



Rose Earhart

Striking out from home; hitting a home run in Hanoi

By HAL PHILLIPS

HANOI, Vietnam — Her appearance and opening line are usually enough to get your attention.

"Hello, I'm Rose," she explains, hand extended. "And I'm from Hanoi."

In an unlikely marriage of acumen, adventure and just plain luck, 31-year-old American Rose Earhart has launched a career in the golf course industry. To do it, she moved to Hanoi, Vietnam,

where she serves as marketing director for King's Island Golf Club and Resort, a destination resort scheduled to open its first nine holes late this year (see story page 31).

The story of Hanoi Rose is a tad bizarre. She's fully aware of this, but the cultural exchange has been worth the raised eyebrows, not to mention the worry from family and friends back home.

"My parents were just traumatized when I told them," she ex-

plains. "They said, 'You're going where?'"

"I said 'Hanoi,' and there was this total silence."

Early this year she left her home in Eugene, Ore., and headed for Bangkok. The aim was to travel and experience new things. She had no idea where or how many.

"I didn't know that I would be doing this sort of thing. But when I got to Bangkok and found this job, they offered it to me. I have a

marketing background, so I went for it.

"They told me, 'It takes a certain type of person to go to Vietnam. It'll be sort of like camping.'"

Earhart didn't have a tent, so she was pleased to find Hanoi a basically modern city, albeit with few cars and no place to buy panty hose.

She lives in a Hanoi guest house and is driven to work each morning on a front-loaded, bicycle-powered rickshaw. In fact, her exposure during the "rush hour" has made Earhart something of a celebrity.

"I mean, I'm tall. I'm caucasian. I've got different colored hair [red]. And I walk around in business suits. I tend to stand out. It's been a great way to meet people, though.

"There isn't much to do here. But for me, the uniqueness of Hanoi has been great entertainment. I just walk around the streets. It's very safe there, both in terms of being a woman and petty theft.

"People are so friendly. Sometimes they ride up next to me on their bikes, just to say hello. They say: 'Hello, madame!' People have been much more open than I'd expected them to be."

Earhart said she has sensed no animosity stemming from her American citizenship. Perhaps it can be explained by the lack of U.S. ground operations in the North, but Earhart has encountered no anti-Americanism, the current embargo notwithstanding.

"You get to Vietnam and you hear about the embargo, but they think it's just this weird thing. They don't understand it because they've gone on with their lives."

She explained that one former Viet Cong soldier now conducts tourist hikes up the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Further, members of the state-run tourist bureau took her to a former prisoner of war camp. "They wanted advice on how they could make it a tourist attraction," she said.

"The biggest misconception I had was assuming there would be ill will towards Americans. It's just not true. I've never been ashamed or hesitant to tell them I'm American."

Earhart isn't thinking of settling down in Hanoi for any extended period of time. She would, however, like to see the King's Island project through to fruition, which should take a minimum of two years. Besides, her parents have finally got used to her new address.

"Now they think it's fun and interesting, and I think they're proud of me for getting involved in the project. My father, who's 82 and has been through all the wars, actually said he'd like to come and visit."

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