



Bridges

Lessons of Vietnam



Character 101

By Eva Fauser



Many people would say that *character* is a broad word; however, in Ms. Lindy Poling’s classroom, not only is it defined, it also has real *meaning*.

Every student leaving her classroom sees the familiar poster advertising good character traits, such as good judgment, responsibility, integrity, and self-discipline. Through the *LOV/RIR* class, students have infinite opportunities to learn, grow, and develop as human beings.

Ms. Poling recently traveled to Chicago to participate in the National Council of the Social Studies Annual Conference. Her presentation topic this year was titled, “Democracy’s Many Voices.” Throughout her VVMF team presentation, Ms. Poling effectively demonstrated how character and democratic values, such as freedom of expression and the importance of voting, are

incorporated into the *LOV* program through community speakers and veteran links.

Ms. Poling returned from the conference extremely enthused! “It’s exciting to meet so many young teachers who are interested in teaching the Vietnam Era with the *Community-in-the-Classroom* approach.” Other teachers who saw her presentation were just as enthusiastic as Ms. Poling. “I plan to begin implementing these ideas this school year!” commented a U.S. History teacher who attended Ms. Poling’s presentation.

As a *LOV* student, and a lover of history, I am very excited to see the *LOV* legacy continue to spread. I know that this course teaches character each and every day, and now I hope that other students across the country will have the opportunity that I have had. *LOV* is not just about Vietnam; it is about enhancing one’s character—and learning who you truly are.



What Veterans Have Taught Me

By Julia Kost

To most students, Veterans Day is just another reason to sleep in. But to many Americans, it means much more than that. I was privileged to interview twenty veteran *LOV* supporters as to what November 11th means to them. I have learned that to these men and women, Veterans Day is not an excuse to sleep in or catch up on a favorite TV show; it is a day of both pain and pride. It is a day on which we should honor all who have made a personal sacrifice by serving our country to keep America free.

Originally called “Armistice Day” when World War I ended, November 11th is the day our Nation has set aside to remember and honor our veterans. Many citizens confuse Veterans Day with Memorial Day. But, while both holidays have a similar focus—i.e., the veteran—they are certainly not the same. Memorial Day, which is commemorated on the last Monday of May, is a day to remember those who have died fighting for our country. Veterans Day remembers not only those who died, but also all who served or continue to serve our great Nation. Veteran David Rabadan pointed out, “It does not matter what the war was or what the veteran did. He or she answered a call...and put their lives in danger [for the freedom of America].” We owe these men

and women a debt of gratitude for the liberties that we take for granted each and everyday.

America is a fortunate country, but we must continue the fight to preserve our inalienable rights. According to VADM Emmett H. Tidd, “It really boils down to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Those are not clichés. They are fundamental to all of us.” And, General George B. Price emphasized, “Veterans Day is a day to re-dedicate ourselves to the fundamental principles on which our country was founded: One nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” Undoubtedly, it would have been a much different world today had not America’s veterans fought for such fundamental principles



Painting by Billie Jackson

in our two world wars. Through the *Lessons of Vietnam* course, and especially through veterans such as these, I have learned that the freedom we enjoy today did not come without cost.

Before I interviewed these veterans, I knew very little about November 11th. Now, Veterans Day will mean much more to me—for I have truly come to realize how significant an impact those who serve our country have had, and continue to have, on my everyday life.



On Behalf of Silent Voices

By Alisha Carter

When reflecting upon my days as a child, I remember how much love and encouragement my parents gave me. I remember them being there for me whenever I needed help, but now I realize that I took much of their love for granted. Never did I think of the children of the world who have to grow up without a nurturing environment like I had. Never did I stop to think about giving back to those less fortunate. Until now.

My link, Ms. May Tran, a Vietnamese refugee, decided to take on an orphanage in Vietnam in 2000 with the help of her husband and numerous volunteers. The founder of this orphanage had been working on this project silently since 1999. After going to Vietnam and seeing the living conditions that the children endured, Ms. Tran decided to fully commit to this project.

Through our correspondences, I have come to learn that there are so many children whose voices are not acknowledged. Ms. Tran has expressed her devotion to the children of this orphanage by giving so much of her time to support it. With tears, she recalls the innocent, abandoned children left behind in Vietnam without the love and encouragement of a family. She is determined to defeat all odds and dodge any difficulty that the Vietnamese government imposes. Through these trials, she is able to accomplish one of her most important goals: to make the lives of these orphans better!

Though they have grown up with no parents, some of these children are lucky enough to encounter people, like Ms. Tran, who have such love for them. She and her colleagues are devoted to fighting to answer the needs of the less fortunate. It is refreshing to know that there are selfless people who are willing to take so many risks to speak for those who do not have a voice.

Memorial

By Nicole Poston

I heard them call my name today
Far away voices brush past my ear.
“Here,” they said. “We’re here, turn, see...”
Grief, as I turned, flooded my heart.
Each mark, each name struck my eyes
I cried my goodbyes to the men
Who once again touched my life.

