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I would like to begin with quote from one of my favorite authors with whom I'm very close.

"Describing contemporary affairs can be a frustrating exercise when you are a first-hand participant. It stems from the reality that others who did not participate wrote it first, while you are forced to continue on to the next challenge. A virtual army of pundits, historians, journalists and others are observing events as their sole focus and most of their records come from being first, then accurate. They publish, public opinion becomes rigid, and then it is easy to reject the few dissenting voices who were actual participants who only had the time and space to say 'this is not true, I was there.'

As time passes, the conventional wisdom is swallowed in convenient chunks, the chunks are summarized in a paragraph or two in textbooks, quoted in conference papers, and everyone moves on as actual history becomes buried in aging boxes and aging minds. After a respectable period, it might then be discovered through archival work or oral history and be labeled an unprecedented breakthrough of original research for a young historian or mint a new PhD. Our history was not easy. Our Secretary of State remarked to Gorbachev that he heard the meeting with President Bush went well. He said yes, but Reagan was there when times were tough.

The aging minds are here before you today, times were tough, and we were there.

- Would need a library – 2 or more semesters to adequately cover only my involvement. At least 20 meetings at senior levels with Vietnamese – some one-on-one, plus uncountable meetings with the Lao in Washington and Vientiane, then as League Advisor for 7 trips to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, with multiple high level policy meetings. Ann Mills Griffiths was at my side and set up many of the meetings. We even introduced Ann to Raw Goat with Ginger in Vietnam and Ant Egg soup in Laos.
- Will provide partial overview from my perspective and emphasize a couple of actions considered significant, but summarizing a decade or so can lead to accusations you left someone or something out. My apologies in advance to the hundreds who have worked on this issue.
- (VN 68-69, rescue recons on Radio).
- Nick Rowe Operations.
- Ft. Carson (73-75), Wives Club, neighbor – Lao MIA Case, Wife
- Thailand (77-78) – interest peaked, refugee camp reports – to JCRC with no vehicle, (PFD's), met Rob Schwab, then working for the League, bringing information that US EMB-Bangkok wouldn't accept – I took and handed to DATT.
- Pentagon (78-81) saw write off firsthand, Schweitzer to Lt Gen Eugene Tighe, USAF, who changed his story.
- Warehouse Reports that surfaced from the mortician.
- Then NSC (81-89)
- Met Ann at my 1st IAG meeting in June 1982 (Schwab/Salems/Bates)
- Briefed before League trip in 1982. Nightline (Koppel)

- Private dinner with Thach, Ann set it up (Oct 83) – several hours. (Stop shouting from the rooftops – Schultz remarks on warehouse, public awareness campaign. (Good to see you, not on TV)
- Intel paper, libraries/SNIE/SB
- 10-part strategy developed
- Asian Mafia/gang of four – mostly Vietnam Vets
- Obvious priority, full backing of NSC advisors, and hangover from Carter write-off, meant NSC would need more active role.

- In the bureaucracy – constant battle and I was there – your toughest challenge is the one you are working on right now, not necessarily the most important, but all or most agreed on priority. (13 countries of SEA, South Pacific, Int'l refugees/narcotics, but had to carve significant time for POW/MIA (60 hours/week became 80). Over time reminded me of VN proverb: Tam Chung: Eat with, sleep with, work with"

- Monitored and supported the hard work of Armitage, CINCPAC, DIA and our JCRC – trying to get crash sites started, gather intel, interview refugees. I worked to reinforce efforts on these tough issues.

- While all above were concerned with live POW issue and unilateral remains repatriation, which would also resolve easy discrepancy cases, it was clear to me no significant breakthrough could take place, without private, secret negotiations. Not possible in large, public, official delegations.

While state worried about exploitation, I welcomed the attempts as that was the only path to admission of prisoners or stored remains.

- I knew this was the true north to accomplish Reagan's objectives – but also know a compass doesn't tell you of the swamps, mountains, deserts and rivers to navigate to get there.

