

Vu Thi Hieu's husband, Tru Anh Tran, could speak pretty good English. He had been a chicken farmer in Vietnam. He had served in the Vietnamese Army for eight years, including being a sergeant and an interpreter for the United States Army.

When they arrived in Shakopee, the family lived at the guest house of the Catholic Sisters at 414 West Fourth Avenue. Maternity clothes, baby food, and eventually house were provided by parishioners at St. Mary's Church. The Anderson family from the church were an important connection to the family.

Vu Thi Hieu had another son, Thomas, who was born at St. Francis Hospital in Shakopee in 1977, and later another child, Taylor was born. Eventually, the family moved to St. Louis Park, where Tru Anh Tran worked at the Spectrum Plastics Group.

Vu Thi Hieu died on July 18, 2011 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her husband, Tru Anh Tran, died at age 67 on December 27, 2011. They are buried at Gethsemane Cemetery in New Hope, Minnesota.



By the late 1980s, there were over 231,000 Vietnamese immigrants living in the U.S., with approximately 18,000 settling in Minnesota.

The influx of refugees resulted in cultural exchanges as immigrants accepted Western ways of life, while trying to hold onto their Vietnamese heritage.

At the same time, Minnesotans began to slowly embrace aspects of Vietnamese culture. These cultural exchanges between Minnesotans and Vietnamese immigrants helped pave the way for the immigrant groups of today.



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Vu Thi Hieu

1945-2011

In Shakopee 1975



Vu Thi Hieu was tired but happy after arriving at the Minneapolis International Airport in the middle of September of 1975 at 1:25 a.m Friday night. And she was pregnant. Her child, a John, would be born at St. Francis Hospital two months later.

Vu Thi Hieu, her husband, Thu Anh Tran and their children were supposed to arrive in Minnesota after the flight from Fort Lauderdale, Tampa, Chicago, and Twin Cities at 5:15 pm, according to an article in the Shakopee Valley News on September 10, 1975.

A large delegation of well-wishers from St. Mary's Catholic Church were there. As the people arrived, the parishioners waited. And waited. But they did not show up.

A group of people asked at the Traveler's Aid, and they told them they might be on the next flight, from Chicago. They weren't!

Vu Thi Hieu, her husband, Thu Anh Tran and their children from a parishioner's booklet from the St. Mary's Catholic Church in Shakopee. The family moved from Vietnam to Shakopee in 1975. Vu Thi Hieu was pregnant when she arrived, and she had a child, Thamas, at St. Francis Hospital. She later had another child, Taylor. They added to the family who included Tran Hoy Cuong, age 4, Trun Trung Hau, age 3, and a girl, Tran Thi Anh Tuye, age one year old.



As it happened, the family somehow was taken off the Northwest Orient flight in Chicago and put on another flight...to Fort Lauderdale, where they started out. After four hours on the plane, they disembarked, thinking Minnesota was not going to be bad after all, according to the article Vietnamese family arrives following two flights from Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. in the Shakopee Valley News. It looked a lot like Florida, with palm trees and balmy weather.

"The Thu family possessions arrived on schedule and after some hastily contrived conversations, they left Fort Lauderdale once again with specific instructions not to leave the plane until someone came on board for them," according to the Shakopee Valley News.

And that is what happened. Once they arrived in Minnesota, George Spielman, director of pastoral care services at St. Francis Hospital, brought the family out to the Minnesota International Airport.

The family left Vietnam on April 29, 1975. They arrived in Guam, where they stayed for six weeks, and then they arrived in Florida on June 26. And now, in September, the family arrived in Minnesota.

Vu Thi Hieu was 26 years old. She already had three children, Tran Hoy Cuong, age 4, Trun Trung Hau, age 3, and a girl, Tran Thi Anh Tuyet, who was a year old. And of course, Vu Thi Hieu soon had another child on the way. Her mother, Nguyen Thi Giac, who was 61 years old, also arrived with the family.

Vu Thi Hieu was born on December 2, 1945 in Saigon, which later was called Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. On April 30, 1975, after 20 years of fighting, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong took over Saigon, ending the war and reunifying Vietnam under one communist regime. Like many South Vietnamese people, the family experienced risky journeys in order to be free of communism. This first group of refugees were well-educated English speakers familiar with American culture.