Subject: thank you, notes
From: David Biggs <biggsbiggs@gmail.com>
To: msm <msm@wjh.harvard.edu ...snip... Ropper <ropper@fas.harvard.edu>

Dear Matt, Sandy and Janet -

Thank you very much for generously sharing with me the boxes of photos and file cabinets full of docs on 16 Div. I'll add some of my observations in hopes that it might be of some use for the archiving process or for future visitors interested in this understudied series of events. (Also, Matt thanks very much for recommending to me to take the kids to Woods Hole. We did that today and I LOVED it as did they! We had a lovely day starting at the aquarium followed by a picnic on the docks watching a construction barge and MV ferries then on to swimming at Stone Beach and ending up at the ice cream/candy shop. My 5 and 2 year old went to bed happy.)

I spent Monday and part of Tuesday scanning through the files beginning with the 16-20 boxes and ending with the extracted HAC files. I'm attaching some notes that I took relating to these collections below, and I'd like to add something more of a summary of my impressions and further questions here. I'll try to divide them into topics to simplify reading them.

<u>using these records in historical research</u>

To me, the biggest value in these records comes in the potential they present for an historian of science interested in writing about how science diplomacy, science activism, and the politics of science in the midst of one of the most destructive wars in history. First there's the groundswell of interest among scientists to "DO SOMETHING"; then there's this much bigger problem of exactly what to do scientifically. The science of making and applying herbicides is one thing, but the science of measuring the effects of chemicals quite another. I was especially intrigued at the volumes of letters and communication in the files between such persons as anthropologist Georges Condominas (a founder of field-based anthropology techniques) or Pham Hoang Ho (a leader in advancing SE Asian botany). These scientists are likewise constrained by their own national and disciplinary politics, esp. Ho who went on to serve as rector of Can Tho University until about 1975. I got some sense int he exchanges with scientists at NAS and in the press clippings that there was friction among the larger community of American scientists involved, and that is interesting, too. There's also the role that this burst of AAAS and other-funded scientific activity had in the launching of new sub-fields of study like tropical forest ecology (Jantzen) and in developing new measurement techniques (Baughman). On the science diplomacy side, you have laid out here a treasure trove of compiled letters, cables and correspondence with various government agencies.

I know to some extent there were attempts to develop oral history works with Galston, possibly Arthur Westing or Pfeiffer. I don't know about people working for government/military such as Alvin Young (just published a new book in 2009 advancing his views). But its clear that this generation of scientists including yourself is a precious resource - the historian in me says "get these stories recorded!" I wish Dr. Ho were still alive as I would have loved to ask him more about botany in the Mekong Delta were he worked.

<u>forest photos and maps</u>

I'm still not too clear on what looked like a 5- to 6-year project to study effects of the spraying on forests. I briefly scanned the reams of computer paper with what look like land cover

change classifications for certain polygons, produced in the very early days of digital cartography. I also found some of Dr. Ho's correspondence giving his evaluations of forest composition in selected areas. As someone who very much enjoys working at a site and integrating remote sensing or maps with historical research and time spent in the field, I can see a very interesting project one might do in returning to one of the sites (Song Hre I think) in War Zone C today. Using GIS and the luxury of being able to travel extensively to these places today by ground transit, one could try to flesh out a more nuanced study of forest composition change after spraying and consider longer-term effects since genetic effects of exposure to dioxin (if VN accounts are believed) have traveled across more than one generation.

Matt, sometime I would love to spend more time figuring out the details of this forest cover analysis.

203 committee

Sandy, I think you should write something about 203 committee. Its certainly a very pivotal moment, and while you don't have the smoking gun (yet!), you have gathered so much fascinating material around it. As I mentioned, I may have a few relevant pieces of information from my research. First, the CORDS historical working group files that include some studies of herbicides and crop destruction in 1970-71 that appear to be triggered by the same mid-1970 policy shift under Abrams. My files on that are back in California, but I'll try to dig those out and send you a pdf. Also, my recent research on the 101st Airborne's base operations in Military Region I came up with documents in late 1970 that involved a very elaborate series of requests from commanders to destroy crops in areas approved by the American provincial advisor and the VN province chief. They suggest a very nuts and bolts view of the effects of this policy shift. However, even A. Orange and the other agents were not limited in the areas of firebases and base perimeters until sometime very late in 71 or early 72. My records from the 101st A/B chemical corps shows that they were still dumping large quantities of cs drops, running the sniffer missions, setting up fougasse in perimeters, dumping 55-barrel sorties of diesel or napalm, and doing ground-based or helicopter spraying of a. orange or blue mixed with diesel. Then, in rapid fashion in '72 the Army started closing up shop on many bases including Camp Eagle. Locals around there allege that US or RVN forces rapidly disposed of the CS and possibly other stocks by bulldozing them into pits. So my current interest is in studying the base perimeter and area more closely to try and get a better picture of chemical and munitions hazards there.

