

et me provide some personal background before reaching the looking, although I was tall for a Vietnamese terms provide some personal ouenges.

substance of article as well as my requests for your readers.

My name is Luong Thi Gia Hoa Ryan. I am a daughter of my First Motherland, Viet Nam. I was the oldest of 12 children. I have whoever was in charge. I was told to sit down four brothers and seven sisters. My Mother was from the South of Viand wait. I waited for half an hour until the et Nam. My Father was from the North just outside Ha Noi. I was lady-in-charge lady came back from the marborn in the South and grew up in the center of Viet Nam. So I call ket. "all" Viet Nam as my home. My father named me after the small town where he was born, namely, "Gia Hoa." My father gave me so much wisdom through his sayings. For example, he said, "When you eat the fruit, remember who planted it." Another time, he told us chil-tioning my capability. "There were only two dren, "When you are drinking the water, never forgetwhere it's com- jobs available: housemaid or bar tending." ing from.

My parents were always very generous, especially to people in need, which included many people who had to go to the South. My peared negative toward my request. But a parents would provide the poor with food, and assistance, and even a young NCO said, "Oh, sergeant, give her a little money, despite the fact that we were not that rich. We children chance. also learned about the value of hard work. When I was only eight years old, Ilearned how to have a "business." My neighbor's son older one explained, "and what about speaking English?" helped me. I went to the train station early in the morning to sell bakery which we had made.Later on I continued to make foods and sell on the bar top. He mixed up some beer and pop. Then he told me. these. Of course, all the money went to our Mother who carefully managed household finances and always seemed able to set aside is Pabst beer, this is Budweiser beer. This is Hamm's." some emergency money

As the oldest child, I of course helped with all the others. My asked me to identify each beverage Mom always had anew baby each year to take care of. So I became as he held it up. I called off each one the "mom" for the others. I always helped them with their school correctly. lessons. In fact, if I remember correctly, I even had to do my brother' s homework. He got the credit, I got the headaches as well as knowledge to carry through my life.

In school our family also had to learn how to take care of ourselves. I remember there were these two other kids—a brother and then, but I could read the labels on sister-- who always were harassing, threatening, and hitting us. They the beverages. did this because we were of the north. They would laugh and make fun of us. So one afternoon, my brother Van and I followed them. Van said we need to teach them a lesson. We ran along one side of But if she cannot learn English, we the train station building and waited until they came along the other cannot use her.' side. Then we jumped out and surprised them. We taught them a "a physical lesson" and they never bothered us again

These are thus some of the seeds my parents planted that blos- over and over. Four days later I resomed into wondrous fruit. Let mealso tell about the water I have turn to the Officers' Club. I greeted drunk. My parents gave us a good model for taking care of children. She taught us life's lessons from the begin-

ning. As the oldest of twelve, it is my duty to be a second mother to all my brothers and sisters, and my nieces and nephews. I teach them to stand tall, talk straight, and above all to respect yourself, your heritage, your family, all our elders, and your country. My father too had his words of wisdom that we children learned well.

So why do I recount all these early childhood experiences Because these lessons helped all of us later, including the virtue of working hard, respecting ou elders, and preserving their wisdom. It these values which I have tried to remember and apply in life, which includes all the jobs and positions I have held, the businesses I owned and managed, and the charitable work carried out by the Foundation I established which is called, "The Friend-

magnificent Art Museum. These lessons it is especially appropriate to we learn about love and truth and hard work. We need to talk to our

recognize now as we celebrate the Twenty-Fifth anniversary of the Friendship Foundation. Let me discuss my early encounters with employment. Already I mentioned how I worked from when I was very young to earn money. I was now only sixteen years old. Other young women at this age were already married and had children. But I wanted to obtain a full-time job with the Americans who had come to Viet Nam in the mid 1960's. Many Vietnamese were seeking such employment. I told my parents, "I want to apply for these jobs." I talked to a girl friend of mine who told me how to apply. I bravely walked across the park and into an Officers' Club in the city of Nha Trang during the non-business ours. Here I was, only 16, and not that old

I walked past the guard and asked for

"You want a job?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"What kind?" she asked, her eyes ques-

"Maybe bar tending." One older sergeant just looked at me and ap-

"She has to learn all about tending bar and learn the drinks," the

"Let's see," said the younger one. He placed several beverages "This is Coke, this is orange, this is RC cola, and cream soda. This

Then he waited a minute. He played the part of a customer and

"See?"he told his partner NCO, "she can remember what she learns."

