

On the Line

An Orphan's Silent Tears

By Bob Considine



The first time I saw Ngo Thi Lam (pronounced Naughty Lamb) she was brought to my room at the Hotel Caravelle in Saigon by Rosemary Taylor — a remarkable girl who is one of the Florence Nightingales of the children's end of the Vietnamese war.

But I had heard about the baby. An Air Force captain named Robert Peck, father of two young sons back in the States, had spotted her during a visit to the Can Tho, Mekong Delta, orphanage run by the Sisters of Providence. Ngo Thi Lam was seven months old at that time. She had been unceremoniously dumped at the door of the convent when she was three days old, a frail mewling creature who somehow beat the awesome odds of infant mortality prevalent in such places.

The wheels of adoption and release from Vietnam grind with excruciating lethargy. Hence, nearly a year passed before the child's number came up and the bulge of documents in her dossier — larger than she — had been stamped and

signed. (Matters came swiftly to a head when I asked Vice President Ky to put in a word for her at the proper ministry.)

Now here she was, 18 months old, lying on the extra bed in my hotel room waiting, improbably, for me to finish a column before taking her to Tan Son Nhut Airport, world's busiest and worst.

Naughty Lamb turned out to be a human doll: Big black button eyes with long lashes, skin the color of light cafe au lait, Cupid's bow mouth and a bit of a pointed chin. She made no sound as she looked up at the strange ceiling in the only room she had ever known that was not filled with the babble or weeping of dozens — maybe hundreds — of other bereft children.

It was time to go. Off to the Big PX on the other side of the world, I told her, trying to calm myself more than anyone else.

The dear baby and I got off at Hong Kong at 10:30 p.m., headed for a hotel to spend the night Pan Am's Flight 846 to

San Francisco, via Tokyo, would not be leaving until 9:15 the next morning. The bureaucracy that had plagued her life once more was apparent. Hong Kong's immigration people wouldn't let her pass the portal. She was an Asiatic, and there was a quota, you know.

We sat for an hour on a bench in the brightly lighted airport reception room while somebody arranged an overnight visa. Naughty Lamb spent the time taking microscopic bits from a dinner roll and delicately eating them. Every other bit she picked she offered to me, or to Kingsbury Smith.

Young Bill Hearst called the Peninsula and got us a room. "Old" Bill Hearst took the station wagon with the bags and dropped ours at the Peninsula before going on to his hotel, the Mandarin. He left his car for us. Turned out to be a Rolls-Royce. Once cleared, the baby and I toiled to the splendid place. It was an interesting contrast to the beginning of her day, in a Saigon orphanage.

She sneezed during the night and I called a nurse, a nice Chinese girl, who came hours later and gave her an aspirin. I gave her orange juice and we set off for the airport in the morning in a Lincoln Continental, no less.

A touching thing happened during the hour's layover at Tokyo. We had been playing — she holds out either of her index fingers to be kissed — when suddenly her eyes clouded and great tears rolled down her cheeks. There wasn't a sound from her, just the tears. I held her, patting her. "I've seen silent tears like that before, with these children," a stewardess said. "They learn early that it's no use making a sound when they're sad."

"Why?"

"Because nobody's going to come," the stewardess said. I held the little girl closer and I cried, too, for her and all like her who have suffered in this war.

She slept most of the night. In the morning, she relished a scrambled egg. We got off the plane and there stood her foster mother, Phyllis, her grandfather, Bill Duggin, and two of their friends. Phyllis wept with joy and pressed against the plate glass of the entry offices, waiting for the clearance, which was swift and humane.

"Tiffany," the mother cried. "Oh, Tiffany." That's going to be Naughty Lamb's name.

She's with her irrespressible 4- and 6-year old brothers now in Austin, Tex., and the family's big clumping, face-kissing German shepherd puppy. Naughty Lamb will teach them some manners, I'm sure, because now she's Peck's Good Girl.

The Mouths Of Babes

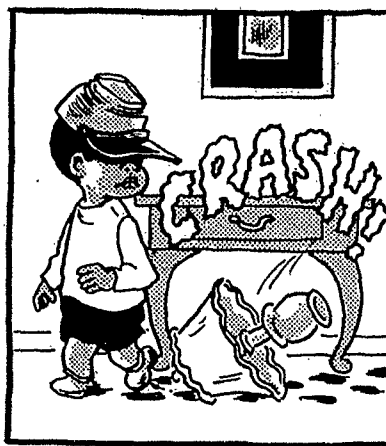
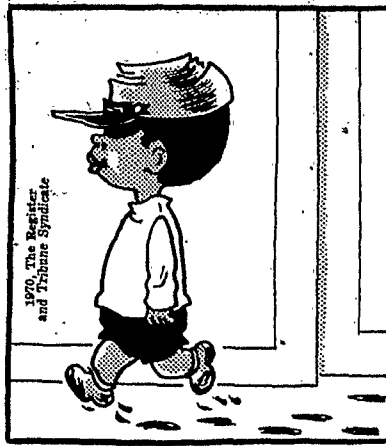
Ladies like to sew in circles where they knit, talk and do their needling.

