



# Bridges

## Lessons of Vietnam



### The Ghost of Russia's Past

By Andy Chenlo

When the Berlin Wall fell in November, 1989, the Cold War ended, symbolizing the start of a new era. But in its place, a new Wall seems to be rising in Russia—on one side those longing for a return to the days of Soviet expansionism; on the other, those hoping Russia's experiment with democracy is not short-lived. But with Moscow's recent invasion of Georgia, we are haunted by the ghost of Russia's Past.

Once part of Stalinist Russia under the control of the USSR's communist government, Georgia—like many of Russia's neighboring states—found new freedom when that Wall collapsed. As a struggling democracy herself, Russia—it was thought—welcomed such change. But, former Russian President and current Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's declaration that the dissolution of the Soviet Union represented "the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" leaves the world in doubt and Russia's neighboring states in fear. The fear is the ghost of Russia Past is becoming the ghost of Russia Future.

As ominous and alarming as this is, it must be noted that Russian warfare is not up to date with current technology. Moscow's invasion of Georgia witnessed the use of outdated phones, radios, and tanks—evidence of a country desiring superpower status but lacking the up-to-date technology to be one—lacking, that is, in all but one area: the Russian military is proud to tout its nuclear parity with the United States. Pavel Zolotarev, a retired Russian major general, stated, "As

far as general forces, the American army far surpasses the Russian army in terms of equipment. An army is made up of different kinds of forces. If we compare the nuclear forces of the two sides, then we have parity. We can destroy each other five or six times."

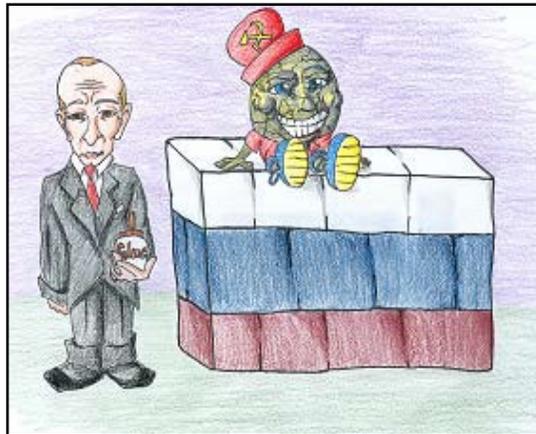
Therefore, by invading Georgia and from a conventional war sense, it appears Russia flexes its military muscle with almost

nothing to back it up. Moscow fields a "steroid army"—an army appearing big and powerful but really nothing more than a temporarily inflated force, much like the inflated balloon which eventually, unable to sustain itself, returns to its deflated form.

Why would Russia choose to return to its old aggressive ways? Perhaps it is humiliation. It is clear Prime Minister Putin is still the man in charge, with President Dmitry Medvedev merely his puppet. Former KGB (secret police) agent Putin—a man who treasures power—clearly resents his country's fall from superpower status when the Cold War ended. Like Humpty Dumpty who fell off the Wall and shattered

in pieces, Putin seeks to put back together the shattered pieces of Russia Past, restoring its superpower status.

While the Russia/Georgia August 12<sup>th</sup> ceasefire commitment restores calm to the region, it is uncertain for how long it will last. Many who suffered under decades of Soviet communist rule during the Cold war fear Georgia may be only the beginning of a re-surg-ing Russia Past. Clearly, if such resurgence is to be stopped, it is going to take a global effort to do so.



Artwork by Bridgette Williamson



### LOV Teacher Presents at National Conference

By Karissa Wojcik

This past July, nearly thirty teachers from across the country met at the American University in Washington, D.C. The occasion was the fifth national Teach Vietnam Teachers Network National Conference sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Millbrook High School's very own Ms. Lindy Poling presented, "Teaching Vietnam through Personal Stories and Experiences" to an enthusiastic audience. Our LOV/RIR teacher eloquently described her *Community in the Classroom* Program in which speakers who have a connection to the Vietnam Era, as well as important current global issues, come in and discuss their experiences and insights with Millbrook students. Ms. Poling shared

detailed speaker guidelines and lesson plans relating to interviews, projects, primary sources, and documentaries, as well as copies of our award-winning *Bridges* Newsletter with this national group.

Ms. Poling emphasizes exposure to multiple perspectives in her classroom. If one side of a controversial issue is presented, the opposite side will be presented as well. By the end of the semester, students leave with more questions than answers, thus developing a thirst for knowledge that continues throughout her students' lives.

