

Radio Saigon, 1949

by

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Letters from stations can sometimes be as interesting as a QSL card, especially when they offer a glimpse into historical events of the time. That is the case with the three accompanying letters from Radio Saigon.

The first is dated December 31, 1948, and is addressed to listener Aldren Simmons at the British Mission Quarters in Rangoon, Burma, thanking him for his letter of December 14, which was answered over the air on December 24 (pretty fast, I would say). The writer, Jean Pison, is with the English Department of Radio Saigon. He enclosed a schedule and some used postage stamps, but advised Simmons that they could not QSL absent a regular report.

Burma had gained independence from Britain only about a year before, on January 4, 1948. Simmons was probably a holdover employee from the days of the British colonial government.

Pison wrote to Simmons again on January 19, 1949, just a few weeks after his first letter. He acknowledged another letter from Simmons (which apparently omitted the frequency), he enclosed a QSL-card (and a schedule and more stamps), and advised that they would be playing a record for Simmons' little sister two days hence (albeit not the song she requested).

The final letter to Simmons is dated December 22, 1949, about 11 months later, and mentions some earlier letters from him. Simmons was now in London, and this time the writer is L. Bouvet of the English Department. She mentions that Jean Pison is very busy with many changes at Radio Saigon, and she outlines the comings and goings of various English Department female staff.

The interesting [Saigon/Vietnam](#) website adds some color to this period, and provides information about the broadcasting scene at the time. We can see there several pictures of Mr. Pison, and some photos of the women who worked at the station in 1950. Radio Saigon operated from 1939 until Saigon was overrun by the Japanese in 1945. It returned to French control surprisingly quickly after that. It was badly damaged in an explosion in 1946, but it was rebuilt and stayed on the air. A 1949 agreement between France and the Vietnamese led to the recognition of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as distinct entities within the overall French union known as French Indochina. In April 1950 Radio Saigon became Radio France-Asie, and it operated as such until February 1956. A separate station in Saigon, the Voice of Vietnam, was operated by the Vietnamese.

A lot was going on in Saigon when these letters were written.

RADIO SAIGON



December 31st 1948

MR. Aldren Simmons,
91, Inya Road,
British Mission Quarters,
Rangoon, Burma.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 14.12.48. I hope you were listening on Friday December 24th, when your letter was answered over the air in our Listeners' Letter-Box.

You do not report on any broadcast heard from this station, although you say you are a regular Radio Saigon listener. As soon as we receive from you a reception report, we will gladly send you a station verification card.

You ask for the name of Radio Saigon's signature tune. I presume you are referring to the signature tune of our English broadcasts, which is "Knightsbridge March" from Eric Coates' "London Suite".

Here are a few used Indochinese stamps for your collection.

P.T.O.

Ref: 0292/48

I hope we shall be hearing from you again soon.

All good wishes for the New Year.

Yours truly

Jean Pison

Jean Pison.
(English Dept)

December 31st 1948

MR. Aldren Simmons,
91, Ivy Road,
British Consulate,
Bangkok, Burma.

P.S. Enclosed is a detailed schedule of our English broadcasts.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 17.12.48. I hope you were listening on Friday December 25th when your letter was answered over the air in our listeners' letter-box.

You do not report on any broadcast heard from this station, although you say you are a regular Radio Saigon listener. As soon as we receive from you a reception report, we will gladly send you a station verification card.

You ask for the name of Radio Saigon's signature tune. I presume you are referring to the signature tune of our English broadcasts, which is "Knightsbridge March" from Eric Coates, "London Suite".

Here are a few used Indochinese stamps for your collection.

P.T.O.

RADIO  SAIGON

Jean Pignon
(English Dept)

January 19th 1949.

Mr. Aldren Simmons,
91, Inya Road,
Rangoon, Burma.

Dear Mr. Simmons,

Since writing to you on
December 31st, we have had the pleasure of
hearing from you again.

It is very kind of you to send us
so many interesting Burmese stamps. They are much
appreciated, as you can guess.

I was pleased to have a
reception report from you, and enclose a verificat-
-ion card. I presume that you heard Radio Saigon
on the 25 metre band.

Your letter of December 27th only
reached us yesterday, too late for us to play
a request record in time for your little sister's
birthday. I hope she wasn't too disappointed.
However, a record is being played for her on
Friday, January 21st. I'm afraid we don't possess
the tune you ask for in our record library.

P.T.O.

I enclosed a detailed schedule of our English broadcasts and a few used Indochinese stamps in my last letter.