Little did he know that I may not have known that much English

"Okay," said the senior sergeant, "she can start on probation.

So I went home and my brother helped me practice some phrases them and waved. "Hi Johnny,

Hi Sergeant. How are

you today?" "See," exclaimed Johnny excitedly,"she knows English. She knows English. She has learned." That was about the extent of what I knew then, although of course I picked up much more Enggo for English classes while they all went off to see the night time movie. So I worked there in the evenings, then also at the NCO clubs, and my main job I got later was as a er generations are attaining high positions in the world and society. secretary at the soldiers' pay office. Eventually I took various courses taught by the US army, niversities everywhere. including in Saigon, and I wound up as an interpreter for the US government, as well as the supervisor for some two hundred Vietnamese workers I followed my heart to the United States of America.

Later when I left for US, I gave my job to my sister.

I want to sum up what I learned from Viet Nam as I decided to ship Foundation of American-Vietnamese." My parents had taught us come to America in 1971. I begin by urging all of us to pay tribute to youth to learn, especially through the Vietnamese Cultural garden we But this is the most important universe of all. Here is where our Mothare creating on Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard near Cleveland's ers influence us children and prepare us for later life. Here is where



的眼光看你,但 Ryan 她萬分堅強,她自強不息,不靠別人敢於面對 所有的困難,她現在已經是當奶奶的人,在克利夫蘭她是一個名人, 她參政,是克利夫蘭市長辦公室協調人員。

Ryan 創辦了 friendship 基金會,關心幫助他人,尤其對來自 越南的優秀靑年,幫助他們來美國留學,畢業後回越南開醫院做貢 話:人要對自己有信心... 浦瑛

phases for our garden.

Ryan 出生於一個良好家庭,父親是個商人,他有兄弟姐妹 12 人,她是老大,她説:她的一生很感謝父親.她的父親給她足夠的自 她接受最好的教育,現在她在越南最窮的地方開設學校。她的一句

own children, telling them both the positives and negatives about this my only activity. world. Our children need to know where they come from. They need

In 1993, after returning to America from my first trip back to to know about their language, culture, and customs so they in turn can Viet Nam in twenty years, I decided to start a humanitarian foundapass these on to their children. They need to realize the hundred Viettion to help people, in both Indochina and America. Our mission was namese generations that have gone before them. In all of my work in "to build bridges of friendship between the people of Viet Nam and America from 1971 to present, I tell our community these ideals. people of other countries including the United States." I recruited These also motivate me in my work to build a Vietnamese Cultural others including many Vietnam veterans to help carry out this dream. garden and these especially inspire our choice of the center statue of a During the past twenty years, our organization of the Friendship Foun-



Vietnamese woman to complete the first phase of five construction dation of American-Vietnamese has sponsored over eleven hundred volunteers recruited from over ten different nations who have jour- ed States from Viet Nam, study in our uni-I have faced many challenges in this Second American Motherneved to Vietnam for a month or more to carry out charitable work. versities, continue our Asian drive for scholland and I can see many in my generation who confront the same bur-Some of these volunteers were sons and daughters of Vietnamese peo- arly excellence, and then return to their

dens. Let me begin with the challenges in education. Many in my ple who had earlier come to America. Others were young people of homeland. My organization has provided older generation never had the opportunity to attend advanced schooldifferent countries who wanted to learn more about Viet Nam. They them with advice and guidance as well as lish as the weeks went on. They would let me ing. Some never even learned to read and write. Today this is chang- all wanted to help in Vietnam and we placed them in positions for housing and good Vietnamese food so they ing everywhere and all of our Vietnamese and Asian communities teaching, for doing work in hospitals, for working with people and can study harder. have contributed to those changes. You are now teachers and doctors, youth in remote rural villages, and for assisting in other social work Lawyers, Scientists, research experts, and business owners. Our new-including with the elderly.