To view the webcast of Ms. Poling's presentation at American University, please go to:

<http://www.tvworldwide.com/events/vvmf/080716/>





## Unlocking My Father's Past

By Michael Nguyen

Imagine yourself sitting at home in the sweltering heat, staring at a dirt-matted floor, amidst the chaos of scores of protesters screaming outside. Well, that was my father's experience. He was born and raised during the time of the Vietnam War. We never talked about his life during that time period--other than the fact that he was *in* the war. I never quite realized how much it impacted him... and how it impacts me. That is the reason I'm taking Ms. Poling's *Lessons of Vietnam* class--to better understand where I've come from.

In 1971, Luong Nguyen, age twenty-one, was chosen out of hundreds of potential Vietnamese officers to go to The Naval Officers Candidate Academy in Newport, Rhode Island as part of America's *Vietnamization* program. A group of seventy Vietnamese were sent there every year for training. There were twelve in my father's group. After graduating from the Academy, he was sent back to Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam to the Coastal Surveillance Center as the representative for the HQ Commander. He eventually attained the rank of Lieutenant JG. During the two years he spent there, he intercepted a ship smuggling over 4,000 pounds of heroin.

Throughout the following three years, he spent his time as the navigator on the "Pham Ngulao," a HEC ship. While so serving, he and his shipmates engaged and sank a Chinese vessel near the islands of Hoang Sa. The Chinese ship was camouflaged so as to blend in with local fishing ships. That ship was carrying many important Chinese officers; so this action dealt a serious blow to China's involvement.

In 1975, when American forces pulled out of Vietnam,

my father was sent to a "re-education camp." Over the next five years, he was moved from camp to camp. Sometimes he was near a city; other times he was held in the dense tropical jungle. He was reluctant to share with me what *actually happened* inside those camps, although perhaps it is best I never do know.

After my father's release in 1980, he married my mother. I was born in 1991. Through a humanitarian program that allowed Vietnamese POWs who had spent five or more years in a reeducation camp to immigrate to the US, our family did so in 1993.

During my childhood, I never talked to my dad about his involvement in the war. I was only taught that education was important. Hearing my father's story for the first time was a surreal moment in my life. Learning about my father's experiences made me realize that this was a man who has sacrificed so much for my very existence. My *Lessons of Vietnam* class became the key to opening the door to my father's past—a door bolted shut for many years.



Lt. JG Luong Nguyen



## Making Our Voices Heard

By Michelle Goldenberg



This year a watershed presidential election will take place during a time of economic turmoil in America. Now, more than ever, the civic duty/responsibility to vote is paramount to ensure America survives and emerges a prosperous country again. Some may compare this election to the 1968 presidential election when America was engulfed in the Vietnam War with many voters calling for a rapid change in government. Today, with a war lacking a clear exit strategy and an economy on the brink, apathy can no longer be afforded. Today's youth must understand their vote is a vote for their future. The echo boom generation will inherit what the previous generation could not finish. Their vote needs to be counted.

Exactly two weeks after the 2008 presidential election ballots will be cast, I will celebrate my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. A mere fourteen days keep me from casting my own vote in this year's election. Plagued with frustration, I sought some way to still get involved. Working at election polls? Putting a sign on my front yard? Making a donation to a campaign? Nothing seemed to fit. My father shared with me his experience about interning for a candidate exactly forty years ago. I took his advice and, a day later, I met with a man from a campaign. I was to become an intern for a presidential candidate at his North Carolina state headquarters. Each week I carried out various tasks, from calling every single early-election site in North Carolina to talking to individuals on the phone about the candidate. The work was fast-paced and in an environment full of friendly people who believed in their candidate and the possibility of a better America.

Forty years ago, in 1968, my father skipped school to spend his first day interning for Bobby Kennedy's presidential campaign. There, my father took on similar tasks but with a very different medium. In contrast to today's modern campaigning with phone number databases and regional profiling at our fingertips, my father opened hundreds of letters. He also took everyone's lunch order and, at the age of 17, had lunch with Ted Kennedy and his advisors. However, on June 5th, 1968, Robert F. Kennedy was murdered, thus ending my father's internship on Northwest 20<sup>th</sup> and L Street, Washington, DC.

