

The story of an Indo-Chinese elderly

Commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel
Oai Trieu



The Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel has now past its 10-year milestone. As the Interim Chairman for the Trustee of the hostel, I am privileged to have witnessed many Indo-Chinese elderly move into our hostel and enjoy a high level of hospitality. Though I am not a resident of the hostel, I believe that my story has become part and parcel of the history of the Hostel.

Ninety five years have passed since I was born in Vietnam. My father used to own a small merchant ship. For many years, he shuttled through endless number of ports of Vietnam to earn a living. My family was poor and we lived a frugal life. I was deprived of receiving further education after I completed primary school.

Yet, I was lucky to have an outstanding teacher during my primary school years, who helped me greatly in terms of education and self-improvement. Under his guidance, I learnt about Chinese Literature, Poetry and Chinese Calligraphy. Progressively, I became involved in the Chinese educational profession in Vietnam, teaching in primary schools, secondary schools, and eventually becoming the school principal of a reputable Chinese high school.

As with many other young men, I got married during the height of my career, and settled down in Saigon. My beautiful wife, my lovely children and I lived a simple and comfortable life for some 10 years. However, our happy life came to an abrupt end the day Saigon fell into the hands of the Vietnam Communist Party. That was in 1975.

Unimaginable pain and sorrow ensued. I saw with my very own eyes the undeserved calamities that my friends were suffering. I decided to flee by boarding a small boat. Like many thousands of Indo-Chinese refugees, we risked our lives and braved through the sea without knowing where we were heading. However, we had only one resolve: to seek freedom, a better life for ourselves. Luckily, we were spotted by a United States naval vessel. We were delivered to Guam, which was, at the time, a place where refugees were gathered and later allocated to different destinations. Many refugees chose to go to United States or Canada but I chose to join my son in Taiwan. Later, I moved from Taiwan to Hong Kong where I was asked to be a lecturer at an institute and was invited to deliver speeches at the HKCEC (Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre). For this reason, I feel deeply honored and immensely grateful for this opportunity.

Years later, with the assistance of my daughter, I settled in Australia. I have expected that I would be spending the rest of my life on this blessed territory. I often asked myself, how can I forget my past? How can I erase the memories of pain and torture? How can I not miss my departed friends? Perhaps I should help the “elderly in need” in this country which has accepted me and share my journey with them.

Hence, I gathered my friends, who shared similar experiences, Mr. Phuoc Thang Tran, Mr. Som Sak Ma and others. We built a Memorial Archway--“Pai Lou” on Park Road, Cabramatta, to grieve over the fall of countries in Indochina, to mourn our departed family and friends, to thank the people of Australian and their humanitarian spirit and to reiterate our belief in liberty and democracy. The Archway on Park Road became an emblem of the Indo-Chinese refugees who were starting a new life in Australia. Subsequently, I was encouraged by Dr. Peter Wong and Mr. Phuoc Thang Tran to join the Australian Chinese Charity Foundation, and became a trustee and later took up the position as its Chairperson.

Years later, we established the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel, which brought me a great sense of joy for it has been my dream for many years. It was such a pleasure to see the first group of thirty elderly move into the hostel to spend their remaining years happily with other fellow Indo-Chinese elderly”

Our next step is to expand the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel, to increase the hostel's capacity by fifty-eight suites and to refurbish the existing hostel .

Looking back at the days when I arrived in Australia, I was unable to speak English and I was virtually penniless, what I have achieved is way beyond my imagination.

However, I believe that my escape from Saigon being unharmed and being rescued in the sea, has been the blessings of God. That is why I have been a Christian for the past 20 years.

I believe that the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel symbolises unity and solidarity for the Indo-Chinese, and is also symbolic of Australia's multiculturalism.

We are all familiar with one of the fundamental Confucian teachings, "To honor the aged of others as we honor our own, and to care for the children of others as we care for our own". These are the basic principles which we must abide by in every aspect of life.

The fact that we have been able to provide high standards of care to so many Indo-Chinese elderly is owing to our generous sponsors, our devoted trustees, staff and volunteers. Without their commitment, the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel would not be what it is today.

I hope that in the years to come we will continue to give our contributions to the hostel in order to provide higher-quality services to the elderly.

