

SLOW DANCING IN SAIGON

Slow Dancing in Saigon contains material from several sources. Text composed by the authors is labelled

R&JT. Text from the Michigan State University Vietnam Project Briefing Information manual is labelled

MSUVP. Comments from our American Community School classmates are identified as ACS.

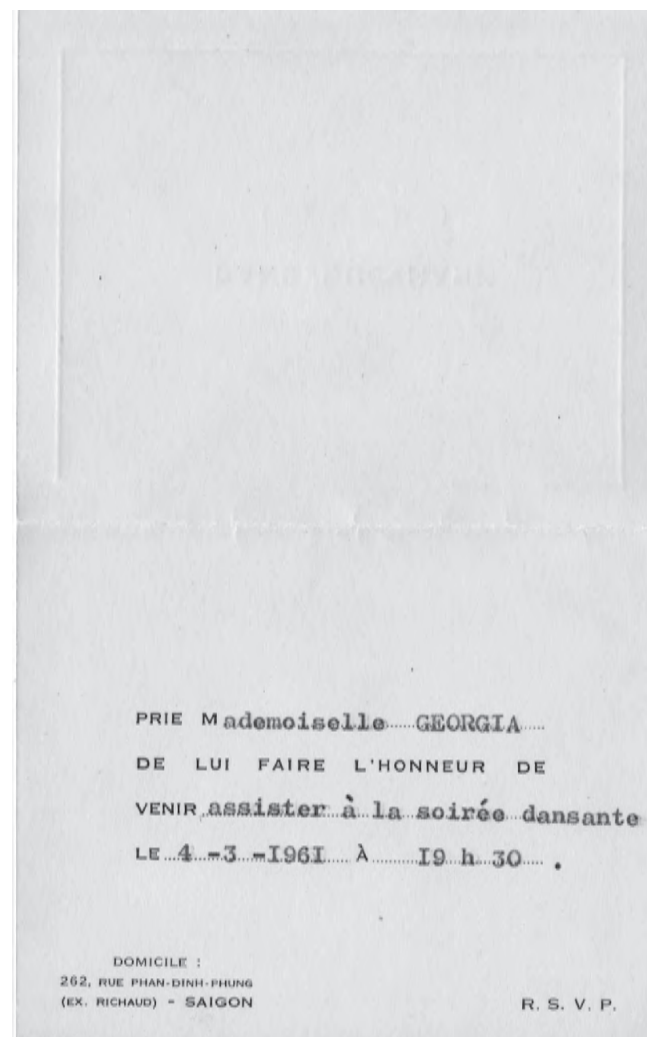
RICHARD AND JOHN TURNER



This photograph was taken by the famous French photographer Raymond Cauchetier, who began taking photographs while serving in the press corps of the French Air Force in Indochina. It is from a collection of images he shot in Saigon in 1955. Later, upon his return to France, Cauchetier became the set photographer on Jean Luc Godard's debut film **Breathless (A Bout de Souffle)**. The photograph is entitled Points of View. The accompanying caption described the street photographers as ambushing their subjects, each one jockeying for a different angle from which to shoot the two French soldiers.

These Vietnamese paparazzi are not the ones who took the photographs used in this book, which were mostly shot between 1959 and 1961. If, however, they left their post on Rue Catinat, the main commercial street of downtown Saigon, and walked a block west to Boulevard Charner, also known as Flower Street, they would come upon the kiosks out of which the party photographers worked. Star Photo, Pham Van Photo, and Provence Photo were the places we teenagers would go to hire photographers to shoot the weekly parties that we held in the houses provided for our parents by their employers, which were, typically, villas that had previously belonged to the French. And it was to these kiosks that we would return a day or two after the parties to look through albums of 3.5" x 5.5" black and white prints with delicately scalloped edges, eager to find images of ourselves and our friends that we would then order copies of for our scrapbooks. R&JT





