

Ted understood them

By **JOEL WALKER**
Managing Editor

Ted Studebaker was from my hometown. He militarily opposed the war in Vietnam. He was a conscientious objector. Sunday he was killed by the Viet Cong.

He was in Vietnam as an agricultural adviser for Church World Services, a church-supported volunteer organization. But Ted was more than that to the people he worked with. He was a friend who understood the way of life, the problems and the concerns of the Vietnamese people.

And this is something we Americans, both in and out of the military, haven't taken enough time to do. But don't take my word for it. If you believe only experts here's what I heard a U.S. Vietnam expert say at an editors' meeting this weekend.

"We have never understood the Vietnamese because they are not American and their problems are not American," said Dolf Droge, a Wittenberg grad who is a specialist on Vietnam for the U.S. Agency for International Development. "In this war we are limited mostly by a lack of understanding."

Ted Studebaker knew that neither he nor all of the CO's in the U.S. could stop the military action in Vietnam, but still he didn't turn his back on the people of the country. He knew if they were going to survive this terrible conflict they would need help, encouragement, understanding.

This is what Ted Studebaker of West Milton had been trying to provide for the past two years. This is what he was going to try to continue to provide. He had just agreed to spend another year in the country.

About this time last month we reprinted, in this column, a letter from Ted Studebaker to members of his home church, the West Milton Church of the Brethren. In it he expressed strong feelings, calling the war immoral and wrong and placing the burden of the blame on the U.S. military, the U.S. government and the U.S. people.

As his strong opposition to the war, Ted Studebaker's urge to help its victims grew even stronger. So on April 17 he married fellow Church World Service worker Lee Van Pak and committed himself to another year of service among the Vietnamese people.

"Rapport is something you develop with people by being here, by living with them, by speaking their language and understanding some of their problems," Ted said in a recent tape recorded interview. "The civilian population is, of course, in the middle of the war, and they are the ones who are losing the war."

Ted Studebaker understood the Vietnamese people. He also understood that the war is immoral and wrong. And there aren't very many American people who have this commendable, two-way understanding about the sad situation in Vietnam.