



Bridges Joins National History Club

By Eva Fauser



Exciting news! Millbrook High School is the first public school in North Carolina to become a charter member of the *National History Club (NHC)*. The *NHC* is a national organization created in March 2002 “to encourage the reading, discussion, writing, and the enjoyment of history among secondary students and their teachers.” There are currently *NHC* chapters in twenty-four states with over 1,350 student members. Mr. Robert Nasson, Executive Director of the *NHC*, “expects these numbers to increase in the coming years.”

Mr. Nasson discovered the *MHS Bridges Newsletter Club* when he started communicating with Ms. Poling this summer. He sent her a copy of the *NHC Newsletter*, and she sent him several copies of *Bridges* in return. The rest, they say, is “history!”

Charter history clubs are quite diverse. Some may emphasize local history, while others may focus on book discussions and writing serious essays. The *National History Club* provides

members with a semi-annual newsletter in which each club’s activities and accomplishments, such as our quarterly *Bridges* newsletters, are shared.

When I asked Mr. Nasson why history should be important to teenagers in today’s world, he replied, “History is such an important subject, because it helps students learn lessons from the past, be inspired by great men and women, and become more aware of the many sacrifices people have made over time. Plus, we can look back at past mistakes and make sure that these are not repeated.”

Mr. Nasson hopes to see one history club in each state by the end of the year. He also hopes to schedule some regional conventions in the future. “I think there is much thinking out there that many secondary students are not that interested in history. Well, I certainly think this organization is going to prove them wrong,” the Executive Director exclaimed! As our club historian, I could not agree with him more!



Journey to Freedom

By Andy Cao

“My mother told me to leave at noon. The bus would come by then.” It was September 14, 1980. Five years of communist rule was enough. Mao wanted to be free. He wanted a new life away from communism. He left at noon, saying his last good-byes to his family. The young man did not go alone, however; his uncle and cousin joined him for the journey.

After the sun went down, the three men boarded a canoe that would eventually lead them to the Gulf of Thailand. The next night, ten people, including Mao’s group, set sail for freedom. River checkpoints, manned by custom officers, were on the lookout for anybody suspicious. Each time one was spotted, everyone got out of the boat except for the canoe owner, and [we] either swam or crept in the water beside the boat for about a mile, hiding from the searchlight of the checkpoint,” Mao recalled. “I wasn’t scared of dying. I was scared of being caught.” Finally, they reached the beach, where a riverboat waited for them. Sixty-eight desperate people crammed into the tiny boat and plunged into the sea. The final lookout official turned a blind eye, as he had been bribed earlier.

The plan was to go to Thailand, but after six hours the engine blew. Now, stranded in the middle of the Gulf of Thailand, morale was low. “There was nothing to do but to sit there and die,”



Painting by Nicole Poston

Mao lamented. Food and water were gone by day three. “The only food I ate after that was the tiny fish that swam around the roots of floating seaweed in the ocean.”

Relief came by day six, as rain provided fresh water. Yet, the refugees were still stranded. Four men and four children died. On day thirteen, the *USS Southern Cross* spotted Mao’s boat in the middle of the South China Sea. The crew rescued the weak and sunburned survivors who had used their last bits of energy to stay alive. UN officials brought the refugees to Singapore. Three months later, Mao was sent to Indonesia and entered into an ESL education program. After finding U.S. sponsorship, he resettled in East Grand Forks, Minnesota in 1981. “When I got to America, I was finally free!” he said proudly.

Mao’s story is very important to me, because he is my father. He soon moved on to Houston, Texas, where he met my mother, another “boat person.” Our family settled in Raleigh, North Carolina a few years after I was born. My parents are part of the 1.6 million Vietnamese refugees who have settled in new countries since the “Fall of Saigon” in 1975. The journeys of others have ended more tragically—some too horrifying to imagine. Yet, the willingness of the “boat people” to risk their lives at sea only shows the extreme price they were willing to pay for their freedom.

