

SFChronicle

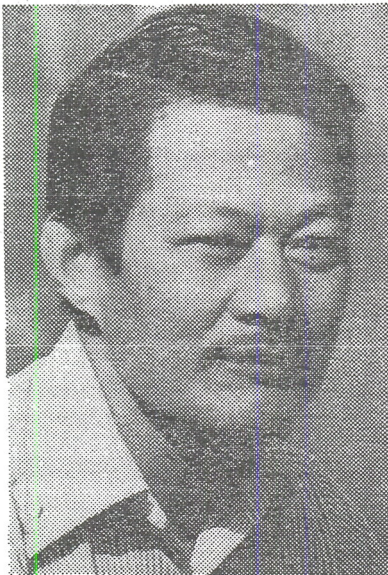
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The Generals In Search Of a Job

By Kevin Leary
Chronicle Correspondent

Hope Village,
Placer county

General Tran Van Minh, late of
the South Vietnamese Air Force,



GEN. TRAN VAN MINH
A humble new start

sat on a wooded hillside and dreamed the impossible dream that someday he and his family will be able to return to their home in Saigon.

In the interim, the 43-year-old three-star general, who was commander in chief of the South Vietnamese Air Force until the Saigon government fell last April, needs a job badly — almost any job.

Minh and many of the 335 displaced persons at the resettlement encampment 12 miles northeast of Auburn cling to the faint hope that somehow there will be an uprising in South Vietnam and their Communist conquerors will be overthrown.

"In time we hope the people of the United States will change their minds and understand what the Communists are doing," said Minh, straining to be understood in this difficult language of his adopted country.

"But it's too early to think about that now," he said. "First we must learn the language of

America, then learn a trade so we can support our families."

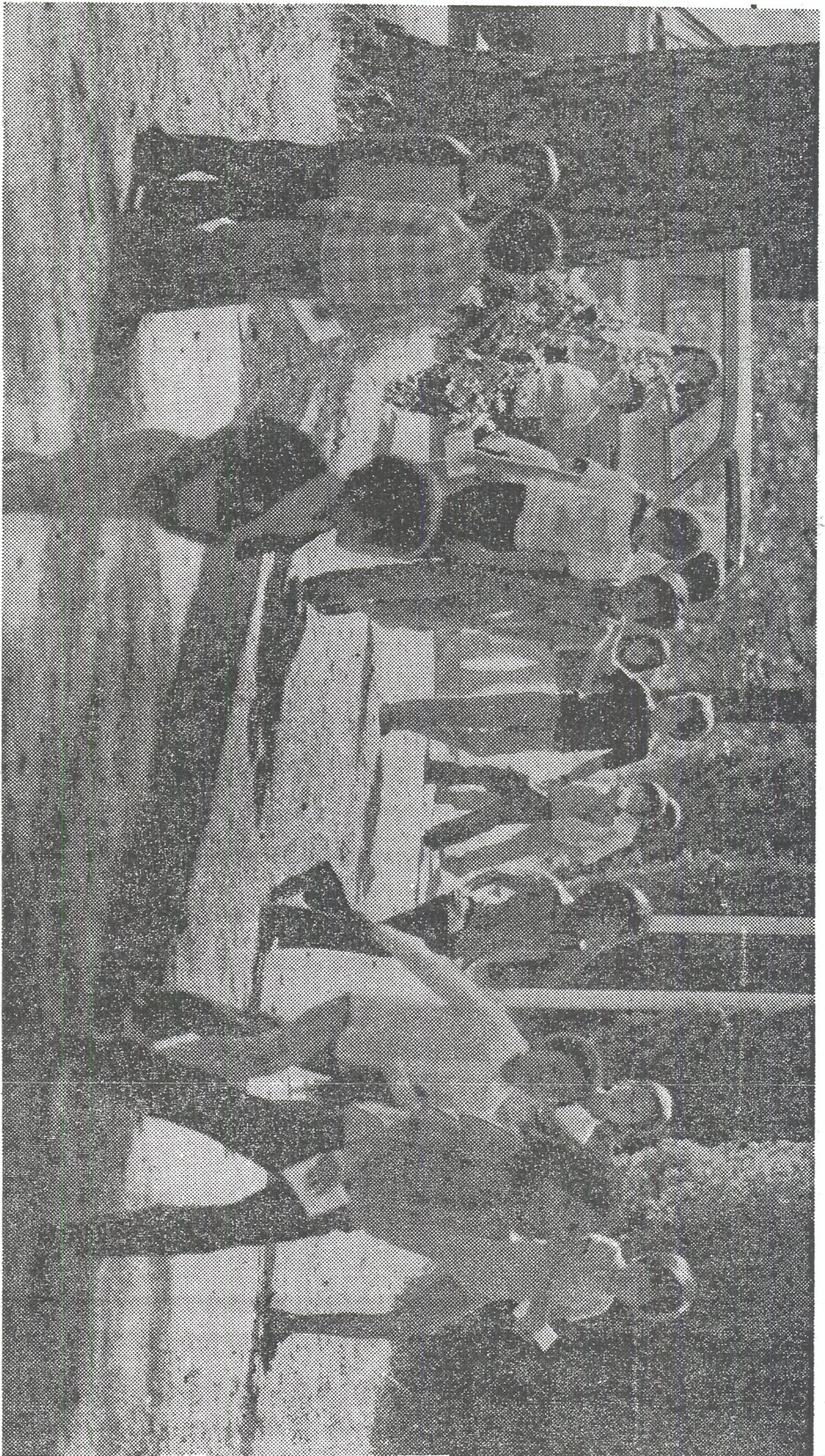
So while he muses about returning to his homeland, Minh, who six months ago was unquestionably one of the most powerful men in his country, thinks about a humbler career as a mechanic, a farmer or a tradesman.

