

WXPost APR 29 1975

'Instant Families,' Cash Pay

By Terry Rambo

Special to The Washington Post

CLARK AIR BASE, Philippines, April 28—"I've got one daughter who's older than my wife," one American said, laughing, as he put together an instant family of Vietnamese refugees a few days ago while he waited in line at the evacuation processing center in Saigon.

A friend replied, "Just standing here, I acquired another daughter."

As the evacuation of Vietnam was stepped up last week, many official Americans took advantage of loosely drawn emergency guidelines to form "families" and fly them to safety.

There have been allegations here that these guidelines have provided a pipe-

line for sending prostitutes to the United States and charges that some Americans demanded and received money to enable wealthy Vietnamese to escape, possibly working as an organized ring to sell evacuation seats.

In some cases, the evacuation guidelines have been bent to send favorite bar girls or prostitutes to the United States. In far more cases, the beneficiaries have been Vietnamese who are relatives but outside the immediate family of legitimate evacuees, or who are longtime personal friends and professional colleagues of Americans.

One U.S. employee of the embassy who, when last seen, had sponsored 19 Vietnamese as immediate family members to get them on evacuation flights, cursed

the embassy for not having organized a legal way to do it.

"I've been an army officer and all that," he argued. "This is the first time in my life that I've ever committed perjury, but I can't believe the embassy anymore. They'll never get any Vietnamese out."

Initially, as it became clear that the final defeat of the Saigon government was only weeks away, there was a rush by Americans to marry their girl-friends and common-law wives. Many had been living with the women for years and had merely delayed formalizing their relationships because of the heavy expense involved in fighting the papers through the bureaucracy.

Many faced agonizing decisions. A Fulbright ex-

change professor debated for weeks whether to marry his beautiful but uneducated girl friend, fearing that she would not be able to adapt to life in American academia.

After the fall of Nhatrang he decided to go ahead and spend the next two weeks in a full-time effort to get marriage papers completed. A week ago, he and his new wife flew out of Tansonnhut for Clark Air Base. A friend who met him there recently found that he now believed that he had made the right decision.

On April 20, all requirements to produce legal papers to get onto evacuation flights were dropped, and the outward rush began. Many Americans who had been staying on in Saigon in the hope that they would be able to get Vietnamese

offs Seen Speeding Evacuation

friends and relatives out with them began to flow into Tan Son Nhut in seemingly endless streams.

No official announcement that documents were no longer required was made, but a blackboard outside the processing point stated: "Guidance from U.S. Embassy for dependents are: 1) Legal spouses?, 2) Children of spouse or U.S. citizen, 3) Spouse's mother and father." The question mark after "legal spouse" was the not very subtle give away.

At the processing center, Americans were required only to sign an affidavit that the people with them were relatives in the allowed categories and to guarantee to support them after their arrival in the United States. No supporting documents were required, and no officials examined the Vietnam-

ese claimed as dependents to see if they matched their descriptions.

Instant families emerged, as Americans manipulated the embassy guidelines. The wife of one senior U.S. AID official showed up with nine "children," including the rector of the Tu Duc Polytechnic University. A 30-year-old American scholar listed five university students, all in their mid-20s, as his sons and daughters. Vietnamese friends of an American reporter uncorked a bottle of champagne to celebrate his "marriage" to a Vietnamese professor. Her nephew and niece, now his "children", joined in the toast to "peace and an early return to Vietnam."

Several refugees here say that they paid Americans in Saigon large sums of money

to sponsor them on evacuation flights.

One woman said she paid an American \$1,000 to get her out. The American disappeared, the woman said, and she was forced to find another sponsor.

Another woman, from a very wealthy family, told a longtime personal friend that she had paid \$20,000 to an unidentified American who listed her and nine others on an evacuation flight manifest. This American did not accompany her on the flight, and the woman thinks that he was part of an organized ring selling places on the flights.

As in any such large-scale event, many different motivations were at work, from the basest to the highest.

There are rumors among American evacuees here

that some sponsors were bringing out prostitutes in order to assure themselves of an income on return to the United States.

Even if true, such cases are clearly in the tiny minority. Most evacuees were taking their wives and children out, in any case, and merely bent the rules a bit to get out their wife's sister or brother or other close relatives, an extremely important matter to the family-centered Vietnamese.

American government officials, scholars, businessmen and journalists who sponsored longtime friends and colleagues simply were unwilling to walk out on friendships that date back a decade or more. So when the chance came, they signed the affidavits and damned the consequences.