Lessons From Our Friends

By Julia Kost

While watching two students effectively explain the complicated history of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to



Nicole Poston's visual

the rest of the class, one has to wonder, how could there possibly be a more interesting way to learn? In our *LOV* class we do not just read a textbook. We learn by seeing and experiencing our lessons. Consequently, not only do we have the opportunity to hear from veterans and others who lived through

the Vietnam Era, but we learn from our fellow classmates, as well.

We have just recently concluded our Cold War Unit, and we topped it off with interesting research presentations. Working with partners, we presented to one another subjects none of us previously knew much about. The topics ranged from Karl Marx to Atomic Bombs.

We ended up learning some particularly interesting concepts and ideas from our classmates, as well as seeing some awesome visuals. Elliot Walker, Jordan Glass, and David Mulvihill did an amazing powerpoint presentation on atomic weaponry. We also learned about the Korean War, the CIA, the FBI, the Rosenberg Trial, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the U-2 Incident, McCarthyism, and other intriguing subjects.

All of our hard work really paid off! Not only did we gain a better understanding of the Cold War, we also improved our presentation skills.

Why Do Students Take *LOV/RIR*?

By Robyn Murphy

Some people might ask why seniors, like myself, would choose to take a class that requires so much work, but does not yet offer honors credit. I decided it was time to find some answers to this question. The *Bridges* staff recently surveyed fifty-one fellow classmates. What we discovered is that the students take this course for reasons that have nothing to do with grades or credits. *LOV/RIR* students are looking for a deeper education regarding the Vietnam War and recent international relations.

76% of those surveyed responded that they wanted to study the Vietnam War in more depth than they had in their U.S. History class. Another 65% of students wanted to experience the Community-in-the-Classroom approach and participate in the Veteran Link Program. About 21% responded that they wanted to know more about the personal experiences of family and friends. 61% felt that they *should* know more about recent international relations. Many are interested in how the lessons of Vietnam affect our foreign policy today.



Community-in-the-Classroom

When asked what he expected to gain from *LOV/RIR*, Ben Efird responded, “[I want] to know the Vietnam War in a personal way—and know the experiences of people who were there.” This seems to reflect the major appeal of the class. *LOV/RIR* students are willing to work hard, because they know they will be gaining much more from this course than *history lessons*; they will be gaining *life lessons*.



With Faith They Fought, For Freedom They Died

By Adrienne Hollowell and Lauren Ward

Most of what we learn in *LOV* is more valuable than knowledge gained from textbooks. For in *LOV*, we journey with people who not only witnessed history, but also experienced it. As they relive their stories, we learn *their* truths about Vietnam. In preparation for our link correspondences, we practiced our interviewing skills on our teachers, relatives, and friends before embarking on this journey together. What we found was that their responses were as vast as the bridge between us.

As students, we must learn from those who *experienced* history. Many of our interviewees emphasized that Vietnam was more than just a war; it defined humanity for a generation. Regardless of who makes our guns, whose soil smears our faces, or what color the skin underneath may be, we are all part of the Human Race, and the race can only be won by surviving. It is up to us to define what “surviving” really means. Surviving in the Vietnam Era reflected a trust in something bigger than oneself, be it Fate, God, commanding officers, fellow comrades, or the powers that be in this country. This became undeniably true to MHS Dad, Jim Colman, who reflected, “When I went to visit The Wall for the first time, it hit me that it was a twist of fate that

my name was not up there.”

The Vietnam Era was a fearful time for troops—even more than it was for the loved ones they left behind. They feared what might be crouching behind enemy lines and the dark shadow that lurked in Charlie’s depths, waiting to swallow their comrades or themselves without warning. More than death, some troops feared the discrimination they might face at home from fellow Americans, even after having defended their freedom. Perhaps as important as *understanding who we are* is the *freedom that allows us to live as we choose*. Our generation seems to have forgotten what *freedom* truly means. South Vietnamese MHS Dad, Giap Nguyen, can never forget: “It is as precious as fresh air to our lungs,” he says. “The American kids may not feel, do not communicate with, freedom because they were born and grew up in a peaceful and free country. They do not understand the value of freedom, as a healthy person does not understand the value of his or her health.”

We are often told that the *future* relies on our generation, but we have come to realize through these interviews that we are just as essential *today*. The success of international relations, and whether or not they yield peace, begins with *us*.

