



poetry © 2008
E.B. Spohr



Vietnam Limericks

by

Elizabeth Spohr

Spring 2008—Rev B

1) In the early sixties when Ho Chi Minh would not bow down,
The French cried "please Uncle Sam, please,
won't you please come to town?"
So Sammy marched in and lest
He was not thought the best
With Agent Orange he torched South Vietnam,
scorching people and ground all around.

2) Now it's two-thousand-eight, almost forty years
Since Uncle Sam was kicked on his keester out of here.
So we've come to know
How things in Nam go.
"Very well, thank you. Can't you see we are thriving?
That should be very clear."

3) Twelve hours flying west with the sun
For thirteen days in Vietnam, Mom with her Son.
A friend of hers said
"My Son would not be caught dead
Even taking me to a dog fight! You're a real lucky Mum!"

40) Coming back into the States, Customs nearly threw Tuck in jail.
A musical instrument with endangered species decor he failed
To declare is a federal offense.
That he didn't know was no valid defense.
Instrument was returned. End of story! Lots to write friends
via E-mail or even slow snail.





4) Our itinerary started with Hanoi, then Ha Long Bay
With a visit to The Humanities on the way.
Then Hue, Danang, Hoi An,
Then four days in Saigon
Where we lived before the troops went away.

5) History-rich Hanoi with its walls painted gold
Proclaim its kingly might and power of old.
Chinese, French, Russians, have left their marks
In streets, memorials, lovely parks.
Now the world waits and watches to see how
Vietnam's new saga unfolds.

6) Thang and Vinh, respectively male driver and lady guide
Took us here, there, everywhere, we didn't have to decide.
Uncle Ho's stilt house, a museum, pagoda a shrine.
A cyclo ride, water puppet show in too short a time.
And they never fail to find plenty of bottled
water for us to imbibe.



38) Like eggs in a fish mummy tum,
Frequent fliers don't think it's much fun
Crammed in a giant plane's belly
Being spewed out tired, hot, and smelly
Then having to go right back where they come from.

39) Neither one thought the other was serious about making
The nice-to-talk-about Vietnam trip we
 would never be taking.
So we backed each other into going
Without either of us really knowing
What we were getting ourselves into. But it turned out
 to be a once-in-a-lifetime great undertaking!





7) Helmeted bikers, all kinds everywhere.
A crosswalk, but nothing stops for anything there.
Motorcycles, cyclos, mopeds, mini cars,
Bicycles, foot peddlers, but please tell me why are
There no trucks, horse or donkey carts anywhere?

36) Van found Penn's old house,
now an elementary school, and then she
Went down an alley off of Phan Dinh Phung,
and there was where we Spohrs used to be!
She found Rue Pasteur, Tucker's school,
The Circle Sportive, with its tennis courts and pool
Now a youth sports club, we were happy to see.

37) Though for centuries, the Chinese,
French and Russians all occupied
This long narrow land, it has never lost its own culture,
language or pride.
No, the Post Office, Catholic Church and
The rebuilt Imperial Palace all stand
Near the center of town as memorials to all the
influences that have come in from outside.



8) Vietnamese lassies seem to think their chasses
Need more curves and swerves to make them more classy.
So since they ain't got 'em
They pad boobs and bottoms.
Oh, boy! then do those Ao-dai clad chasses ever look sassy!

9) A mausoleum? Uncle Ho's will said, "Oh, no!
I want my ashes in three equal parts to go
To the Mekong and Red Rivers and to my home."
But officials would not leave Ho alone
They build him a big building where they put Ho on show!

10) Buddhist, Catholic, or to whatever faith Viets adhere,
There's likely to be a small shrine for worshipping ancestors in most
homes here.
But officials want the public to see
Uncle Ho as he used to be,
So they ship him to Moscow to be re-embalmed every year!

11) Hanoi streets, sidewalks, parks are squeaky-clean.

If there are beggars, they are not to be seen.

All of the traffic seems to go,

In a one-way, steady, even flow,

While pedestrian, jaywalkers dodge in, out, around and in between.

12) The government sponsors Humanities Centers where

A thousand agent orange victims live.

They're fed, clothed, and

Taught lots of skills they can

Use. To these U.S. sheltered workshops can not compare.

13) Ha Long, "Descending Dragon", the Gulf of Tonkin

The list of new natural Seven Wonders it should surely be in.

Sky-high limestone monoliths rising straight up out of the sea,

A cave, in one, rivaling Carlsbad Tuck could climb up to see.

Then down on the shore of this gulf off the China sea,

Tuck went in for a swim.

35) We were almost home free. Our very last day in Saigon.

A mango from the soup-chef. Then guess what happened to Mom?

The travelers' curse!

It could not have been worse!

But recovery came in time for us to have a final sightsee.





14) On the three hour sail back to where we had been
the five-strong crew

Served a six course royal meal

on a white table cloth for us two

Shrimp, squid, pearl farms dotted the view

Of the miraculous gulf we were sailing through

Seeing is the only way to believe this gulf is true!

