



Bridges



Lessons of Vietnam



Returning Millbrook Grad Knows *LOV* and War

By Karissa Wojcik

Sean Patrick Keenan knows *LOV* and war.

He was told by his counselor he would not graduate his senior year as he needed to earn eight more credits in one year, which was impossible! But, Mr. Keenan is not the type of person to accept something like that at face value. Stepping up to the challenge during his last semester, he went to school, then to work, and then to night school. (On reflection, he added it was “a good thing I had Ms. Poling’s U.S. History class the last period of the day, or I may not have come back to school after lunch!”) The evening before graduation, he finished his last credit. The next day, he walked exuberantly across the stage with fellow members of Millbrook High School’s class of 1992.

Mr. Keenan decided staying in Raleigh was not an option, so he enlisted in the Marine Corps. He found his assignment as a loadmaster extremely rewarding. But, he wanted a college degree. After two years at Wake Tech, he transferred to Campbell University and earned a degree in Government. He re-joined the Marines, this time as an officer. He is currently serving as a Huey helicopter pilot and holds the rank of “Captain.”



Capt. Keenan taking off in a UH-1N “Huey” helicopter from a combat outpost in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq.

Today, Mr. Keenan says he did not expect to ever become a helicopter pilot. In fact, he does not want to be a helicopter pilot when he “grows up”--he wants to be a lawyer. But for the next few years, Captain Keenan will continue serving in the U.S. Marine Corps.

He has traveled all over the world. He has

served two full tours in Iraq and has learned that war is quite different from what he expected.

In a recent visit, Captain Keenan said he used to have a “romantic” view of war and fighting but, in reality, it is nothing like he thought it would be. There have been ups and downs for this young man. With a tear in his eye, he shared with us that the most rewarding experience of military service is seeing signs welcoming Marines home. It is a feeling of pride for he knows he has helped to protect some of those Marines fighting on the ground, and helped to bring them home alive.



Captain Sean Keenan stands on the Haditha Dam overlooking the Euphrates River.

When asked why he has given so much time as a *LOV/RIR* guest speaker and pen pal link for the past decade, Captain Keenan said it is an opportunity to give back to Ms. Poling and serve his community. He takes seriously his role of leading young Marines and loves to share stories about his experiences. When asked about advice to teenagers, he answered, “Be an American! This is what ties us all together. If we focus on that, we cannot be defeated.”

In the eyes of his audience, Captain Keenan practices what he preaches. In a reflective letter, Irazu Valenzuela commented, “I appreciate people who care for the wellness of the community, and you truly showed me that there are people out there who do care for others.” Another student, Aly King, added, “I was encouraged to do bigger and better things, no matter what anyone says. It was so inspirational to hear how Captain Keenan succeeded against all of the odds!”



***LOV/RIR* Program Featured in National Peace Corps Publication**

Ms. Lindy Poling’s article, *Developing Citizens of the World*, was recently published in *Global TeachNet*, a publication of the National Peace Corps Association in cooperation with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Ms. Poling’s article describes the “Community-in-the-Classroom”(CIC) approach she uses with more than sixty community members from all over the country and the world to help her to “team teach” her *Lessons of Vietnam/Recent International Relations* students each semester. She describes the positive impact of having guest speakers visit her classes, as well as pairing students with *pen pal links* who have experienced the events they are studying.

Ms. Poling strongly believes that “the CIC methodology not only makes history more exciting, but students are also being challenged to develop the important critical thinking and writing skills they need in order to become well-informed citizens and effective leaders in their communities.” As MHS senior Jane Liu commented, “Through this program, I have gained a sense of responsibility to be an active and knowledgeable citizen of the world!”