Considering Our Options

By Nicole Poston

In the summer of 1965, there were several options open to the government regarding the escalating conflict in Vietnam.



Leah & Lauren enthusiastically research Option #3: Limit Our Involvement.

The decision made by the Johnson administration would ultimately alter the course of U.S. history and set a precedent for future international relations. Anyone who has read a history book knows the rest of the story. LOV students recently went back in time and re-examined various options available in 1965, while assuming to know nothing

about the true course of the Vietnam War.

We were assigned to research and defend one of the following four options: *Americanize the War and Fight to Win*, *Escalate Slowly and Control the Risks*, *Limit Our Involvement* and *Negotiate Withdrawal*, and *Unilateral Withdrawal - Pull Out Now!* All group members researched information that supported their arguments, and then they presented their option to the class. Our classmates then asked questions, such as: "If the U.S. rushed into a war and used all its power, do you think China will feel threatened and turn to nuclear warfare?"

What will you do if negotiations fail? Do you think the Soviets will view our retreat as a 'go ahead' to invade and force communism upon defenseless nations?" A poll taken at the end of the debate, showed that Option One—*Fight to Win*—was by far the most popular choice.

Did the United States make the best decision in 1965? That question is still debated today. Some people view our involvement in Vietnam as a victory against the spread of communism, while others judge the war as an unnecessary tragedy. Today there is new controversy over the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Is the U.S. getting involved in areas that will only place our troops in unnecessary jeopardy? Or, are U.S. actions justified in order to prevent an even greater tragedy? There are many ways to deal with serious international conflicts such as these, but which is the best? Let's hope that the Bush administration is considering all of our foreign policy options.



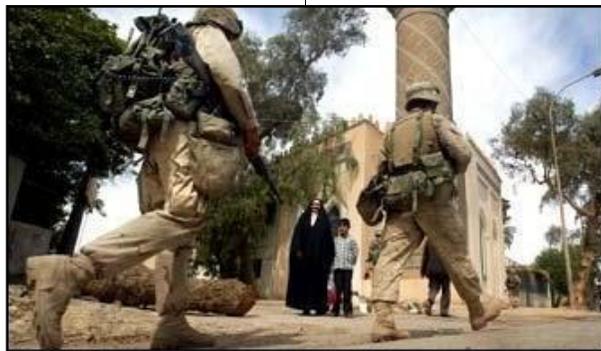
Mindy & Kim design a poster.



How Can We Win the Peace?

By Josh Whitmore

The U.S. military has proven its strength and superiority in Afghanistan and Iraq, but now the question is, "Are there enough troops left in these countries to keep the peace?" With the recent bombing of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad, critics are saying we need to increase not only the size of our presence in Iraq, but the size of our military in general. Currently there are 140,000 troops in Iraq, 34,000 in Kuwait, 10,000 in Afghanistan, 5,000 in the Balkans, 1,150 in the Philippines, and 37,000 in South Korea. Since the Vietnam War, the number of men and women in the military has fallen from 3.5 million to 1.4 million. The active-duty Army, the group that is most needed for peace-keeping missions, has fallen from 1.6 million in 1968 to 480,000 today. With major advances in battlefield technology, some suggest we do not need as large a military as we did in the 1960's. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld claims, "Overmatching power kind of is replacing overwhelming force." We do not need millions of troops to invade a country, but it seems that we need more troops to occupy the country once fighting has ceased. Troops trained to drive tanks and jets are unaccustomed to dealing with civilian needs; thus, requiring the military to take on such



Mario Tama/Getty Images

responsibilities is like putting a square peg in a round hole.

So what is the solution? One solution to winning the peace might be to create a specialized division, from the ground up, whose primary mission is nation building. However, adding more troops to the equation will not come cheaply. With President Bush now asking for 87 billion dollars, it is estimated an additional 10 billion dollars would be needed to add a new active-duty division. Others would say we do not need more troops, but rather a new foreign policy. Lawrence Korb, a former Pentagon official, asserts, "This nation cannot deal effectively with the combination of terrorism, rogue states and weapons of mass destruction in all places and every time through the unilateral use of U.S. military force." The most difficult aspect of winning the war in Iraq is undoubtedly proving to be the winning of the peace. A solution must be found either to improve the capabilities of the military to win the peace as efficiently as it won the war, or to commit the mission of nation building to others. Anything short of this is unfair to our military forces and, by overextending them, places our national security at risk.

