

Ho Chi Minh: two nights before the Lunar New Year

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▼ Nurturing cow--(below) This person spends 10-14 hours a day making sure that these cows get what they need to grow healthy. (Above) the bed where he sleeps every night after his work.



Crowded street with people shopping for the new year.



It was hot and humid in Vietnam, even in spring season. I landed in Ho Chi Minh City two nights before the lunar New Year, year of the pig. The streets were packed with motorcycles, bicycles, cars and pedestrians, driving and walking controlling the streets with their own rules. Moving vehicles hardly stopped for any red lights and pedestrians crossed streets any time they wanted to. Besides the over crowded vehicles, Tet (means new year in Vietnamese) flower shops also occupied two sides of the streets. Many people were buying money, flower and fruit trees to prepare for a ceremonial event on the New Year's Day to worship their ancestors. I also got some flowers for my uncles and aunts in a small village called Song Mao (5 hours drive from Saigon), where I spent my New Year. This is the village where my Dad grew up.

Not much had changed in this village since I last visited six years ago (this was the second time I visited since I left 18 years ago). This is where my grandparents and my Dad grew up and where most of my close

relatives still reside. Most people in this village make their everyday living by farming. Growing crops and nurturing cows are the most popular things to do in a farm. Some lucky families have the means to buy meats, fish and vegetables from the market but most people eat food what they grow from their own farm.

It was also very interesting to discover that children aren't taught to ask questions here. They simply listen and obey their teachers and parents. They are not allowed to express themselves openly. These restrictions could really limit their growth and development potential. I wonder how much learning I have missed and realize that how fortunate I am to have had the chance to live in a land full of explorations opportunities.

My incentive for this trip to Vietnam was to host and sing for a school reunion event put together by former students who attended this school during the 70s and 80s. I will tell you more about this in June issue.

