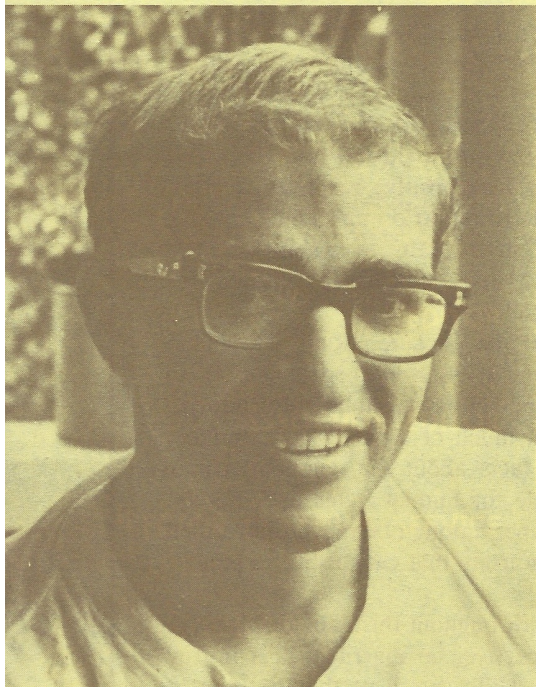


## TWO WHO LIVED FOR OTHERS



### Ted Studebaker: A dissenter from despair

"COOL IT and don't fret; this boy knows what he's doing."

These were among the parting salvos of Ted Studebaker as he left his Ohio homeland in the spring of 1969 for Brethren Volunteer Service and Vietnam. In effect, the sentiment was voiced by Ted again this spring from Vietnam, in a letter he wrote late on April 25 to critics back home. It was the last letter Ted was ever to write.

**Raided:** That night shortly after midnight, the residence of the Vietnam Christian Service unit at Di Linh, South Vietnam, was shelled with B-40 rockets, blasted with a plastic charge, and raided by Vietcong soldiers. Three women who had made it to the bunker of the stairs of the old hunting lodge were not harmed; Ted, still in his bedroom, later

was found shot to death. For him two years of creative interchange in the lives of the central highland peoples in and around Di Linh, and a commitment to a third year of service, had come to a tragic end.

Among the three women who survived the terror was Ted's wife of one week, Ven Pak, a volunteer from Asian Christian Service whom Ted had learned to know in language training in Saigon. Their wedding, which had occurred a block down the road from the Vietnam Christian Service house at the Koho Tin Lanh Church eight days before, was a festive occasion not only for the church but for many in the wider community.

**Enriched:** It was in that community, 140 miles northeast of Saigon, that I had spent a couple of days with Ted some four months before, observing what he was trying to do in a foreign land. One of my clearest impressions was that Ted scarcely seemed a foreigner there;

### Raul Tasiguano: Killed in defense of his people

THE YOUNG MAN had Addison's disease and although controlled by medicine, he knew that his life might be uncommonly short. Perhaps it was this knowledge, knowing that he had fewer days than most men to accomplish his hopes and goals for his own people, that enabled Raul Tasiguano to take a bolder leadership stance than other Quechua Indians in the rural Llano Grande community of Ecuador.

And it was this leadership of his people, often exploited and mistreated by white Ecuadorians, that caused his death on March 28 in Llano Grande.

**Killed:** Late that Sunday evening Raul Tasiguano was murdered when he was attacked from ambush, beaten, and twice run over by a bus. He reportedly died of two skull fractures and an "explosion of the heart" inflicted by the bus.

With his brother, Enrique, and broth-

er-in-law, Andres Guaman Jr., Raul played a key role in the community's response when last year a competitive bus cooperative attempted to dominate the only transportation service to Quito, the capital city, where many of the Quechua Indians work (MESSENGER, Nov. 5, 1970).

All three men were graduated from the Brethren school in Llano Grande, and Raul's family had been the first baptized by Brethren missionaries in Ecuador. He himself was a lay preacher in the church.

**Harassment:** When the bus service from the white Calderon community resulted in abuses and insults to the Llano Grande Indians, the Indians obtained control of their own community transportation service from the central government, following a boycott of the Calderon cooperative and a series of non-violent confrontations.

Since then the Llano Grande people have been the object of segregation, a tyrannical attitude, verbal insults, and

deeds against the passengers still using the Calderon buses. The immediate dispute had arisen on the higher fares which the Calderon cooperative wished to charge above those agreed upon by the community and the government.

"We could not have imagined that the answer to resolve the bus cooperative problem could have been the extremely brutal violence which has taken place," said Franklin Canelos, executive secretary of the Brethren and United Foundations for which Raul was a community coordinator.

**Onus:** Responsibility for the death is being attributed to members of a Mestizo household in Llano Grande and the only whites who are members of the community's bus cooperative.

Nevertheless, justice may not be done, given the social status of the Indians. Since the attack the Tasiguano family and witnesses have been threatened. And justice for Indians often depends on political expediency and who pays best.



