The Adoption of the Thai Family

In 1941 after Pearl Harbor most of the eligible men were either drafted or had voluntarily enlisted in some branch of the service so Uncle Sam began imploring women to leave the safety of their homes and become actively involved in some type of Defense work. He really acted on one's emotions to try to do something that would be useful to the war's effort. The cry did not go unanswered by millions of women from every state of the Union.

My sister, Eleanor, (now deceased), and I were both rural school teachers, in southwestern Minnesota, at the time and we decided to go to California, during our summer months, to work in Defense. Our Father decided to accompany us. So, in the summer of 1943 we drove our 1938 Chevrolet, without air conditioning, or radio, from Minnesota to Long Beach California, where we had friends.

We all obtained positions in the shipbuilding industry on Terminal Island, part of L. A. In that Fall Eleanor returned to Minnesota, to teach, but Dad and I continued working in Defense. It wasn't too long until I began to notice women in uniform so began exploring the different branches of service, choosing the Marines Eleanor gave up her teaching position and returned to California so that we could enlist in the Marines together. We loved our nearly three years of Marine Corps service during which time we instructed Marine Fighter Pilots in Aircraft and Ship recognition.

After Service we returned to Minnesota, and back to college to finish our Bachelor degrees, with the help of the famous G. I Bill of Rights. We continued our education throughout our working lives and each ended up with several degrees.

From 1961-1963 Eleanor and I took a two year leave of absence from our Educational positions with the St. Paul Public School system and worked for the Department of Defense in the Overseas program. We were both employed with the school system on Clark Air Base in the Philippines. We loved our work there and had a firsthand experience in learning about Asiatic culture and customs.

In 1975 when Saigon was falling into the hands of the Viet Cong a humane cry went out to all the civilized world to try to help the Vietnamese who had been cooperating with the Americans, and who desperately needed to be rescued. (You all remember seeing the frantic life and death struggle of the Vietnamese trying to board the last helicopter leaving Saigon.)

At this time my sister and I owned a home in the Highland Park area of St.Paul, Minnesota, close to the Mississippi River and within two blocks of St, Therese Catholic Church. We were very active in St. Therese and in our community, as well as our schools. We were extremely concerned about the plight of these wonderful people and strongly considered adopting a family. From our experience of living in that Asiatic culture, however, we knew that a family in that part of the world meant an *extended* one and we were concerned about adopting due to possible medical complications and costs.

We then decided to speak with our Priest, Father Joseph Streff to see if our parish would be

able to adopt a family. He, too, was very interested and concerned about those people and thought that was a very wonderful project for our parish. We were simply delighted!!! He appointed us as a committee of two to go downtown St. Paul, to Catholic Charities. Where all the formal paperwork was being done, and to bring back to the parish all the required information that was pertinent.

Fr. Streff called meetings of the parish and committees were formed to accomplish all that needed to be done for the arrival of our family, Catholic Charities filed the necessary papers and then the exciting days started, anticipating the arrival of our family.

Eleanor and I desperately wanted to be in the reception committee, at the airport, when our family arrived but this was not to be. That summer we had decided to go to Florida, to vacation, but more importantly, to begin looking for a warmer place to live, when we retired. Our family arrived a few days before we got home from our trip.

We were delighted, however, that a most wonderful family, from St, Therese, the Wm. Moore family, had been there to welcome them and took them to their own home for several days before taking them to the apartment which the parish had rented for them. They couldn't have been more warmly and lovingly received than by the Moore's who had 12 children of their own!!

Imagine our delight when we first met our darling refugees from Vietnam!!! We could hardly contain our feelings and love. Here was a most beautiful, 20 year old mother, her 30 year old husband, his 18 year old cousin, and the couple's 8 month old son. Later we found out that the young male was not related, at all, but needed to attach himself to a family in order to get out of a Refugee Camp.

Eleanor and I fell in love with them immediately and visited them, after work, daily, for a long time, teaching them English and customs of our wonderful country. It was no time at all until both men were working and they were learning English so we could better communicate.

We dearly loved playing with the baby!! In no time, at all, the young, beautiful mother, Lisa, asked us if she could call us "Mother" What an honor!!!! We were simply DELIGHTED and to this day, she does. We told her that had we married and had a daughter of our own, we would have had to accept whatever God sent us, but we would not have had such a beautiful one, both inside and out.

We had our new family to our home for most all of the holidays helping them learn a new culture and a new way of life. They adopted quickly and learned very fast. Soon the cousin was enrolled in the University of Minnesota and the young father was employed with Northwest Airlines.

Very soon, also, three of Vy's brothers, and their families were also living relatively close by, so we all could get together, and have great celebrations, especially at the time of Chinese New Year All of the wives were/are gourmet cooks and bakers. We felt very close to all of them and are very happy to know they have all done exceptionally well over the years.

Not too long, however, and divorce entered the picture and some difficult years were

ahead, especially for their children, Steven and their daughter, Lynn. Lisa worked very hard at several different jobs mostly at Control Data while the husband, Vy, worked all his years at Northwest Airlines, from which he retired and returned to live in Vietnam.

Lisa finally found her niche as a Realtor and has done extremely well. She works 24/7., is honest. kind, caring and considerate. She is a friend, indeed, and contributes both her time and money to many charitable causes. After a few years of shared parenting both children came to live, exclusively with Lisa and she put them both through college.

Lisa continues to live in an immaculate, beautiful home, in Eagan, Minnesota, drives a Lexus car and her most recent joy is the birth of a beautiful, smiling grandson, named Evan Jerome.

Over the years Lisa has proved to be a most wonderful daughter and I couldn't ask for more. She calls me very frequently and is always showering me with her love and caring. She and her family have brought much enjoyment into our lives. We are so thankful we listened to that great emergency call to help the Vietnamese.

There is no one that has worked harder, or given more, than Lisa. I am proud, and extremely happy that she is being honored, and recognized and will be written about in a book for Hennepin County Library. Thank you, so very, very much for recognizing her contributions. She is a winner in every way!!!

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Lisa adaptab**

Mother

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