

19 March 1985

Dr. Walter Capps  
Dept. of Religious Studies  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
Santa Barbara, California 93106

Dear Dr. Capps:

Apprised of the L.A. Times article on your course by colleagues, I have read it with great interest. I also am prompted to encourage you to continue the ventures in healing so necessary for so many of us as individuals, and for all of us as Americans.

Enclosed is a copy of DEROS, a Viet Nam era veterans' poetry magazine. Obviously, the materials are largely cathartic, yet a number of the writers contributing to this journal are working toward literary refinement as well. In this number, I have one poem. Other pieces of mine have appeared in other issues of DEROS, The Cape Rock (from S.E. Missouri State), and Poetry/LA.

I shall make bold to include a few other items of mine for your perusal. I have a full manuscript of Viet Nam experience poems from which I have done readings on a few occasions. Should you have an interest in seeing more such work for use in your course, or should you wish to stage a reading session, I would be happy to explore the possibilities with you.

Another aspect of my own Viet Nam legacy is a renewed involvement with the Viet Namese language via informal and academic contacts with the refugee community. I have translated the reeducation camp memoirs of Mr. Tran Huynh Chau, former Deputy Chief of Quang Nam Province. A new bilingual monthly tabloid, The Viet Nam Times, out of Germantown, Maryland, has begun to serialize the work. Mr. Chau (Mr. Tran, in the Western mode of naming) is now active with one of the resistance movements, and is willing to speak to any groups interested in a Viet Namese refugee's perspectives on the past and present situations in their homeland. I should mention, too, that the English section of The Viet Nam Times is available for \$4.00 a year from Mr. Vinh Liem, Editor; The Viet Nam Times; P.O. Box 567; Germantown, MD 20874. The intent of the periodical is to enhance Americans' understanding of the Viet Namese refugees' culture and perspectives as shaped by the last several decades of history.

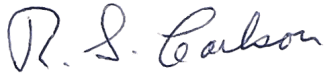
I tender this information leading toward glimpses of the refugee experience because it has been an important part of my own journey back from Viet Nam to seek to bring some restoration experiences out of the brokenness. Being with people who still retained a capacity for faith (à la Tillich) when seemingly all logical foci for faith were shattered has made it possible for me to now join in "patriotic" or militant episodes such as pledges to the flag or lively renditions of "Onward Christian Soldiers" in a church half populated by active duty military personnel without getting sick to my stomach any more.

Carlson -- 2

I expect that the recent publicity has probably brought a flood of queries and proposals. I will understand if it is impractical for you or your associates or students to pursue any of the possible connections I have mentioned. Still, DEROS can use more subscribers and contributors. I am willing to read poetry or join discussions on the American involvement in Viet Nam, and my friend Mr. Chau would be happy to do so as well.

Best wishes to you in your pursuit of understanding and healing.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. S. Carlson".

Ralph S. Carlson  
Professor, English  
Azusa Pacific University

R. S. Carlson  
1325 N. Sierra View Dr.  
Glendora CA 91740

24 lines  
~~First rights offered~~  
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### The Extraction

John Wayne didn't play this one.  
Mathematics did:

forty-eight men to go,  
one chopper in the flight shot down.

Each surviving bird, in turn,  
settled among the incoming shells  
to take an overload of casualties,  
classified gear,  
and evacuees  
till rescue reached capacity.

Two Viet Nameese, two Americans  
kept some extra ammunition  
and maybe a wish for one more sortie;  
they held six shattered bunkers  
eroding from the hilltop  
under mortar fire.

When things fell quiet in late evening,  
they chatted with base camp by radio.  
But their sign-off was hard to copy  
over the rattle of rifle fire.

The logbook reads:  
2100 hours --  
Dogpatch, this is Red Dog four.  
They're coming through the wire.

R.S. Carlson

R.S. Carlson  
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Glendora, CA 91740

This poem still in circulation  
to journals

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deus ex machina

A Clucking Capons' copter dropped him in --  
a real live chaplain,  
first we'd seen in months.

Word came round the hill  
he'd do a service in the gun pit  
beside the chopper pad.  
The artillery people dropped the barrel,  
so from trails to muzzle  
the 105 served as pew.

The scrubbed, starched man  
laid out testaments and crosses,  
punched taped songs out of a Sony,  
and gave word that our unwashed bodies  
were Temples of the Holy Ghost  
not to be defiled:  
we each possessed a Sacred Penis  
not to be profaned --  
here where the nearest dog  
was twenty kilometers away.

To prove the marriage bed was holy,  
he told how his wife was a glorious lay  
till his ear-flogging chopper  
dropped back to take him up,  
and he left us  
crouching against his propwash,  
stung with driven sand.

R. S. Carlson  
1325 N. Sierra View Drive  
Glendora, CA 91740

12 lines  
First rights offered  
presently in circulation

Kính Tảng Bạn Chiến Hữu

Xa xòi quê hương,  
Phải ở khắp phương,  
Chiu luôn ánh hương  
Thit xương đau thương.

Thời giãn tha phương  
Lam àn nhu' thương,  
Tự chọn định hương,  
Àn uống sung sương.

Những tránh hua sương,  
Nghe thấy tiếng chuông,  
Cố đốt nền hương,  
Tưởng nhớ quê hương

Lê Kinh Kha

To My Honorable Former Comrades-in-Arms

Scattered now, forced to live  
so very far from the Motherland,  
one carries still a constant grief  
pervading to the flesh and bone.

Yet living abroad awhile,  
one settles to work again,  
chooses a path of one's own,  
and can raise a glass with a smile.

Still, beware of false promise:  
hear the bell of the temple sound;  
light the stick of sandalwood incense;  
remember, revere the Motherland.

Lê Kinh Kha