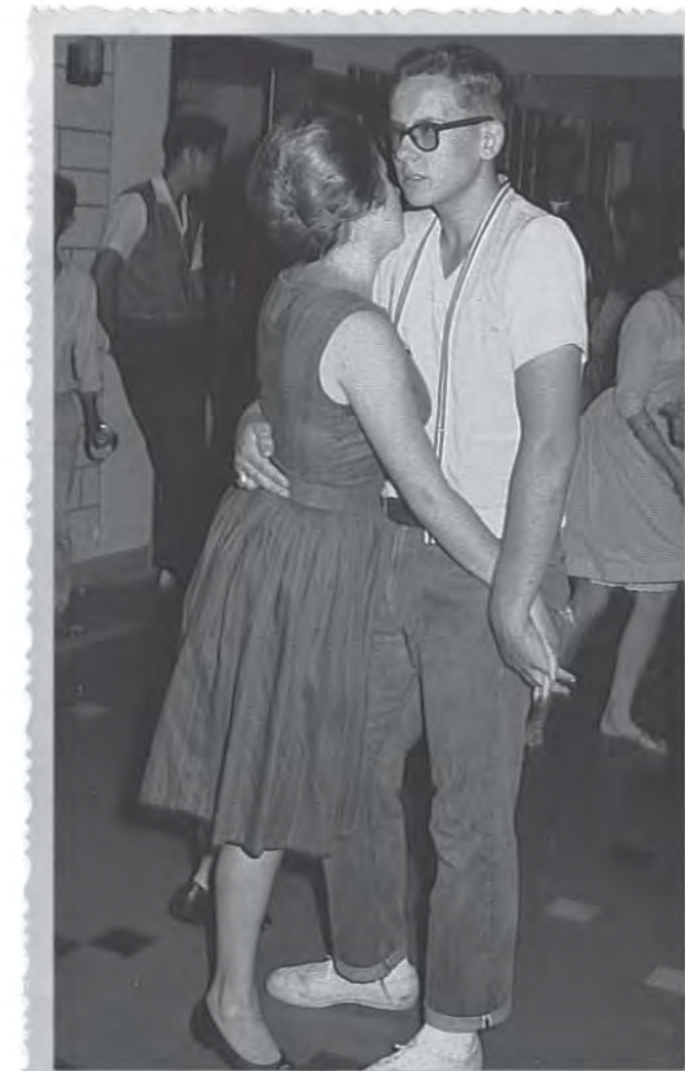
*I recently came across an invitation for a party
 Tom was giving that had the reminder
 “don’t forget your dancing shoes.” ACS*