I'm headed back to california (driving!) next Thursday Aug 5th, so in case we don't get a chance to meet again before then, I want to thank you very much for finding me and opening up these resources. I'm putting together a grant to have a conference about a year from now (Oct 2011) on historical GIS in Vietnam, and from that perhaps I can interest some aspiring grad students or colleagues in this data set. I know from several emails that Prof. Jeanne Stellman is excited. She's launching a new interactive website with GIS data related to spray sites this fall, and she has a grad student very interested in remote sensing and the historical GIS angle. I believe she's also working on a book that may feature more on science policy with respect to herbicides.

Should you have any questions or thoughts, please feel free to contact me. I'll be on campus tomorrow (Thurs) and possibly Monday. This is to me a very exciting collection of materials and one I'll continue to ponder as I work through the current study. Have a great end of summer and autumn in new England!

Best-

David

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----------notes taken July 26-27----------
In reviewing these text records, I will refer to Hayeslip's 2002 classification and simply add additional notes about the potential use or relevance of certain materials based on experience with other archival collections. Before getting started, too, let me also add that faculty in Harvard's History of Science Program should be made aware of this collection as it presents a perfect opportunity for an aspiring historian of science to formulate a PhD. Such organizations as the Chemical Heritage Society and the Max Planck Institute might also be sources of interested students developing PhD topics as well as funding for students interested in doing research.

Boxes 1a – 4a

One value of the published materials – books and articles – here is that they are all collected into one physical place. Many reports and books are available through worldcat at other libraries, and many Congressional and military reports are now available online as PDF's; so there is overlap and they are out there. The Shaun Hayeslip catalogue of materials alone is a tremendously valuable research or finding aid for this material. In particular, it points to many small-run publications from the late 1960s early 1970s that researchers new to this topic would never think to examine.

LETTERS. For example see Box 4A. The blue binder contains extensive correspondence between Dr. Meselson and Dr. Pham Hoang Ho of Vietnam. Dr. Ho was a founder of Vietnamese botanical science and classification. He compiled some of the first comprehensive surveys of Vietnamese plants and was responsible for identifying many of these species' common and local names as well as their Latin names and locations in SE Asia. He served as a Chancellor of Can Tho University in the Mekong Delta before 1975 and then later moved on, I think, to France. From a history of science angle, these correspondences between VN scientists, AAAS and NAS scientists, and various key political figures such as Ellsworth Bunker, are of HIGH historical value. These are all photocopies – likely Dr. Meselson has originals? No, they are in Box 6. Again, the participation of these other established scientists in this debate over defoliants is very interesting from an historical angle.

Vietnamese documents in **Box 5a** also interesting as they are not easily found elsewhere.

INTERVIEWS. Transcripts and translations of interviews of villagers also potentially interesting for historians looking for more anecdotal, personal views and perceptions of herbicide effects in VN.

AAAS-NAS friction. Box 8. Documents here point to differences between the AAAS and NAS groups on estimating the damage caused by defoliation, esp. forest inventories.

Boxes 8-9 – good background correspondence and supporting materials to suggest the extent that scientific org's like AAAS and conservationist org's may have been in communication to study effects of herbicides and pesticides. Thus linking the Agent Orange study in VN with wider concern in late 1960s about "silent spring" type effects in US.

One of the aspects of this topic that make it interesting and complex from a history of science angle are the many different fields of science, applied sciences, and geoscience involved. What's fascinating to me as an historian are the many different areas of science that have to be mobilized in order to understand the effects of these chemicals in these very dynamic Vietnamese evironments. On the multi-field angle, you have such projects as the study of forest cover involving the likes of Pham Hoang Ho; the study of toxicity in shrimp and breastmilk involving medical researchers and the development with Baughman of a technique in mass spectroscopy for finding concentrations of TCDD at as little as 1 ppt; geoscience issues in using remote sensing to study historical changes in forest cover. Then there's the trans-national and political angles of this research. There's a not-so-subtle undertone of American politics about the military and chemicals playing out in NAS-AAAS communications. Then there are political issues in Vietnam with the NLF opposition to defoliation and the ongoing war there. There are also side stories like test sites in Thailand and Puerto Rico. There's also another science angle with Jantzen's correspondence about tropical ecology and the development of that as a sub-area in landscape ecology.