

# Saigon Adoptions Sped; 6-Month Job Cut to Week

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EUGENE, Ore., April 6 — A man from the Middle West called the Holt Adoption Program, a nonprofit international adoption service, and said, "I'm a very important person and I've got to have one of those Vietnamese children."

A Congressman from the East Coast said the State Department had denied passports for his wife, daughter and sister-in-law to serve as his observers in Saigon.

"What are you going to do about it?" he demanded.

An elderly man from Kansas called to say he had collected \$1,200 in donations in less than five hours. He wanted to know how he should send it to Eugene.

Since flights carrying Vietnamese children to the United States began last week, Holt Program telephone lines have been kept busy.

The Holt Adoption Program, one of seven international adoption agencies operating in South Vietnam, flew 408 Vietnamese children from its Saigon center to Seattle this weekend, the plane arriving early this morning.

All the children have been assigned to American parents, according to Wink Guthrie, the program's information director.

Mr. Guthrie said the flight had been possible because of close cooperation between the State Department and the South Vietnamese Government.

"Several high officials in Saigon really stuck their necks out for us," said Mr. Guthrie.

South Vietnam provided the exit visas and the State Department provided the entry papers.

"That's six months of legal work done in a week," said Mr. Guthrie. Vietnamese adoptions usually require up to 83 documents.

Hundreds of couples across the country have been trying to apply for adoption of Vietnamese children, Mr. Guthrie said, but have been told, "it is impossible." Families getting children now applied 18 months ago.

The program has been operating in Vietnam since 1972, when it sent three children to the United States. Seven children were processed in 1973 and 300 last year.

Mr. Guthrie explained that generally South Vietnamese Government officials bring the children to the Holt center in Saigon, where they are fed and taught about American ways of living.

"These are the most Americanized foreign children you have ever seen," he said. "In Saigon, they were eating scrambled eggs and singing Jingle Bells."

## Preparing for More

The weekend flight emptied the center. One hundred nurses, pediatricians and teachers have remained to prepare to process more children.

The Saigon orphanage has plenty of supplies, most of it from American military stores left behind in 1973. The program will continue to operate in Saigon as long as possible.

"There is no panic," Mr. Guthrie said. "It is very quiet there, though ominous. We are not going to get involved in a panic airlift. We're not going to scoop up every child we see and flee the country."

Mr. Guthrie said the Holt personnel in Saigon had been told there were more than 900,000 children in South Vietnam.

The Holt Adoption Program was started in 1955 after Harry Holt, Oregon lumberman and rancher, adopted four Korean children. The resulting publicity brought calls and letters to Mr. Holt and his wife, Bertha, requesting information about the adoptions.

He formed the Holt Adoption Program and set up an orphanage in Korea. Mr. Holt died in 1964, but Mrs. Holt has continued the work.

The program is financed by private contributions and adoption processing fees, Mr. Guthrie said.

"We just pray that the Lord will find it in His will to see that we get the necessary funds," he said.