Although Minh's fall was steeper than most Vietnamese refugees, his case is not unique at the facility, which is chock full of former military brass, professional men and their families who fled Vietnam just before the Communist takeover.

Brigadier General Huynh-Ba



An entrance gate at the camp says 'Welcome to Hope Village'



Vietnamese children left an outdoor class in basic American.

Photos by Dave Randolph

Dinh, once division commander at Bien Hoa military complex, wants to start from scratch as a mechanic, if he can get the training.

Nguyen Ngoc Oanh, another Air Force brigadier general and civil engineer, is willing to take almost any kind of construction job.

Another general considers himself fortunate to have landed work as a laborer in a Southern California Steel mill at \$2.10 an hour, the minimum wage.

One of Hope Village's success stories revolves around General Nguyen Chuc, a cabinet minister in Vietnam. Now he manages a service station in Loomis, where he employs his whole family.

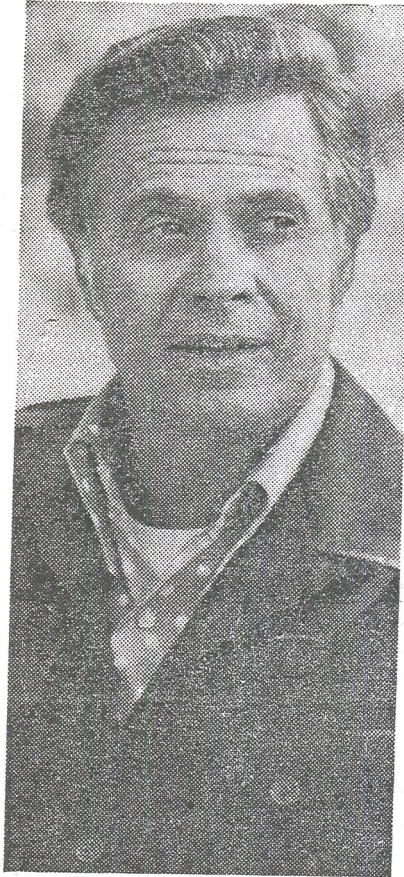
Others among the refugees here include a test pilot, a captain of a Vietnamese naval vessel who supplemented his military salary by driving a bus on weekends; and an attorney who served six years as a senator in the South Vietnamese legislature.

They are all looking for work.

"That's what we're here for," said Jack Bailey, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel, who is the director of the camp.

"We're here to get these people jobs and to keep them off welfare.

"And the ones we've placed are working out well because they are willing to work. Most of these people got out of Vietnam at the last minute with nothing but what they were wearing," he said.



JACK BAILEY
Camp director

Bailey is personally responsible for sponsoring most of the 1800 refugees who will eventually pass through Hope Village. More than 700 have already been placed

from there.

He was in Saigon during the last days of the war and signed the papers that allowed most of these families to get out of the country.

Hope Village is unique because it provides the only halfway house for the refugees. It is a middle-ground between the huge resettlement camps and a normal life. It offers the refugees a pleasant, slow-moving atmosphere, where they can learn about American culture without having it crammed down their throats.

For the refugees, it is something of a cultural decompression chamber.

Children attend nearby schools during the day, and after school they attend classes in basic "American," learning how to order a meal in a restaurant, how to apply for a driver's license and simply how to get along outside the village's gates.

When classes are out, the clean Sierra air is filled with the sound of Vietnamese children chirping at play and the adults' halting English practice: "How-are-you-today?" (pause) "I-am-fine-thank-you."

But time is running out for Hope Village and the remaining refugees. The lease expires in October, and Bailey is working non-stop to place his charges wherever he can find them work.