

7-8-75
SF
Chen

Small Town Match for Docs



South Vietnamese refugee Dr. Pham Van Hoang has settled in Loup City, Neb., with his family

New York Times photo

Loup City, Neb.

It isn't really so unlikely a matchup as it might appear — either for Loup City or for Dr. Pham Van Hoang and Dr. Phung Minh Tri and their families.

They are Vietnamese refugees who have been catapulted suddenly by political and medical necessity from the upper strata of urban society in their home country into the life of this

little farming community on the Great Plains.

American physicians just don't seem to want to stay very long in places like Loup City, a community of 1400 people spread out neatly along Dead Horse Creek and the Loup (Wolf) river in the undulating corn-wheat-and-cattle country.

Loup City has had six doctors in the last six years.

The town constantly lives with the danger faced by other Nebraska communities that are said to be short a total of 200 doctors — that it will be left with no physician at all.

But the small-town life is all right with Hoang, 41, and Tri, 46, former classmates at Saigon Medical School. In May they, their wives and children were huddled in tents at Camp Pendleton,

freezing at night, standing in line six hours a day for food and wondering what lay ahead.

What lay ahead was an offer from Loup City: Come and help out in our town, and we will set you up and support you until you are on your feet and licensed to practice in the U.S.

Weary, not knowing anything about Nebraska or its people, the doctors asked for

a guarantee in writing. They got it, and the bargain was struck.

Now, less than two months after fleeing their home cities of Saigon and Can Tho, the Tri and Hoang families are settling into classic white-clapboard houses on quiet side streets here. The doctors are two of 27 Vietnamese physicians being brought to rural Nebraska from Camp Pen-

dleton.

They are trying to forget their shattered lives at home. There they were of the upper class, sons and daughters of businessmen and landlords, with active practices and comfortable holdings in property and stocks.

The two families feared that because of their wealth and position, and because of Hoang's many American associations and Tri's former post as an Army officer, that the Communists would have forced them into hard labor, possibly killed them, and taken their children away and put them into camps.

And so they left, bringing little but the chance to make a new life based solely on their skills. They've made a start in Nebraska.

New York Times