Hoping to hear from you again soon,

Yours sincerely,

Jean Pipon
(English Dept)

January 19th 1954

Mr. Alder Simmons,
91, Inye Road,
Rangoon, Burma.

Dear Mr. Simmons,

Since writing to you on December 21st, we have had the pleasure of hearing from you again.

It is very kind of you to send us so many interesting Burmese stamps. They are much appreciated, as you can guess.

I was pleased to have a reception report from you, and enclose a verification card. I presume that you heard Radio Saigon on the 25 metre band.

Your letter of December 27th only reached us yesterday, too late for us to play a request record in time for your little sister's birthday. I hope she wasn't too disappointed. However, a record is being played for her on Friday, January 21st. I'm afraid we don't possess the tune you ask for in our record library.

P.T.O.

We are pleased to verify your reception of

RADIO - SAIGON

(French Indo-China)

Broadcasting on 11.78 megacycles, i, e, 25 meters
on the 25th December 1948 at 0.30 (GMT)

Our Wavelengths

11.78 mgcs in the 25 m. band
6.19¹⁶⁵ mgcs in the 49 m. band
1.05 mgcs in the 285 m. band

Our English daily sessions (G. M. T.)

0.45³⁰ to 1.00 AM
~~9.15~~ 10.00 to 10.45³⁰ AM
13.30 to 14.30 PM
23.30.. 23.45.

~~ADRESSE~~

Please address all
communications to

Monsieur Jean PIPON,

English Dept.

Radio Saigon

RADIO - SAIGON

BUREAUX & STUDIOS

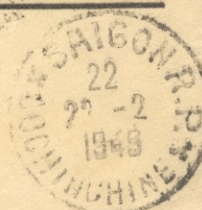
86, rue Mac-Mahon

SAIGON

Boîte Postale 412



PAR AVION



Mr. Aldren Simmons,

British Mission Quarters,

91, Inya Road,

Rangoon.

BURMA.



FOIPA 11/17



PAR AVION

RADIO SAIGON



BUREAUX & STUDIOS
86, RUE MAC-MAHON
SAIGON
BOÎTE POSTALE : 412

December 22nd, 1949

Dear Mr Simmons,

Thanks a lot for your lovely Christmas card and your kind wishes. From what I see in the files, I understand that we have not written to you since the 22nd of August, though we got a letter from you at the end of October. Well, Mr Simmons, you must excuse us. So many changes have happened since Margaret Jonchier, who was in charge of the Listeners' Letter Box left us in May. She is in France now, after a few months in England. Maybe you met her there without knowing her. Funny isn't it? Then, the Listeners' Letter Box was taken over by Florence Peverelly, a young American woman married to a Frenchman. She also left us to go back to France, in October. Then, listeners' letters were answered by Violet Palmesani (née Spencer) who is now back to her job as one of our announcers and, after a few months in France, I am back in Saigon, in charge of the programmes and the Listeners' Letter Box.

As for Mr Pipon himself you will easily understand he is rather busy with all these changes in his staff.

Can you hear Radio Saigon clearly in London? We have quite a few listeners in England, but reception is generally rather poor.

Since you left Burma, we have received long letters from Rangoon. They were sent by a 23 year-old Parsi girl, Cecilia Burjojee who seems

PAR AVION

RADIO SAIGON



BUREAUX & STUDIOS

86, RUE MAC-MAHON

SAIGON

BOÎTE POSTALE : 412

to be quite a keen listener.

As for our Programme Schedule , we have none printed for the time being, as many changes are liable to take place at the beginning of 1950. Our present broadcasts are:

1st news bulletin from 23.45 to 0.00 GMT

15 minutes music and 2nd news bulletin from 0.30 to 1.00 GMT

Talk, music, 3rd news bulletin from 9.30 to 10.15 GMT

Music, 4th news bulletin and music from 13.45 to 15.12 GMT.

Be sure I'll let you know as soon as we've got definite programmes. Meanwhile Mr Pipon and the whole staff send you their best wishes for a merry Christmas and a very happy New Year

Lilay Bouvet

L. Bouvet
of the English Dept
Radio Saigon.

RADIO - SAIGON

BUREAUX & STUDIOS

86, Rue Mac-Mahon

SAIGON

Boîte Postale 412



ENGLAND

Angleterre

Mr Aldren S I M M O N S

154 Warwick Road

L O N D O N W.14

VIA AIR MAIL - PAR AVION