

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE



AMBASSADOR KENNETH M. QUINN

President

The World Food Prize Foundation

Dr. Kenneth M. Quinn, former U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia, assumed the leadership of the World Food Prize Foundation on January 1, 2000, following his retirement from the State Department after a 32 year career in the Foreign Service.

Inspired by the vision of Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, the founder of the World Food Prize, Ambassador Quinn has endeavored to build this annual \$250,000 award into “the Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture.” Held each October in Des Moines on or around World Food Day (October 16), the World Food Prize Laureate Award Ceremony, “Borlaug Dialogue” international symposium and Global Youth Institute have grown in size and stature under his direction.

During his diplomatic career, Ken Quinn served: as a Rural Development advisor in the Mekong Delta; on the National Security Council staff at the White House; as Narcotics Counselor at the U.S. mission to the United Nations in Vienna; for four years as Chairman of the U.S. Inter-agency Task Force on POW/MIAs; and as Director of Iowa SHARES, the humanitarian campaign that sent Iowa doctors, nurses, medical supplies and food to starving Cambodian refugees.

Dr. Quinn emerged from these experiences as one of the US government's foremost experts on Indochina. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the origins of the radical Pol Pot regime and is widely acknowledged as the first person anywhere to report, in 1974, on the genocidal policies of the Khmer Rouge. Twenty-five years later, while serving as ambassador, his plan of agricultural enhancements and rural roads led to the final eradication of the Khmer Rouge.

A fluent speaker of Vietnamese, Dr. Quinn acted as interpreter for President Gerald Ford during high level meetings at the White House and personally negotiated the first ever entry by U.S. personnel into a Vietnamese prison to search for U.S. POW/MIAs. He was also a member of the first U.S.-Russian Commission team to gain entry to a former Soviet prison.

Ambassador Quinn rose to become one of the most decorated Foreign Service officers of his generation, recognized for the important role he played in humanitarian endeavors, as well as for his actions in dangerous and violent situations, including:

- The Secretary of State’s Award for Heroism and Valor for his efforts to protect American citizens exposed to danger in Cambodia, as well as the four lifesaving rescues in which he participated in Vietnam;
- Being the only civilian to ever receive the U.S. Army Air Medal for his participation in combat operations in Vietnam;
- A Superior Honor Award for his role in identifying and successfully prosecuting two persons engaged in espionage;
- A Meritorious Honor Award presented at the White House for his role in assisting refugees from Indochina;
- A Treasury Department Commendation for the arrest of an international counterfeiter and terrorist;
- The Presidential Distinguished Service Award – the highest recognition accorded career State Department officers – for his leadership in re-shaping policy toward Vietnam and Cambodia and for accounting for POW/MIAs;
- The Department of Defense Award for Distinguished Civilian Service and National Guard Bureau Eagle Award;
- The Arnie Raphael Award for exemplary service in mentoring Junior Foreign Service Officers;
- Being the only Foreign Service officer ever to have three times received the American Foreign Service Association Rivkin and Herter Awards for intellectual courage in challenging policy.

Ambassador Quinn, a graduate of Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, has a M.A. in Political Science from Marquette University and a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of Maryland. He and his wife Le Son have three adult children.