Such sage sayings have been culled from the work of children in a Detroit grade school and distributed via "The Michigan Catholic" and NC News Service.

Wednesday, July 29, 1970

WEE PALS

By Morrie Turner



YOUR SON, THE PRIEST



THE HOLY FATHER'S MISSION AID TO THE ORIENTAL CHURCH

We shudder when we see them on TV, the families in India who have never lived indoors. They live in the streets, painfully, sleep huddled together on matting on the sidewalks. The pennies they earn buy scraps of food and rags. . . . In Calcutta alone they number 100,000. They are not drunkards or tramps, these families. All they need is a chance. . . . "For only \$200 (for materials), we can give a family a home," states Joseph Cardinal Parecatil from Ernakulam. "We'll provide the supervision, our men will do the work free-of-charge, and the family will own it outright once they prove they can take care of it themselves. We'll start the work immediately. Can you imagine the happiness a 'home of their own' will bring? . . . Here's your chance to thank God for your family, your home. Cardinal Parecatil will write to say thanks.

"WHAT ELSE CAN I DO ABOUT INDIA?"

□ The parishioners gather the stones and do the construction free-of-charge, under their parish priest's direction. That's how in India a church, school, rectory and convent can be built for only \$10,000. . . . Name the parish for your favorite saint, we'll erect a permanent plaque asking prayers for your loved ones, if you build a parish as your once-in-a-lifetime mission gift.

□ Archbishop Mar Gregorios will write personally to say where he'll locate it if you enable him to buy (\$975) two acres of land as a model farm for a parish priest. Raising his own food, the priest can teach his parishioners how to increase their crop production. (A hoe costs only \$1.25, a shovel \$2.35.)

□ In the hands of a thrifty native Sister your gift in any amount (\$1,000, \$750, \$500, \$250, \$100, \$75, \$50, \$25, \$15, \$10, \$5, \$2) will fill empty stomachs with milk, rice, fish and vegetables. . . . If you feel nobody needs you, help feed these hungry boys and girls!

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The Slot Man

Calling a Mafia a Mafia

By Carmen Viglucci



Ever since the much-heralded testimony of Joseph Valachi, the American people have had some opportunity to know more about the workings of the Mafia (excuse me, Mr. Mitchell).

It was always generally known that the "secret society" grew out of the centuries of oppression of the people in Sicily.

I was told long ago that the word Mafia is an anagram, each of its letters standing for a word. This is given some credence by Ed Reid in "The Grim Reapers", who says that although legendary it is also plausible.

Back in 1282 the Sicilians revolted against their then-tormentors, the French, with the battle cry, "Morte alla Francia, Italia Anela" — "Death to the French is Italy's Cry." The French were just one of a long line of oppressors who made it propitious for an underground rebel group to survive over the years.

Ramifications arose, for a similar society, the Camorra, grew in Naples and the progeny of both clashed briefly in the U.S. before they were blended into what Mafioso Valachi revealed is called within the Mafia "this thing of ours" — la cosa nostra.

Various other names, such as Unione Sicilliana and Black Hand, have served to confuse the makeup of the society. And indeed there have been and are people working with and for the Mafia who are not Italian. Some who worked hand-in-hand with various "dons" are Bugsy Siegel, Louis Buchalter, Dutch Schultz, Owney Madden and others.

Now, the attorney general with the approval of the President has issued an order

to the FBI and the Justice Department to stop using terms such as Mafia and Cosa Nostra because it offends Americans of Italian background.

No one has to tell me that people who think that everyone with a name such as Viglucci may be a Mafioso are down right irksome. But at the same time let's not give the Mafia any breaks.

An acquaintance of mine who runs a delicatessen in the Bronx has a revealing tale about the recent Italian-American protests in New York City. He was told to close up shop for the day and go to the demonstration and the guy who told him was not a member of the American Civil Liberties Union. My acquaintance knew the seriousness of the order for he did indeed close up although he didn't attend the demonstration as most Italian-Americans in New York City didn't.

Incidentally at the demonstration the biggest applause of the day was reserved for Joe Colombo Sr., one of the day's organizers and one of the five Mafia dons in the New York City area.

If you want a better look at the Mafia, two fine books currently in circulation are "The Valachi Papers" by Peter Maas and "The Grim Reapers" by Ed Reid. Skip "The Godfather", a fictionalized, Hollywoodesque version that tends to justify, if not the Mafia, then some of its members.

It is downright harmful when at the very time some knowledge of the shadowy workings of this criminal organization is being disseminated that people may be coerced into not calling a spade a spade, thus contributing to the Mafia's necessary quest for secrecy.