- Also was aware there is a temptation by many to overestimate how much a relationship and direct talks can overcome firm strategic and ideological considerations. I was determined to resist that human tendency.

- Rich and I knew the importance of personal relations in Asia, along with the other Asianists. Both Rich and I were Vietnam Vets, lived in Thailand and spoke the languages, along with Dave Lambertson. Some in State felt it was a turf war between NSC and State and that negotiations with Vietnam would undermine us with ASEAN.

Ironically, it was the non-Vietnam Veterans who felt we could not trust the Vietnamese, threw up obstacles to dialogue and appeared to be refighting the war. We felt that we could pursue aggressively without compromising Cambodia. i.e. Walk and chew gum at the same time. (Rich quoted VN writers, RTC – deep Delta accent.) (At one point RR says thank you, State combines with CB – talking me, not you.)

- So we explored channels with some influence

- Had always asked ASEAN countries to urge Vietnamese cooperation.

- One, especially of interest to the issue, Indonesia, which was more trusted by VN (PRC backed a rebellion in Indonesia; 1965 coup attempt; current leaders anti-Maoist, non-communist; solidarity in anti-colonial history; Dutch and French; wanted independent, neutral SEA and Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, or ZOPFAN)

- Mid 1980's – decisions in ASEAN, Beijing, Moscow ranked higher in Vietnamese calculation than US – wanted to influence this calculation – Emphasis on ASEAN and US.
- VN (Pham Van Dong) August 1978 – whenever in 4,000-year history that VN had been dependent on one large friend, it has been a disaster for all.
- I knew VN was proud of their independence and balanced outside superpowers. SINO-SOV support during war, now PRC hostility. Historical – Ha BA Trung sisters. Shifted dramatically to USSR (Cold War), made US-PRC rapprochement inevitable.
- Did not believe they were comfortable with USSR as their only strategic partner.
- The belief that they wanted options prompted my emphasis on future possibilities for them – strategic independence, economic development, normalization with the US, with a Cambodian settlement, repositioned by solving the POW/MIA issue, followed by regional peace with ASEAN.
- My message to Thach on collusion with PRC. Could make such a charge in Carter period; NSC asked Thailand to support the Khmer Rouge, not with Reagan – do not support Pol Pot, back ASEAN settlement – to counter the PRC, agreement with ASEAN, political settlement and withdraw. US, Europe, Japan, others would agree and PRC would have to adjust (Thach repeated this formula in Eastern Europe)
- Indonesia was also talking the future with Vietnam at the policy level and through military channels, so on to Indonesia
- 1982 – Adam Malik, Indonesia founder of ASEAN, in a letter to VP Bush, mentioned the issue and publicity – thought it was wrong for Vietnam to withhold – wanted info on issue. VP responded with our new priority.
- Based on this interest, I put together some specific cases, information on stored remains previously recovered, and sent through our DATT who provided to the Indonesian NSC Secretary General.
- I then met with Malik in 1985 and briefed him on issue, asked his support to motivate Vietnam.
- A business associate I know was close to Malik since the late 70's and the retired brother of the NSC head, and urged both to take a role.
- Around the same time, General Mordani, head of Armed Forces and frequent visitor to Vietnam, was now engaged. Rich and I met with him on an early trip to Indonesia and briefed him on the issue.
- Uncountable meetings/communication between my business friend and Malik, head of their NSC, his brother and another member of the Indonesian team. They began to travel to Vietnam and began the dialogue.
- During the period, Malik engaged the Thai Deputy Prime Minister to help; he was then briefed. The Malaysians were engaged and the Foreign Minister assured Secretary Shultz they were ready to help.
- I continued my support for the private dialogue efforts and provided guidance – separate, humanitarian, long term effort to resolve.
- In 1984, FM Mochtar then became engaged in pushing the issue. Both Ann and I met with him on more than one occasion and exchanged correspondence. He pushed the Vietnamese to respond on POW/MIA in bilateral meetings in Hanoi and Jakarta, continuing their bilateral exchanges on Cambodia since 1983.

