



# A "Rags Tale"

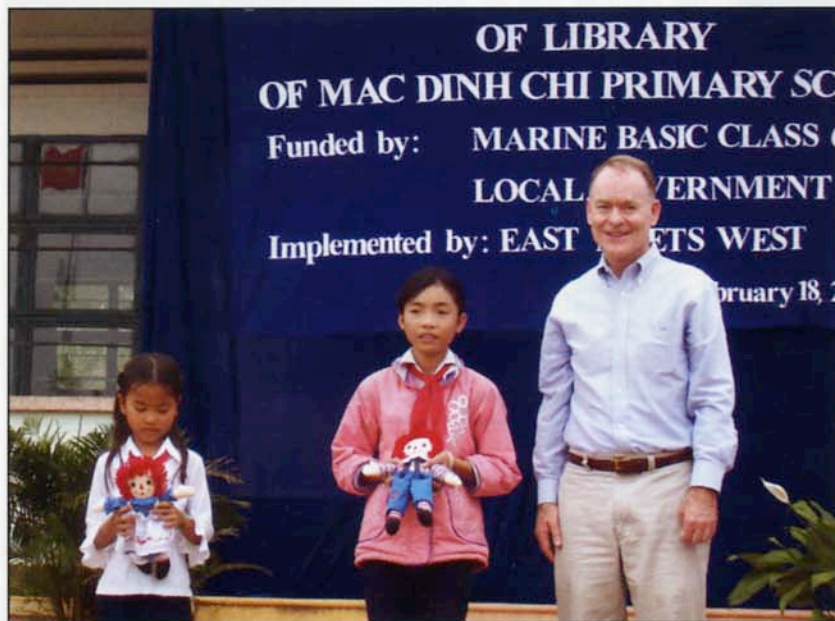
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By Tom and Joni Gruelle Wannamaker

*My friend Jack Wells, retired Marine Lt. Col., who served with H Battery 3/11 1st Marine Division 1968-69, sent this article he wrote (as Raggedy Ann). Jack, who was a key person in this project by East Meets West, personally delivered some of the dolls to Vietnam. — Tom.*

**F**or us dolls who spend most of our time in the storeroom, the word quickly spread about the adventures of Traveling Ann II's trip to Wyoming and Utah.

Little did we know that two of us would soon be given another Marine mission of kindness and generosity in keeping with the Raggedy Ann and Andy tradition. Well, the word finally came down that a storeroom Ann and Andy would be



*Ly, Phuong and Colonel Jack Wells*

getting "PCS" orders (Permanent Change of Station) to a very small village in the central part of Vietnam. We had always heard of the deep impact that the long ago war in Vietnam had on those who served there.

Traveling Ann II had told us of visiting the cemetery where Marine Lieutenant Dennis King rests and how deeply Tom missed his friend. Tom briefed us before the trip that we were going to be special treasures of two Vietnamese girls who live near a small village called *An My*. The girls were selected by their local school officials to receive Andy and I, based on their good grades in 4th grade along with their difficult home lives — helping their single moms with the chores.

Phuong's father died when she was very young and her mother has to work very hard to support Phuong and her older brother and sister. Ly is in the same grade as Phuong and lost her father also when she was young. Her family is so poor that she never got to have any toys like some of the other girls.



*Jack and Tom's comrades are listed on this wall.*

Many years ago in 1968, Phuong and Ly's grandparents had an even more difficult life. *An My* village was in the countryside about an hour from the bigger city of *Da Nang*, and the war was fought all around where her grandparents lived. Peace had finally come to this area, but the soil was still not very fertile and would only yield two crops of rice each year—which meant that most of the villagers in *An My* were still very poor. Many of the homes had finally been rebuilt, after having been destroyed during the war.

It was very exciting when we finally arrived at the Mac Dinh Chi Primary School. We could see that the 190 first through fifth grade students were already sitting on little red plastic stools to watch the official dedication of the new school library. At the end of the ceremony, Andy and I would be presented to Phuong and Ly. A former Marine friend of Tom's, Jack Wells, would be making the presentation to the girls. I could see that the girls were nervous, having to stand up before all their classmates, the government and school officials plus this small group of former Marine lieutenants and their families.

These Marines were representing the many Marines they served with in the long ago war. These Marines had contributed money to build the beautiful two room library. Andy and I are now sharing our friendship and love with Phuong and Ly, and we are starting to get used to our new homes. It certainly is more exciting than being in the dark storeroom at the Museum. We are a little homesick, but Tom had hinted to both of us that he may see us at the school sometime next year.