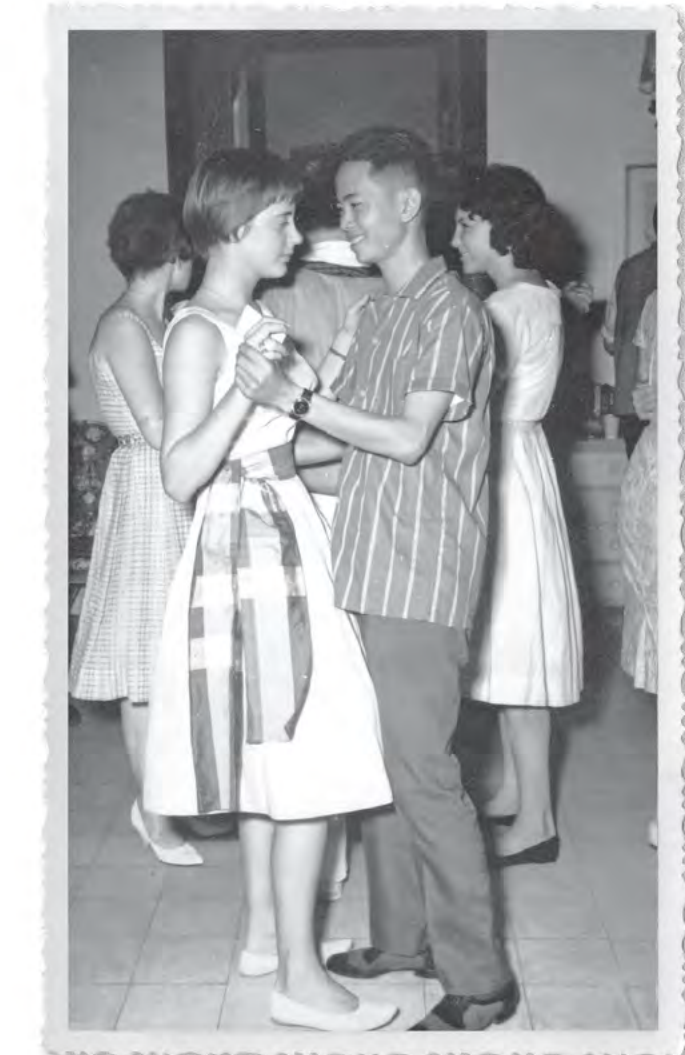


The success of a Saigon party often could be determined by a quick survey of the photographs. Who was there, who was not and who was with whom. It was a pleasant way of keeping up with the shifting currents of the Saigon social scene. Scouring these albums for photos of a particular party was sometimes complicated by the fact that one party looked very much like all the others, especially to the Vietnamese proprietors of the kiosks, who would sometimes proffer an album of images from an entirely different event. The predictable nature of the photographs was probably as much a function of what types of images captured the fancy of the teenage consumers as it was that one party was, indeed, just like the next. However, the Vietnamese photographers managed to capture the very essence of these parties, which was fundamentally a recreation of our lives in “the States.” Looking at the images, one would be hard pressed to identify their locale. We do not see servants carrying trays of food or serving drinks, the ubiquitous ceiling fans, the louvered shutters, the spacious verandas or the walled gardens. The dancing couples are wearing outfits typical of middle class America – jeans or chinos for the boys; skirts, capris, or dresses for the girls. Aside from an occasional glimpse of rattan furniture or an expanse of ornately tiled floor, the diversity of the partygoers (which included Vietnamese, Chinese, Indonesian, Thai, German and French youth) is the only clue that the events recorded in the photographs were anything other than adolescent gatherings in mid-twentieth-century America. R&JT











For me and my best friends a party was always about getting ready! Usually, the Haznam sisters, Penny and I would head to the market Monday after school to pick out material for our next frock. Many times, Dini, Penny and I would pick the same material as we thought it was fun to dress alike. Much of the material was really special; organdy imported from France or silks from Hong Kong or Thailand or sari material from India with gold and silver threads.

On Tuesday we would take our material to the seamstress and decide on what style by looking through her many pattern books. She would then take our measurements and we were off.

On Wednesday we would meet at Brodards and get serious about what all we had to do. This included finding shoes to match our dresses, getting our toenails and fingernails painted and of course getting a fancy hairdo.

Thursday we went back to the seamstress for our first fitting and to get a swatch of material so we could match our dress with the perfect shoe.

Saturday we headed for the beauty shop and spent the majority of the day there before picking up our finished dresses.

Mom was usually pretty frugal when it came to buying clothes for me, but in Saigon I had plenty of clothes

because having them made was so inexpensive. I also felt very grown up wearing three-inch stiletto heels to the more formal parties. I used to take a cyclo to a beauty salon to get my nails done before every party. I probably had more manicures when I was a teenager in Saigon than I've had during the rest of my life.

I remember the parties only as a blur of fun and excitement.

The next day we would race down to flower street to see pictures of us in our fancy new attire.

ACS



Saigon Has Charm of France

The City's Face is French, but Its Heart is Oriental

Saigon, Vietnam – This French colonial city on the crossroads to Bangkok and Hong Kong is back in business as a tourist center. Since the signing of the Geneva armistice in 1954, peace and prosperity have gradually returned to Saigon. Although the city is now the capital of the Republic of Vietnam, the face of Saigon remains French with shady boulevards and sidewalk cafes reminiscent of Paris. Beneath this sophisticated façade, the heart of Saigon is Oriental, noisy on feast days with dragon dances and exploding firecrackers. Chinese junks and sampans dot the sprawling harbor, and the streets are jammed with automobiles, horse-drawn carts and three-wheeled pedicabs.

While the business boom has lured many travelers back to Saigon, the turning of the tourist tide to Vietnam stems in part from its new accessibility. Jet planes link Saigon to the United States' west coast via Honolulu, Guam and Manila, and with Singapore and Jakarta. Hand-in-hand with the opening of the jet age in Vietnam is the addition of Saigon to the ports-of-call lists for around-the-world steamship cruises.

The cutting of red tape for entry and customs also has been a stimulant to tourism. A favorable exchange rate offered to visitors in Vietnam serves as an additional attraction.

Americans can buy 75 piasters for one dollar on the free market. The traveler with a few piasters to spare will find good buys in pottery, lacquer screens, hand-painted silks and tortoise shell. Bargaining, of course, is the custom, especially in the huge central market, where everything is sold, from coolie hats to priceless jade, according to Pan-American World Airways.

The renewed tourist interest in Vietnam has sparked the refurbishing of a number of hotels. The famous Majestic hotel, for example, now has 125 air-conditioned rooms, each with a private bath and a view of the harbor. The newest hotel in Saigon is the Caravelle, with 86 rooms and an exotic roof garden. An air-conditioned room with breakfast and a choice of lunch or dinner begins as low as \$8.00 per person. Restaurants in Saigon offer a variety of culinary adventures. French cooking at such establishments as the Admiral and the Guillaume Tell makes Saigon one of the best places for dining in the Far East. The Chinese Quarter has its share of fine restaurants, specializing in Peking and Cantonese food. Noteworthy are such places as the Floating Restaurant on the river and the Arc en Ciel in Chinatown, with a menu listing 900 dishes. There are also the Vietnamese establishments where one can sample the famous Vietnamese shrimp broiled on sugar cane.



