

Jim Schnell

## SEP (Student Enrichment Program) Blog Report

SEP grant to participate with the annual national meeting of the Texas Tech University Vietnam War Archive held in Dallas, Texas April 12-13, 2024. My work with this organization focuses on study of ethical issues associated with the Vietnam War and the aftermath of the Vietnam War.



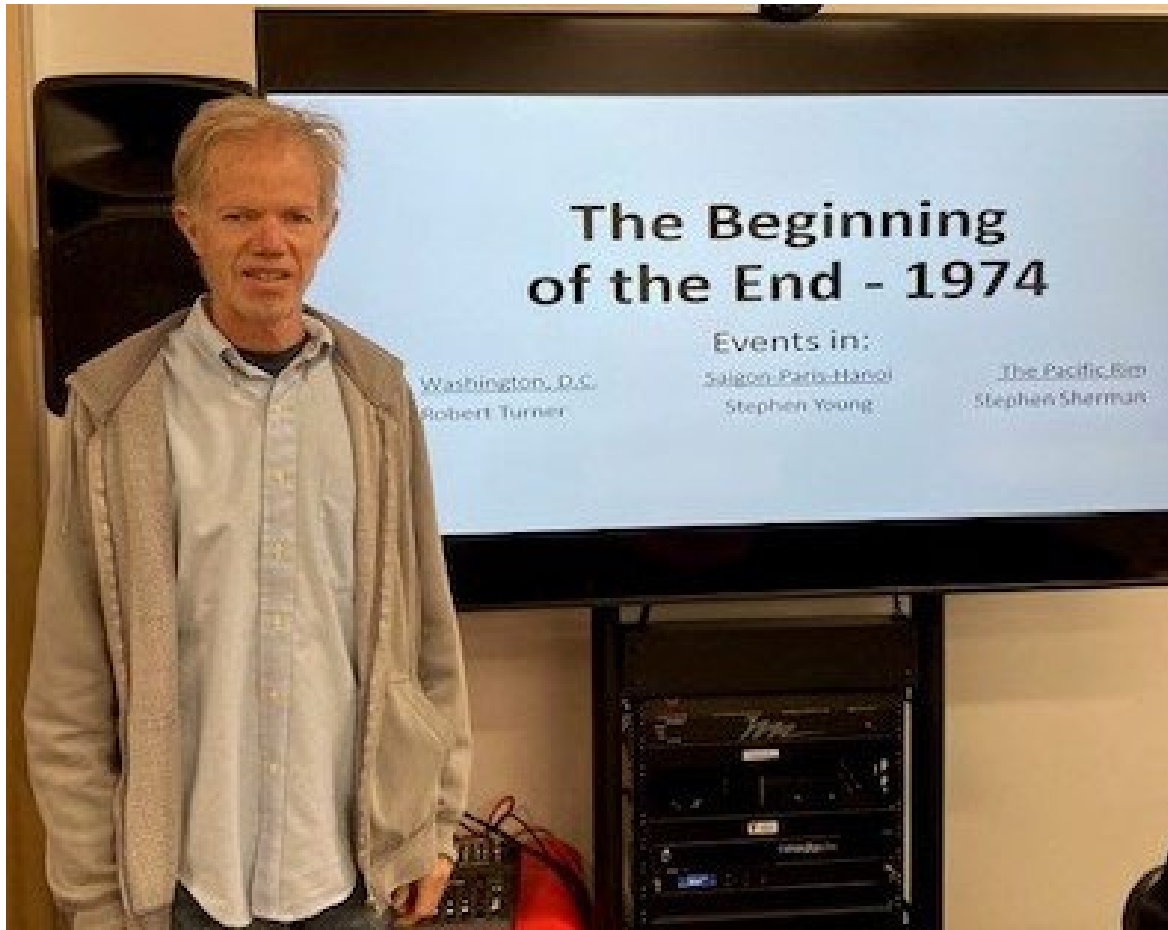
### **April 12, 2024 First Day of Conference**

This conference featured a robust two-day schedule of sessions that dealt with varied aspects of the Vietnam War and the aftermath of the Vietnam War. 2025 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam so there is considerable interest in this organization. The Texas Tech University Vietnam War Archive is the largest collection of Vietnam War materials aside from the U.S. National Archives.

I am posing in this picture with Dr. Le Nam Trung Hieu from Duy Tan University (Da Nang, Vietnam). Dr. Hieu is a native of Hue, Vietnam. He and I are partnering on study of ethical issues associated with the Vietnam War.



The conference provided opportunity for me to meet with my Vietnamese counterparts to confer on our ongoing study of ethical issues associated with the Vietnam War and the aftermath of the Vietnam War. In this photo I am meeting with Dr. Hieu, Dr. Minh and Dr. Bao. The latter (Dr. Le Nguyen Bao) is the son of Le Cong Co. Le Cong Co was a Vietcong leader during the Vietnam War. I published an article about ethical dimensions of Le Cong Co's leadership style in the *International Journal of Ethical Leadership* and we (those of us pictured) continue to work on scholarly ventures associated with ethics in warfare.



This gathering of Vietnam War scholars focuses on macro and micro dimensions of the war. Both ends of this continuum allow for analysis of ethical issues that are relevant to understanding and interpreting outcomes of the war.

Of particular relevance related to my study has to do with the cross-cultural understandings of what transpired during the Vietnam War. My Ph.D. is in rhetoric and much of my study, teaching and research has to do with cross-cultural rhetoric. As such—the Vietnam War poses opportunity to focus on western rhetorical traditions (as manifested in the American point of view) and eastern rhetorical traditions (as manifested in the Vietnamese point of view). One of the more relevant findings of this analysis of ethical orientations maintained by both sides of the controversy is that there were times during the war when there was common ground between the Vietnamese and American objectives but a lack of understanding of the other. This common ground was not recognized at the time of the fighting but it can now be recognized 50+ years later via academic dialog among those who participated on all sides of the equation.



