Faculty Wife’s Role Leads Her to Saigon

Family adjusts to life with servants but minus ice cubes, window glass

By Jane Mary Farsley

In the tropics

BECOMING a faculty wife sounds like a pretty grisly and glad life. Conventions, boredom and president’s teas. But for the last year and a half, Mrs. Ralph Smuckler, wife of a Michigan State professor, has been keeping house behind magazine-cutting, managing three foreign speaking servants, boiling every ounce of drinking water and throwing receptions for as many as 350 college officials at a time.

As a faculty wife in the “international” outposts of Saigon, where her husband heads a department of political scientists, she learned to cook birds’ nest soup and drink shark’s fin wine, whisked lizards, showed off a curtsy she learned at a foreign school, and set off on their safari. Mrs. Smuckler found that her parents Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Smuckler, a Michigan State professor, have been keeping house behind government officials at a time.

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While visiting the homes of these officials, Mrs. Harry Shoes could turn moldy bread and learn to take a “hard ship” to cook. And she could change clothes several times a day and learned to take 12 shots given by her husband. She was cautioned to wear clothing “they were all really expected to have a nice dress, but not a very expensive one.” She learned to wear clothing “they were all really expected to have a nice dress, but not a very expensive one.”

They went on pleasantly and thronged when anyone took the time to make a meal,” she observed. “And they all just died to learn English,” she chuckled.

Mrs. Smuckler and the soft spoken Vietnamese women established better communication, she began to feel that “the density apparent differences they are just like American women in many ways. They group, and talk about their marriages, and how they live in the city, and how they live in the city, and how they live in the city.”

Unfortunately, a home which was once a hotel, only about 1/2 of the women learned to cook. Many of the peasant women still work in the fields and on roads as a cook’s helper. Others who are not of the telling class seem to enjoy being in their homes and managing their servants. She and her husband have guests over on Saturday and these guests attend school outside the country.

More Parent Corruptions

For the most part, they lead conventional lives. Often, Mrs. Smuckler is invited to dinner parties, and other government officials turned up at the round of parties alone. Mrs. Smuckler has been visiting Vietnamese women in many ways.

Mrs. Smuckler, former Milwaukeeans, and one of her parents Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Smuckler, former Milwaukeeans, have visited in Milwaukee recently after 18 months of adventures in Vietnam where Smuckler, a Michigan State professor, headed a technical assistance team of political scientists.

Little Sandy Smuckler, 4, dressed in a typical Vietnamese costume, showed off a dress she wore to a Swedish nursery school in Saigon. The youngest, her brother Gary, 7, and her parents Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Smuckler, former Milwaukeeans, visited in Milwaukee recently after 18 months of adventures in Vietnam where Smuckler, a Michigan State professor, headed a technical assistance team of political scientists.

Broke the Ice

At the very first dinner party, she wore a white dress and trousers that are the tradition of the country, the Vietnamese women, she noticed, wore all over the way of fashion. She noted at the very first dinner party, she wore a white dress and trousers that are the tradition of the country, the Vietnamese women, she noticed, wore all over the way of fashion. She noticed at the very first dinner party, she wore a white dress and trousers that are the tradition of the country, the Vietnamese women, she noticed, wore all over the way of fashion.
According to the Milwaukee-born Mrs. Smuckler, things are different in another way, too.

"We'd like to go to Vietnam without our husbands, without our children."

Mrs. Smuckler explained, "They are there to help their families and manage their homes."

Mrs. Smuckler and her husband, a former Milwaukeean, left for Vietnam on their honeymoon.

"It's a different world, a different culture," Mrs. Smuckler said. "I don't know if I'll ever go back."
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East
From page 12

and for the rest of her stay, the former Milwaukeean served as the group's program chairman.

"It was hard to figure out programs without too much speaking because we had members who were Vietnamese, Thai, Japanese, Chinese, French, British, Indian, and American." Each month the group concentrated on a different member country, featuring customs, food and dances.

There were about 220 members when she left, Mrs. Smuckler estimated.

In a six week trip en route through the middle and near east and Europe, the Smucklers gathered even more treasures and their eyes popped with such wonders as the Taj Mahal, the Eiffel tower and London's Big Ben.

"But nothing," admitted Mrs. Smuckler, "looked as good as a huge tossed salad with sour cream dressing, a glass of fresh milk, ice cubes in drinks once more, television, ice cream, and for the children, someone to talk to who can understand them."

Back at Michigan State, the wives of the Saigon team have resolved to form a "white suit" club.

"We kind of agreed among us that when we get back to the campus we'll help one another when we have parties. It's such fun to be a hostess when you don't have to cook or do the dishes," she smiled.

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