- Messages back from Indonesia were becoming more hopeful about a possible shift in attitude. FM Thach went to Jakarta in March, 1984, and Mochtar pressed him
- Indonesians felt timing was getting closer for official USG follow up. Didn't feel comfortable, that the Vietnamese may perceive linkage to Cambodia, etc, as Indonesia was at times over the tips of their skis on Cambodia. So I needed more clarification from a known set of US eyes.
- I enlisted Dr. Larry Ward – Vietnam War NGO and continued going back for humanitarian projects. He was known to the Vietnamese as a humanitarian, was well-respected and always had an interest in the issue.
- October 84, in a meeting with Thach in New York, I told him about Larry, and he acknowledged his humanitarian contributions, and I told him I was interested in his going to Vietnam to follow-up the initiative. He did not object.
- Late Summer/Fall, the Indonesian NSC engaged General Giap, who agreed to cooperate; he was getting messages to the top in Vietnam.
- Briefed Indonesians on Larry, and he met with business contact and Indonesian representative that had been in dialogue with the Vietnamese. They agreed to turn over dialogue in November 84 to Dr. Ward.
- I provided a letter to Thach in December 84 formalizing Larry as my non-government representative.
- To this point, information over a period of months from Indonesian sources in dialogue with Vietnam were targeting our 2 priorities – the live prisoner issue and remains previously recovered. One report said, the live prisoner issue was on the table and “breathers are the primary product” and existed. Also various numbers of remains available, ranging from 200 – 750, an unrealistic high number unless it included seizures from remains traders – most of which were not missing US personnel.
- Dr. Ward went to Hanoi, was well received, no linkage expressed on aid, trade or recognition – simply want the issue resolved. He was armed with several pages of talking points, limitations and responses to hypothetical Vietnamese interventions.
- Word came back through Dr. Ward and the Indonesians: It's time to go, they are ready to discuss all issues seriously.
- VN expressed desire for me to go, that it not be publicized, but a low-key serious discussion. They said Ann was welcome, but did not want more participants. So Ann and I began immediately planning for the trip that would include Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.
- Atmosphere was dramatically different from even the successful trip with Rich in 1984. Within an hour of arrival from the airport, I was in a private meeting with FM Thach for almost 2 hours, while Ann was meeting with Asst. FM Le Mai, Chief of North American Affairs, and Cu Dinh Ba, designated working level officer for POW/MIA.
- Following the session, FM Thach and I joined them for a larger session for 2 hours. After a one-hour break, Mr. Thach hosted a private dinner for us for 2 hours. (Thach – not in collusion with China.)
- After dinner Thach requested another private meeting that lasted 20 minutes.
- When I arrived, I was anxious to get to the key deliverables that I had received from the multiple intermediaries I had engaged since 1983.

- I began in our first session by saying to the FM, I understand I am here to discuss live prisoners and remains repatriations in significant numbers
- I was crestfallen and also encouraged at his immediate response, "No, no, Richard not POW's, but remains." We then went on in detail; he acknowledged they had previously recovered and processed remains – a first admission after years of denial, and a major breakthrough.
- Further he said they are in very large numbers which correlated with messages I previously had from intermediaries. He did not have a specific number, but the clear impression was at least a couple of hundred, because he expressed worry that such a huge turnover at once would expose them to public criticism on the "warehousing" charges.
- Told him I understood, so we discussed the modalities that they would agree to.
- We agreed that incremental turnovers on a sustained basis over a relatively short period of time was workable. If you announced you were turning over remains recovered from your unilateral efforts, it was true, and we would express appreciation for each turnover. He seemed satisfied and said they would initially concentrate on "accessible cases in the Hanoi-Haiphong area" and the DIC list. He said our agreement should not be public as it would damage the effort greatly.