My father and I experienced two very different interning environments. However, we both got involved for the same reasons. Bobby Kennedy believed in racial and economic justice, non-aggressive foreign policy, and social improvement. He declared that the young are the future of America and understood the need to provide for them. Today, the presidential candidates understand the need for economic relief and improvements. Both men agree the American "home front" needs change. Education and healthcare need to improve, and we need to effectively confront our foreign policy challenges. My father and I both believe(d) America deserved better.



bobby-kennedy.com

One of the most important decisions that will affect the Millennial Generation is whom our next president will be. This president will be a prominent figure as my generation transitions into adulthood, goes through college and joins the workforce. Change is imperative. Change is now.





# Viewpoints

## Barack Obama: Strength Through Diplomacy

By Nick Orban

With the upcoming U.S. presidential election, foreign policy has become a very hot topic. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama is very knowledgeable about American foreign policy, including the war in Iraq. Armed with a strong desire to renew American diplomacy, he seeks to use it as a tool for gaining respect for our country around the world.

Senator Obama has routinely said he will end the war for a multitude of reasons: "Fighting a war without end will not force the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future. And fighting in a war without end will not make the American people safer...I will end this war...because it is the right thing to do for our national security, and it will ultimately make us safer." In my view, Senator Obama is completely right;

there is no point in our fighting a war without end. This has been his message from the beginning; ending the war is a top priority for him.

United States diplomacy has suffered during the years President Bush and Vice President Cheney have been

in office. President Bush's policy has been one of not diplomatically engaging directly leaders of the remaining two members of the "Axis of Evil"—Iran and North Korea. Senator Obama and his running mate, Senator Joe Biden, seek change to renew American diplomacy, not only to help the U.S., but to help the rest of the world as well. They are willing to meet with high level officials from these "Axis" countries. Additionally, they want to see a strengthened NATO and to work hard at finding a solution to the Israel and Palestine conflict.

Another aspect of the Democratic Party's foreign policy reform is to help lower the world poverty rate. Senator Obama plans to reduce Africa's poverty rate, cutting it by 2015 as stated in the Millennium Development Goal (MDG). MDG is a project established by the United Nations to eradicate poverty and hunger in Africa. The first and most important goal aims to reduce by half the number of people living on \$1 a day or less. To assist in this effort, Senators Obama and Biden will ask Congress to dedicate \$50 billion in foreign aid.

Senator Barack Obama's foreign policy goals are strong suit of his campaign. Voters favoring a formidable candidate should look no further than this man—a candidate who as president will improve America's diplomatic relations around the world, proving that diplomacy and foreign aid, taken together, really can work.



Senator Barack Obama

## John McCain: A True Maverick

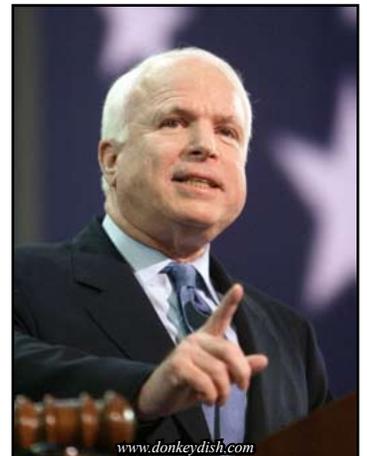
By Dan Nobles

As American citizens, we have rarely heard the term "maverick" used as much as it is being used during this presidential election. Dictionary.com defines "maverick" as "a lone dissenter, an intellectual, an artist, or a politician, who takes an independent stand apart from his or her associates." John McCain has been called a "maverick" numerous times because of his track record of going against several bills and policies proposed by his own Republican Party. However, he remains faithful to its conventional ideals.

Senator McCain has a strong military background. During the Vietnam War, he served as a Navy fighter pilot and spent five and a half years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. Senator McCain believes, "It is strategically and morally essential for the United States to support the Government of Iraq to become capable of governing itself and safeguarding its people. He strongly "disagrees with those who advocate withdrawing American troops before that has occurred." To withdraw before victory is achieved would not only severely wound U.S. prestige and encourage terrorism elsewhere, but it would leave those Iraqis who put their faith in America's promise to bring them democracy at the mercy of unfettered Islamic extremists. McCain believes the war in Iraq can be won by 2013, but says a timetable is not the number one priority right now.

The Iraq War has been front page news since the U.S. invasion five years ago, and it continues to be one the candidates' main platforms during this election. Many Democrats are fearful a McCain presidency means another four years of George W. Bush. But Senator McCain, being the maverick he is, has opposed the Bush Administration in various foreign policy areas, including the use of torture to gain information. The Senator stated, "If you torture someone, they're going to tell you anything they think you want to know." He has fought the Bush Administration on bills regarding torture, preferring the CIA to follow the Army Field Manual on interrogation techniques. He believes waterboarding is illegal.

