

# GALLERY OF SUCCESS

For over a year now, friends have asked me to relate the experiences that led me to be honored by the Gallery of Success, where my picture hangs in Mitten Hall at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This honor made me both humble and proud. If this could happen to me, it is within the realm of possibility that it can happen to you.

In the early 1980's I was able to escape by night from Vietnam on a home made boat. Arriving in Pennsylvania, I took all manner of jobs: busboy, animal care maintenance, lawn care, farm work -- if the job was offered, I took it.

Even though I was basically on my own during my college years, I never gave up, and graduated with a DMD degree from Temple University's School of Dentistry. So I know it can be done.

I opened a dental office in New York City in sight of the World Trade Center's twin towers. On September 11, 2001, I heard the first plane hit. Startled, I thought perhaps it had been a small commuter plane. Suddenly dust and debris came rolling up the street, and as I looked out, the second tower was hit. Covering my face, I rushed into the street and saw crowds of people running and screaming. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. My mind flashed back to the war in Vietnam. I quickly realized that some of my patients worked in those towers, and my body began to shake. Then I saw First Responders flooding over the scene. Fire trucks and ambulances were everywhere, and people were being guided to safety; the injured being cared for. Stunned, I went back to my office and looked at the debris that was everywhere. I felt helpless and afraid. It's hard to remember what I did next.

The following day I learned that I had lost friends. As I cleaned up I determined to do something to help the First Responders and the survivors. I would offer them all free dental service as a way of saying thank you for what they had endured, and what America had done for me. The New York Post and the Daily News alerted everyone to my offer, which was gladly taken up by many. To my complete surprise, I received a letter from then President George W. Bush.



*On Daily News New York*

My dental services have always been free to members of the clergy and religious orders, no matter what their religious preference. God has been good to me, and I respect those who serve him. During the course of my career I have been fortunate to meet Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, as well as the Dalai Lama, Senator Schumer and Secretary of State Hilary Clinton.

My greatest honor, however, came on September 26, 2008, when Temple University honored me and placed my picture in the Gallery of Success. Every year the University awards individuals who fulfill certain standards of

scholarship, philanthropy, and morality, and who demonstrates success in a chosen field. I am the first person of Vietnamese origin to receive this honor, and Temple University sent a letter to the US Consulate in Vietnam, at my request, asking that visas be given to the following so that they could come to the United States to share this honor with me: Reverend Phap Tong, Chief Monk of the Huyen Khong Temple, Hue, Vietnam; Professor Ton That Hanh, Vice President of Hue University, where I had studied, and my family members. With over a thousand onlookers in Mitten Hall, they came to share my happiness.



*With President George W. Bush*

I know that you young people who have excelled and have received honors, you who are valedictorians and honor society members, can understand the feeling of pride I experienced on that stage. Certainly you and your families make sacrifices: that is understood, but the rewards are immeasurable. You will serve society and be a better person for it. There is no feeling to compare.

The Gallery of Success's mission is two-fold: to provide current students an opportunity to recognize and be inspired

by the success of Temple graduates who have gone before them and achieved success in their fields, and to honor alumni who have distinguished themselves in their careers, serving as an inspiration to others in the attainment of their Temple University degrees--and the names of all former Gallery recipients are permanently displayed in the Temple University, Mitten Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Above all, I thank my own dear mother in Vietnam, Bui Thi Zung, who underwent many privations during and after the hostilities, but was cheered by the knowledge that I was safe and working hard and was trying to be a good person. I also thank God for his great favor and blessings.

Good luck with you dreams, young students. Remember your goals can be reached. Be patient, industrious and charitable. I know that any help I gave others came back to me one hundred fold. Love and respect your parents, listen to your teachers, and enjoy your youth and its many opportunities.

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*Mrs. Bui T. Zung*