

**Tuesday, January 9, 2007**

We ate breakfast at the hotel. Newton wanted to take the city tour offered by the hotel, but Ha said she could take us around the city so we went with her instead. She called a taxi to our hotel and we took it over Chuong Duong Bridge to the other side of Hanoi. There was nothing much there except stores and houses so we drove back over the bridge and went to Quang Trung Park. Newton paid the taxi driver 140,000 VND and told him to wait for us while we took pictures. We walked around the park and took pictures for half an hour until Ha saw a guy staring at us. Ha said drug dealers often frequent this park, and this guy might be one, so we left. About this time, John called Ha and invited us for lunch at a Vietnamese restaurant. We took the same taxi from the park to the restaurant for 70,000 VND. John and Phoung were already at the restaurant and they ordered a lot of food for us. This place served Vietnamese home-cooked food. This restaurant, like many other establishments in Vietnam, serves as both business and home. Specifically, this was a three-story building, the bottom floor being the restaurant and the top two floors were where the restaurant owners lived. We discovered this fact surreptitiously when our waiter yelled upstairs for his son to wake up. Ten minutes later his son came climbing down a ladder with his school uniform on. He took a drink and headed off to school.

**Figure 1: We crossed the Chuong Duong bridge at left. Cars and trucks rode on the top level and trains crossed on the bottom level of the bridge. At right is the main statue in Quang Trung Park**



After lunch Casy, Ha and Phoung took a taxi back to Ha's house. John took Newton back to the hotel on his motorcycle. The ladies laughed at Newton because he looked so uncomfortable but he arrived safely at the hotel. John had to go to work after than, and Ha and Phoung had to do some errands so we stayed at Ha's house. We watched our DVD from the wedding studio. The first half of the DVD was fine and consisted of photos of us in our different poses and suits. About halfway through the DVD the photos changed to that of a different couple. We

were stunned so Casy called Ha to tell her. Phoung stopped by and the three of us walked to the wedding studio. Newton stopped at the CD store across the street from the studio while Casy and Phoung went inside the studio. Phoung did all the talking and the store clerk said it would take one week to fix the DVD. We are leaving in two more days so Casy asked if they could do it in that time. They said the fastest they could do it is three days so Casy called Ha and she said that since she was flying back to Phoenix after us, she would pick the DVD up and bring it back with her. We were done with the DVD and stopped by a toy store where Casy bought a bunny doll for Nam, Phoung and John's daughter. After that Casy and Phoung walked to the DVD store to pick Newton up.

**Figure 2: Beside the main statue in Quang Trung Park is a wall with stone carvings of scenes from a famous battle in Vietnam's history. Behind the wall are modern schematics and chronologies of this battle.**



Phoung said she would like to take us around the city. So we took a taxi from Hang Bong Street to Quan Thanh Temple. The taxi fair was 25,000 VND. The temple was beside a lake and the temple property occupied a large stretch of the beach. The complex consisted of several buildings, some altars, a gift shop and offices. Some of the altars were built in commemoration of famous Vietnamese monks. One building had a statue of a large reclining Buddha inside of it. At 6.30 PM, John called Phoung as his parents had invited us to come to their house to have dinner with them. We took a taxi from the temple to John's house. This house was quite far from downtown Hanoi and it took ½ hour to drive there. John had bought a fruitcake for all of us for dinner. Fruitcake in Asia is different than fruitcake in the US. In the US, fruitcake is thick, dense, dark brown in color, and full of walnuts, almonds, cherries, dried apple, raisins, and maybe dried peaches and dates. Fruitcake in Vietnam is like a regular cake, white, soft and fluffy with cream on top, except it has layers of strawberries, kiwi, mango, pineapple and other tropical fruits in it. This is in the tradition of French bakery. Newton prefers Vietnamese fruitcake to American fruitcake.

Figure 3: Scenes from Quan Thanh Temple



**Figure 4: Dinner at the house of John's father. Top left is the dinner table. Top right is John's father playing with his grand daughter. Below right is dinner and below left is dessert, fruitcake. Soda is often served in bottles instead of cans, and empty bottles are sold back to recyclers to be reused.**

