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Marie Eltz, center, with four of the Amerasian children she has adopted. From left: Nicholas, Jonathan, Ahyna and Moki

Amerasian kids coming here from Vietnam

By Edwin Bell
Examiner staff writer

Within a few months, the first planeload of Amerasian children from South Vietnam is expected to arrive in the United States.

It is uncertain whether the flight would contain the 70 children already certified as American citizens, or how many of the 400 registered with the American Embassy would be allowed to emigrate once the quotas begin.

It is not even certain how many Vietnamese-American children are growing up in Vietnam as part of the legacy of U.S. servicemen's participation in the war there: 8,000, maybe twice that many.

What is certain is that the Vietnamese government is willing to allow all those children to emigrate, and that it only needs approval from Congress for the process to start.

Over the years more than 30 bills have been introduced in Congress to ease the immigration of Amerasian children, but they have died in committee. This year one bill with a strong chance for approval, the Simpson-Mazzoli proposal, came under fire for its tight guidelines.

The bill would insist that Amerasian children allowed in this country be between the ages of 14 and 21, already accepted for adoption, able to prove parentage by an American serviceman and "subject to significant discrimination in the country of residence because of such parentage." It would also limit the number of Amerasian immigrants to 2,000 a year.

Other measures have come in its wake, including one from Rep. Philip Burton, D-San Francisco, meant to ease visa restrictions for such children, and another from Rep. Stewart McKinney of Connecticut, calling for sponsorship and financial responsibility for Amerasians for five years.

The McKinney bill has support in the House and a similar measure in the Senate stands a good chance. But the Mazzoli measure may still be predominant.

Whatever legislation wins out, said San Francisco's Marie Eltz, it's a step in the right direction.

"Ten to 100 percent behind this," she said of congressional attempts to ease the immigration of Amerasian children. "Beyond a doubt, one of a dozen non-Vietnamese have no rights over there. They're not able to get anything available to others."

Eltz directed five orphanages in Vietnam.

UC accused of censorship

BERKELEY (AP) — Workers on the University of California's award-winning national radio program, "The Science Editor," have accused the university of censoring claims that female faculty members earn less than men in American colleges.

Statistics Professor Elizabeth Scott has asked the campus Academic Senate to investigate allegations that her interview for the university-produced radio show, which is carried by the CBS radio network, was censored.

Two university public affairs employees who produced the program, newswriter Sylvia Hill and former professor Charles Levy, have filed grievances with the university, saying they were harassed and demoted when they objected to the removal of the interview.

Scott, Hill and Levy say the interview

in tandem with Australia's Rosemary Taylor, and ended up adopting four of the 8,000 children who made it out of the country between 1969 and 1975.

Because she was single at the time, Eltz took in "only the children who had no other hope, who were, for whatever reason, unacceptable." The children she adopted turned out to be darker-skinned, identified with long-gone GI fathers in Vietnam.

Even in the orphanage, when the children lined up a breakfast, they would feed them in this order: the Vietnamese child, the Vietnamese-white Vietnamese-child, and then, finally, the Vietnamese-black. By the time they got their rice ladled out to them, their bowls were all but empty."

Eltz remembered that the sisters of the orphanage "would run out on the road when soldiers passed and point to those children and say, 'American GI babies — American. Give 'em.'"

Eltz' oldest, 13-year-old Jonathan, still can't get used to the world he's come from and the world he's living in now. The other children, Nicholas, 12, Moki, 8, and Ahyna, 7, haven't had it quite as hard, but still are aware of how their lives stand out, said Eltz.

Eltz now offers a home for bettered children in San Francisco, and the sound of singing birds could be heard upstairs as she talked earnestly about the Amerasian children who might finally get a chance to come to the United States.

Eltz pointed up the main entrance problem in Vietnam, adding, "If there are 10 starving children and only one piece of bread, and two of those children are not Vietnamese, you can be sure the bread will only be broken into eight pieces."

Eltz picked up pictures from a photo album and pointed to children in Vietnam orphanages between 1969 and 1975, before the airlift stopped. Some of them are dead, she said, killed in the crash of a transport plane that skidded into a rice paddy outside of Saigon in 1975, killing 140 children and 30 adults.

Here were two blind children "helping each other to see," she said, both killed in the crash. Here were girls crowded with three and four babies, all orphaned, row after row of them.

This talk of Amerasians being brought into America is the first hope for those children since the airlift stopped operating.

Although efforts in some European countries have helped Amerasian children to emigrate, the exchange between the United States and Vietnam has been in limbo since 1975, when Eltz, with the help of military personnel and volunteers from San Francisco, established the Presidio to accept massive airlifts of infants and children from Vietnam.

The decision pending from Congress offers Amerasian children a chance to come to America, something they've been denied for at least seven years, indicated Eltz.

In her book, "Dark Rice," Eltz wrote an open letter to the unknown father of Jonathan, her oldest adopted son. "Each child wants to know one day if his coming was 'leaped fate,' she said. "Each child deserves to be told. Because you did not tell Jonathan and all his brothers and sisters that someone waited for their coming, I must."

More and more fathers of Amerasian babies are coming to that realization, said Eltz.

Rick Rovels, program developer for the Center for Southeast Asian Refugee Resettlement in San Francisco.

"I got a call from a Wall Street broker in New York City the other day, asking what he could do to see his child again," Rovels said.

A fundraising benefit at the Kabuki Theater in Japan town tonight will go a long way toward easing the obstacles to bringing Amerasian children into this country, added Rovels.

With funds raised from this benefit, CSARF plans to pay for a group house in which these children could be sheltered pending adoption by American families, as well as to fund the planning process needed to deal with the anticipated influx of hundreds of Amerasian children in the months to come.

Charges filed in oil well scam

A Castro Valley promoter has been charged with luring investors, many in the Bay Area, of \$42,000 in an Oklahoma oil well-drilling scheme that promised "multiple financial returns."

Gordon Taylor, 50, who operated in Castro Valley as This Inc., was accused of mail fraud in a five-count indictment returned by a San Francisco federal grand jury.

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