

Vietnamese Family and Camas, Wash.,

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Special to The New York Times

CAMAS, Wash., June 1—Not long ago a soothsayer in South Vietnam told Nguyen Dinh Tri that he would have 10 more years of wealth in his life—but that he must keep his mustache to insure the prediction's validity.

Mr. Tri, a 55-year-old affluent construction contractor, kept the mustache—and lost everything he owned.

But the South Vietnamese refugee, one of the first people released from refugee camps by United States officials to begin the difficult resettlement process, is well on his way to forging a new life in this coun-

This is the second of several articles that will follow selected Vietnamese refugees through various stages of adjustment to life in the United States.

try. His initial success and minor difficulties so far may provide encouragement and valuable lessons to more than 100,000 other refugees, who will be experiencing much the same transition in the weeks and months ahead.

In his first few days here in southwestern Washington State, Mr. Tri, once a member of the nationalist Vietminh, already has enrolled to pay Social Security taxes, purchased a used car, got a driver's license, paid courtesy calls on his new neighbors and obtained full-time employment in a woolen mill for his sister, his wife, his oldest son and himself.

The other night he worked overtime and still did his English lessons. And next week he will open a bank account for his family. "We try," he said, "every day we try. We are tired, but we try."

Neighbors Impressed

So far, the Tri family has impressed new friends and neighbors with their confidence, their manners and their quiet determination.

Last week, for instance, Mrs.

Adjusting to Each Other

Louis Rice interrupted her husband's funeral preparations to leave a sack of groceries with the new neighbors. That night, all 13 members of the Tri family trooped over to the Rice home to express their gratitude and condolences in the best English they could muster. Mrs. Rice cried.

Each afternoon after work and each evening after dinner the entire Tri family—from 4-year-old Tram on up to 81-year-old Grandpa Le—studies English (the word "yo-yo" ignited gales of giggles the other night) around a table for several hours. They use books, newspapers, dictionaries, Bibles and even margarine labels. "What means lecithin?" visitors are asked.

The family's eagerness to learn and their presence in this quiet paper-mill community of 6,000 up the Columbia River from Portland, has prompted dozens of local residents to stop by, to telephone good wishes and to offer help ranging from clothing to cabbage. In some of the clothes, supposedly outgrown by American children, the Tris have found brand-new price tags.

"I think they will work out fine," said Glenn Farrell, a merchant whose grandparents came here from Ireland and Switzerland.

Some Surprises

This is not to say that the first 18 days of life in the United States have been simple. It has been an uneasy time for the family, filled with concern, surprises, bewilderingments and many unknowns. A pop-out ice-cube tray without handles can be a puzzle when first encountered. The driver's license exam talked of strange things like "shoulders" on the road. And the foot-pedal drinking fountain was temporarily mystifying.

There are, of course, more

difficult hurdles ahead. What will be the town's reaction, for instance, when Mr. Tri's two sisters and his brother-in-law and their families, a total of 30 more people, arrive in town? What will the Tri children think when they learn that many American youngsters have their own bedroom and do not share quarters with four sisters? Or when the traditional and unquestioned Vietnamese family hierarchy is challenged by teen-age peer pressures?

For now, those worries seem distant. Of more immediate concern is the search for new living quarters in Camas. The Tri family has been sharing the six rooms and one bathroom in the home of the James Collinses (he is 34 years old, she is 32), who just one month ago welcomed their first two children—twins left at a Catholic orphanage in Saigon last winter.

Mr. Collins volunteered his

home to refugees through the Catholic Relief Services, which flew the family here from southern California and which is providing \$30 a day in aid for the first few weeks.

"You'd think it would be terribly crowded with 17 people here," said Mr. Collins, a former Navy Seabee who spent 18 months in South Vietnam, "but it's worked out beautifully."

The Tris have noted what time the Collinses bathe the babies and take showers, and the bathroom is somehow always free then. Most meals, prepared Vietnamese style, are cooked by the Tris. When Mrs. Collins is at work as a typesetter and her husband is away managing the six modest houses they rent out, the Tri children skillfully care for the babies.

And when Colleen Collins

goes to do the laundry, she finds it done and folded already.

Mr. Tri said: "They do so much for us. We must avoid, how you say, to imposing on them. I hope some day I can help people like they help us."

The help has been abundant

and from many persons. And Mr. Tri notes each gesture on a pad of paper for later repayment, perhaps by a big party.

Marcy Morris slipped Mr. Tri \$5 when she learned he had given up his cherished evening beer. Jim McConnell has offered a house rent-free, which Mr. Tri will accept if he cannot find a house by himself.

Paul Noble delivered 100 pounds of potatoes. Another neighbor brought some fruit she canned last year. And Pacific Pride Farms gave a station-wagon full of vegetables and fruits. Then, Del Terrill dropped off a sack of groceries. "I was passing by anyway," he said.

Dr. Thomas Williams is providing free dental care. And someone found the family a Buddhist temple in Portland, Ore. Mr. Tri's father uses a little table covered with fresh flowers as an altar.

At work this week, a woman noticed that Mr. Tri's wife had difficulty seeing. That afternoon she took her to an eye doctor and paid the \$71 bill for glasses.

The Tris got no special hiring treatment at the nearby Pendleton woolen mill. "These jobs

were going begging because you can get \$86 a week on unemployment," said Bob Smith, the personnel manager.

The Tris now earn about \$3.40 an hour each.

"They are sure hard workers," said the foreman, Dave Omar, who 25 years ago fled from Communist China.

There was some grumbling over the Vietnamese at a union meeting, but the complainer got no support. And Iris Giesler, local president of the Textile Workers Union, supported the hirings.

The Tris' workday begins about 5 A.M. After a breakfast of eggs, Nguyen Ngoc Chau, the 16-year-old son, goes outside to clean the dew off the nine-year-old Ford's windshield. Mr. Tri bought the vehicle from Harry Goodnight for \$300 with \$75 down. Next week, when he gets his first paycheck, he will make the next payment.

The driver's license exam is likely to present more of a problem for refugees, especially those not proficient in English. The license will be a necessity, however, if the refugees are to become self-dependent.

At work along with Mike Baseden, Mr. Tri oils the wool-carding machines and then keeps the hoppers full of wool. The women inspect and correct defects in the woven material, which goes into lumberjack-style shirts. They carry lunch in brown paper bags—salami sandwiches.

At 3:30 the family heads home to relax for an hour before English lessons, sometimes monitored by neighborhood children. Meanwhile, Nguyen Hieu Hanh, the oldest daughter, is making dinner—sausage, eggs, soup and rice.

There are occasional evening shopping trips to the Safeway store in Camas, where the women still try to smell the fresh meat through the plastic wrapping. "I guess you like rice," she said Debbie Hayes, a checkout girl, as she rang up the 100-pound bags.

"Every once in a while you



Nguyen Dinh Tri at his new job at the Pendleton Woolen Mills.

see the children walking down the street," said Gene Hagen, the Chamber of Commerce manager. "They seem very well behaved. At least they haven't put soap in the fountain, like local kids do."

The fountain, the soothing sounds of which dominate the shady main street where passers-by wave to merchants through shop windows, is a monument to the nine Camas men who died in Vietnam.

At home Mr. Tri works to learn the day's 30 new English words. Then he pauses. "We leave everything in Vietnam," he said. "Sometimes there is nostalgia. But I regret nothing. I like freedom more."



The New York Times/David Falconer

The Tri family gathered on the patio of James Collins, seated on railing, for their nightly English lesson. Mr. Collins served 18 months in Vietnam as a Navy Seabee.