Taking a family abroad on a mission in the public interest creates a new set of living conditions for every member, twenty-four hours of the day, every day of the month. Your children at school will be judged to be typical of all American boys and girls of school age. Your wife's techniques of handling her household and guiding her family will be watched not only by her new friends, your colleagues, but by her servants as well. By the very nature of your assignment you will lead much more public lives than you have ever known before. You should be well aware that the most casual details of your family life at home will be noted, talked about, and compared with the lives of other members of the foreign community in which you live.

The semi-official nature of your mission is not a 9 to 5 affair, but persists around the clock, every day of the week. You will be exposed to public gaze and discussion on two levels; every small foreign community indulges in a lively and perpetual discussion of its member families. Beware of cliques and local jealousies. Your new-found local friends will observe every detail of your domestic life and household arrangements with curiosity and interest. You must be aware that your servants, as with servants everywhere in the world, are prone to exchange stories and comments among themselves. In the Far East this is sometimes called the "bamboo telegraph" instead of the "grapevine." The folklore and literature of servants' tales, you will discover, is a source of endless conversation in American communities overseas. To be on the safe side, NEVER criticize your host country and its people or their customs in the presence of your servants. MSUVP

Vietnam, from 1959 through 1961, was in a period of transition. The French Far East Expeditionary Corps, having been defeated by the People's Army of Vietnam in May 1954, in the battle of Dien Bien Phu, were withdrawing from their Indochinese colonial empire. The American government was establishing its presence in the form of economic aid and non-combat military support for the anti-communist regime of Ngo Dinh Diem. Vietnam had been a divided country since July 1954 when the Geneva Conference recognized the 17th parallel as a provisional military demarcation temporarily dividing the country into two zones, the communist North Vietnam and pro-Western South Vietnam. The promised elections to determine a government for a united Vietnam never took place; the partition became permanent. The Viet Minh cadres remained in South Vietnam and soon began a covert campaign of propaganda and assassinations aimed at the destabilization and ultimate overthrow of the autocratic and increasingly corrupt rule of the U.S.-backed Diem government.



In 1959, one of the early American casualties of what was to become known as the Vietnam War occurred. Our father, Ralph F. Turner, helped supervise the autopsy of a military advisor who was ambushed by the Viet Cong. The autopsy took place in the American dispensary, a few blocks from our house.

Our parents and those of our classmates were, for the most part, employed in the service of the various official agencies the U.S. government had deployed to Vietnam. They worked for MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group), USOM (United States Operations Mission), and MSUG (Michigan State University Group), as well for the American Embassy and private companies contracted by the U.S. government.

In 1960, an attempted coup d'état was mounted by disgruntled military officers disillusioned with the despotic rule of the Diem family and the politicization of the military. We lived across the street from the park in which the presidential palace was located. Rebel soldiers established a bunker adjacent to our front gate. The fighting necessitated our evacuation to a safer quarter of the city.



The Turner family lived in Saigon, Vietnam from 1959 to 1961. It was the first overseas trip for the family. Mr. Turner, a professor at Michigan State University, advised the South Vietnamese government on matters relating to police administration and the latest developments in scientific criminal detection. Mrs. Turner taught sixth grade at the American Community School, which Richard, 16, Georgia, 14, and John, 12, attended. R&JT



Every American who goes abroad today automatically assumes the role of a “national representative” to an important degree. The American who goes abroad in an official capacity has a very special responsibility thrust upon him. If he is going to a post in Asia, Africa or the Middle East, he is, in fact, going to the front lines of the Cold War.

You are about to take up life in a “foreign community.” You will hear many references to the foreign community as such, and will hear its interests discussed as if it were a highly organized unit, having an existence quite distinct from that of the host country. Why is this so?

There are two reasons. The first one is simply stated. Physical characteristics will set you apart in the countries of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. You will soon lose self-consciousness of this, but it is obvious that race, speech and dress make you prominent wherever you go, and at all times. Your behavior becomes noteworthy whenever it does not conform closely to local custom. Before World War II, Caucasians were rare curiosities in some parts of Asia, just as the Asian is a rare sight in many isolated rural communities in the United States even today.