This informative article can be found on pp. 6-7 of the Winter Edition of *Global TeachNet*:

<http://www.rpcv.org/GTNWinter08-09.pdf>





Reflections on *LOV/RIR*

Editor's Note: As part of Ms. Poling's final exam, students are asked to reflect on the *LOV/RIR* class and how its unique teaching approach has contributed to students' personal learning experiences. This is what several students had to say:

Community in the Classroom is a great way to learn about a different time period by hearing and learning about what people who have lived through these times think. Through the Link Program, I learned that everyone has a different viewpoint, but that each of them may be valid. By comparing some of the things that my link, Dr. Ric Vandett, shared with me to some things that other people heard from their links on the same issues, we realized that there were often four or five different opinions... This class has taught me that I need to open my eyes and listen to all viewpoints relating to any given conflict. Everyone is entitled to an opinion--and everyone deserves to be heard. I will remember that forever. ~ Glen Kalbaugh

This course has affected me personally, because I didn't know much about recent international relations; but now I do. Lifelong lessons? As a result of further studying and sharing my own Iranian culture, I will tell my kids, "There's always math, science, English, and basic history; but I took a course that helped me understand my own culture better."~ Michael Abbaspour

*The Community in the Classroom experience is a breath of fresh air! This approach helped teach me how to interact with outstanding citizens; it also taught me things I would have otherwise never learned. The Link Program definitely helped me become a better writer... I learned a lot about the lessons of Vietnam, but I also feel like a more "tuned in" citizen. Before *LOV/RIR*, I never watched or read the news. Now, I read the paper in the morning and record the evening news in case I miss it. I feel that being informed is a responsibility and privilege that I will keep with me for the rest of my life. ~ Will Gouz*

*This class has given me a good sample taste of what college will be like. It has also changed my view (positively) on teaching--plus school as a whole. Some life lessons I can take from this class include how to be a better citizen in my community and my country, and being more aware of the history around me. I would encourage anyone to take a chance on this class. Initially, I didn't pick *LOV/RIR*. But, I got in here and excelled with flying colors. So go for it--and you'll "LOV" it! ~ Tiffany Carlyle*



The World Trembles

By Andy Chenlo

As Congo bleeds, Africa trembles. But how long will it be until that shiver spreads to the rest of the world?

Often described as the heart of Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo has never had an easy job dealing with its governmental problems. When the Congolese state began to collapse in 1996, it spread war around the region like one of the many diseases claiming its people. When the government caved in again in 1998, it drew in armies from six other African nations. Since the beginning of the war, over six million people have died, making it the worst death toll since World War II.

The Kivu Conflict, as it is known, is often referred to as the "silent genocide." The Congolese wars always received less interest than the much exposed Rwanda genocide. For example, there are few movies about Congolese martyrs. And, the conflict has drawn far less political concern from the American government than the Clinton Administration gave the Rwanda affair. But, that now seems to be changing.

The Kivu Conflict involves two opposingsides. On one is the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo or FARDC. As forces of the state, FARDC defends the interests of the democratic government led by President Joseph Kabila. On the other side is the National Congress for the Defense of the People or CNDP. This rebel group is led by former General of the Armed Forces, Laurent Nkunda. Sympathetic to Congolese Tutsis and the Tutsi-dominated government of neighboring Rwanda, General Nkunda has been expressing his beliefs with violence.

Wishing to prevent a second Rwanda, top U.N. diplomats have made their way over to Africa's current deathbed. For now,

they have been unsuccessful. Though ceasefires have been on and off during the past few months, the death toll keeps rising by the thousands. But it is not only the numbers that are staggering to the global community, it is the manner in which violence is imposed on people of all age and gender. In November, some of the 17,000 U.N. peacekeepers sent to the African nation found a roadblock set up by the rebel group which was intended to prevent their entrance into one of the afflicted villages. This roadblock was not made with customary barbed wire and spikes but with the bodies of five innocent Hutu civilians—a symbol of the hell which the Congo has become.



Artwork by Zach Smithson

A Catholic aid organization, along with the Congolese government, accused the Uganda-based rebel group known as the Lord's Resistance Army, of massacring 400 civilians during a Christmas Day concert. The group is also accused of burning down another church. Not only do these deaths affect the families of those killed, but "the number of dead bodies risk spreading disease," according to a spokesperson for Caritas International. The war has also created millions of orphans. Unable to care for themselves, these children—as young as eight years old—are being kidnapped to fight as

soldiers for the rebel army. Those not taken often die in a few days, unable to fend off starvation.

Attempts to stop these atrocities may finally have caught the attention of some. However, even the most powerful leaders are over how to stop Laurent Nkunda and his rebels from continuing their rampage of death, violence, and despair. A ceasefire, for now, gives hope to the young; but death is anxious to pounce.

The news of Congo's bleeding spreads—the world trembles.



