

My mother's story about the last days of April 1975 is equally harrowing, but in a different way. My parents were not exactly thrilled when they learned that I was going back to Viet Nam after being safely evacuated on one of the early Babylift flights. They were in frequent contact with the FCVN folks in Colorado to keep informed of our situation. They were told that everything was fine and that we were just waiting for flights that would bring the last of our kids and the remaining American staff home. On April 27, however, the call did not go well.

"Well, we got them all out. It was the final Babylift flight, with the last of our kids plus Cherie Clark and the last of our American staff."

Cheryl Markson, the FCVN US Director sounded a bit uneasy with what should be good news.

"Including Ross, right?" my mother asked anxiously.

"Um, no. He stayed behind."

"WHAT?!" The newspapers and television were filled with dramatic stories and footage of the horrors being inflicted on Saigon.

"You left him there?"

"Don't worry," Cheryl tried to reassure her. "He has the van and the house is near the airport. We told him that if things get bad, just drive to the airport and live in the van until you are evacuated."

Hardly words of comfort. My mother gulped and hung up the phone.

On April 29, the worst case seemed to be unfolding: the headlines screamed, "SAIGON AIRPORT BOMBED" and worse, "AMERICANS KILLED IN AIRPORT ATTACK" followed by, "Names withheld pending notification of next of kin."

My mother dropped the paper and sank into her chair. "Names withheld..."

The next day, she waited for the news. FCVN Colorado had heard nothing and offered little reassurance other than, "Ross is incredibly resourceful. I'm sure he will be fine."

Then it came, a knock on the door. My mother opened it to see a young man in some kind of uniform. She looked across the street at the car that had brought him. INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS was printed in large type on the side, with the red cross emblem that mothers with sons in Viet Nam had learned to fear.

"Telegram for you, Ma'am."