In the larger countries, and larger diplomatic and commercial centers, foreigners were well known, but to a very large degree kept to themselves, and it is this fact which gives continuing significance to the second reason to review the foreign community life.

The circumstance that sets the foreign community apart has its roots in history. Do not forget that for centuries the foreign settlements in Asia have by and large been identified with “white European imperialism.” With the rise of nationalist sentiment and ambition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the privileged foreign communities became the symbol of social, political and economic inequalities which nationalist leaders vowed to redress. You are becoming a member of a foreign community at a time when the old style, pre-war foreign settlement pattern is undergoing a profoundly significant change.

The exclusive foreign club that bars its doors to natives except as servants, or admits high local officials only on special formal occasions is becoming a less popular institution. Individuals and families no longer risk foreign community displeasure if they invite their local native friends in to dinner. It was not so bad as “going native,” but it was severely frowned upon by the “proper” people who set the social standards of the old settlement.

Many pre-war foreign communities were divided roughly as follows: diplomatic and consular representatives and their families; agents for international concerns and proprietors of smaller local enterprises; missionaries and laymen representing varied religious groups, medical services and schools; foreigners who have settled in the country, sometimes taking local citizenship; tourists and occasional scholars doing research over a period of time; drifters, including soldiers of fortune, beach combers and remittance men. MSUVP







There was a reason for parties every week. We ex-pat high-school students suffered a nagging suspicion we were missing out on what were supposed to be the best years of our lives. A feeling we didn't talk about, but which universally we experienced. We imagined our peers back at our stateside high schools attending school-sponsored sock hops, going to pre-parties ahead of Friday night football games, the raucous games, and then more parties after. Continuous parties, we imagined. Our stateside counterparts had cars, we knew, and we heard from their letters how they piled kids into their trunks to sneak extras into drive-in-movies, how they'd use the money saved on unpaid admission prices to buy popcorn, RC Colas with lots of ice and Mars bars at the drive-in concessions. They were doing other stuff, fun stuff we couldn't quite define, but which we knew we were missing. So we invented an

intense social life for ourselves—and that included at least one party at someone's house every week. Often two.



Our weekly parties, to which all teenagers were invited, were free-form events, tinged with high drama and restlessness. The boys seemed in constant motion, roaring in on their motorbikes, eyeing the party narrowly through their cigarette smoke, and then leaving a few minutes later, for the bars and the taxi girls in a seedier part of town, only to return an hour later to our party. The girls' movements had a smaller scope. We pressed our shoulders together and whispered, on the edges of the dance floor. We went in pairs to the bathroom where we combed our hair and checked our crinolines, and then returned, trying always to seem cool and occupied, even if it was only to light a cigarette. In the

center of the room, a few lucky couples slow-danced, hip to hip, to the latest hits from "stateside."



Something else that was unique about our parties was that students from all grade levels in the high school were invited, and in many cases the majority of the fifty some students all attended a party. Even shy, self-conscious freshman like me had plenty of dance partners. Slow dancing with handsome French boys was especially romantic and the Vietnamese, Chinese, and Thai boys were eager to practice English with me.



The other thing I remember was that we would compare dancing styles when kids from Clark Field would come in from Manila for a visit.

ACS



The American Community School (ACS) in Saigon was established in 1954, to provide American-style schooling for the dependent children of Americans working for U.S. government organizations in South Vietnam. The school also accepted for enrollment the dependent children of private American firms operating in Saigon, as well as some non-U.S. diplomatic families. Some Vietnamese children also attended the school. In 1958, the school moved into the newly built compound located near Tan Son Nhat International Airport. In 1959, 23 faculty taught 53 high school students, 64 junior high school pupils and 270 elementary school children.

While the experience of elementary school and junior high school students at ACS was much the same as it had been Stateside, high school classes were correspondence courses from the University of California. Students worked at their own pace. Lessons and tests supervised by the faculty were mailed to the U.S. for comment and evaluation, only to be returned six weeks later, long after the material had ceased to be relevant. Discipline was lax and unmotivated students often skipped school or engaged in disruptive behavior.

The school day ran from 7:30 am to noon. Most students were brought to school in buses that had wire grilles over the windows that would theoretically protect the occupants from grenade attacks. Other students arrived in pedicabs, chauffeured limousines or on motor scooters. Classes were held in austere rooms with screened windows cooled by ceiling fans. Extracurricular activities included yearbook, Latin club, chess club, student council, dances, a school carnival, holiday parties, softball games and trips to the beach.

