

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE • EAST LANSING

VIETNAM PROJECT • OFFICE OF COORDINATOR

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To: Howard Hoyt
From: Edward W. Weidner *eww*
Through: Wesley R. Fishel
Subject: News Release on Franklin

If you would like some information for a news release locally on Franklin here it is.

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From G. R. to Saigon.

While other citizens read their Christmas cards, Traffic Engineer Jerome D. Franklin will be memorizing phrases like "het duong," "cham cham" and "khong co di." These mean, respectively, "end of the road," "slow down" and "do not enter" and are to be seen on the traffic signs of the city of Saigon, capital of South Vietnam, where Franklin will go early next year to be traffic consultant to a young nation born at Geneva when France and China divided Vietnam into Communist northern and free southern halves.

Last year the French gave effective control of the country to the Vietnamese government and Premier Ngo Dinh Diem now deals with the United States and looks to it for advice in building a small modern army, an effective public health service and a modern administration.

One of the premier's first acts was to change all the street names, such as "Rue Catinat" and "Rue Chesapeake-Laurier" to Vietnamese names. This undoubtedly pleased the 10,000 "cyclo" boys who operate bicycle cabs or two-cylinder "moto-cyclos," as well as the 500,000 ordinary bicyclists and the many hundreds of horse-cart drivers. There are several thousand autos and trucks, too.

But to an American traffic engineer the situation can't be anything short of chaos, and Jerry Franklin will have his work cut out for him. When Franklin came to Grand Rapids in 1949, this city's traffic engineering was based on the practical experience of a few policemen. Since 1949 he has developed one of the finest traffic engineering departments in Michigan, in proof of which he is being sent to Vietnam by Michigan State university as part of the state department's program.

Untold numbers of motorists have muttered, "Who in blazes did this?" when they first encountered a new lane of concrete "mushrooms," or a new one-way street or traffic signal. But they have got used to the innovations and most of them now are ready to concede that all of these changes have been for their good.

The odd fact is that the total number of accidents has not increased in proportion to the soaring number of autos and trucks on our streets. The reason is

obvious—traffic engineering. The number of fatalities has increased in the last two years, but Franklin has said, "I'm no psychiatrist—I'm an engineer. I can't convince a fool that he shouldn't speed, and when the speeder hits, somebody gets hurt."

To Franklin a fender dent is an accident just as much as a fatal crash, and therefore a symptom of something wrong. He has changed the traffic system when it appeared to be the cause of accidents—and he has changed it to fit the habits of the greatest possible number of drivers. Many citizens do not know that Franklin's department has photographed streets after a new snowfall to see where cars actually had made traffic "patterns" and then "planted" the "mushrooms" to fit the patterns the drivers themselves made.

With his professionalism tempered by humanism, Franklin should do well in Saigon, where a population of 2,000,000 is just coming into the motor-age. We wish him luck and congratulate him on the fact that, for a few months at least, he won't understand what all those complaining oriental drivers are saying about that traffic engineer and his new-fangled ideas.

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Howard Hoyt