

Dinh Quan:

Singing with four handsome dancers

■ By Lena Gia Linh



The school where I attended while in Vietnam.

This was my house before



hosting with an former classmate

After spending a few days celebrating the New Year with my relatives, I visited a small town 6 hours South of Song Mao called Dinh Quan. I spent most of my childhood years going to school here from grade one to grade seven. The main reason for my visit to Vietnam this time 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 was so excited to see many of my childhood friends who I grew up and went to school with. This event reunited many of my friends who are now also living in other countries such as United States, England, Australia and Hong Kong.

The event was a huge success even though the electricity was cut twice during the performance. This may have happened because we forgot to tip the person who was in charge of the electrical room that night. Unlike here in the U.S., the power source in this village is owned by an individual and the power can be cut at anytime without warning. In order to prevent the power from being cut a third time, we promptly spoke directly with the president of the electric company who happens to be a dear friend of one of the students in the reunion. The production of sound and stage, including a group of six dancers were hired from Ho Chi Minh City, which is about two hours west away. I had a great time dancing with four handsome dancers with one of the songs I performed. This is one of my dreams come true. I've always wished that I can sing and host at my childhood school in front of many of my friends and teachers. My friends were amazed that

I was able to maintain my Vietnamese so well after so many years living in the United States.

There have been many changes to my lovely village I called home for 15 years since I left 18 years ago. Many tree leaves roof and dirt floor homes are now built with bricks and cement. I didn't recognize my own house when I first saw it. The two big trees by the front house were demolished, giving space to a little café dining place. My next door neighbor's general store is still here but had expanded it to allow twice the merchandise. Unlike Song Mao, many families here generate their income by operating little stores in front of their houses selling food, gas, café, toiletry, nails and salon services, etc. When I was living there, people farmed for a living as my family did. The progress of the economy allowed many people to choose professions other than farming for a living. The gifts of money and visitors from the United States and other countries had greatly improved the civilization of not just this village alone but the entire country of Vietnam.

The entire trip was an exciting and fun learning experience. It was heart warming to spend the Lunar New Year with loving and caring family members and it was incredibly fulfilling to host an event for my childhood school. The discovery of how unfortunate some of the children are in this country, especially in Song Mao makes me realize how fortunate I am to have had the chance to live in a land full of exploration and learning opportunities.



dancing with the hotties



Performing