I subsequently wrote up the trip for the record, but did not include the remains admission or live prisoner exchange, fearing a damaging leak. A leak would have caused a breakdown and denials from Hanoi. Did separate White House only memo on this and orally briefed Nat'l Security Advisor Bud McFarlane and the President.

- Thach had previously announced the recovery of 5 remains not yet turned over and asked if we would like to take them back and at least 2 of the 5 were DIC cases from the South, a breakthrough and a first.
- The following day, we were taken to a previously unvisited B-52 crash site on the outskirts of Hanoi – a site which would become, in 1985, the first joint excavation since the end of the war.
- They further agreed to increase the number of technical meetings from 4 to 6 per year which positioned them to turn over remains.
- The final day we had a wrap-up session with Thach for about 30 minutes; the discussions were direct, hospitable, and they provided 2 suites in the government guest home, 2 official sedans, and several enormous meals at the guest house. (Kissinger lied to me 4 times.)
- We also discussed, in detail, reeducation camp inmates, the release of Mathers, the yachtsman in their custody, Amerasians, overall US-SRV relations, Cambodia, the PRC, Economics (Forbes magazine, Baker/Solomon – 1992) Sino-Soviet relations, US-Soviet talks and Star Wars. I briefed the Thai NSC Director and the Secretary General of the Thai MFA. They were not concerned about the talks and said they supported the dialogue on all of the issues.

Subsequently, remains began to be returned. In March, after our departure, 6 were returned including the 2 DIC cases; in July, 26 were returned, the largest turnover since the war. In September, they said more remains would be returned. In December, 7 remains were returned. During this period, they began turning over large numbers of investigation reports at our technical meetings. In April, 21 remains were turned over; 4 more in Sep/Oct 86.

- The 2-year plan was unveiled by Mochtar as a Vietnamese goal 4 months after our departure, and the Vietnamese provided one in Hanoi on the trip that State boycotted for unsatisfactory reasons. Our interlocutor, Vo Dong Giang was equivalent to Dep Sec State. But the senior State representative was pulled from the trip supposedly for protocol reasons and an anonymous spokesman blamed me.

This was an important trip that could seal the Indonesian work, so the White House approved me to lead a trip. I had confidence that when Thach said to come even in his absence, it would be positive and it was. A subsequent breakdown over the 2-year plan led to the Vessey initiative (NYC: Nixon Mask). The White House appointed General Vessey as the POW/MIA Emissary in April 1987.

- This led to mine and Ann's trip in May 1987 to advance the Vessey mission in some of the most painful sessions I've had, when they said there is nothing new here. I threatened to leave. Then we were notified the Vice Foreign Minister wanted a meeting and said they would consider Vessey.

- Vessey made his first trip in August 1987; the Vietnamese agreed to resume cooperation. In August, remains repatriations resumed with 3 in September and 5 in November. In January 1988, they said they had information on remains of 23 that would be turned over, which came in March. In April came 27 more, 25 more in July, 23 more in November and 43 in 1989.

- I was gratified that the agreements reached in 1985 were still intact and they continued until 1990, with one remains repatriation in 1993.

- Now halted – great debate as to whether it was all from their earlier unilateral remains recoveries.

- Ironically, though they should have turned over previously recovered remains at the end of the war and the Paris Peace Accords, along with those subsequently recovered had they not recovered them, they could have been lost due to acidic soil, remains traders or lost locations.

- Thus, in the League-developed and government-endorsed comprehensive proposal of the last 2 year plan, there is an open question, and one way to address it is for Vietnam to provide archival records on their unsuccessful recoveries on the comprehensive list turned over previously – they could be reinvestigated jointly with Stony Beach specialists. The League's Archival Research Committee is presenting a case on Friday that deals directly with this phenomenon.

- The other facet of the 1980s negotiations was to turn a potential disaster into an opportunity, namely the efforts to learn the fate of Robert Schwab.

