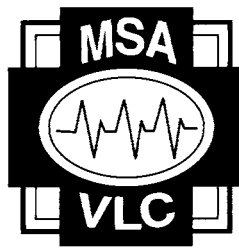


# **VIETNAM LAOS CAMBODIA**



## **MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC AID NEWS BULLETIN**

[www.msavlc.co.uk](http://www.msavlc.co.uk)

No. 178 February 2014

# **DR MADELEINE SHARP MBE**

**It is with great sadness that we have to inform you of the death of Dr Madeleine Sharp MBE, former President and Honorary Secretary of MSAVLC. She died peacefully at home, in the early hours of Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014, age 93.**

Madeleine was born in London in July 1920. Her father was a Patent Agent, and they moved away to Newcastle-Upon Tyne because a lot of his work, as with other patent agents, was taken over by the war office. This was due to rumblings of a possible war, and any inventions that may help the war effort had to be kept secret. Madeleine was very close to her grandparents and spent a lot of time with them in Gourrock in Renfrewshire. That is probably where her Scottish accent came from. Her grandfather was the head teacher of a large school, and she often told stories of his formidable character.

Her mother was the secretary of the British/Russian friendship society, and it was probably her mother who encouraged Madeleine to go



into medicine. She was from strong-minded stock! She often proudly said that when the Spanish Civil war started she would often be found talking about it in class, and her teacher accused her of being a "premature anti-fascist"!

She initially trained to be a nurse because her parents couldn't afford to send her to medical school. Her father had lost much of his work since leaving London. She joined the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nurs-

ing Corps and was sent to India, where she witnessed the beginnings of partition between India and Pakistan. Her first-hand contact with the horrors of war and the poverty of many of the people that she met were to change Madeleine, and she would spend the rest of her life campaigning for peace and seeking ways of helping the poor and the sick.

On returning to Britain at the end of the War, Madeleine was able to take advantage of the brand new National Health Service and get a grant to train to be a doctor at Edinburgh University. So she was one of those pioneering women who opened the door for many other women to train in medicine.

She moved to Coventry shortly after qualifying, having answered an advert for a locum at a practice in central Coventry. The temporary position soon became a permanent one and grew into a partnership in the practice, where she worked for 30 years.

Madeleine joined the movement protesting about the American involvement in the civil struggle in Vietnam. In 1965 she became a supporter of the Medical Aid Committee for Vietnam, thereby bringing together both aspects of her life's work. The following years saw her

involvement increase in both the charity, and her peace campaigning, despite continuing as a much-loved and respected General Practitioner. Once asked by a friend's 9-year-old if she had any children, Madeleine said "oh yes, hundreds!" She took on the role of Honorary Secretary to MSAVLC from 1987 to 2009, and for many years she was also Chair of the City of Coventry Lord Mayor's Peace Committee.

Madeleine first visited Vietnam in 1989 and made numerous trips back there to visit the many projects supported by MSAVLC. She was always a welcome visitor to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and made many friends there; her last visit was a three-week tour made in 2009.

Madeleine was awarded an MBE for services to human rights and humanitarian causes in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in 2002. She re-

ceived the Vietnamese Government's Order of Friendship in 1992 and the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Order of Merit in 2013.

With her passing the world has lost a dedicated campaigner for poor and oppressed people every-

where and a genuine opponent of armed conflict.

Madeleine's selflessness and compassion shone through in everything that she did, and the Trustees are proud that they were able to know her and work with her.



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# THANK YOU TO ALL OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

**Last August we reported in the Bulletin the plight of Nguyen Sy Thang, who was suffering from a disfiguring facial growth, due to the effects of Agent Orange.**

The Trustees are now delighted to report that since this article, donations have been received that have enabled Thang to have the first of two or three operations to remove this growth. As can be seen from the photograph, half of it has been successfully removed, and already Thang's confidence has begun to improve.

This is the first step; the second operation is due to take place approximately six months after the first, when the wound has settled down.



Thank you so much to all who contributed to this operation, which will help to change dramatically the life and self-esteem of this young man.

