

Sponsors heed ex-refugee's testimony



Special guests John Chu (left) and Louise Cornblum were delighted to see Don Barnes (second from left) of Parents Without Partners present a cheque on behalf of his organization to the Georgetown Chapter of Operation Lifeline. Accepting the donation last Wednesday night was Don Long, co-ordinator of the chapter committee which has been working to arrange Halton Hills' contribution to the worldwide fund to save the Boat People of Southeast Asia. (Herald photo)

By PAUL DORSEY
Herald staff writer

A former Vietnamese diplomat's emotion-charged description of how his countrymen choose to risk death on the open sea rather than live under Hanoi's domination has helped several Georgetown residents decide to sponsor the immigration of at least three more families of "Boat People".

Georgetown will become the new home for the refugee families if local sponsors who pledged their support at a special meeting last Wednesday are approved by Immigration Canada officials.

Some of the refugee's personal trials and tragedies were recounted for their Georgetown benefactors by John Do Trung Chu, formerly a senior diplomat for the South Vietnamese government and now head of Toronto's Vietnamese Association.

Most if not all of the reservations expressed by would-be sponsors were resolved by Louise Cornblum, a Don Mills housewife who adopted a refugee family three weeks earlier and described the initial meeting and the times they have shared thus far as "the most heavenly experience I've ever known."

THREE MORE

Assurances offered by Mr. Chu and Mrs. Cornblum apparently had the effect of affirming decisions already made by many of those in attendance, who indicated in forms distributed by the Georgetown rescue committee that they will sponsor at least three more families.

One family had already found sponsors the previous Monday evening among officials of the Georgetown committee and others: Don Long, Howard McLean, Lynn Ferguson, Al Gogan and an anonymous donor had signed immigration documents indicating their readiness to support a refugee family upon their arrival in Canada.

Speaking in a voice often choked with emotion, John Chu recounted stories about the Boat People he has heard during recent weeks from the refugees themselves, newly arrived in the Toronto area. As head of the area's Vietnamese Association, he greets new arrivals at Toronto International Airport on an almost daily basis, at times waiting through the night.

HIGH RANK

Prior to the fall of Saigon, capital of South Vietnam, in the spring of 1975, Mr. Chu was the country's senior diplomat as well as its consul-general to Indonesia, charge d'affaires in

Australia and economic and cultural counselor to Thailand. Used to working and living among the relative luxuries that were common to his high rank, Mr. Chu found himself unable to return home from Toronto, where he was visiting his daughter, because of the Communist take-over.

Before assuming his present position, Mr. Chu found employment in Toronto as an apartment building superintendent, a job which ironically saw him settling disputes and assisting residents in much the same way as he had as an international diplomat.

Among the new refugees greeted by Mr. Chu was a woman eight months pregnant whose recent immigration was sponsored by a Toronto church group. As reported by the city's daily newspapers last week, the woman gave birth to a son 13 hours after her arrival, and the occasion, according to Mr. Chu, was one of profound happiness.

When he visited the new mother in hospital, Mr. Chu said, he found her crying but she explained that she was crying because "she was happy her son is so lucky."

"You have heard the stories about the refugees being pushed back into the sea like animals, like objects," Mr. Chu said. "This family was among the stateless people only 40 hours before, but now that baby is somebody: a Canadian."

Mr. Chu noted that the refugees are well aware of the dangers they will face when they board the tiny boats in search of freedom and a new life. Officials estimate that nearly half of them drown, die from exposure or malnutrition or fall victim to the Malaysian pirates whose ruthless beatings await them on the beaches of Indonesia. The choice is clearly between "Quick death" at sea, however, and slow death under the rule of Vietnam's communist govern-

ment, a regime propagated by the ruling minority class.

NOT ONLY RICH

"This is the reason we have to leave," he explained. "The rich and middle class, but the poorest people and the poor people."

Mr. Chu acknowledged that many would-be sponsors may be "frightened" by the many "technicalities and formalities" associated with immigration, but stressed that the refugees who come to Canada "will ask very little" in their eager efforts to re-establish themselves. Virtually all are anxious to find jobs so that they, in turn, can sponsor the immigration of their relatives in Vietnam.

"Please follow your heart," he urged.

Mrs. Cornblum prefaced her words of encouragement to would-be sponsors by pointing out that all Canadians who are signalling their concern for the Vietnamese refugees deserve congratulations. Through the pressure they have exerted, she explained, the federal government has been persuaded to boost its immigration quota for the refugees from 5,000 to 30,000.

"We actually made the government stick its neck out," she laughed.

SCARED TO DEATH

Mrs. Cornblum admitted that she was "scared to death" in anticipation of her adopted family's arrival, but with the help of interpreters provided by the Vietnamese Association encountered and continues to enjoy one of the most moving and memorable experiences of her life. She confirmed Mr. Chu's assurances that the refugees ask for very little, but are instead highly appreciative of the most basic provisions and accommodations.