He is the romantic adventurer who sailed from the Philippines to Vietnam to reunite with his Vietnamese girlfriend he had to abandon as he boarded one of the last flights out of Saigon.

- The Schwab situation became particularly interesting to me after a burst of anger at his foolishness and complications to our ongoing efforts with Vietnam

Previously I had worked on the Glomar Java Sea disaster that caused significant deaths in the ocean off Vietnam's coast and persistent rumors that Vietnam held survivors. Vietnam said they conducted searches in their territorial waters and they were negative. I turned to overhead NASA images, NGO and diplomatic channels to no avail, and we determined there were no survivors.

Also the yachtsman Mather was picked up by the Vietnamese and held for an extended period of time.

In this case, State and I made demands to the Vietnamese to effect his release. My last one was during the March '85 visit outlined earlier. He was released shortly thereafter with a fine.

- But Schwab was different, Glomar became a remains recovery issue and Mather was acknowledged by Vietnam as being in their custody. Schwab, though not missing from the war, could fit the profile if Vietnam held him secretly in confinement. Then it became a test case if our intel confirmed his captivity and/or could we gain an admission. I was determined to pursue it for the family, as well as a test case.

Schwab sent letters to his parents, a friend in Hong Kong, Ann Griffiths and others, telling of his plans before departure. The Filipino who was to mail them failed to do so, but his letter to Hong Kong which he mailed himself arrived. Rob's Step-father came to Washington and met with Ann, and she set up a meeting with both of us for a lengthy discussion.

As with the Glomar Java Sea, we engaged search and rescue efforts, I contacted NASA and Landsat. We determined Rob left the Philippines with 2 sightings on 10 and 19 April 1985 heading toward Vietnam west of Palau. Search and rescue - negative. Alerted JCRC to ask newer Vietnamese refugee arrivals if they knew anything - negative. Asked NGO's to check coast for wreckage or arrival - negative.

This was first raised with Vietnam in July 1985 and several subsequent meetings in Hanoi and New York. Raised in Vietnamese Embassy by our Ambassador to Thailand as well. Reply in Bangkok was depressing - no knowledge or evidence he landed. However, Thach was telling me they are still searching in the South which suggested the possibility of survival, rather than clear evidence of death or he didn't arrive. Meeting in August 85 with Deputy PM and told him Rob was no spy. He promised to look in to matter in the South and reply.

I also delivered a letter from Schwab's father-in-law, in December 85, a humanitarian appeal.

Provided his bio to Thach on NSC letterhead to demonstrate he wasn't CIA or working for the USG. By this time, all except Rich, Ann and I thought he was drowned at sea.

But my NGO contacts in Vietnam reported to me that the family had been contacted and revealed that on June 1, 1985, his girlfriend had been called by district police and was questioned about Schwab. This was followed by 7 more interrogations, the last in September 1985, about the same time I was being told by Hanoi that they had no word yet from the South. This could mean they found his body and evidence of Schwab's communication with her or he was in their custody and were investigating.

Clearly they viewed him as a national security threat or they would not have expended so much energy. I was concerned about his cross-border activities in Laos in the late 1970s when he rightfully believed the issue was being written off.

Unfortunately, we learned from Rob (after his release) that he was suspected of trying to help organize the Montagnard resistance in the highlands where he had worked during the war. This fear was ridiculous on its face, but it shows the paranoia that still existed in some quarters of the Vietnamese government.

So, I felt it was time for a bold roll of the dice and informed a colonel, after a one-on-one with Thach, but out of Thach's earshot as we were breaking up, that I had proof they were holding Schwab in the South which would be serious in our relationship if not cleared up. I asked him to inform Thach, and I would wait for his action. The same message was passed in New York in May 1986.

On May 23 1986, I received a formal letter from the Vietnamese UN mission in New York that they had heard from Hanoi that Schwab was being held by local authorities and Hanoi was contacting them on this matter.

I immediately drafted a letter to Schwab for delivery. They gave it to him and sent he a reply through the Vietnamese.

