



Presidio  
Trust

## OPERATION BABYLIFT: PERSPECTIVES AND LEGACIES Exhibition and Program Series

April 16 to December 31, 2015

Tuesdays to Sundays, 10 am to 6 pm

Presidio Officers' Club, 50 Moraga Avenue, on the Presidio's Main Post

Admission is free

### ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

*Operation Babylift: Perspectives and Legacies* explores the diverse experiences and lasting impacts of a dramatic airlift that removed more than 2,000 Vietnamese children from their war-torn country to be adopted by American families as Saigon fell in April 1975.

The extraordinary story continued at the Presidio, where more than 1,500 of these children were transferred before being placed with adoptive families. As 5,400 volunteers in the San Francisco Bay Area cared for the children, Operation Babylift itself was being debated across the country.

Through photos, artifacts with community contributed labels, a multi-media timeline, and StoryCorps dialogues between adoptees and Presidio volunteers, the exhibition explores the diverse points of view that existed then and now. *Operation Babylift: Perspectives and Legacies* is not a single story told by a solitary voice, but by the voices of many whose lives were changed forever.

Visitors can become part of the legacy of Operation Babylift by pausing to reflect and contribute their perspectives in the gallery. Exhibition text is partially translated in Vietnamese; a print guide offers a full translation. Visitors can take a self-guided tour with docents on-hand to answer questions and share information.

This exhibition and program series is co-curated by the Presidio Trust and the Adoption Museum Project, and was shaped by input from more than 40 community contributors. It marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Babylift and the end of the Vietnam War.

### COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTORS

Forty years after Operation Babylift unfolded, over 40 community members – all with different connections to the event – helped shape the exhibition. They include Vietnamese adoptees, adoption agency workers, military and medical personnel, Vietnam veterans, civilian volunteers, adoptive parents, people who contested Operation Babylift, and Vietnamese Americans. By engaging in dialogue with the community members, exhibition curators explored different experiences, memories, and understandings of the events. Community members were involved from the early concept stage through content development, and contributed ideas, artifacts and personal stories.

**RELATED PROGRAMS**

Exhibition programs offer the opportunity to hear from people who participated in Operation Babylift, and provide a forum to explore related topics such as the Vietnam War, international adoption, and race. Programs are presented as part of the ongoing calendar of events at the Presidio Officers' Club. Admission is free, but registration is required. For details, visit [www.presidioofficersclub.com/calendar](http://www.presidioofficersclub.com/calendar).

**Thursday, April 16, 7pm: Presidio Dialogues**

*Operation Babylift: Adoptee Voices*

Four people who were adopted through Operation Babylift 40 years ago reflect on their memories, questions, experiences growing up, and the legacies of that event. The discussion will be moderated by poet and adoptee Lee Herrick, who teaches in the English Department at Fresno City College. He is the author of two books, *This Many Miles From Desire* and *Gardening Secrets of the Dead*, and his poems and essays have been published widely in literary magazines, anthologies and college textbooks. Lee was born in Daejeon, South Korea and adopted at 10 months.

**Saturday, April 18 and Sunday April 19, 11 am-4 pm: Creative Family Fun**

*Nest-Fest! Make Your Own Bird Nest*

Engage in a kid-friendly activity that explores the concepts of home and family.

**Thursday, June 18, 7pm: Presidio Dialogues**

*American Experience's Last Days in Vietnam*

*Film screening in association with KQED*

In April 1975, during the chaotic final days of the Vietnam War as the North Vietnamese Army closed in on Saigon, South Vietnamese resistance crumbled. City after city and village after village fell to the North while the few U.S. diplomats and military operatives still in the country contemplated withdrawal. With the lives of thousands of South Vietnamese hanging in the balance, those in control faced an impossible choice—who would go and who would be left behind to face brutality, imprisonment or even death. Directed by Rory Kennedy, this Academy Award® nominated documentary will premiere on PBS in April in conjunction with the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon.

**PRESIDIO OFFICERS' CLUB**

*Operation Babylift* is the latest special exhibition at the Presidio Officers' Club, a cultural institution that showcases the Presidio's role in shaping and serving California and the nation. Special exhibitions explore the Presidio's heritage and allow for fresh perspectives and a deeper exploration of the topics and themes presented in the permanent exhibit. Exhibits explore how and why the past matters and inspire civic engagement by fostering an understanding of how the Presidio's heritage is relevant today. They change annually.

Opened in October 2014, Presidio Officers' Club is San Francisco's most historic building and the Bay Area's newest cultural destination. First established in 1776, the adobe walls of the Officers' Club stand testament to California's beginnings. Throughout the 20th century, the club was a gathering place for Army brass and their families. Today, this beloved institution welcomes the entire community. The Officers' Club features exceptional exhibits as well as free public programs, including live music and dance, talks, films, and creative family fun. Field trips invite students to understand their world by examining the Presidio's fascinating heritage. The Presidio Officers' Club is also a wonderful place to gather, featuring Arguello, a restaurant by award-winning chef Traci Des Jardins, as well as spectacular spaces for celebrations and meetings. No visit to the Bay

Area is complete without a trip to the Presidio Officers' Club – San Francisco starts here. To learn more, visit [www.presidioofficersclub.com](http://www.presidioofficersclub.com).

**PRESIDIO TRUST** **The Presidio Trust** is an innovative federal agency created to save the Presidio and transform it for a new national purpose. The Trust's vision is that the Presidio will be forever a public place: vital to the Bay Area, important to all Americans, and recognized for achieving broad benefits for the nation. Today, the Presidio welcomes visitors, is home to a vibrant community of residents and tenants, and inspires greater good through programs that draw on its history and natural resources. The Presidio Trust serves the public with events, lodging, venues, and recreational opportunities. To learn more, visit [www.presidio.gov](http://www.presidio.gov).

**ADOPTION MUSEUM PROJECT** **The Adoption Museum Project** is creating the first museum to explore the story of adoption and how adoption relates to larger themes such as identity, human rights and race. Its mission is to catalyze conversations about adoption that support positive social change. The Adoption Museum Project is committed to honesty, inclusion, and respect. To learn more, visit [www.adoptionmuseumproject.org](http://www.adoptionmuseumproject.org).

**PRESS CONTACT** Dana Polk, Presidio Trust \* (415) 561-2710 \* [dpolk@presidiotrust.gov](mailto:dpolk@presidiotrust.gov)

**GENERAL CONTACT** (415) 561-4400 \* [heritage@presidiotrust.gov](mailto:heritage@presidiotrust.gov)  
[www.presidioofficersclub.com/exhibits/special-exhibits](http://www.presidioofficersclub.com/exhibits/special-exhibits)