The school was permanently closed in 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson ordered all dependents of U.S. government personnel to leave Vietnam. The building was converted into a medical facility for the U.S. Army's 3rd Field Hospital later that same year. The building is now the site of a Vietnamese military museum. R&JT





The presence of professional photographers and the formal printed invitations gave the illusion of maturity to our adolescent parties. Although we would not have admitted it at the time, our parties were, indeed, very much like our parents' parties, at least they appeared so in the photographic record. The routine nature of these photographs was reminiscent of the scripted tableaux of a wedding photographer. But where the wedding photographer choreographs the record of the event, the Vietnamese photographers hovered at the margins, recording the parties as they unfolded, awaiting the invitation of a couple or a group that wanted a posed picture. Occasionally they would capture an unguarded moment, inadvertently chronicle the beginning or the end of a relationship, or shoot a portrait that revealed more about the subject than he or she realized. For the most part however, it was the photographs of the dancing couples that best expressed the character of these parties. Absorbed as we were with ourselves and each other and in the thrall of the music on the record player, we were unselfconscious subjects for these forgotten photographers. R&JT



















There we were, in that tiny enclave of privileged brats hardly aware of anything but our hormonal urges and the rustle of skirts as they flared out against our legs. The girls smelled of jasmine, their hair was full of the sunshine of beach towns, their breath smelled of peppermint and Coca Cola. I desired them the way a sculptor might fall in love with a statue he had made of a goddess. And on we danced, nibbled on the cheese, sipped at the fruit juice, and bathed our ears in the varnished eroticism of American music.



When my Chinese girlfriend celebrated her birthday my brother and I hosted a party where the invitation specified that all the girls had to wear Chinese dresses. Since they were not a part of our wardrobe, we had to purchase fabric and have them made by seamstresses. Mine was a very form fitting dress made of pale pink satin covered with gold medallions. It had a high collar and sexy, Suzy Wong slits up the sides. One of our Chinese friends, Hollie Choi, came dressed as a Mandarin Chinese scholar.



Domino was a bodybuilder who won the title of Mr. Viet Nam in the 50s. He would often make a grand entrance at parties

on his extremely loud Harley Davidson motorcycle. After dismounting, he would move through the crowd and ask people if they would like to squeeze his biceps.



Roger, a German diplomat's son, said that the reason he attended the American Community School was that they had soft toilet paper.



We had nicknames for many of our classmates; Sexy Suzie, Peter Rabbit, Garage Mouth, High Pants, Big Bad Bob, Batman, Gums, Steeny Babes, Chuckles, Flaxie, Rusty, Rique, Turnrocks, Pooh Bear, Big Dick, Butch, Fat Al, Gnat, Daddy Del, Ruggie, Mouthless, Shrap, S'ellen, Bootsie, Raoul, Hollie, Penny, Miche.



I am reminded of how I felt claustrophobic milling around the snack table, watching others slide their feet in slow motion across the tile floor to songs by The Platters, the Temptations, the bouncier music of Little Richard and Fats Domino. Presley was always on the play list. If I my brother was performing in our little combo, we did covers of Ricky Nelson and Presley, Buddy Holly and anyone else with the three magic chords by which Rock was made.

The parties I remember most were the ones that had a theme. For a Dogpatch themed party, my girlfriends and I wore white pillowcases that we'd cut holes in and decorated. We went barefoot, painted our faces with freckles and wore ribbons in our hair, imitating the women depicted in the Lil Abner comic strip.



My mother held dances once a month at our house on Doan Thi Diem. She originally hired a Vietnamese dance instructor but he wasn't attuned to the music or dances American kids were passionate about. My brother, Tom, was in charge of the music, something he'd brought with him from the states.



The Vietnamese who attended filled a supporting role. The servants of the house were there to replenish our refreshments and to lock up the house when festivities were over. Others, chauffeurs, taxi and cyclo drivers, waited to drive us home; photographers mingled with us, recording our fun so we could buy pictures of it the next day. You might glimpse several of the servants' children hanging on the door frame, watching.

ACS



Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not. Now these cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms, are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we do not carry on the level of conscious awareness.

Now when an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed. He or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broadminded or full of good will you may be, a series of props have been knocked from under you, followed by a feeling of frustration and anxiety.

When Americans or other foreigners in a strange land get together to grouse about the host country and its people, you can be sure they are suffering from culture shock. Another phase of culture shock is regression. The home environment suddenly assumes a tremendous importance. To an American, everything American becomes irrationally glorified. All the difficulties and problems are forgotten and only the good things back home are remembered.