## TWO WHO LIVED FOR OTHERS

did not need to be on the roads at night or did not get detained while traveling close to American military convoys. He told of shellings now and then into Di Linh and other villages, and of mine explosions, making children and other innocent persons the victims of war. "Sometimes," he commented, "it seems like this whole war is run on a bunch of mistakes."

On occasion as we traveled Ted talked of his upcoming plans for marriage. He and Ven Pak had announced their engagement in Vietnam, but had yet to break the news to Ven Pak's parents, which meant a journey to her home in Hong Kong, and to Ted's family in the States. Actually Ted earlier had written his parents about it, but in Koho, the dialect no one at home could read.

When I last saw Ted in Dalat, he told me that he hoped that in this highlands town, which is a beautiful blend in Vietnamese and French influences, he and Ven Pak would honeymoon in the spring. His hope was fulfilled; that is how he spent part of the final week of his life.

Because Ven Pak was on a project quite some distance from Di Linh, I did not meet her. I did feel I had come to know her, however, through the snapshots Ted shared and through his own resplendence when he spoke of her.

**Common qualities:** Upon meeting Ven Pak at the Studebaker home near Union, Ohio, early last month, the day before Ted's memorial service, what surprised me most was how many of Ted's qualities seemed to be her own. The gentleness, the humility, the sincerity, the warmth, the determination were readily conveyed. Even more so, her life statement shared with the directors and staff of Vietnam Christian Service seemed to echo what Ted himself might have written:

"I'm sure all of you share my grief over his death, but I hope you will grieve even more for those who do not understand what he did."

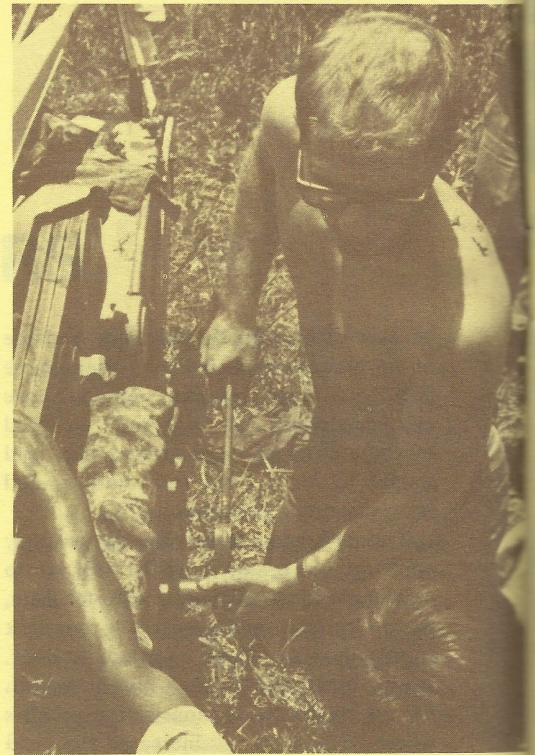
The real story of Ted is not only of his life and death and Vietnam; it is also of his years of growing up in Ohio's

"Studebaker Country"; of his feel for the soil and things of the farm; of his devotion to high school and college football and other sports; of swimming in the farm pond; of parents who expect their children to do their own thing, to leave the family nest, and to make their own mark in the world; of older brothers, one of whom was in military service in Germany, another in Brethren Volunteer Service in Morocco, and a third, in International Voluntary Services in Laos; of three sisters and a younger brother all of whom make their contribution to the family's sense of solidarity; of studies and friendships at Manchester College, where he earned his way through school and did four years' work in three; and of master's study in social work at Florida State University.

**"Hunting good":** Ted's story is closely aligned too with the West Milton Church of the Brethren, where in a sermon in August 1967 he revealed his feelings about the war. Holding up a newspaper clipping of a starving, homeless child, he read an accompanying article which said, "Hunting was good today in the Mekong Delta region. U.S. Marines bagged 45 of the enemy, wounded scores, and completely wiped out one small village."

"Hunting was good today!" Ted responded. "Just like the sportsman who comes back from a day of rabbit and pheasant shooting. So many rabbits, so many pheasants, he lays them all out to see. The dehumanizing process of war concerns me deeply. What can I do about man's inhumanity to man?"

