



BETTY NGUYEN

CNN ANCHOR

By Amorette Yang

CNN news anchor Betty Nguyen had never planned on becoming a broadcast journalist. These unexpected twists began early in her life, dating back to when her family fled Viet Nam shortly before Saigon fell to communism in 1975. "We left in the cover of darkness and packed in a cargo plane like sardines. My mom knew we couldn't stay in Viet Nam—we were walking on faith."

Whether it was faith or destiny, Betty and her family safely arrived in America. Despite the fateful events that she and her family endured, including three different refugee camp stops in the Philippines, Guam, and Camp Pendleton before settling in Texas, Betty's fate has led her quickly to the top as a news anchor for the world-famous CNN network.

"I didn't plan on becoming a broadcast journalist," says Betty. "Like most Vietnamese Americans, I was going to pursue a career that's often regarded as bringing honor to the family. My choices were to become a doctor, lawyer or engineer. I chose to become an attorney." In her high school years, Betty worked in a law office during the summers to prepare herself for a career as a lawyer. Realizing that she had no passion for this field, Betty began exploring other options. Her involvement in debate and drama during high school led her to consider broadcast journalism, as "television has both a little bit of debate and a whole lot of drama." Additionally, her parents watched the news every night, which reinforced her interest in journalism as she grew up in news-conscious home.

Betty eventually pursued her heart's curiosities and chose broadcast journalism at the University of Texas at Austin. She received her Bachelor's degree with honors, graduating *magna cum laude*. Her academic excellence was only a minor stepping stone, however, towards her success as a broadcast journalist. Soon after graduating, she landed a job with KWTX in Waco, Texas, as a morning anchor and reporter, then

went on to become an anchor for CBS-affiliate KTVT in Dallas, Texas. Her talents were quickly noted, as she received an Associated Press Award for spot news coverage and received the Legacy of Women Award in 2003. Betty was also named a Great Women of Texas Honoree and won a regional Emmy award for "Outstanding Noon Newscast."

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Unsurprisingly, her accolades and self-determination earned her an unexpected phone call from CNN one day, offering her an opportunity with the network. "It was something I never saw coming," says the modest journalist. She reached the top in such a short amount of time, yet acknowledges her success humbly. "There's no real formula. You got to have the talent and experience, but a lot of it has to do with timing and a little bit of luck. I'm thrilled to be at the network level."

But Betty's achievements didn't happen overnight. From the beginning, she was determined to convince her family that television news was the right choice. Fortunately for Betty, they supported her in every avenue. "Another obstacle I faced early in my career was getting into a business that doesn't have very many Vietnamese American or Asian American mentors."

"Rising up quickly as a journalist was also challenging. You have to step up to the game and make sure that you're competitive. That competition is what will determine if you sink or swim in this business," she told *BN*. Betty also urges young people to "always follow your dreams, as clichéd as that may sound. If you have a passion for something, you're bound to succeed. So jump into it. Pound the pavement. Make the phone call. Go for it!"

LENDING A HELPING HAND

Another one of Betty's dreams has been to give back to her country and people in Viet Nam. Her passion for the community started a nonprofit humanitarian organization, which was inspired by her first visit back to the motherland. In 1998, Betty returned to the very same soil she was born on for the first time since 1975, when she and her family abruptly left Viet Nam.

"It was very emotional, very moving. Of course you're familiar with the culture and language, but to see the country, this land, to see where you're from was very emotional. My mother has never let me forget about the suffering in Viet Nam. That trip sparked my family and me to establish Help the Hungry in 2000."

On an annual basis, Betty makes a trip to Viet Nam during the rainy season to help provide humanitarian relief through her foundation Help the Hungry. They focus on struggling families along the Mekong Delta, where deadly flooding occurs.

"Help the Hungry provides a life-line to those in need during the hardest times of the year. We don't realize how lucky we are in America. This humanitarian work has really given me a sense of purpose." Not only has it given her a purpose, but it has also earned her a spot in the Philanthropy in Texas Hall of Fame. (To help contribute to Help the Hungry



or learn more about this organization, visit www.help-the-hungry.org.)

