the restaurant staff to fix more vegetarian food for breakfast, so in addition to the fruit, omelets, dry cereal and bread they had fixed a big bowl of fried rice for us. I think she had told them to use brown rice, because in addition to being publishing secretary for the mission she is also the health secretary. I found out on Friday that she is not the stewardship secretary, but was leading out in the seminar for Khoi, since he was going to be in Hanoi with us. Anyway, the fried rice was good, and by the time we were finished eating the rest of the gang had arrived.

We all piled into the van about 7:30 and were on our way to the airport. When we were about half-way there Khoi got a call from the travel agent saying the flight was delayed. So we had time to stop at the water falls which was on the way, and a very popular tourist "trap." In addition to the falls there is an Alpine coaster that you can ride on down to the falls. We were a little concerned that we might not have time to ride the coaster, so Khoi and I walked down the falls. It was a bit of a hike. There were rock steps going down-as opposed to a trail. So by the time I got down my legs were a little shaky. While I was taking pictures of the falls Puong called Khoi and told him she was going to ride the coaster down and meet us, and we could all ride the coaster back up. I was pleased about that, as I wasn't looking forward to the hike back up those steps.

When we were all back together we headed for the airport again. While we were still on the way we got another call that the flight was delayed again.

But, we dropped the air travelers at the airport anyway, and the driver, Khoi and I headed for Ho Chi Minh City. The views coming back down the mountains were pretty spectacular and the roads in that area were pretty good. Also, since the speed limit in the mountains was 30 kph I had a chance to enjoy the scenery. At one point Khoi was talking to the driver about something, and we seemed to be heading off the beaten track. After a while we came to this large gate with a toll booth at the entrance. It turned out to be the Dambri Falls and Resort. Here they also had an Alpine Coaster and a nice lake with paddle boats in the shape of swans.

Khoi asked me if I wanted to hike town to the falls, and I said sure, why not. When we got to the stairs going down to the falls there was a sign in Vietnamese. I asked Khoi what it said. It said that old people shouldn't go down, because
there was no elevator to bring you back up. He said he didn't consider me old and that the stairs were steeper than the trail at the other falls, but not so long. I appreciated his confidence in my hiking ability.

We made it down OK and I got some more pictures. Coming back up was a bit of a hike, but we took our time. I knew I had to make it up so Khoi wouldn't get in trouble for taking an old man down! My leg muscles are really feeling it today!

After a pit stop we headed on toward Saigon. We kind of meandered around for a while, and the driver had to stop a couple of times and ask directions. But we finally got back to the main road and a large town that they were familiar with. We stopped there for lunch at a restaurant that Khoi knew was clean and wouldn't overcharge us. The place was packed out, and we had to go upstairs to a small conference room to find an empty table.

The food was good and there was plenty to eat, but much of it I no clue what I was eating!

Soon after we left the restaurant and resumed our trip we came to the road construction. And on Friday there was a lot more traffic than there had been on Wednesday. To make matters worse there had been recent rain and the potholes were full of water, and the shoulders were muddy so the motor bikes couldn't get off the road as well when we cut them off. So we had to slog our way through. A lot of the time the motor bikes we passed would pass us again when we got stuck in the traffic. In one large town the rain had been so hard that the water was flowing all the way across the road. It was quite a sight, seeing the bicycle riders trying to pedal in water that came up over the pedals! Anyway, rather than getting back to Saigon at 4:00 PM as we had planned; we didn't arrive at the hotel until 6:00 PM. Ralph was in the lobby to meet us, and he told me today that I look really beat when I got out of the van. We had a meeting scheduled at the Rex Hotel with the camera crew from the Quiet Hour to plan the schedule for Sabbath, and when Ralph asked if I wanted to go along I begged off! I didn't have any insights to share and I didn't have to take any pictures, so I figured there was no point in my going. Instead, I checked into my room and took a hot shower.

After the shower I felt somewhat revived, so I went outside and walked around for a while. I hadn't eaten supper, so I ate a few nuts and some prunes before I went out, and thought maybe I could find an ice cream shop.

After walking a few blocks around the hotel I came across a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant. They had soft ice cream cones for about 15 cents, but when I ordered they said their ice cream machine was broken. I went on down the block and found a little store that sold smoothies, so I ordered a banana honey smoothie. It cost about $1.25, and was mostly ice, but it was refreshing. I didn't walk long, because I was accosted on just about every corner asking if I wanted a girl or a massage. When I got back to my room I tried to study my Sabbath School lesson, but kept falling asleep, so just gave up.