I called Ann to inform her, but to keep it quiet, more work to be done I heard her scream in a tone that could be heard throughout the office - "Schwab's alive!" I hoped the windows were closed.

We immediately flew to NY on May 30 to meet with Dep FM Son and urged early release and worked out some modalities to assure it was announced together, but not until release, that it would remain a secret until then.

I even suggested the possibility of me flying to pick him up the end of June while I was in Asia for the ASEAN post-ministerial meeting which I would be attending with Secretary Schultz.

Not that simple; we discussed the release with Thach during July discussions in Hanoi at the same time we were firing up our support for the Vietnamese 2-year plan.

I won't bore you, but the following month I was on an US Embassy plane from the Philippines to pick up Schwab in Saigon/Ho Chi Minh City and pay the civil fine from the family for his violation of Vietnam sovereignty, by then a standard practice.

After release papers were signed, Schwab ran to me and gave me a Joe Biden hug. I told him I didn't know whether to hug him or kick him in the butt.

We boarded the plane and I outlined what we went through and briefed him on the upcoming Bangkok press conference and how handle to it and turn this incident into a positive for the POW/MIA issue. He agreed and handled the conference very well. And, the Vietnamese expressed appreciation as to how the whole affair was handled.

I felt we had gained an admission from Vietnam of holding an American in secret, worked out modalities to handle such a situation, obviously with POW's in my mind.

I continued to use this as an example to Vietnam that we could return them sensitively, should a POW/deserter/voluntary stayover or American be found by their authorities. This modality was also in a letter sent by Secretary Schultz that I hand carried to Thach on our 1984 trip in case a live American turned up in any status.

Aside from the challenges in Laos and Vietnam, our domestic challenges grew. The raised public awareness campaign successfully captured the attention of our foreign counterparts and built public support generally, along with major Veteran Groups and important bipartisan support, with a few notable exceptions.

Unfortunately, it also spawned a divisive element of uninformed radicals intent on gaining public attention and backed by irresponsible media outlets, such as tabloids like 20/20 and 60 Minutes which purposely broadcast misinformation despite extensive objective briefings.

They required DoD to issue critiques, the preparation of which robbed valuable time from those consciously working the real issue. It was clear they weren't going to let facts get in the way of a good story.

This continued at such a pace that Rich Armitage sent me a memo after one of his reps, a returned POW, was publicly harassed. Rich was questioning whether the public awareness campaign was worth the price. We exchanged letters and had extensive discussions. But we continued, given the need to show the public support of our efforts to Vietnam, but knew that facts would not get in the way of domestic cockeyed theories.

The vocal negative minority had no relevant expertise like Ann to advise us on POW/MIA issues, inhabiting a state of pristine ignorance of what the work actually involved. (Thach, you should see my gorillas)

They demonstrated at the Lao Embassy, threatened to kidnap Vietnamese diplomats in New York, and early Rolling Thunder participants broke off and rode their motorcycles over the Lao and Vietnamese flags until Ann intervened and convinced them to stop for the good of the mission.

Their campaigns led to absurd accusations that Rich was running drugs, requiring an IG investigation that cleared him. To his credit, he won an unprecedented lawsuit against his accusers – crossing the difficult hurdle of government officials successfully suing non-government critics.

I was accused by the late Congressman Billy Hendon of bribing Congressman John LeBoutillier. LeBoutillier sent a letter to the Lao before a trip, stating that the issue is being run by the CIA/NSC and that both are opposed to cooperation with Laos, that they should not cooperate with Childress and Griffiths.

He even said if mission was not successful, Nat'l Security Advisor Frank Carlucci would relieve me, then Chief of Staff Howard Baker would be successful in shifting the issue from the NSC. LeBoutillier had even lobbied State and the White House to take the job himself.