Another policy Senator McCain pushed contrary to the position taken by President Bush is the surge in Iraq. Even though President Bush repeatedly told the American people there was no need for additional U.S. forces in Iraq, Senator McCain knew otherwise—and did not fail to let his opinion be known ever since the 2003 invasion. Today, the President acknowledges it was the Senator's constant pressure to initiate the surge that finally caused him to do so.



Senator John McCain

John McCain holds true to his beliefs and ideals because of his strong, military upbringing. If elected, he will not be another President George W. Bush, because John McCain is, in every sense of the word, a true *maverick*.





# Olympic Rings of Disunity

By Karissa Wojcik

Ever since its introduction in 1912, five interlocking rings have served as the international Olympic symbol. The rings represent the union of the five original continents (Asia, Africa, America, Australia, and Europe). But, if the Olympic symbol represents unity among the nations of the world, why then have so many controversies surrounded the modern day Olympics? For years now the Olympic Games have sparked controversy. In the Munich Olympics of 1972, tragedy struck when eleven Israeli Olympians were taken hostage and murdered by Palestinian terrorists. The 1976 Olympics in Montreal also became a controversial event as they were boycotted by twenty-six nations, mostly African, questioning the integrity of the Games. The 1980 Olympics were then boycotted by the United States in protest of Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan. And all this controversy covered but a span of eight years!



Artwork by Alisa Senna

The 1980 Olympics did not end such controversy as evidenced by this year's Beijing summer Olympics. Months before the Olympic torch was even lit, protests erupted in Tibet. Fifty years earlier, China had invaded Tibet killing nearly a million innocent people. Still angry that China occupies some of their land, Tibetans began protesting months, burning Chinese flags and encouraging a boycott. Nearly thirty protestors lost their lives.

As athletes began arriving in Beijing this summer, several donned face masks as they stepped off their planes. Whether the masks were intended as a protest against Beijing's poor air quality or were simply worn for health reasons is

unknown. But controversy continuously plagued the Beijing Olympics right up to, during, and after the opening ceremony.

During the opening ceremony, we listened in awe to a song sung by a beautiful young Chinese girl, only to later learn she was not the actual singer. As the girl we watched lip-synched the song, the real singer, a seven year old girl, sung her heart out—hidden in the shadows from world view for being deemed too unattractive by Chinese officials to be shown. That same day, a Chinese man stabbed an American couple, killing the man and leaving the woman seriously wounded. The couple was later identified as parents-in-law to Hugh McCutcheon, the head coach of the American men's indoor volleyball team.

During the Olympics, the Chinese women's gymnastics team excelled. Together with the men's team, they collectively brought home eighteen medals. However, speculation arose as to whether some of the younger athletes were eligible to receive these medals. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) investigated their eligibility, concluding they were of legal age to compete in the Olympic Games.

Through it all—the tragedy, speculation and controversy—the Olympic flag, embroidered with its five interlocked rings representing the unity of the nations of the world, has continuously flown. The real tragedy, however, is that over the past four decades, these rings have come to represent disunity. Sadly, the true unified Olympic spirit of the old world appears to have been lost by a modern one.



# Memories from an Undeclared War

By Katherine Nevils and Michelle Goldenberg

The *Lessons of Vietnam* class provides its students with a gateway to a personalized experience in learning about the Vietnam Era. In doing so, students interview family, friends, and teachers about their experiences and reflections of an era that has parallels to our foreign policy today. These interviews give an insight to how the war affected the everyday lives of American citizens. This assignment offers students a personal connection to the war that lays the foundations for the upcoming speakers, linking projects, and the *LOV* class Washington, D.C. field trip. Here is a compilation of responses from the interviews:

## In what ways did the war affect your life?

1. "It took me a while to get over Vietnam and the way I was treated after I got home, but I think it has made me a better person by learning how to deal with it." ~ **MHS Family Friend/Veteran**
2. "It made me respect human life more...it made me make better decisions regarding conflicts and difficult problems in life. It made me realize that it is better to talk things out and analyze problems." ~ **MHS Teacher**
3. "As a young teenager, and up through the years, it affected my life in a sense that there were a lot of protests at home and it gave me a feeling that we as a country were almost in a state of civil war. There were images on TV of wounded and dying soldiers. It was very difficult to watch that." ~ **MHS Dad**

