

Miss Women
Le Eckles
(MACV PIO) SAIGON "I just wanted to help."

This was the answer given by Miss Le Eckles, of San Fernando, California, when asked why she had left California and come to the Republic of Vietnam, at her own expense and the aid of some friends.

Miss Eckles, daughter of Mr. C. P. Eckles of 11505 Viny Road, Granada Hills, California, and Leora A. Eckles, of 851 N. Brand, San Fernando, California, was employed as a telephone operator when considerable publicity was given to protests against the U.S. Policy in the Republic of Vietnam.

Her reaction to these protests was a decision to come to Vietnam and assist the people in their struggle for freedom and independence. She drew out her life savings and with the assistance of friends, purchased a ticket to Saigon.

Arriving in a strange land, with no knowledge of its language or customs, the pert 22 year-old Auburn haired volunteer was robbed of her clothing, money and camera after just a few days. But this did not dampen her enthusiasm or determination to help.

After a short, but eventful stay in Saigon, Miss Eckles became acquainted with the Budduet Institute Orphanage and after a tour of its facilities and meeting its many orphans, she decided that here was where she would devote her efforts.

Attired in the traditional Vietnamese dress, the Ao Dai, Miss Eckles can be seen any time, at the Budduet Institute Orphanage, performing a myriad of tasks, in her position of Assistant Director of Orphans. It is not an easy life, but then, few things that are really worth while are easy. She works and lives with the orphans, most of them the victims of the years of conflict between the Viet Cong and the citizens of the free Republic of Vietnam. Her typical working day lasts between 16 and 17 hours, with meals taken in, Vietnamese style, and her room she shares with 67 of the orphans.

Miss Eckles plans to remain in Saigon for another six months, she has been here approximately that long, and then return home for a short vacation, to return to Vietnam for what she calls "an extended tour."

March 7, 1966

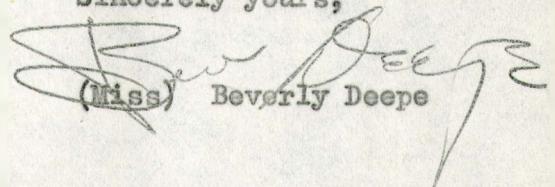
Mr. Ed Kiester
Parade Magazine
733 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Kiester:

Please forgive the delay in answering your cable for an add to the "Dateline" piece about other women in Vietnam. Between Honolulu, Humphrey, a visiting editor and more war news, life has been madness here.

I hope this add is satisfactory. If not, please don't hesitate to ask for more detail.

Sincerely yours,


(Miss) Beverly Deepe

Beverly Deepe
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Another active woman correspondent is UPI's Betsy Halstead, who is regularly seen at Special Forces camps and field installations wearing the black and green camouflage of the Vietnamese Marines. The wife of Dirck Halstead, also with UPI, red-haired Betsy was the first correspondent to ride in carrier-based jets from the U.S. Navy 7th Fleet and the first to photograph the Guam-based B-52 SAC bomber missions within South Vietnam.

Several other husband-wife teams have cropped up in Vietnam. Mary Pickerell actively helps her husband Jim with research for Black Star Publishing Company. Susan Sheehan, wife of New York Times' Neil Sheehan, is free-lancing, ^{but} ~~is~~ ^{Wrote} officially accredited to the New Yorker for which she worked before becoming a wife. Ruth Walloy, wife of UPI's bureau chief Mike Walloy, is officially accredited as a free-lancer, but has written a long serial on her trip to Communist China. She has Canadian citizenship.

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Beverly Deepe

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Jill Krementz, fiancée of NBC's Dean Brealis, has surveyed and photographed Vietnamese orphanages, hospitals and social institutions. A former photographer with the New York Herald Tribune in New York, she has stacks of photos taken in Vietnam. She is officially accredited to NBC. Brunette Ann Bryan represents the overseas weekly. Photographer Rena Briand, of French-German descent, is also currently free-lancing in Vietnam. A recent arrival is blonde Frances Fitzgerald, now accredited to Weekend telegraph of London Daily telegraph.

Even after the withdrawal of American dependents in February, 1965, shortly after the initial American airstrikes against North Vietnam, a number of other American women have been filtering in to work for the government or government-approved agencies. The American military command in Vietnam has assigned two WAC's to assist the Vietnamese Women's Armed Forces Corps (called Waf-see); and a dozen others to serve as typists and stenographers within the headquarters. In addition, ten U.S. Navy nurses, 139 Army nurses and 16 Air Force nurses are assigned to hospitals within the country.

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Several American nurses are also assigned by the civilian U.S. Agency ~~for~~ ^{to} International Development to "advise" Vietnamese provincial and regional hospital staffs in the countryside. One of these is blonde Ann Fry, the daughter of an American colonel, who is now serving her second 18-month tour in the Mekong Delta region south of Saigon.

The latest female arrivals here have created bomb-shell reactions--workers for the American Red Cross in the American base areas. Principally responsible for special services and entertainment of the American troops, a minimum of four Red Cross girls are based in the major areas protected by U.S. troops, such as Danang and Bien Hoa. Because this is a war without frontlines, their ~~tent~~ ^{present} existence can often become the focal point of fierce military action.

"I've never seen anything like it," one sergeant, ^a veteran of Korea explained to me. "In Korea, of course, we had nurses in the rear areas, but they were secure. I remember I was blinded and in the hospital and when I heard the click-click of an American nurses' shoes on the hospital floor--I was so happy. I knew I was safe. But, now we have these Red Cross girls running around the base area--and we can be attacked anytime. Things are really changing."