While in Vietnam Ted continued to be in contact with his home church. "Second only to my family," he wrote a year ago, "you as representatives of the West Milton Church of the Brethren are responsible for my thought and actions concerning conscientious objection to the military, my pacifistic views, and my volunteer service. Without the church, as skeptical as I am about it now, I might find myself in a uniform as part of a giant military machine whose reason for existence seems based on economics and



Ted replaces flat tire on VCS rototiller used by Montagnards in the rice fields

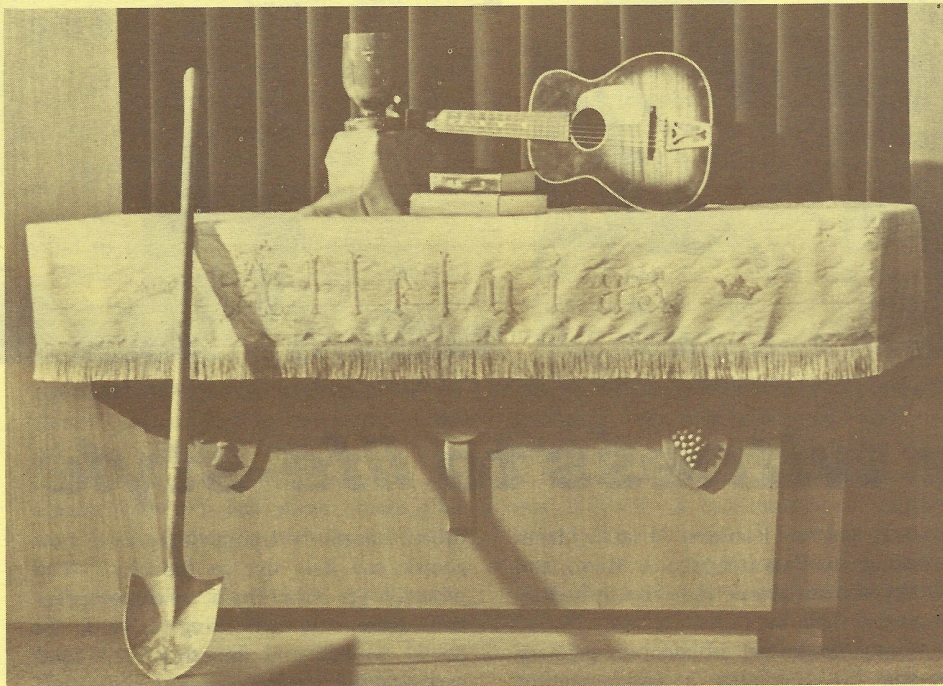
a big myth. The meaninglessness, the wastefulness, and the non-necessity of this war is outweighed only by its inhumane effects, both here and in the States.

" . . . I do not pretend to understand all the whys and wherefores of this crisis, but one thing stands out clearly in my mind. This war is immoral and wrong, and the burden of blame is upon the U.S. military, the U.S. government, and the U.S. people. I believe there is a lot of truth in the statement that the killing will stop only when American public opinion demands it."

**Response:** This was the letter, picked up in the *Southern Ohio Herald* and then this past March in the Troy, Ohio, *Daily News*, that prompted a Troy couple to write Ted of their disappointment in his stand, questioning his understanding of the Bible, wondering even if the organization he was serving was "Christian." The couple appealed to Ted to study the word of God, to spurn the company of those misfits who call the war "immoral," and "for God's sake, to get your views straight."

Only hours before his death, Ted replied, thanking the family for writing, indicating the difficulty of debate by letter, and clarifying only one point. "I do not 'feel the enemy is right' any more than I feel the U.S. military is 'right'





Worship center, above, uses several elements important in Ted's life: shovel, service cup, guitar, his and Ven Pak's Bibles. Below, Ven Pak and Ted with Montagnard farmer



**I'm sure all of you share my grief...  
but I hope you will grieve even  
more for those who do not understand  
what he did—Ven Pak Studebaker**

here," he wrote. "I believe strongly in trying to follow the example of Jesus Christ as best I know how. Above all, Christ taught me to love all people, including enemies, and to return good for evil, and that all men are brothers in Christ. I condemn all war and conscientiously refuse to take part in it in any active or violent way. I believe love is a stronger and more enduring power than hatred for my fellowmen, regardless of who they are or what they believe.

**Sincere:** "You probably think I'm pretty idealistic and, by your letter, indicate that I'm a pretty mixed up kid. But, I cannot apologize for any part of the letter I wrote to my church, since it well represents honestly and sincerely my feelings and concerns about this particular situation. I have tried to speak from both experience and reason, not from mere emotion or hearsay."

The letter was closed by Ted thanking the family for writing and for expressing concern for his welfare. "Please know that I am in excellent health and adequate safety. I know I am a fortunate man and life is great to me."

**Affirming life:** Excerpts from the letter, the statement of Ven Pak Studebaker, and tapes of guitar playing and singing which Ted had recorded only weeks before in Vietnam were used by Pastor Phillip Bradley in the memorial service May 3. On the altar of the church were two Bibles — Ted's heavily marked edition in English and Ven Pak's in Chinese, a Brethren Service cup, a shovel, Ted's guitar, and a banner lifting up in essence the affirmation with which he had concluded the final letter and many letters before it: "Life is great, yea."

It was on this note that Ted Studebaker, 25, a dissenter to despair, a champion of love, a man of peace, came home. He had lived his life purposefully. To the nation, the community, the church, the loved ones his return was not unlike his leaving; it simply put meaning to the words:

"Cool it and don't fret. This boy knows what he's doing." —HOWARD E. ROYER