This morning I woke up around 5:00 AM. Got up and went through my bathroom routine and got dressed. Then I studied my SS lesson and finished report no. 4. By then, it was time to go to breakfast. Today they had an excellent selection of fruit. I had pomelo, jack fruit, papaya, and rambutans. They also fixed me another omelet and I had some French toast with that. I had orange juice to wash it down with. When I was almost done eating, Ralph joined me, and to keep him company I went back for some more fruit!

At around 8:15 Puong pulled up in the van with the Quiet Hour guys, and we headed for the headquarters church. While they were doing interviews I picked a big leaf and got a lapel mike from the PA people, so I'd be prepared to tell the children's story. Sabbath School starts at 8:00 AM and church at 9:00 AM, so we didn't have long to wait. All of the church participants, including the choir, were ladies, and I found out later that today was women's ministry Sabbath. I felt a little guilty that I had offered to tell the story, as Puong was supposed to tell it. But she did the translating, so guess that was OK. After the opening songs, prayer, and offering Elder Watts and Elder Giao addressed the congregation.

Ralph told a little about his history in Vietnam and his association with Pastor Giao. He introduced the Quiet Hour guys, who were now taking pictures and videos, and told about some of the projects that Quiet Hour had been involved with financially in Vietnam.

After that the music started to signal the children to come forward for the story, and I got up to do my thing. On Friday Puong had told me that I shouldn't take more than 5 or 10 minutes. This morning in church she told me I had seven minutes. I told the Eric B. Hare story about the key and the fish, so I knew I couldn't tell that in seven minutes with translation. I didn't tell her that and went by the old adage that it is easier to ask forgiveness that to get permission. Besides, she also told me this morning that church went from 9 to 10, and according to the bulletin it was scheduled to go to 10:30, so I figured I had an extra 30 minutes! Anyway, it went OK, and Puong did a good job translating. After the story they have a custom of giving a little gift to each child. Today I gave little stuffed toys to all of them. I think there were only ten or twelve-not like the 30 or more that we have at Calimesa.

After the choir sang a very lovely number we snuck out and headed for the Cholon Chinese Church. By the time we got there the pastor was preaching.
The pastor is a lady, and she was preaching in Chinese, so I didn't get much out of the sermon. After the service they served us a nice lunch of rice and vegetables. For desert we had mango steins, fresh lanzones, and another fruit that is kind of like rambutans and I can't think of the name of. After lunch Khoi was taking the Quiet Hour team to some home churches a couple hours away. Ralph and I and Pastor Giao took a taxi and came back to the hotel.

Khoi is supposed to come and get me this evening to take me to play badminton again. Tomorrow morning he is going to pick us up at 6:30 AM to take us to the Cu Chi Tunnels. When we get back we'll just have time to shower, change and head for the airport to go to Hanoi. So you can see there won't be much time for writing tomorrow. Glad I was able to get you caught up on my travels today.

Love, Arlind (Dad)

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II. Letters

1. Jeros June <jeros@saum.org.sg> August 14:
   I am always blessed by the FED e-News letter. I am feeling that we all live for others and praise God that He has chosen us, his humble servants.
   I am originally from Sarawak where the Halls, Goertzens and other missionaries often mentioned in the Newsletters, have worked. Now we are at the Union Office in Singapore--re-located at the former FED offices. We actually live in 800 Thomson Rd. Those days I used to go there to visit the late Marion Simmons (she put me through school) and missions, always have a soft spot in my heart.
   --Mrs. Jeros June-Liah,
   Secretary, Vibrant Health Pte Ltd
   Treasury Clerk and Guestroom Hostess
   Southeast Asia Union Mission
   Phone 63552700 ext 219

2. Jack Blanco <blanco@southern.edu> August 15:
   Amazing report about Vietnam etc. Praise the Lord for what He is doing through consecrated believers everywhere whether locally or traveling. Amen and Amen.

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III. SSD Leads In Membership Growth

--from "Outlook" magazine

The Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD), made up of 14 countries, leads the Adventist world in membership growth rate.

"During the October 15, 2013 Annual Council, a yearly gathering of Seventh-day Adventist leaders, church growth and the evangelistic efforts within the Southern Asia-Pacific Division were highlighted.

"One of the brightest spots in rising membership in 2012 occurred in the SSD, which reported the fastest growth rate at 7 percent.