A number of these volunteers have remained in Viet Nam where on West 54th and Detroit. For many years it We still have far to go, but we are making progress in schools and uthey have served for years as teachers and social workers. At the same had been a furniture store; then a church actime, I worked in my American community where I lived; I helped the quired and used it for a bingo hall. Finally, local people as well as raised my children. In 1971, as I mentioned above, my overseas journey began when

Our Foundation has raised over twenty-seven million dollars in it was abandoned for several years. Then I funds, medicines, operations and surgeries, food, clothing, school supheard it was for sale. But when I tried to In America, I have had to find ways to support myself, my plies, and other beneficial services. In carrying out our mission to buy, suddenly somebody else came along daughter, and my son. I have owned and operated a number of build bridges of friendship, we have also hosted and sponsored some and bid more on it. So I lost this building. I restaurants and food services. You know, we Vietnamese women can 250 people from Viet Nam and other countries to come to America thought, "If God had wanted me to have and always survive on our great cooking skills and tasty foods. I also for professional, medical, legal, governmental, business, and educause that building, He would do so." Howevhow we should always help others, especially those in great need, inour parents, especially our Mothers. We may think of them as living had worked for a Hotel in Foods and BeveragesDivision with the title tional projects. I must mention one doctor who came here and eventuer, two weeks later, Alex the building mancluding from poor rural areas. These are also the values I want our in tiny universes within their households and taking care of the family. of Executive Director of foods and beverages, and then I owned various others businesses. I have also bought houses and buildings, and he was the first Vietnamese surgeon who could do this. All this humanaged my Community Center and Banquet Hall called Saigon manitarian activity was one way for me to pay back my First Mother-Plaza. But making money, while necessary in America, has not been land for all she gave me.

have been appointed to this Board by three suc- 22,000 square feet of usable space. cessive mayors: Mayor Michael White, Mayor I have worked with our US government

Community Mental Health Services to attend the well as all the neighborhoods in Cleveland. mental health needs of our Asian communities. was fortunate to recruit a young psychiatrist,

sionals which includes five psychiatrists and six doctors.

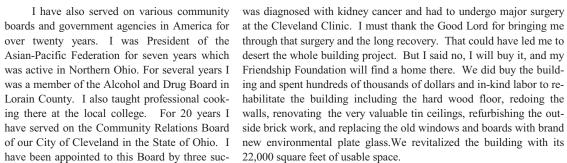
ebrate our history and culture. This is crucial for all of us from nore people of all races.

my Friendship Foundation has

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I must mention more about the Sai Gon Plaza. This was a hundred year old building as people of that Church left the community,

I said, "Yes" and I gathered together all my life's savings. About that same time I



We also added other property, parking areas, and buildings to Jane Campbell, and Mayor Frank Jackson. Our this complex. We hosted many community events, usually at least two Board oversees the activities of 130 different or three a month. This included educational programs on many isethnic and nationality groups. Our goal is to sues, such as taxes, immigration programs (such as the EB5 program), promote good relations among all these people, social and governmental services, and cultural events. Many other encourage them to live peacefully with each oth- community groups held their events and programs in the Sai Gon er, and help all appreciate and celebrate their Plaza. We welcomed all. For the Vietnamese community we were alheritages as well as the heritages of other groups. ways available for major events such as Tet, the Children's Fall festival, and Community remembrances of our Viet Nam country.