We will keep you informed of his progress in future Bulletins.

The Trustees



# WHEELCHAIRS FOR AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS

In March 2011 we visited some victims of Agent Orange with VAVA – the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/ Dioxin. We saw that many of the victims had limbs missing, or their legs were so twisted or cramped that they were unable to walk. For some of these people a wheelchair would give them the opportunity of getting beyond the confines of their own homes. And so the Trustees asked VAVA if they could supply 50 wheelchairs to victims who would benefit from them, at a cost of \$5,000, about \$100 each.

price! These were to be distributed by VAVA to Agent Orange victims in nine districts of Ho Chi Minh Province, in South Vietnam. The wheelchair handing-over ceremony was held on Easter Saturday 2012, at the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City. As MSAVLC was unable to send a representative to the ceremony, VAVA sent us some photographs of what must have been an exciting occasion.

When Mary Lidgard, Brian Stenson and I visited Ho Chi Minh City in February this year, we saw one of the wheelchairs which had been supplied for the children of Hoa Binh Peace Village, and we were also taken by VAVA to meet another of the recipients in his home.

Mr. Nguyen Duc Khoang is a 67 year-old Agent Orange victim; he had deformed hands, diabetes, and hypertension, and

We parked our minibus and walked to his house through a warren of tiny streets, totally inaccessible to cars, but a few folks on motorbikes precariously pushed their way by. The houses were crammed together, mostly with two rooms, one up and one down. They were sparsely furnished and untidy inside, with belongings scattered around and only small plastic chairs to sit on. A steep wooden step-ladder led



upstairs. The shutters at the front of the houses were open and overlooked the narrow street.

We were greeted by the residents with smiles and shouts of 'hello'; they seemed amazed to see us. We reached Mr. Nguyen's house and we sat on small chairs to chat, through our interpreter, to him, his wife and daughter. They made us very welcome and the neighbours crowded around outside, staring in at us, as we talked. We drank cold, sweet tea with ice. The room was stacked with tins, bottles and packets of food, which the family sold to make a living,



We were delighted to learn subsequently that VAVA had done a deal with the manufacturers, and had been supplied with 90 wheelchairs for the same

had also suffered a stroke. He lives in District 4, which is a poor area near the docks in Ho Chi Minh City.

**Medical and Scientific Aid for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia**

# **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

## **6.30pm Monday 28th April 2014**

**at the**

### **VIETNAMESE EMBASSY**

**12 Victoria Road  
London W8 5RD**

### **Everyone welcome.**

**The Agenda and Annual Report will be published on [www.msavlc.co.uk](http://www.msavlc.co.uk)**

**Paper copies will be available at the meeting.**

and the walls were bare boards, except for one football poster!

Mr. Nguyen's father had joined the North Vietnamese Army in the war, but Mr. Nguyen himself was drafted to fight with the Americans in the South. This must have been dreadfully difficult for the family, but we were told that this happened quite often. Mr. Nguyen was exposed to Agent Orange in Da Nang. He was paid a small pension by the Vietnamese government on behalf of his father, who had fought for the NVA.

We examined his wheelchair and it seemed strong and durable. We took photographs, thanked the family for their hospitality and said farewell.

It was only when we

were in the minibus, on our way back to the hotel, that our interpreter, Mr. Hong, told us that District 4 was quite dangerous for strangers to enter, because of opportunist thieves and pick-pockets.

The man in black, who had been accompanying us through the streets, was in fact our minder, and the family had asked him to protect us!

Following on the success of the provision of wheelchairs in Ho Chi Minh City, in July the Trustees agreed to fund a further 50 wheelchairs to be distributed to VAVA victims in the Hanoi area. News of their distribution will be published in a future Bulletin.

Peter Lidgard

## **WILLS AND LEGACIES**

In 2013 the charity distributed over £72,000 to our projects in South East Asia, thanks solely to you, our generous donors. We could not help the poor and sick in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia without your support. And a little goes a long way in the developing world.

Please remember the charity when you are making or updating your will. The Trustees will ensure that your money is wisely spent.