A Nation Divided

By Zachary D. Harrison

In 1815, Paul Cuffee, the Quaker son of a slave, led a group of freed blacks on an expedition to Africa. His hope was that these people would finally escape the chains of bondage that had been forced upon them in the New World. Cuffee was just one of many who wanted to give those who had been torn from their native soil a chance to return and prosper in the land they and their families had once called home. From this noble vision sprung Liberia, a nation built upon righteous foundation that has cracked and crumbled with time.

In the 1980's, a series of military coups left Charles Taylor in charge of the country. Liberia became a nation divided, with many rebel groups constantly at odds with Taylor's regime. During fourteen years of almost constant fighting, more than 200,000 people died. Taylor finally stepped down in August of this year. This action, which gave many hope for peace in Liberia's future, has led to a new set of problems for this frail nation.

Since Taylor resigned, control of the country fell to Moses Blah. Blah has encouraged rebel groups to lay down arms, but militant leaders and warlords have left this vulnerable nation no better off than before. Rebel troops have pillaged, raped, and killed those who they once protected. In the face of these horrible abuses, the U.S. successfully encouraged the UN to give aid and keep peace while Liberia can be rebuilt.

When President Bush sent troops to hunt for Osama Bin Laden, there was controversy. When the U.S. launched an invasion against Iraq, there were protests. Our country has been divided for many months over the Bush administration's foreign policy. However, I do not believe anyone will be marching to keep peacekeepers out of Liberia. Americans do not seem to oppose interfering in the national affairs of others when the U.S. role is limited strictly to reestablishing order and peace to a killing field, knowing that innocent lives will be lost without taking such action. We are a very fickle people. We are often angered at the way our government undertakes military action and its reasons for doing so. However, this time, it appears, we may have gotten it right.



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Websites: www.wcpss.net/community_in_the_classroom & <http://mhs.wcpss.net/academics/sstudies/poling/index.htm>

The PBR-FVA

By Njaimah Jobe

The *PBR-FVA* has been an outstanding supporter of our MHS *LOV* Program for the past four years. We would like to give a special thanks to all *PBR-FVA* members, and especially to Mr. Bob Gray and Mr. Cecil Martin, for taking the time to answer my interview questions:



1. When was the PBR-FVA organized?

"PBR Forces Veterans Association, Inc. (PBR FVA) was originally organized in early 1998 by our President Kerry Schaefer."

~ Bob Gray

2. After reading the goals of the organization, which one do you feel is most important?

"I believe that the most important goal is to eliminate the discrimination suffered by the Vietnam Veteran, and I would probably add the goal to refute the myths that haunt us 'til this day. These myths have created at stereotypical Vietnam veteran who is prone to being homeless, incarcerated, mentally ill and drug addicted, etc. more than the rest of our generation. All of these myths have been proven to be wrong..."

~ Cecil Martin

3. What does the student-veteran link program mean to members of the PBR-FVA?

*"Being a link in the *LOV* program gives us the opportunity to assist in educating a new generation about the true aspects of the Vietnam War as we knew it then and as we know it today."*

~ Cecil Martin

4. Why do you feel our program is important?

*Without the *LOV* class and its teaching, there would be very little of the River Patrol Force's history being made available to the next generation."*

~ Bob Gray



Surpassing Expectations

By Ashley Bell

The 2003-2004 *Bridges* staff is pleased to present to you the fifth volume of our newsletter. We are delighted to introduce our first issue with the contributions of the largest staff in the history of *Bridges*. This year, as students' interests in various topics grow and broaden, we will continue to share our personal reflections on classroom speakers and links. We also plan to publish more artwork, poetry, and articles relating to today's important global issues. The *Bridges* staff thanks you, our readers, for your continuing support. We hope that you truly enjoy our publication, and perhaps find our enthusiastic staff to be the best ever!



The 2003-04 *Bridges* Staff