Lao Minister Soubanh, a real pioneer on cooperation with the US, knew LeBoutillier was a hindrance and didn't believe a word of it, but wanted us to see it. I reported it to Carlucci and State. Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead, whom LeBoutillier knew through family connections, sent a 2-page rebuke to LeBoutillier, telling him that said our visit was successful and that I had the full confidence of the President, citing his actions as deplorable.

Congressman Hendon's destructive work on the issue would also fill a book – from his misinformation efforts, to the Senate Select Committee, to chaining himself to the fence outside the US MIA Office in Hanoi for publicity.

This is the same individual who pushed me to get him appointed as US Ambassador to Laos after his losing reelection bid.

All of us, including Ann and the League, suffered at the hands of people arrested in puberty with their middle school dramas that crumbled to dust. They included a forcible takeover of the League office, for which they were arrested. Personally, I had to get an unlisted phone number due to threats and hundreds of hang-up calls

Nat'l Security Advisor Frank Carlucci and I had boxes of care packages for POWs in Laos dumped on our lawns at home. Elli had to call the bomb squad, then went through the boxes to salvage toothpaste and sundries for donation to the local homeless shelter.

A member of the Senate Select Committee independently made a criminal referral on me to the Justice Department on Hendon bribery charges that were dismissed forthrightly, as the Committee had earlier done.

The Ross Perot damage would also fill a book and delayed Vessey's mission for months, and Bo Gritz delayed the first excavation by a year due to his fantasy Rambo expedition across the border.

And those working the issue from top to bottom were accused of conspiracy and cover-up. DIA came under severe attack. I arranged for the DIA Director to brief the President in the Oval office to reassure them.

The situation reminded me of a Lincoln joke when they were talking about tarring and feathering and running him out of town on a rail. As Lincoln said, knowing the character of his critics, Rich and I felt, like Lincoln, that were it not for the honor of it, we would rather walk.

The other public extreme came from what I refer to as the "Healers" some of whom undermined our priority on POW/MIA. They were a mixture of humanitarians, former anti-war elements such as early VVA and some members of the business community.

But, in contrast to the conspiracy and cover-ups crowd, in most cases you could hold dialogue with them to explain our policy and exchange views in a rational way – and importantly they responded generously to our efforts under the Vessey initiative to facilitate in numerous ways private NGO humanitarian assistance to Vietnam.

By 1991, 55 US based NGOs were issued licenses to work in Vietnam. There were exceptions who felt the POW/MIA issue was raised to punish Vietnam rather than solve it. They burned their hands on the healing stove and those of Vietnam by misleading them.

Some business lobbyists crossed the line and were funneling information from Congress and elsewhere to Hanoi and then returning and repeating Hanoi's positions publicly. There was talk of looking into violations of the Foreign Agent Registration Act from time to time.

The basic message from some of these was to normalize relations and lift the trade embargo, then Vietnam would solve the issue rapidly regardless of Cambodia or any evidence that Vietnam would respond once their objectives were fulfilled.

Our negotiations in the 1980's put us far enough down the path to devise the Roadmap to Normalization which was unfortunately violated in the Clinton Administration by false certifications on the POW/MIA criteria.

But, let me end in the overall spirit of this special meeting commemorating 50 years since your founding. You have an astonishing record through 9 Administrations, both supportive and destructive ones for the issue.

The partnership we established in the Reagan Administration set a path that has led to the remarkable results achieved thus far which the Vietnamese recognize.

Both sides agree more work needs to be done, and the bilateral relationship that now exists should be sufficient to overcome the inevitable bureaucratic blunders that will continue to occur from time to time and you will undoubtedly remain on the firing line until you reach the objective.

Ann has gone from literally breaking the glass on her desk with her fist in frustrated tears during the Carter Administration to being an integral and essential part of every aspect of this issue. She sat next to us through it all.

So I will wrap up by calling for a special prosecutor to investigate if the League was in collusion with the government to achieve the fullest possible accounting. I volunteer to be the first witness saying yes, we colluded, and thank God we did!