Some of the symptoms of culture shock are: excessive washing of the hands; excessive concern over drinking-water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; the absent-minded, faraway stare (sometimes called the tropical stare); a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on the long term residents of one's own nationality; fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; great concern over minor pains and eruptions of the skin; and finally, that terrible longing to be back home, to be able to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of apple pie, to walk into that corner drugstore, to visit one's relatives, and in general, to talk to people who really make sense. MSUVP



*Put your head on my shoulder
Hold me in your arms, baby
Squeeze me oh so tight
Show me that you love me too*









Most of us remember the beatnik party. This party, Rique explained to us earlier in the week, was to be a beatnik affair, different from the dance parties the American teenagers staged weekly.

Rique had decided he was a beatnik—a beat artist, actually. And this party was to be in his studio, a room he had appropriated. It was behind his family's villa and should have been part of the servants' quarters.

"You'll come in through the window," he announced. "The door'll be blocked off. It will be very beat," he told us. As beat as any ex-pat teenager, one whose entire knowledge of the beat scene had been gleaned from a story in one issue of Life Magazine. "Dress beat," he said again.

So, through the window we came that Friday evening, and for all we knew, the room was indeed very beat. What did we know; none of us had read that story. Certainly none of us had ever seen a copy of Allen Ginsberg's Howl.

Not Part I or Part II. Nor had any of us—except Rique—heard of Jack Kerouac or William Carlos Williams or William S. Burroughs, names he likely dropped at his party. It would have been possible, for this was 1959, these progenitors of The Beat Generation had all been around, been publishing, for several years. But we were out of it. We had nothing to judge Rique's vision of Beatdom, so we accepted that a huge stalk of ripe bananas hanging from the ceiling was part of it. And we appreciated his request that we bring jazz records. (At every party, we all brought a sampling of our collection of 45-rpms, with our names written on the labels next to the big hole.) I don't remember what I might have bought, but do recall that, although I was from Texas, I had no country and western music. So I didn't ruin the ambiance with twangy tunes.

The small room was crowded, made even smaller because we were sitting along the walls with our legs outstretched toward the center into what should have been an area for

dancing. Yet, some found room. I'm certain Cheryl and Larry Smith, brother and sister and by far the best swing dancers in the American Community School, found room. Maybe someone danced with Bootsie or Suellen or Jeanie. Probably I danced with Jeanie. I've seen photos of us slow-dancing together.

At some point, Rique gave us charcoal sticks, and I am certain very little of what we wrote onto the walls of his studio came close to poetry or prose worthy of a beat publication. Yet, when we left Rique's party we all were aware now that there was a movement back in the states called Beat. There was something going on worthy of our consideration.

ACS

The music playing in these photographs was exclusively American pop. What we listened and danced to was largely determined by the collections of 45 RPM records that we had brought with us from the States. New arrivals to the Saigon teenage community were especially welcome if their collections included the latest hits by Ricky Nelson, Sam Cooke or Elvis. Although our parties included our Vietnamese and Chinese friends as well as children from the diplomatic community, the music was always American. And it was this music that we employed to stake out our territory. Geisha Girl by Hank Locklin made the Olympic Bar our hangout. Johnny Mathis' The Twelfth of Never turned the tree-lined boulevards of the city into grand theaters for our adolescent dramas. We may have been partying in Art Deco French villas with tiled floors, painted stucco walls and high ceilings, attended by servants, our celebrations recorded by photographers, but the music transformed these rooms into the basements and backyards of Virginia, Michigan, Texas and California. The occasional comfort of a burger or an ice cream sundae in the U.S. military Bachelors Officer's Quarters could not compare to the invigorating power of Buddy Holly's Peggy Sue pulsing through the dark heat of a Friday night. R&JT









Sometimes, between records, there was a lull, and you could hear the servants arguing and joking, a Vietnamese version of "To Know Him Is To Love Him" on one radio competing with a Chinese opera on another, fruit bats chirping, geckos hiccuping, someone hitting two hollow sticks together, and if it was the rainy season, a grumble of

thunder. A stew of sound that, if we had really listened to it, would have told us how far away we were from Michigan or Texas or Washington DC.



Going to the airport to say goodbye when friends left was a significant event in many cases. It sometimes

seemed like a party except some of the girls cried.



The world had changed when we returned "Home" ...but "Home" was Saigon, wasn't it?"

