

# GRACE WORDS

Amazing Grace International Update



## TOM'S KIDS

Tom Tune first went to Vietnam in 2005 to help Partners In Progress build a medical mission ship. There, he noticed many children were in the streets every day. He learned that tuition for public school cost about \$12 a month, and since most people only earned \$2 a day, sending a child to school was simply out of the question.

Tom set about to send some of the children he had met to school with money out of his own pocket, and it wasn't long before he'd persuaded friends to contribute to the cause. As the number of students increased, "Tom's Kids" was born, and, Amazing Grace International, Inc., stepped in to take over the collection and administration of the tuition (making contributions tax-deductible).

Tom later met "Frenchy," a graduate of Sunset International Bible Institute, who was supported in Saigon by the WestArk church of Christ in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. Together, the two grew a congregation with the students, and Tom began another congregation when he moved to Can Tho in 2009.

Tom passed away on February 5, 2013, but his work goes on. Our report is about the lives that have been and continue to be changed.

## Mike's Notes -- October, 2023

Dear friends:

I have returned from a 12 day stay in Vietnam – my first since COVID in 2020. I went in January of that year and you may remember I mentioned before about hearing them announce in the Hong Kong airport “if you feel unwell please go to the infirmary.” It wasn't until I got back that we all learned what was really happening. I had planned to return last year, but a retinal tear caused the cancellation of those plans. This year, however, the Lord brought everything together. The trip went really well.

Throughout COVID, we never missed sending help to the children. Time has passed, as it always does, and for the most part, things have returned to normal there like it has here. I still saw people wear surgical masks in public (fewer of the cloth ones they used to wear while riding motorcycles) and in stores. But the stores and schools are open and business appears to be booming. I left Nashville on a Wednesday and arrived very late on a Thursday eve-

ning. Hai, one of the preachers in Can Tho met me and arranged for my hotel. We spent Friday and Saturday meeting with some of the children in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon — aka, HCM) and with the leadership of the church. I'd been receiving information from them about their meeting place. After COVID subsided, the local preacher in HCM had to leave the country to find help for a learning disabled daughter. That cost the church their meeting place and they have been meeting for over a year in a rented room. I preached for them Sunday and agreed with them, the facility was wholly unsatisfactory. We reviewed alternatives and Vinh, one of the leaders of the congregation found a much better place near where they were meeting. The WestArk church of Christ in Fort Smith, a long- time sponsor of the work in HCM has agreed to pay the rent for at least the first year. It is a beautiful place in a brand new building. Hai and Hiep, the preachers for the Can Tho congregation, take turns making the 100 mile (3 ½ hour) trip to HCM each week to provide preaching

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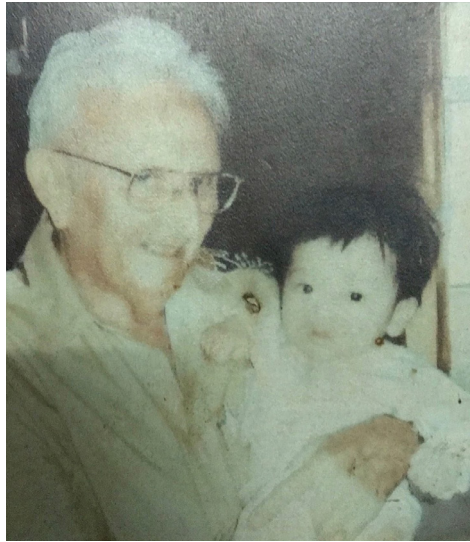
This is the room where we met for worship my first Sunday back in Vietnam. One of the leaders of the congregation is Vinh (in the front on the right). He is 27 years old and works in a bank in Ho Chi Minh city. He is formerly one of "Tom's Kids." In the front on the left is Hai, one of the preachers in Can Tho. Hai was my "guardian" on this trip.

and Bible instruction. The new facility has a sound proof room for worship (really important in Vietnam), access to a swimming pool for baptisms, and a playground for children. I am earnestly hopeful that this will be the beginning of something really wonderful in that city for the kingdom of God. They had their first assembly there October 22.



The new place for assembly in Ho Chi Minh City is in one of these high-rise buildings. There is plenty of space for parking and for growth. The apartment has 720 sq. ft., a kitchen and 2 bathrooms.

I hope you can make out the picture at the top of the next column. It's Dad, of course, holding a little baby. When Dad first arrived in Vietnam, "Frenchy" (see the "Tom's Kids" sidebar on page 1) and his wife had been trying for a long time to have a child -- without success. One morning, Frenchy went to his front door to find that little girl left there with



a note: "We know you are Christian people," it read, "and we know you will give our little girl a home." They named the little girl "Dorcas" (no doubt Dad's suggestion). Now, turn back to page 1 and look at the young lady to the right of me. That is Dorcas. She grew up a "Tom's kid," graduated from high school and is now a University student majoring in International Relations. She speaks English fluently and never misses a worship assembly. We got to spend a little time talking and she shared that she had a picture of Dad holding her as a baby. Later, she sent it to me. The picture was taken in 2006 when she was 6 months old.

The following Monday I traveled to Can Tho where I stayed for a week. It is the "rainy season" in south Vietnam so rather than have me on a motorcycle traveling into the country, they brought the children to me. I met with them, one on one and with many of their parents, over a period of four days. There were about eighty students. In our next newsletter I will begin introducing them to you.

In the last newsletter I introduced you to Nguyen Huynh Thanh Thuy (first name is Twee, last name is Nguyen). She practically grew up a "Tom's Kid" and, like Dorcas, she has graduated



from High School and has entered her first University year. She placed third scholastically among all students in Vietnam last year. Her sister, Nguyen Huynh Thuy Ngan (pictured above -- first name "Ngan") has also been one of Tom's Kids for most of her academic life. She is now 17 years old. Her best subject in school is Chemistry and in her spare time she loves to play volleyball. Your support has helped and continues to help make all this possible.

Thank you for all your support during these difficult years. We've come out on the other side with wonderful stories of success among our students. Dad believed a key to a mature congregation was to have an educated congregation, one whose members could study the Bible, get good jobs and support the work of the gospel as it spread. He took the long view and began with children. If you haven't noticed before, you will as our story and pictures unfold: the church in Vietnam is made up of young adults.

When you write (or send your contributions), be sure to include our suite number (G-243) in the address. That's really important.

There will be one more newsletter before the end of the year. I hope you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Mike