## What should we teach our kids?

1. "The truth. We need to let them know and make sure they hear the truth. Politicians did not allow the military to run the war. Mistakes were made." ~ **MHS Family Friend**
2. "Be more involved in your community and if you are old enough, please vote. Always think for yourself and learn how to get along with others. Be more responsible. Get the right people in office." ~ **MHS Family Friend**
3. "We should teach our kids to love our country and how important it is for us to vote and that so many people have died to protect them. Most of all, we should be informed!" ~ **MHS Family Friend**
4. "We should try to teach them to live in peace." ~ **MHS Grandfather**





## A Hopeful Start

By Alison and Christine Gamble

When school began this year, a new club was introduced to Millbrook High School. *Club HOPE* focuses on getting students involved in the community through service projects. *HOPE* is an acronym for *Helping Other People Everywhere*. The club is designed to broaden students' perspectives while helping other people in need.

This organization provides students with a unique opportunity to interact with people who are in different situations than many students at Millbrook are accustomed to seeing. By working with the North Carolina Food Bank or Habitat for Humanity, students are able to see the effects of poverty first hand. Through these projects, students will gain an understanding of a specific problem and why it is important to try to fix it. This understanding is invaluable because the difficult circumstances students encounter through these service projects, like poverty, are universal problems. They are occurring almost everywhere throughout the world, including in our own backyard; and it is up to our generation to tackle these dilemmas.

The efforts of *Club HOPE* are being felt outside the Raleigh area. The club plans to work with *Stop Hunger Now*, which is a local organization that sends food to people in need. Students will package nutritious meals made of rice, soy, dehydrated vegetables, and a flavoring mix. These meals will be sent to hunger stricken areas, including many part of Africa. The organization also helps regions after a crisis. For example, many of the meals are currently being sent to Haiti after several hurricanes destroyed much of the country.

As the school year continues, the club hopes to make a difference in the community while providing students with important knowledge and a new perspective on world issues and cultures.



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## Websites

[http://www.wcpss.net/community\\_in\\_the\\_classroom](http://www.wcpss.net/community_in_the_classroom)

<http://mhs.wcpss.net/academics/poling/index.htm>

<http://www.nationalhistoryclub.org>

## Knowledge is Power

By Jane Liu

This year is one of the most unique election years our country has witnessed in its recent history. This election has become home to two "firsts" in American history: The first woman to be nominated for vice president by the Republican Party and the first African American to be nominated for



Jane interviews Mark, a first-time voter

president by either major political party. The extreme importance placed on this election has put young voters in a difficult position.

The easiest thing to do is nothing at all. The young students who walk these halls of Millbrook are extremely busy with activities, homework, jobs, and now stress of applying to college. We are often preoccupied with our responsibilities, and we are sometimes oblivious to the important decision awaiting us on November 4th. Although it is hard to research the presidential candidates' platforms while trying to finish your homework, getting involved and informed is crucial to walking the path of making a well-informed choice in this year's election.

Voting is both a right and responsibility of all American citizens eighteen years old or older. Every sliver of information helps to make one a more educated voter and more responsible citizen. One does not have to go door-to-door, organize school rallies, or work on a campaign to get involved. Simply watching the news and doing research through the internet will provide one with a plethora of information.

Some students at Millbrook High are quite sure of their presidential pick. Mark Zurawel, a registered voter, responded to a survey question saying, "I am going to vote for McCain because he has experience and has shown change throughout his career."

Tiffany Carlyle, a senior at Millbrook stated, "My choice for president is Barack Obama. My views on this presidential election are that we need a change in government. Unless you want four more years of George Bush, don't vote for McCain."

Even though an opinion is crucial, some do not think it needs to be developed right away. Millbrook senior and first time voter, Dylan Wells, recently stated, "I am not quite sure yet about my decision for President in 2008. I am hoping the debates will help me make my decision."

The choices are there alongside the opportunity to get involved and make a difference. The decisions might be tough, but educating oneself ahead of time will be well worth it come November 4th. Do not be afraid to get involved and exercise your responsibility to be become an informed voter in the 2008 presidential election!

## Welcome to Bridges!

On behalf of our staff, welcome to the tenth anniversary year of our *Bridges* Newsletter. We are working hard to make year number ten one to remember. With the help of our advisor, Ms. Lindy Poling, our sponsors, and our supportive readers, we know we can do this! This year's staff is made up of truly unique and talented writers and artists. Throughout the year we hope to bring you the joy and knowledge that has come to us in the creation of this unique publication. Enjoy! ~ Karissa Wojcik, Editor