At this time we are searching out new ways for how this historiand the IRS to set up one of the oldest tax clinics cal building can be used. A very prominent East Side school has been in America. This helps many immigrant new- interested in using the building and preserving its grand architecture. comers to understand and obey American laws There are many challenges for all these plans, but I will continue to for filing taxes. This also helps these families devote myself to insuring the building is properly appreciated and participate in various helpful government pro- used. This includes paying respect our great Cleveland Municipal Court Judge, Raymond Pianka, for whom the building tower is dedi-In 1997 I established an Asian Community cated. Judge Pianka was a great help to our Vietnamese community. Mental Health agency as part of the West Side He did so much to preserve our neighborhood in Detroit-Shoreway as

We were very proud recently to dedicate three newly built teacher facility buildings in the mountain area surround the Dien Bien Dr. Thanh, from Viet Nam who came to Ohio, Phu city. This was a site of a world famous battle in 1954 between helped establish the agency, and then gained a graduate degree with the Viet Minh forces led by President Ho Chi minh and General Vo honors in psychology which is still a relatively new field of study in Nguyen Giap and the French forces and their Vietnamese and Mon-Viet Nam. He is now the director of one of the largest mental health tegnard Allies. We have also been asked by the local communities establishments in Viet Nam, helping both patients and their families. there to help build two kindergarten buildings for the children. The He has more than 3,000 patients, a staff of over one hundred profes- three Teacher facility buildings were dedicated in a Grand Opening ceremony in February 2018 to thehonor of Judge Raymond Pianka. For the Asian and Pacific groups I have been proud to spon- We were very proud to escort the Judge wife Karen Pianka and sor our annual Asian Heritage Month which is highlighted by Daughter Kirtsen to this Grand Opening along with Jan Rybka, and Asian-American Heritage Day at other members of our Mission team. Now Judge Pianka's Photograph Cleveland City Hall where we cel- adorns the wall of the main building and there is a tribute to this great judge who unfortunately and unexpectedly passed away in early 2017.

> Another major project of our Friendship Foundation is the conaround the world who have Asian struction of a Vietnamese Cultural Garden to join the forty other garbackgrounds. This Asian heritage dens that now are located on Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard. I we expanded to a weekend of have been working on this project for almost twenty years. In 2012, dancing, singing, and exhibits in- we finally were awarded the garden's space very near Highway 90 in cluding at the Sai Gon Plaza. the gardens We have joined the Cleveland Cultural Garden Federa-Eventually this grew into the Asian tion for a number of years in celebrating One World Day along with Festival celebrated annually in all the other gardens and the entire city of Cleveland. Our celebration Cleveland which attracts 30,000 or has always included a tribute and raising of the flags over our garden, speeches by leaders of various communities, exhibits of our heritage We people of Viet Nam have al- and culture, fashion shows to show of our arts, cultural shows, and a ways appreciated learning. Con- cuisine display, preparing of food on site, and making this available to tinuing this tradition of scholars, all the attendees numbering twenty five thousand.

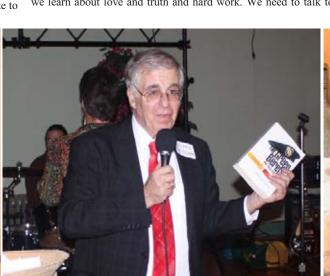
> We have also through our garden participated in other events welcomed students who come to which celebrate our heritage, history, and culture.

> > Currently we have planned to place a fifteen-foot tall statute of a Vietnamese woman in the center of the garden as Phase One of the project. This woman will celebrate not just Vietnamese women (including mothers, and wives, daughters, and grandmothers), but also women worldwide. The statue will be made by Vietnamese artists using the finest of marbles from Vietnam. There will be four other phases also to display our history and culture.

> > In conclusion, I urge all in our communities to remember all that our parents have provided for us, especially their wisdom and teachings. Remember how hard all of our ancestors have work, how much they never got to enjoy including educational opportunities. It is not just the rich and famous people we should celebrate, but all the many ordinary people who worked so hard so we could find success.

By Joseph Patrick Meissner







Let me tell a little of my struggles as a woman.