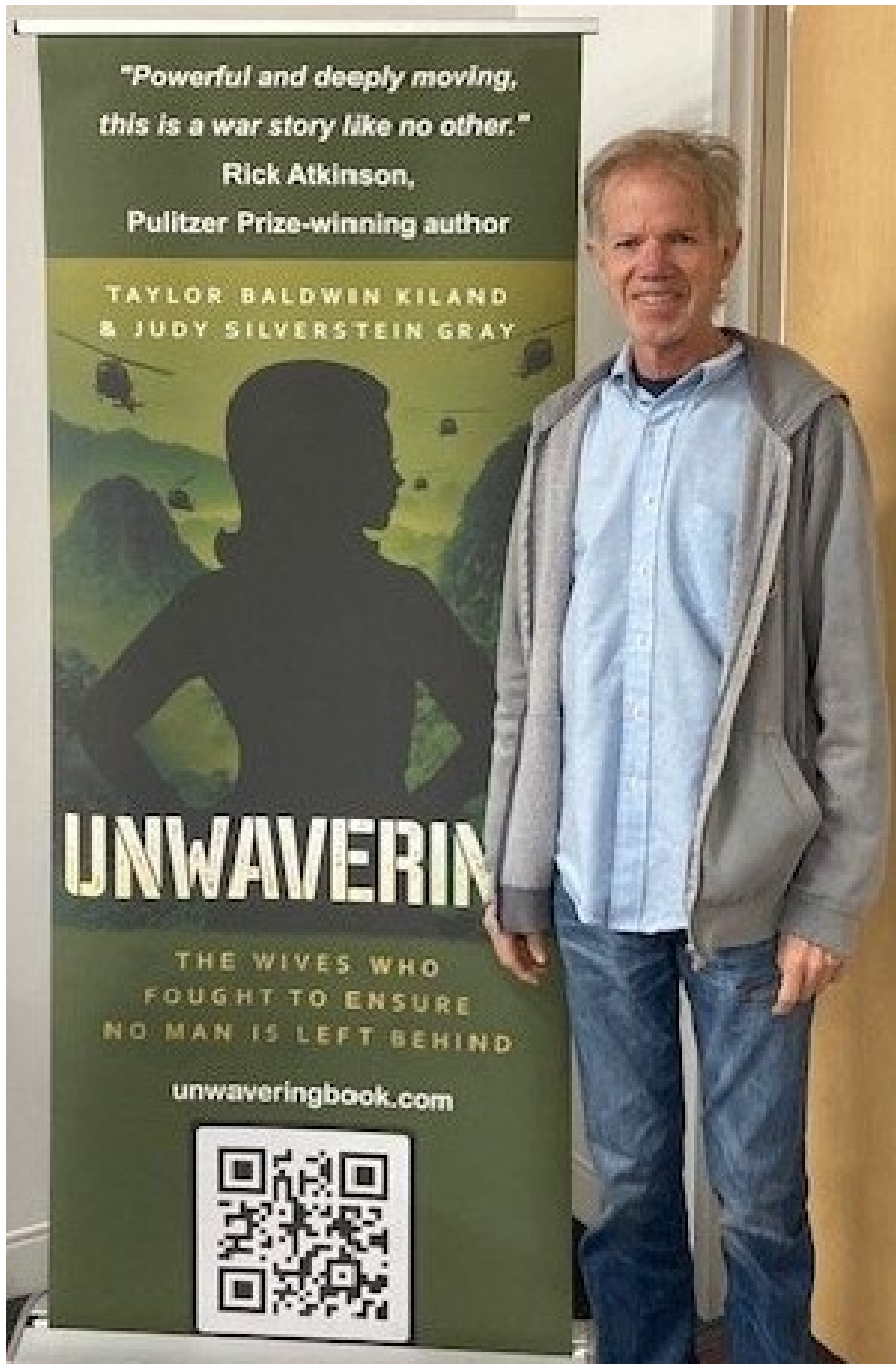
### **April 13, 2024 Second Day of Conference**

The conference brings together a wide range of individuals who focus on matters having to do with the Vietnam War and the aftermath of the Vietnam War. This includes American military veterans who were involved in strategy development during the war, South Vietnamese who were allied with U.S. foreign policy objectives and North Vietnamese who fought against the Americans and South Vietnamese.



The conference sessions allow ample time for presentations and questions from the audience. This makes for lively dialogs that provide unique insights. In this session we focused on ethical objectives associated with the leadership of Le Cong Co. I am Le Cong Co's biographer so this

provides a wonderful opportunity for me to probe details that were ongoing throughout his leadership of the Vietcong. Such analysis recognizes perceptions at play by all sides of the controversies.



One of the ethical dimensions of the Vietnam War has to do with work of the women associated with men who were POW/MIA (Prisoner of War/Missing in Action). This typically included wives of such men but also included sisters, mothers, daughters etc. Their objectives and

persistence often rested on the ethical recognition of their plight and efforts to secure prisoner freedom from captivity.



Of particular relevance is the opportunity for those who were involved in the fighting of the Vietnam War to come together 50+ years later to address specific engagements from that period and analyze the orientations of the “other” so as to make sense of what occurred. Ethical intentions and ethical outcomes are a significant part of this study.

Looking ahead, I will be using information I gathered at this conference for the book I am authoring about the leadership of Le Cong Co both during the war and since the war. I was in Vietnam last month (during the MTSO 2024 spring break) to engage in interviews with him and collect information that I can access via my being in-country. The theological ramifications have continual relevance.