

“MASTER PHAN HOANG AND YOUR CLUB”

“During this year of the Tiger, 2010, each month I will write a letter to your club. Please feel free to distribute it within your club and you can volunteer in translating the letter into the language of your country. I am sure that we will be proud of your contribution.”

Letter 2010/APRIL

CHALLENGING THE LAKE OF WONDER

MEADOWGLEN, OTTAWA, Friday 2010-03-19

Dear all,

We are now in the beginning of the spring, a beautiful season of joy and hope. Coming back from Mexico, just in time when the ice and snow begin to melt, I witness with admiration the impressive Rideau Fall in Ottawa, which liberates large blocks of ice from the upper stream down to the lower river in a thundering roar. I took a series of pictures and made available in our Web site (www.vovietjournal.org) in a PowerPoint Show format to share with all of you. After seeing those pictures, please send me a note to gmpphanhoang@vovietjournal.org , regarding your observations, creative ideas, or related photos. The first one who sends me something on this subject will receive **an AWARD**. I wish you a HAPPY month of April, full of energy and creativity. A PPS of TICH-THIEN exercises is also available on our website for this month.

Now let's get back to the story in my previous Letter about the **Lake of Wonder** in Mexico.

I was attracted by the game of assessing the circumference of this magical lake. From the small beach which was my starting point, I did not have a full view of the lake, and so I could not directly estimate how large or how long the lake would be. Moreover, there was no path or trail circling this intriguing lake. One Saturday morning, I decided to initiate my game in estimating the size of the Lake. The rule of this game was simple: Once I had made a decision to execute a process, I had no right to change it. That day, I chose to walk and use my steps to do the measurement, since riding a bicycle and using its meter to measure some part of the lake was not an option. For every 1000 steps (500 metres), I would make a stop and perform my training with nine times of the breathing-bow; and for every 2000 steps (one kilometre), I would make another stop and execute a form. Each time I fail to abide by the rule of the game, the lake will win.

Usually this small and deserted beach was very quiet, but when I was about to walk away, a sound of trotting horses was gradually growing towards my direction. A few seconds later, I was surrounded by four young fellows on horseback. I was alone, having only a stick 'yet-bong' at hand. They passed me, made a round turn on the beach, and then galloped away as fast as they had come. I stayed still in a cloud of dust, surprisingly seeing them sitting on horseback without saddle. Now, I started dreaming if I could have a horse to go around the lake, or simply to join them for an adventure. A second later, the image of

the Mount Ba-Vi came back from my memory in the background of a dozen of Vietnamese mountain folks, young and old, on horseback without saddle, holding firmly their spear or long stick, and advancing in single line into the heart of this dark mountain, which was famous of ferocious tigers. I was then an eleven years-old boy coming from the city and discovering almost every part of life in high mountains and rain forests of my own country. The instinct that had been forged in a forgotten past now suddenly came back to shape up my daring character, when I advanced into the unknown terrain of the Lake of Wonder. I thought I should not be hesitant to take part into this game of exploring the lake; in Mexico, there is no tiger or lion to be afraid of. But one second later, I realized that I had not taken enough precautionary measure defending against snakes. At the moment, I am alone in a deserted place of Mexico, unlike in Canada, a country of snow and maple trees having no venomous snakes.

Although there was no path or trail around the lake, I was advancing quite well the first two kilometres. At the stop of my first kilometre, I performed Bai Di-Xa; the quiet lake seemed to understand my message - I will "go far". At the stop of my second kilometre, the lake sent hundreds of birds flying around to impress me. This flock of birds flew up very high in organized escadrilles under the cloudy sky. At my great surprise, they suddenly disappeared and then reappeared in a twinkling of an eye, like in a trick of magical cards, under a surreal sky. Slowly, I performed Thap-Bat-Dieu (form of Eighteen Birds) for several times then quietly left the place to continue my way.

I was accounted with more difficulties in my third kilometre. The landscape became somehow unpredictable. The soil was wet and there was a stream cutting across the path. The stream was shallow and the rocks in the bottom seemed to be slippery. I could manage to cross it, but the plan of executing a quyen in the middle of an unknown stream was not an easy task or a wise thing to do even at a quite peaceful place. One solution was that I could make a left turn and walk a bit further up to complete my third kilometre somewhere along the stream before I have to cross it. This was a good idea but not an honest solution. An alternative solution suddenly sprang into my mind, suggesting me to find a very short Quyen which does not involve any leg-kick or any low movement. Do you know what? There is a very small form that we almost forget about it, which has only five simple hand movements. It is easy to perform and very rich in meaning. This form is called '*Bai Dau-Viet*' or '*The Five Accents*' in English. With confidence, I slowly crossed the stream, and, at half way, I stopped and did this form. While I was busy executing the form of *Five Accents*, my stick 'yet-bong' slipped out of my hand. I quickly regained it at the cost of being fallen into the water.

I lost! The lake won the first round. My day ended in the evening at a well known Mexican restaurant El Cielo located in Zona Rosa where I enjoyed the company of my new Mexican colleagues, tasted the 'Mexican Vodka' *tequila*, and discovered that, in Mexican Spanish, the word '*Si*' does not always mean Yes, but sometimes it could mean... No!

Best wishes,

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