

From Vietnam jungles to feeding hungry

Loras graduate: Quinn now heads up the World Food Prize Foundation

By JOHN EVERLY
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Something profound happened to Kenneth Quinn in Vietnam.

The young Dubuquer, educated for diplomatic service, had suddenly found himself in the jungles and backwaters of Vietnam as an adviser to the South Vietnamese government in the early 1960s. Quinn was scheduled to assume a diplomatic position in Europe upon completion of his tour of duty in Southeast Asia, but it was in Vietnam that he received the first inkling he was destined for something else, and he stayed beyond his mandated term of service in that war-torn country "to make a difference."

His career brought him full-circle back to his home town to address an audience at the University of Dubuque on "Feeding the World



Kenneth Quinn
Feeding hungry

in the 21st Century" Tuesday night.

Quinn is now executive director of the World Food Prize Foundation, a Des Moines-based organization dedicated to emphasizing the importance of a nutritious and sustainable food supply for all people. His experience in Southeast Asia and the U.S. State Department has prepared him for his latest role in fighting world hunger.

The life-and-death situations that were the Southeast Asia conflict spawned Quinn's Vietnam epiphany of nearly 40 years ago.

"I found myself, more than once, being in a situation where what I did could make a difference of whether someone would be alive or not," Quinn said. "That had a really profound effect on me. After that I think that I would have found that working on things that were less consequential was just not satisfying any-

more."

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Quinn graduated from Loras College and went on to receive his Ph.D. in government and politics from the University of Maryland. He has served as executive director of Iowa SHARES, deputy chief of mission to the United Nations, deputy executive secretary of the Department of State, and U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia.

Quinn said to feed the world, agriculture will need to enhance productivity, and better nutrition and health should be promoted. Improved roads to stimulate economic activity and food distribution are needed in poor regions of the world, and agricultural research and extension systems need to be strengthened, he said.

The United States could, and should, take a leadership role in meeting those challenges, Quinn said. More than a shortage of food, a shortage of adequate food distribution is a problem between 800 million and perhaps a billion people to go malnourished, he said.

"It's in our country's, Iowa's and Dubuque's best interest to address this problem now," Quinn said.