

Rebuilding Soui Vinh

After being in Viet Nam for about two months, we heard about helping displaced families near the base. We looked at some of the nearby villages. Houses were made of mud and sticks with straw roofs. Others were made of heavy waxed cardboard, flattened beer cans and other throwaway materials. Our squadron adopted the Village of Soui Vinh.

On days we didn't fly we worked on the village. We always had part of the crew guarding us with M-16's. Sometimes after a flight we were very hyper and couldn't sleep. We would get a truck from Crazy Cat and get a load of wood from the dump. The wood was dunnage from ships cargo holds. The dunnage was lumber that was used as bracing to keep the cargo from moving. Every day they burned the dunnage from the day before. We had to be out of the dump by 7:30 A.M.

Our houses were built on concrete slabs. The whole village was low and muddy. We built our slabs about eighteen inches above the ground. First we poured a slab for every house. Next we worked on one house at a time. As we finished each house a family would move in. Afterwards, they move their old hut and hook it up to the new house!

We would take the lumber out to the village. Sometimes we would work all day with the villagers; other times, we just delivered the lumber. Finally, we had a house for every family.

Sam's "Maybe" Village

On our way back from the village to Cam Rahn Bay we met five nuns with thirty children who were hitchhiking along the road. We gave them a ride back to their camp. It was a long canvas covered lean-to. They cooked on the ground and had no sanitation facilities. The Mother Superior said her government had given

them land for their orphanage and promised more help. About ten other agencies had also promised them help, but no help came. I told her that our squadron couldn't promise for sure that we would help. I said "maybe" we could. After that the crew really got things moving! That was about July 1968, by Christmas we had a chow hall, living quarters for all, a hand dug well and a church going up. The crew gave a big Christmas party for the kids. We had a parachute for a tent. The well was just finished and I sent a hand picture pump from the Philippines. The kids almost wore it out. That was the first running water they had ever seen! I had missed the party because crew one was rotated to Sangley.

Before we left Viet Nam, Cdr. Dunnan (the new Skipper) asked me to take him out to the orphanage. Mother Superior showed us around the buildings. It was almost finished ! We had plenty of materials to finish the job. Standing in front of it all she said to Cdr. Dunnan, "This is Sam Gore's Maybe !"

- Story submitted by ADR1 S. Sam Gore, Plane Captain Crew 1.