The comrades who stood beside me
Alongside me they fell
Freed from the hell we were in.
These men, heroes of the battlefield
I kneel by their names
With shame for still being alive.
I’ve never forgotten.

I turn and notice the children
When they see the sadness in grandpa’s eyes
Sighs leave them, but they don’t understand
Why this grand wall brings such tears.
Years have gone by and some people forget
Yet, others never do - they remember
Warm Decembers, pain, lies, and Brotherhood.



Michael John Coleman



A Soldier’s Best Friend

By Sara Burns

America lost over 58,000 lives during the Vietnam War. Several of the valiant men and women who served our country received silver stars, purple hearts, and other recognition for their bravery and sacrifice. However, the legacy of America’s four-legged heroes of the Vietnam War seems to be forgotten.

War dogs played an important part in America’s military during the Vietnam War. It is estimated that the 4,000 dogs that served saved the lives of over 15,000 American military personnel. The U.S. military used K-9 units for a wide range of functions. Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs uncovered booby traps, land mines, base camps and searched tunnels. Sentry dogs defended U.S. military facilities in South Vietnam. Patrol dog teams patrolled and protected air bases. Mine, Booby Trap and Tunnel dogs were trained to search tunnels and villages for secret enemy stashes of war supplies and detect mines, booby traps and trip wires. Water dog teams were used by the Navy to track enemy divers underwater. Combat Tracker teams followed the enemy’s trails and located downed planes and wounded soldiers.

War dogs were also used to build the morale of our troops. They helped soldiers face the obstacles put before them in their battle for survival. Their devotion, loyalty and bravery gave soldiers strength to overcome some of their fears.

Although dog handlers returned home after their one-year tour of duty, war dogs served for life. Military records show that of the 4,000 that served, less than 200 went home. This is because the U.S. Military classified the dogs as “equipment.” The dogs that did not go home were either turned over to the South Vietnamese Army or euthanized by their handlers.



Painting by Lauren Johnson

While many soldiers received special recognition from the government for their heroic actions, and those who lost their lives fighting for our country were given a military burial, a white cross to mark their grave, and a twenty-one-gun salute, the war dogs got nothing in return for their service. Most were not even allowed to come home.

This country still owes these war heroes a debt of recognition. Their dedication, devotion and courage will never be forgotten by those whose lives they saved.



Investigating the Vietnam Era

By Katie Eck and Nicole Poston

LOV/RIR students are always learning important lessons through a multitude of sources. Some of these include videos, news



Kim serves Ben delicious Vietnamese cuisine.

reports, guest speakers, links, and class projects. Ms. Poling's *Lessons of Vietnam* classes recently presented projects that explored the Vietnam Era in greater depth.

Each group of students taught the class about a topic of their choosing. The projects focused on a variety of themes, ranging from different

aspects of the Vietnam War to present day situations in Southeast Asia. Students learned in great detail about the war in Vietnam through the presentations dealing with the TET Offensive, My Lai Massacre, weapons of the NVA and Viet Cong, the Black Ponies, and Agent Orange. The happenings on the home front were shown through the projects on the protest movement, the media, and the music of the era. Projects on PTSD, human rights issues, and

present day Vietnam also focused students' attention on the issues of today.

This assignment allowed students to delve more deeply into the Vietnam War Era and into the topics that interested them the most. When students are given the chance to explore more fully the areas of their choosing, the class is taken to a whole new level. The project becomes more than a research assignment; it becomes an investigation. The experience is multiplied in effectiveness when students have the chance to share these investigations with their peers. Creativity and interest combined make for a lesson plan that cannot be rivaled by a chapter in a textbook. Exploration brings the students into history much more than simply reading words on a page.



David gives his presentation on *The Black Ponies*.



Making a Difference

By Stephanie Nicholson and Katie Greer

*A source of strength and grace and pride,
For me to hold, at peace, beside.
~"Tribute to a Golden Partner"*

On Monday, October 20th, Ms. Poling's *Lessons of Vietnam* students shared an experience that will continue to shape the way they perceive the lives of others—and their own. Following in their father's footsteps, Admiral Zumwalt's son, Lieutenant Colonel James Zumwalt, and daughter, Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers, accompanied by their mother, Mrs. Mouza Zumwalt, visited Millbrook High School to tell us about *their* past and *our* future.



Lieutenant Colonel Jim Zumwalt

Lieutenant Colonel Zumwalt, who served in Vietnam and has made over fifty trips back since the War ended, emphasized the importance of learning the lessons from the War. He directed us to look straight at the conflict: what misconceptions were there, what lines were crossed, and what was our enemy's mindset? Specifically, Lt. Col. Zumwalt reminded us that we must always remember our enemy is *human*, with a name, a face, a culture, and a history. It is vital to learn that we will not be successful in our conflicts if we do not understand our enemy.

As Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers sat next to her mother, reading "Tribute to a Golden Partner," a poem

*For half a century, 'twas always true,
This voyaging sailor did so love you.
~Elmo R. "Bud" Zumwalt*

Admiral Zumwalt wrote to his wife for their fiftieth wedding anniversary, no one was left with a dry eye. Not only did our hearts melt with the Zumwalt's love story, we were also challenged to realize that age should not limit one's influence. One classmate commented, "I have never felt like this before in my life... I am now determined, motivated, and driven to make a positive impact in this world. I am excited to see what I can accomplish."



Mrs. Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers and Mrs. Mouza Zumwalt

Toward the end of class, we were able to discuss more recent international issues with Lt. Col. Zumwalt, particularly North Korea and Iraq. The subtle threat of North Korea generated questions relating to U.S. foreign policy and human rights. It was moving to see the concern in our classmates' eyes for peoples who are isolated, mistreated, and overlooked. We all suddenly felt the urge to do something to change these horrific situations. In the end, we simply desired to make a difference. Now nurturing this flame to change the world, beginning with ourselves, we would like to thank the Zumwalts for igniting the passion!



Naming our Destiny, Claiming our Future

By Lauren Ward and Adrienne Hollowell

From the moment children step into the public school system, they are taught they are “the voice of today and the leadership of tomorrow.” Still, many doubt that America’s youth are engaged in what is happening in Washington. This prompted our own investigation. The results were shocking!

Of our estimated population of 290 million, America’s youth—those 18 to 24—make up about 15.6 million. Contrary to our expectation of a politically enthusiastic generation, we discovered that less than 38% of those youth voted in the 2000 presidential election—69% of those being college graduates.* These numbers suggest that educated citizens have the upper hand in politics, because they have the knowledge and awareness of civics that breed motivation to be involved in their government. Maybe it is true that “knowledge is power!”

To test national statistics on a local level, we surveyed 111 MHS seniors. There was good news and bad: although an encouraging 84% indicated they were going to vote in the 2004 presidential election, only 43% knew the names of their Senators. One might question how well these youth will be informed about the candidates when they do not even know who represents them in Congress. It seems that ninth grade Civics and Economics now come with an expiration date.

For a generation that has not hesitated to criticize the government, we have done little to turn our dissidence into deed. It is senseless to choose not to vote, only to complain later about the decisions others made. It only seems fair that those who give up their right to vote should abandon their right to whine. In the words of General George B. Price, “Youth who do not get involved with those who decide their destiny...It’s a tragedy. They are standing in the blood...of those young men who fought and died *without* the right.”

Do we want to see our soldiers withdrawn from Iraq? Do we want to see the drinking age coincide with the voting age? Do we want to see more funds being spent on education? It is time for our generation to prove we are accountable citizens by learning more about the issues—and then vote to voice our opinions. Let’s stand up and be heard! It is our turn to lead this nation into the future that was intended to be ours.

*Statistics from CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement)



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

Balancing Act

By Sophia Malik

America, the land of the free. We go about our day, free to say what we want, free to do what we want, free to have what we want. This country honors the idea of liberty more than any other in the world. We start our day with the Pledge of Allegiance, swearing “liberty, and justice for all.” All of our pennies have the word “liberty” emblazoned on them. It is easy to forget the power and meaning of liberty, though, when born into a society that has provided it for more than 200 years.



September 11, 2001, was a direct threat to our freedom and served as a wake up call for many of us. It was impossible not to feel the surge of patriotism and unity across the nation. We were willing to take any measures to preserve our freedom. Six weeks after the attacks, the *USA Patriot Act* was passed into law. Its purpose was to expand on the powers of the national government in order to provide it with the necessary tools to fight terrorism. In our passion to secure our safety, however, we did not question any steps made by the government. Liberty faded into the background and security became our priority.

The Patriot Act gives the government unprecedented power. Without notice or a hearing, property can be seized solely on the basis of secret evidence. Wiretaps and searches may be conducted with no probable cause, as long as the government claims that it has to gather foreign intelligence. Suspects may be detained for an unlimited period of time. Their cases are not listed on public dockets and their hearings are closed to the public. These suspects may be detained indefinitely without anyone outside the military ever seeing the evidence that was the basis for their conviction. The supplanting of the civilian justice system with “military justice” takes away great power from the courts and emasculates the rights of citizens. These are but a few examples of the challenges this Act makes to our Bill of Rights. And they barely scratch the surface of the questionable directives found in the *USA Patriot Act*.

We must ask ourselves what it truly means to be patriotic. Is it patriotic to sit back while laws are passed that challenge what was set forth in our Constitution more than 200 years ago? As Robin Williams put it, the Bill of Rights was not written on an Etch-a-Sketch. No matter how drastic the circumstances, we must be cautious to uphold our values and laws and not let emotion cloud our judgment. To blindly follow what our government decides is a dereliction of our duty as citizens. It is our obligation as citizens to strike a balance between liberty and security. As Ben Franklin said, “Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.”



Seasons Greetings from the *Bridges Staff!*