

THE WONDERS of CROSS-CULTURAL TRANSLATING

Tales of Pop Stars, Race Jockeys, French Poets, Nu Gini Cartoons, Red Cross Heroines and Indonesia's founding President all served as a perfect preparation in writing the English Version of a novel by Asia's finest 20th Century novelist, Bao Ninh.

Frank PALMOS



*Bao Ninh and Frank Palmos in Hanoi after the publication of *The Sorrow of War* in 1996*

Putting into English publication what Race Jockeys really said, translating poor grammar in songs into a new language, discovering foreign correspondents are not equal, being corrected by a New Gini Christian cartoonist, failing the International Red Cross and having President Soekarno delight in turning the spotlight on the interpreter in front of a very large audience... These are but brief anecdotes that take us into the Bao Ninh story...and from these experiences grew my deep respect and admiration for our profession...I admire every one for the work that brought you here today. I *know* many here also have stories as strange as mine...



Frank Palmos was the first foreign correspondent trained in Bahasa Indonesia (1961-1962) to cover Indonesia. In 1964 he founded the first newspaper bureau in Jakarta, then served three two-year stints, covering the rise and fall of the Communist Party and the subsequent civil upheavals. Frank took leave to immerse himself in French at the Centre for Linguistics, worked on the *Desk Anglais* for Agency France Press news agency in Paris and translated French reports from the Israeli-Arab Six-Day War for the international press. Frank then served four tours as a war correspondent in Vietnam, later writing *Ridding the Devils* (Bantam, 1960), a look at Vietnam under the Communists. He successfully tracked down Viet Cong soldiers who had ambushed and shot dead four Western journalists in 1968, a search recorded in his Bantam 1990 book *Ridding the Devils*. Foreign office interpreter Phan Thanh Hao translated *Devils* into Vietnamese and it became a local hit, leading to a meeting with Bao

Ninh...the three combined to see *The Sorrow of War* make history for Vietnamese literature as the first Vietnamese novel to be published in the West. In early 2010 the Society of Authors awarded *Sorrow* a ranking alongside *War and Peace*, *The Tin Drum* and other famous novels as one of the finest 50 translations in the 20th Century. Frank now engaged on a major Indonesian history project that has required 1500 pages of translations, about *The Battle for Surabaya* (1945).