

Reflection on my being an octogenarian (1934 – 2014)

Đoàn Thanh Liêm

* * * In Autumn 1934, I was born in a small rural village of the Red River delta in North Vietnam. Now in 2014 looking back to these turbulent years of war, famine and particularly communist dictatorship, I feel myself much fortunate to be able to survive into this advanced age.

Moreover, I consider myself quite privileged to be provided with much tender care from the family as well as with an excellent education in modern time both national and international. That is why I have been very active in social work just to pay back such a large debt to the society as well as to the family.

My name Thanh Liêm means honesty. It's not my own choice, but it was given to me by my parents. And consequently as a lawyer, I have tried to give my best to live up to my parents' expectations - that's to remain honest all the time in my professional activities.

I have an ardent passion for books and friends. That's why I enjoy very much in seeking valuable knowledge from innumerable books as well as from numerous human acquaintances I have come across with during my long life of action.

As a young man, I was very active in various social and humanitarian action programs in partnership with lot of friends - especially in the community development program in the suburban areas of Saigon in the 1960's at the raging war time.

As a jurist, I devoted most of the time to the research into the field of constitutional law – that's why I was arrested in 1990 by the communist government and sentenced 12 years of prison for “disseminating anti-socialist propanganda” just for writing a short guideline for the eventual new constitution.

In recent years as my age advances, I have joined various human rights organisations such as Vietnam Human Rights Network, Amnesty International etc... to efficiently contribute to the cause of human dignity of our people in Vietnam as elsewhere. That's also the best way to pay my dues to my beloved country Vietnam and to the humanity as a whole./

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