ACS

Just as it had been stateside, the music told the story of our young lives with a drama and eloquence to which we could only aspire.

A WHITE SPORT COAT AND A PINK CARNATION Marty Robbins PARTY DOLL Buddy Knox DREAM
LOVER Bobby Darin BE BOP BABY Ricky Nelson CALENDAR GIRL Neil Sedaka LITTLE BITTY
PRETTY ONE Thurston Harris TALLAHASSEE LASSIE Freddie “Boom Boom” Cannon AT THE HOP
Danny and the Juniors IN THE MOOD Ernie Fields ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK Bill Haley WHOLE
LOTTA’ SHAKIN’ GOIN’ ON Jerry Lee Lewis WHAT’D I SAY Ray Charles THETWIST Chubby Checker
RAVE ON Buddy Holly THE BOOK OF LOVE The Monotones PUT YOUR HEAD ON MY SHOULDER
Paul Anka COME SOFTLY TO ME The Fleetwoods YOUNG LOVE Sonny James CHANCES ARE
Johnny Mathis YOU SEND ME Sam Cooke TO KNOW HIM IS TO LOVE HIM The Teddy Bears ALL
I HAVE TO DO IS DREAM The Everly Brothers LOVE IS STRANGE Mickey and Sylvia DON’T BE
CRUEL Elvis Presley BYE BYE LOVE The Everly Brothers LONELY TEARDORPS Jackie Willson ITS
ONLY MAKE BELIEVE Conway Twitty MR. BLUE The Fleetwoods POOR LITTLE FOOL Ricky Nelson
CATHY’S CLOWN The Everly Brothers CRYING Roy Orbison TEARS ON MY PILLOW Little Anthony
and the Imperials ONLY THE LONELY Roy Orbison JUST A DREAM Jimmy Clanton SMOKE GETS
IN YOUR EYES The Platters WILL YOU LOVE ME TOMORROW The Shirelles IT’S NOT FOR ME TO
SAY Johnny Mathis IT’S ALL IN THE GAME Tommy Edwards TRAGEDY Thomas Wayne LAST
KISS J. Frank Wilson and the Cavaliers TELL LAURA I LOVE HER Roy Peterson TEEN ANGEL Mark
Dinning ENDLESS SLEEP Jody Reynolds

SAVE THE LAST DANCE FOR ME The Drifters



Richard and John, along with others in these photographs, have returned to Vietnam either as members of the American military or as tourists. The map of the city that we once knew has been redrawn multiple times – first by the war, then by the Communist liberation and finally by the forces of global capitalism. The broad boulevards, once traveled by pony carts and cyclos, are now choked with chaotic traffic. Many of the familiar street names have been changed from French to Vietnamese, often honoring the deeds and names of the victors from the North. The colonial villas in which our parties took place have been razed to make way for skyscrapers or are hidden behind an accumulation of nondescript buildings erected over the past half century. The first time one of us revisited our family’s house, it had become a multi-family dwelling with a noodle stand and a makeshift auto garage in the revamped front yard. By the second visit, less than 4 years later it had been torn down and in its stead was a store selling computers. Ho Chi Minh City today is a thriving metropolis rivaling the economic powerhouses of Hong Kong, Bangkok and Singapore. It is no longer a place for slow dancing. R&JT

This book is dedicated to the memory of Big Bad Bob (Robert) Layson, creator of the Saigon Kids website which has been, for many years, the main vehicle of communication among alumni of the American Community School in Saigon.

Artist/curator **Richard Turner** is a Professor Emeritus at Chapman University where he taught contemporary Asian art history and directed the Guggenheim Gallery. He has worked as a public artist for over three decades. His studio work, curatorial, and public art projects can be viewed on his website turnerprojects.com

John Turner worked as a news editor and arts producer for KGO TV and curated shows for the San Francisco Craft and Folk Art museum. He is an author, film director, and collector of folk and outsider art.

Thanks to the following for their reminiscences about our parties in Saigon. Janet Bogardus, Paul Christensen, Larry Duthie, Michele Gendron, Sandy Hanna, Roy Mc.Donald, Georgia Portocarrero, Stephen Pryplesh, Sarah Bush Rogers.

We also wish to thank Roy McDonald, Kenneth Yeager, Georgia Portocarrero, and the other American Community School classmates for sharing their photographs with us.

The newspaper article titled Saigon Has Charm of France (page 23)
is from the MSU Vietnam Project Archives.

Put Your Head on my Shoulder, lyrics by Paul Anka, ABC Paramount

Book layout by Renee Weber