ON BEING VIETNAMESE AMERICAN

"In growing up as a Vietnamese American, especially when you leave the country, the focus is on 'becoming American,'" she proclaims. "I grew up as an all-American girl and my parents instilled in me the need to succeed. That's important and has helped me to reach my goals, but the process of assimilation has

also caused many of my generation to lose a sense of culture and a sense of language. That's very unfortunate because as Vietnamese Americans, we have such a proud and rich history to offer. So as we achieve the American dream, we should always remember where we come from and never forget that."

So what lies in the future for Betty? "I honestly don't know what is to come" in regards to her yellow brick road of success that awaits her. However, she does know that she wants to write a book one day, as "everyone has interesting stories to tell that can benefit every generation."

At her young age and with such a compelling background and unparalleled accomplishments, Betty already has so much to share with the world. The one thing that she's not waiting to release as a New York Times Best Seller is that she's "proud to be Vietnamese-born and Vietnamese American." **BN**

[Tiếp theo trang 111]

■ VỀ JOHOR TÌM MỘ BA

đồ của nghĩa trang, nếu có bản đồ của nghĩa trang thì mới tìm ra "lot number" được.

Dò theo bản đồ chúng tôi lần mò đến một khu đất nằm ở góc cuối của nghĩa trang, tìm mãi vẫn không thấy ngôi mộ nào có cùng "lot number" của Ba. Tuy nhiên ở nơi đây, có một vài chỗ đất trống, ở chung quanh thì có các ngôi mộ. Lạ lùng thay, khi bước chân tới đó, tự dưng tôi cảm thấy có một chút gì quen thuộc, thì ra trước khu đất trống này có một cây cao cao với những bông hoa màu vàng mà hồi xưa ngay trước nhà tôi có hai cây này. Tôi thường hái bông của nó và kết thành chữ màu vàng trông rất đẹp mắt, tôi không nhớ rõ lắm tên của cây này. Tôi nói với chú Hùng chắc nơi đây là mộ của Ba, tôi giải thích cho chú Hùng biết vì có cây này mọc ở đây, giống như trước nhà ở Việt Nam. Chú Hùng nhìn chung quanh và nói thật lạ, trong nghĩa trang rộng mênh mông này có trồng rất nhiều loại cây, nhưng duy nhất chỉ nơi đây mới có cây này. Tôi còn nói thêm là hồi nhỏ cháu hay chơi hay chơi ở dưới gốc cây này. Khi nói đến đó thì bỗng dưng một đàn chuẩn chuẩn bay khắp nơi, tôi cũng chợt nhớ ra hồi nhỏ mình cũng hay bắt mấy con chuẩn chuẩn ở cây này và làm đồ hàng chơi với mấy đứa bạn hàng xóm, nhất là vào những tháng hè. Ở Mã Lai bây giờ cũng đang là mùa hè. Cũng phía trước miếng đất trống này, còn có một cây mọc cành lá xum xuê, cây tuy nhỏ nhưng rất nhiều lá, cây

này làm cho tôi chợt nhớ tới những lần Mẹ hay ngắt lá, giã nát, vắt lấy nước, tắm cho tôi khi tôi bị nổi mề đay.

Ông Francis nét mặt đăm chiêu, cầm bản đồ trong tay ông đi từ xa xa đếm từng ngôi mộ, khi đến khu đất trống này, ông nói theo như bản đồ thì ngôi mộ có "lot number" này nằm ở nơi đây, chính là nơi ở phía trước có cây với những bông hoa vàng.

July 12, 2005, đánh dấu kỷ niệm ngày tìm ra mộ Ba. Hôm đó, tôi mặc áo mầu vàng, cây mọc ở trước mộ Ba cũng bông mầu vàng, bông California Poppy cũng mầu vàng, mầu vàng cũng là mầu tôi yêu thích nhất. Ba qua đời lúc 35 xuân xanh và năm nay tôi được 35 tuổi.

Cám ơn Ba đã 25 năm nay luôn theo sát an ủi, dẫn dắt, che chở bao bọc cho con. Ba cũng là người mà con thường tâm sự khi vui cũng như lúc buồn. Xin ba luôn phù trợ cho những người chung quanh con. Nhất là người mà Ba đã chọn để cùng với con tìm kiếm Ba, cũng có vết sẹo bàn ủi y như con, chỉ khác là con thì ở bàn tay, còn người ấy thì ở trên cánh tay... có phải cánh tay tương trợ cho bàn tay phải không Ba? **BN**