15) You won't believe the goofy things I do,

Since I have become a female Mr. McGoo.

I often hug strangers thinking them friends,

Try to walk through walls where a hall ends

And, oh shame! I've been found in the men's

not the lady's loo, too!

16) No in Hue to take us where we were scheduled to go,

Were these two, Ms. Long and young Mr. Vo.

Our first day there, a tour via ferry

Was what Mom thought was a very

Hazardous trip and should have been for her a no-go.

17) The marble, bronze, limestone statues
in a Hue museum we went to see
Were mostly of Confucius, Buddha, Shiva and we
Wondered how Ganesha fit in with
All this history and myth
But it was so hot, a museum was NOT where we wanted to be.

18) New fangled sanitary facilities and fixtures
all have their own special quirks.
A problem is, finding out where they are and how they all work.
Dispensers for tissue,
Towels and water are the issue.
But tricky new stall locks that won't let you out
when you're in, now they are the worst!

19) On the edge of the Perfume River,
stands the magnificent Royal Citadel
Where hundreds of concubines lived until the Chinese dynasty fell.
The ladies' lives were spared
But they never again saw the light of day
They lived out their lives in the royal tombs.
It's another sad story for history to tell.

34) "Shut up! Stop yelling! I want to sleep,"
Tuck, bleary-eyed, shoured, "It's late!"
Two burley Koreans who somehow got into our
Caravelle Hotel room by mistake
Were still yelling when back out in the hall
Mom, her hearing aids out, slept through it all
While Tuck, now wide awake, couldn't figure out how
they got into our room in the first place.





32) In restaurants and on a three-deck river boat,
we eat 'till we're stuffed.

Then just when we think we have had more than enough
Here's the waiter with one more course.

Rice, veggies but fish is, of course,
In this land bounded by water, dish number one
whether served plain or deluxe.

33) From Hanoi to Ha Long and as we have wended along our way,
Through Hue to Danang and Hoi An, the hotels where we have stayed
The Fortuna, the Green, the Hoi An
Resort, all rated five-stars. But In Saigon
The Hotel Caravelle would merit a sixth star any day!

20) German, Belgium, French tourists surround us here.
We listen, but English is not the language we hear
At "Heavenly Lady", Thein Mu
Pagoda or when Tuck went to view
The Tu Duc tombs and Mom sat in the shade
watching river boat draw near.



21) From Hue, through Danang, past Marble Mountain
into Hoi An, the delta where
Rivers meet and tourists flock in to sightsee from everywhere.
But to have their fun
Tucker and Mum
Swam in the sea and took the time leisurely on their first day there.

22) In Hoi An town drivers are never in doubt
They know exactly when to stop, and when to start out.
Lighted traffic signals show
How many seconds to go
Until the lights change! Now that's high-tech to marvel about!

23) Watching Mom scale the side of the
dragon boat we sailed in to
Get to a boatyard, then climb in and out
on a ladder of bamboo,
Made Tuck shudder to think
What if Mom lands in the drink!
But surprise! She maneuvered it all without a single snafu!



30) It's taboo in Vietnam for a lady to drink.
Is that because the ladies' macho-men think
It's better to have half the population sober
While the other half sleeps off last night's hangover?
Or is it because they want to make sure
driver and drinker are always in sync?

31) What Mom do you know travels with her son and her own nurse?
Mom had an all-in-one. Tuck cared for health and her purse.
From pipeline to Medic,
Now that's quite a trick!
It's lucky for Mom Tuck did not do those two things in reverse!

28) Three-hundred bucks (millions of duong)
seems a lot to pay for a small
Metal stall in the central market considering all
The stuff a vendor must sell
To make a profit as well
As stock his own space from floor to ceiling and wall to wall.

29) When we wanted to take Van and Quock out for a treat
Fried noodles was what they both chose to eat
What do you think we saw
On the noodle shop wall?
A poster of ex-president Clinton pinned up there
right over our seats!



24) Flight from Ho Chi Minh City. Or still call it Saigon.
If you wish, because Sai means kapok, and a mango is Gon
Located on the Saigon River
We go hither and thither
With guide Van and driver Quock, the two who
keep us always moving along.



25) Everywhere reminders of what the Vietnam War did.
One-hundred twenty miles of tunnels where the Vietcong hid.
They killed thousands and wrought
Havoc. But we killed millions and brought
Devastation to countless innocent bystanders and their young kids.

26) A trip on the Mekong for tea and a local serenade.
Then further down the river to see coconut candy made.
All along we find
This tour blows our minds
When we realize how much special attention we are both paid.

27) After changing Duong at the ATM late at night,
Tuck thought he left his card. Raced back there in a fright.
Van said, "That card you have got."
Tuck was sure she didn't know his card he had not.
All along it turned out he was wrong, she was right!