"SSD President Alberto C. Gulfan, Jr. told Adventist News Network that most of the growth is occurring in the Philippines, which is undergoing a neighborhood-based evangelism campaign that is being credited for some of the 80,000 baptisms since 2011.

"The care-group ministry program, called Integrated Evangelism Lifestyle, consists of an Adventist family praying for a family in their neighborhood, and inviting the family to a weekly study of health principles, family life matters, and, later, Bible study.

"'It's catching fire,' Gulfan said. 'We are seeing that in South Philippines, where the growth is fastest and largest. It's because they have strongly implemented the program of the Integrated Evangelism Lifestyle.'"

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IV. Southern Adventist University SM Reports Phonpei Service

from the Collegedale Retired Workers Newsletter:

At our April meeting, Richard Meskalone, a junior theology major at SAU and graduate of Blue Mountain Academy, shared his fascinating testimony of life on Pohnpei Island, Micronesia, as a student missionary. "It wasn't easy," as he said, "and one of my first encounters was giving blood to Melanie, the daughter of the local academy's principal." While sitting eating at the cafeteria, Richard received word of her internment in the local hospital as a result of a serious accident, and jumping up from the table he took the local truck and went flying to the premises and up to her room, and
along with two others gave blood, blood that saved her life. As a teacher at the school with 20 other SMs, one of Richard’s challenges was Trevor, a miscreant boy who liked to make trouble. But due to Richard’s patience and fatherly attention, Trevor made important changes in his character. It was supremely satisfying to later receive a nice letter thanking Richard for his tenderness that, according to Richard, "made my experience there worth it, and I left my heart there."...

Pohnpei, a small island in the Pacific, just two miles long and one mile wide, tropical and very hot, left Richard with many unforgettable memories. For one thing, "the heat," as he said, "left me feeling wet even after drying from a shower. God refines us through service. This experience totally changed my experience with God. I'm grateful for every trial."

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V. SULADS Story -- LIVING FAITH

By: Sarah A. Famisaran, Deaf Church, Cagayan De Oro City, Philippines

LIVING FAITH is the name of Sunny's daughter. She was one of the five baptized by Pastor Jeff Jordan during his Revelation seminar for the Deaf in Cagayan De Oro City.

Sunny related to me his story about being born Deaf to a Seventh-day Adventist family. His mother, who was a teacher, taught him patiently in anyway she could the values of attending and worshipping in church every single Sabbath. We do not know how she taught him. She did not know sign language so perhaps she used homemade signs. It is the ingenuity of a mother to reach out to her child in need of a mother’s guidance and love.

When Sunny left home to live independently, he never missed church every single Sabbath as was his custom like Jesus. "How did you enjoy church when there was nobody interpreting for a Deaf like you?" I asked.

"Of course I don't know of what the sermons are. But it was the LIVING FAITH in me taught by my mother that pulls me to attend church every Sabbath. I have believed in my heart that I belong to the family of God and I am His child."

"When I got married to a beautiful Deaf lady," Sunny continued smiling proudly, "I could not convince my wife and children to come with me to church. That was my biggest burden. But earnestly I prayed from my heart for my family to join me someday. As I stand for my Lord, I saw blessings come my way when normal hearing children were born to us. When my wife got pregnant again and gave birth to a girl, the fifth of six, I named her LIVING FAITH. Then I silently and prayerfully dedicated her to the Lord to bring blessing to my family.

"From the day my daughter, LIVING FAITH, accepted Jesus through baptism, she really kept a LIVING FAITH as an example to her siblings. Though she is away from home studying in a University in another city, she never misses church every Sabbath. Her older siblings saw a peaceful changed life in her. This opened their minds to try this path she is now treading."

Today, Sunny is giving Bible studies to his grown up children and in-laws. He prays and longs for the day when all his children, in-laws and grand kids will be joined together in the rites of baptism into the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Sunny, our lay worker and church elder for our Deaf church has many Deaf friends who come to him asking for Bible studies. He has difficulty finding sufficient time to schedule Bible studies for them as he needs to give more time to his massage work which is his only means of livelihood to feed his family. I would like to have Sunny work full time to give Bible studies to his Deaf friends for the growing Deaf church. But he needs to be paid for this work as he also has a family to support. I pray that God will send somebody to feel and fill the need.

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BEGIN-ANTISPAM-VOTING-LINKS

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