

# Refugees Start Settling Here

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Kenneth Quinn, a State Department official who until a week ago lived a peaceful, middle-class life in Alexandria, is now the chief provider for a family of 12. The 10 newcomers are his wife's relatives, Vietnam war refugees who have arrived at his two-bedroom home to begin a new life.

Quinn is busy placing six children — ages 5 to 20 — in school, filling out applications for college scholarships, seeking English tutoring, shopping for clothes, looking for jobs, and house hunting. He said he is also trying to maintain the dignity of a family which has lost everything.

"It's another full time job," Quinn said yesterday. "But I'm glad they're here."

Other families in the Washington area

have undergone similar transformations in past weeks as the first wave of more than 100 Vietnamese refugees arrived.

They are the forerunners of what State Department officials believe will be some 10,000 war refugees who will settle in and around Washington.

A State Department refugee specialist believes Washington will get proportionally a greater share of the 130,000 refugees than the rest of the country. This is because a large Vietnamese community is established here, and because the area is home for U.S. government and ex-government employees who have friends and in-laws coming from Vietnam. About 10 percent of the 15,000 Vietnamese in the nation have settled here.

The first arrivals here are mostly

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women and children. Many were members of upper-class Saigon families who had relatives already living in the Washington area.

Most do not speak English. The professionals among them—teachers, doctors, dentists, lawyers and pharmacists who had rewarding careers in Vietnam—are having difficulty finding comparable jobs because of a lack of American-required training and licenses.

Despite these difficulties, the first arrivals say their strongest emotions are excitement, gratitude, and relief that they no longer have to worry about war.

"Everyone here seems so free to go where they want, you don't have to worry about the communists," Kim Oanh Cook of Falls Church said of the immediate reactions of her four newly arrived relatives. "They are impressed they don't have to bargain when they go to market and they can buy as much rice as they want. And they are impressed that they can get in a car and take off for hundreds of miles."

At least 24 Vietnamese and Cambodian refugee children have enrolled in Washington area schools within the past two weeks, although school officials cautioned the number may be far higher.

Marcello R. Fernandez, director of the District's bilingual education program and himself a Cuban refugee, estimates 2,000 refugee students eventually will be enrolled in metropolitan area schools.

At Alexandria's T. C. Williams High School yesterday Le Phoung Nguyen, 18, sat attentively in an 11th grade American history class as the teacher explained the events leading up to the Great Depression of the 1930's. Teacher John Foregach said, "I'm not sure Phoung picked up any of it because she doesn't speak English."

Interviewed later, Phoung managed, "I speak little English." To help her overcome this she attends four periods a day of special English classes for foreign-language-speaking students that T. C. Williams and other area schools have had for a several of years.

T. C. Williams teachers said Phoung's adjustment since she enrolled April 30 has been made more difficult by the death of one of her brothers six weeks ago in Vietnam. Wednesday Phoung unexpectedly began to cry during one of her classes. Her father, a former Vietnamese army colonel, later explained to the teachers that Wednesday was the 58th day following her brother's death, which is a Buddhist day of mourning.

"This is the first time I've ever been really happy to pay my taxes," said Everett Bumgardner, a State Department Refugee specialist. He has nine refugees in his Arlington home and





By Linda Wheeler—The Washington Post

**Le Phoung Nguyen, 18, who speaks little English sits in an American history class at T. C. Williams High.**

nine more expected this weekend.

The Arlington school system, he said, received his five refugee children "with open arms" and immediately scheduled them into classes where English is taught as a second language. "I was thinking of contesting my tax reassessment, because it was so high this year, but now I'm not going to do it," Bumgardner said.

Bumgardner, searching for low- and middle-income housing, says he can't find any in Northern Virginia. "When you tell some people you want it for Vietnamese refugees, they start turning funny colors and say they haven't got any rentals." Bumgardner, like Quinn and others, said they are not seeking public assistance "because this is our responsibility."

Quinn, who is looking for a home big enough for 12 persons, found a different reaction. When he told a realtor in Prince George's County that he needed a big-

ger home because of refugees, the agent lowered the price of a house by \$2,000. "He seemed to be moved," Quinn said.

The director of a Catholic charity agency in Arlington said he has received numerous offers of temporary housing from Americans, but that he has received no requests from Vietnamese.

Most Vietnamese are opposed to temporary housing because they do not want to divide their families and are uncertain of their relationship with strange Americans, said Tuy Can Bullington, the Vietnamese wife of a State Department official.

Nguyen Anh, the wife of Arlington physician Nguyen De, has 26 people in her four-bedroom home, with 22 more expected soon. "We just try to make it; so far we make it all right," she said.

It would be difficult for her relatives to stay in temporary housing, she said, because they do not want to impose on others. They feel shame, she said, because

they had to leave their established lives in Vietnam and suddenly are dependent on the mercy of others.

Like other refugees, she said their most immediate need is for tutoring in English.

Difficulty with English is keeping some refugees out of the job market, according to interviews with relatives. Others, like three adults staying with the Bumgardner family, have taken menial jobs at minimum salaries. They held professional jobs in Saigon.

"They want to improve their English, save some money while they live with us, buy new clothes for interviews, take some training courses, and get better jobs," Bumgardner said.

Although the two Vietnamese food stores in Arlington and two restaurants in Washington expect an increase in business with the influx of refugees, most Vietnamese interviewed yesterday said they had little difficulty adapting to American food.

At first, said Thanh Mahoney, her two children did not like pork chops and tomato sauce. "Now they like hamburgers and hot dogs already," she said. The children have been here two weeks.

Kim Cook says she can prepare a standard Vietnamese dish for six by cooking two pounds of rice, a pound of meat and some vegetables. Fish-heads, given away by supermarkets, make an excellent soup, she said.

The traditional Vietnamese soup, pho, can be made by mixing ginger, cloves, onions, cinnamon, rice noodles available at local markets, chuck roast cut into thin strips, and onions and mint. Boil that with a lot of bones all day long "and you have pho," said Mrs. Cook.

Fortunately, Mrs. Cook said, Nuoc Mam, the fermented fish sauce that Vietnamese use with every meal, can be purchased here at Thai, Philippine and Chi-

nese stores. Nuoc Mam, Mrs. Cook explained, is made by stacking dead fish in an urn, covering the urn with a rock and letting it stand in the sun for six months. The juices from this is nuoc mam, a salty condiment with an unforgettable odor.

Vietnamese traditionally are gardeners, and many here want to get their hands in the soil, Mrs. Cook said. "My problem is my husband (a State Department official) likes his big green lawn," she said. "Maybe when he is away traveling I will rent a plow and we will rake up half the lawn and surprise him with a nice big garden."

*Contributions for Vietnamese refugees are being received by Catholic Charities, affiliated with the U.S. Catholic Conference, at 534-7161 and 526-4100 and at the Vietnam Refugee Fund (528-5500), and the Emergency Aid for Vietnam Refugees (546-5008).*