

# Temporary Wives

(very cheap)

Dan Derby

1969

SAIGON (LNS)—To stem the gold flow and inflation caused by six-hundred thousand Americans spending large monthly salaries in Vietnam, the PX and the military clubs have gone to great lengths to provide for the needs of the Americans in Saigon.

One commodity in great demand, however, cannot be found in the PX shelves or at the bar of the Officers' Clubwomen.

Accordingly, the sale of sex is the chief means for those Vietnamese so inclined to rake off a part of the seemingly endless pile of money Americans possess.

In Saigon, where peace is the exceptional rule, flesh peddling has become a complex form of business. To have a girl snuggle up to you while you have a drink costs only two dollars at any local bar (up from eighty cents in 1967), a pedicab driver can usually locate about an hour's worth of the real thing for five dollars.

Room service at the local hotels features hot and cold running girls at fifteen to twenty dollars per night (equivalent to a laboring woman's wages for three weeks, or a Vietnamese soldier's for a month).

But for a thinking man with time on his hands and a relatively "secure situation"—military office workers and U.S. civilians—there is a "better" way to get sex. By the month, sex is not only cheaper, but safer from social diseases and social stigmas. The way? The "temporary wife."

The temporary wife is the approved solution for the lonely man overseas. Acquiring a "wife" is very simple. Rather than propositioning waitresses, sales girls and secretaries, all one has to do is look in the classified ads of Saigon's English language papers:

## SEEKING FRIEND

If you are looking for a girl friend or just a friend, keep in mind, Miss Lee at 333 Cong Ly. Many beautiful well-educated interesting high class girls. Come to Miss Lee in order to meet foreigners...Why don't you? Tel. 20683 (0800 to 1900 hrs. daily).

Three-three-three Cong Ly Street is a villa (large house with a wall around it) about half-way between Tan Son Nhut Airbase and downtown Saigon. As the visitor enters the building he immediately encounters Miss Lee's office. It looks like any business office and one gets the impression that the service provided is likely to be nothing more than a manual version of computer-dating.

And why shouldn't the office look proper? Miss Lee's is a respectable operation, which, in addition to match-making, handles passports, car and real estate rentals, and employment service.

Miss Lee is a motherly woman of 35 or 40 with a piled up hairdo that makes her look like a Japanese empress. Her English is dignified and quiet, if broken.

"What kind of girl do you like?" she asks. "Marriage, Language Exchange or Friendship?"

Marriage is represented by a folder containing photos of girls who would like to marry an American, with a little information about each girl. Girls in this category look to be in their late 20s and rather sophisticated. No one I know seems to have had the nerve to meet girls in this category, so it is impossible to say just what they are like.

Language exchange is next, and under this category are portfolios of bookish-looking girls who look very much like what they pretend to be. No one seems to have tried meeting any of them either.

The category that does get sampled—and sold—is the “Friendship” category. Folders show portrait photos of each girl fully clad and with a flower in her hair or in her hand, held to her cheek.

“Would you like friendship A, B, or C?” inquires Miss Lee.

It is good to know your “friendship.”

Class A is the mainstay of Miss Lee’s operation. These are young, good-looking girls who want money and know Americans have it. They are smart enough to realize that the chances of marrying an American are slim and they have sufficient self-respect not to sell their bodies by night in the ordinary way of the world’s whores. By the month, as “temporary wives,” is another matter.

These girls are not to be underrated. They are capable of strong, if spontaneous affection, and many of them become quite attracted to their “husbands.”

Class C girls are for older men or men with lower standards. This kind of temporary wife is at best average, at worst ugly, and usually in her 30s.

Class B girls are jet-set, on-the-make types who want to go to fancy places like the U.S. Embassy’s deluxe civilian restaurant-nightclub, the International House. If you don’t have a card for the International House, these girls suddenly lose interest in being your girlfriend.

In the case of Class A friendship, a monthly fee of about \$80 is paid to Miss Lee, who passes most of it on to the temporary wife. Class C maidens are a steal at only \$40. The girl-friend-golddiggers of Class B cost you only administrative fee.

Miss Lee’s products are a versatile lot. They may be seen on the arms of their “husbands” in any officers club or nightclub in Saigon. But just as often, you find them shopping in the markets and stores, avoiding the high prices charged to Americans.

In many ways, a devoted “wife” will save more than she originally cost in being able to haggle with vendors.

Few American men can avoid this system of modified prostitution. Why not just date “nice girls?” one might ask. The answer is that few are available. Because the majority of Vietnamese women seen with Americans are prostitutes, any woman who doesn’t want to be considered a prostitute is hesitant to go out with an American.

The company of an American can make a girl a fortune if she plays it right.

Many girls do just that because the economic situation in their country and the military invasion offers no feasible alternative.

The transformation of masses of Vietnamese women into prostitutes, and yet the system’s ability- to pass these women off as “friends” and “wives,” ‘says something about the status of women back in the States—or in any capitalist country.

Housewife or prostitute—it’s a convenient inferior status satisfying economic and psychological needs. In both cases, the men set down the rules, the women “love, honor and obey.”

Not all Vietnamese women are making the Saigon sex scene, however. Tens of thousands have taken up arms with their brothers to struggle against the regime and the system that would turn them all into prostitutes, or for that matter, into housewives.

# fifth Estate

Dan Derby  
Temporary Wives  
(very cheap)  
1969

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/84-july-24-august-6-1969/temporary-wives>  
Fifth Estate #84, July 24-August 6, 1969

[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net)