"You don't have to worry too much about (finding the refugees an expensive or elaborate home)," Mr. Chu said. "There were hundreds of them crowded onto the boats. A basement apartment is like heaven to

them. Don't worry about the standards. Don't start them too high because in two or three months, they're going to have to stand on their own feet."

Georgetown Animal Clinic



Dr. B.C. Buckrell and Dr. D.F. McEwen of the GEORGETOWN ANIMAL CLINIC are pleased to announce that Dr. Robert Desmond of the St. Clair Animal Hospital will be joining them in practice of Veterinary Medicine as of July 16, 1979.

Citizens open hearts to Asia's Boat People

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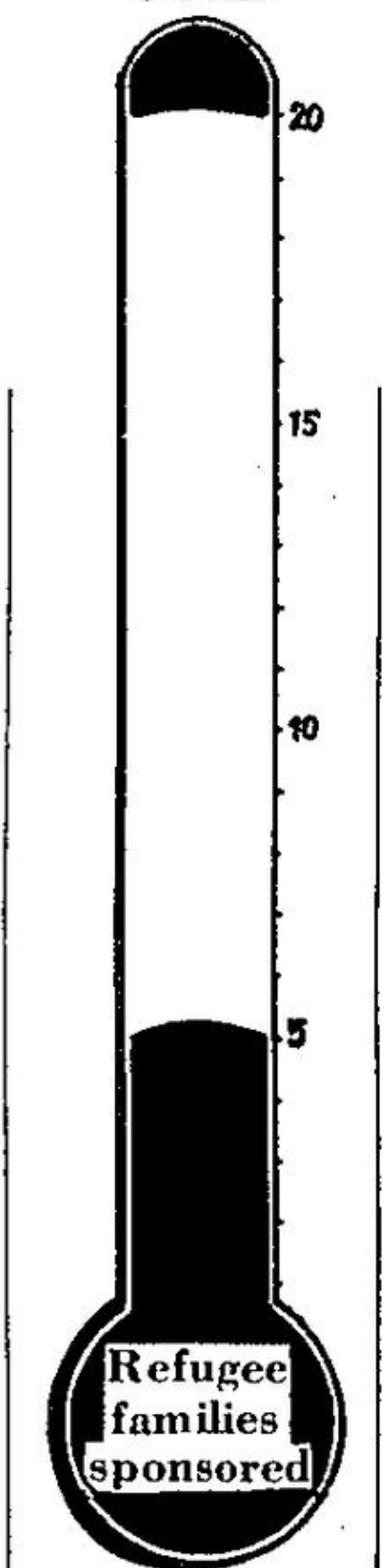
The Georgetown and District Christian Reformed Church took an early lead in arranging for the immigration of one Vietnamese family, setting an example that will be followed by members of the congregation at St. George's Anglican Church.

St. George's contribution has been organized by a special committee chaired by Dr. Gerald Corbett and including John Walker, Andrew Henwood and Dr. Roger Beck, Dr. Corbett told The Herald this week that the necessary sponsorship funds were raised among the church's congregation even before the committee had circulated a letter to parishioners seeking their donations.

Like the other local groups

which will together be bringing five refugee families here, the St. George's sponsors have already submitted immigration documents to Ottawa.

GEORGETOWN'S GOAL



Similarly, members of the Knox Presbyterian and St. John's United congregations have indicated some willingness to sponsor families. The idea will be considered further at a joint congregational service to be held this Sunday at St. John's.

Al Gogan, who joined fellow committee members Don Long, Howard McLean and Lynn Ferguson as well as an additional anonymous member in sponsoring another family, told The Herald this week that two more families have been sponsored by groups whose members must, for now, also remain anonymous. One of the sponsors is a Georgetown industry, he said.

OFFERS RECEIVED

In addition, the committee has received five separate offers of accommodations, plus "a tremendous amount of food, clothing and furnishings" from other sources and many calls from concerned residents interested in visiting the families, entertaining their children or cooking for the new arrivals and their sponsors.

The local chapter of Parents Without Partners became the first area organization to donate funds to the cause last week when Don Barnes presented a cheque to the committee for \$50. Other groups are considering similar action.

Several local businesses are also making offers of food and clothing.

Psychology course for Acton

Herald special

Actonians will be able to take a psychology course at the University of Waterloo without leaving town this fall, as the public library will be the site of one of the university's off-campus lecture series.

Miles Genest will be the lecturer in the course which will run Thursday from 7 to 10 p.m., starting Sept. 13 and going until Dec. 6.

The course will count for half credit towards a university degree. Registration fee is \$81.50, waived for persons 60 years old or more, but people who want to take the course without credit can do so for free.

Early lectures will focus on the physical aspects of human being, concentrating on the nervous system and its relationship to behaviour. From there the course will move into more complex issues such as personality, states of consciousness, and psychological tests. Final lectures will investigate the major psychopathologies. Registration forms can be obtained from the university's part time studies office in Waterloo.

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