



# Bridges

## THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM



### My *LOV* Experience

By Andy Cao

When I was eight years old, I left the only world I knew for the very first time. My destination was Vietnam, and I had no idea what to expect. My grandparents were finally going to see their American grandson in person. What a time I had! From the energy and lights of Saigon, to soothing afternoon showers in the river town of Bac Lieu, the sights and sounds of that first trip are something I will always remember. Yet, I was still too young, too naïve, to be aware of the problems around me—problems that would cloud my second journey four years later.

The confusion I had during my second trip to Vietnam was inconceivable. Reality hit me, and it had quite a punch! I witnessed poverty and mortality first hand. The concept of Communism was foreign to me. One day, I asked my dad about Ho Chi Minh. His response was, “Hush, don’t talk about that here!” I did not know why...then.

But now, I do. From the first day I entered my *Lessons of Vietnam* class, I knew I was in for a unique experience. Our introductory speaker, Mr. Del Vecchio, like VADM and Mrs. Tidd, the Zumwalt family, and many other “guest teachers,” encouraged us to *learn the lessons of history* so that we might make a better future for ourselves and for our world. *LOV* is such an interactive class, with so many ways to learn. To top it all off, our *LOV* field trip to Washington, D.C. was both fun and educational! We met renowned journalist, Mr. Joe Galloway; and Mr. Jan Scruggs, VVMF Founder and President, gave us a personal tour of The Wall. We even discussed recent international issues with foreign policy experts at the U.S. Institute of Peace.



*MHS LOV Class visits our nation’s capitol.*

I had special reasons for taking *LOV*. I wanted to learn more about my own history. I have received that—and even more. I now know the story of my parents—and my past. I better understand the problems that Vietnam struggles with today and what led to those problems. Most importantly, I have met some of the people who were *personally* involved. I empathize with the sacrifices they have made, and I appreciate the lessons they have taught us. Vietnam is a major part of American history, as well as my own. I feel so privileged to be part of such an amazing educational experience!



### Father and Daughter: United by History

By Eva Fauser

Just as daybreak broke, I boarded the charter bus headed for Washington, D.C. with my *LOV* classmates, teacher, chaperones—and my father. My father volunteered to serve as a chaperone on his first field trip. He is a Vietnam Veteran, and I am his daughter—a student learning about the Vietnam War and his past for the very first time. I was apprehensive about visiting The Wall with my dad, because I was extremely concerned about what he would be going through.

I did not know that my father had fought in Vietnam until I took *Honors U.S. History* with Ms. Poling last year. One night at dinner, I asked my parents if they had any opinions on Vietnam. Needless to say, my father and mother both had plenty to offer! I returned to school the next day, my interest heightened, knowing that my father participated in the events that I was learning about. I wondered why he had never talked about it, what he did in Vietnam, his feelings, his thoughts...I had an endless number of questions. I was so intrigued about the Vietnam Era that I signed up for *LOV* this year.

After taking this class and going to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with



*Painting by Michelle Konar*

my father, I can honestly say that I feel closer to him than I ever have before. Standing next to him with The Wall in the background during our candlelight vigil, I felt that I *connected* with him. In that moment, I knew why he was afraid to talk about the war for so many years—and why he came on this trip. He came to show me that miracles can happen. He wanted me to understand that people can survive traumatic ordeals, and that love and peace can go on.

Standing next to The Wall, watching him rub the name of his closest fallen comrade, I could not help but wonder, “What if?”...What if *his* name was on The Wall?...Since then I have

felt the need to hug my dad more, to tell him about my day, to spend more time with him, because I am so lucky and thankful that he came home.

Having a veteran father has shown me patience, love, acceptance, and courage. I can *still* only imagine what he saw or what he went through during his one-year tour of duty in Vietnam. I just want to say, “*Thank you, Dad. Thank you for serving; thank you for sacrificing; and thank you for being my father. WELCOME HOME.*”

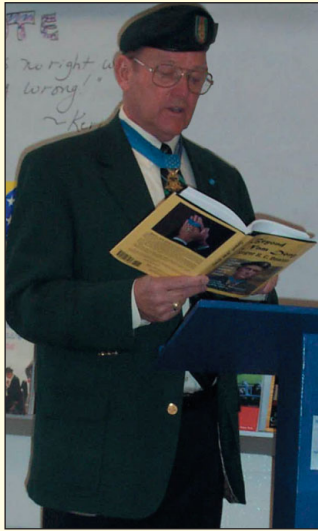




# Courage Under Fire

By Sophia Malik

Colonel Roger H.C. Donlon (U.S. Army, Ret.) always dreamed of being a leader. His father, a veteran of WWI, taught him that the primary role of all leaders is *service*, and service became the foundation of this man's life. He commanded the Nam Dong Special Forces as a Green Beret Captain. Colonel Donlon rose above the call of duty, proving over and over again to be a valiant leader. Even while coming under intensive attack and being badly wounded, he continued to lead his troops. These gallant acts earned Captain Donlon the first Medal of Honor awarded during the Vietnam War.

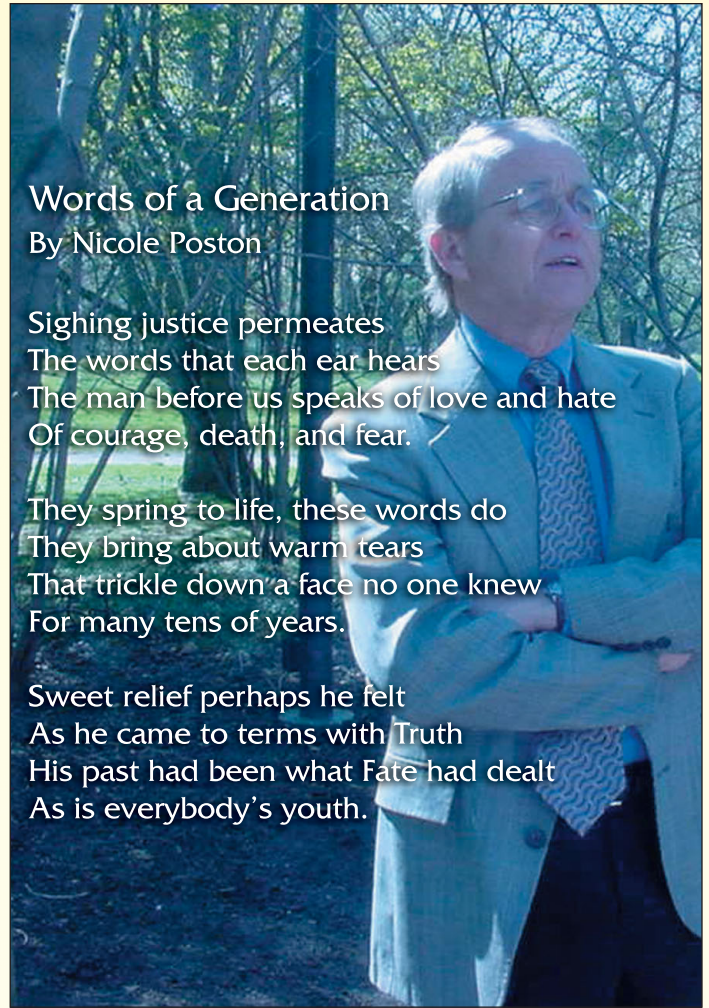


Colonel Roger Donlon

On February 18th, LOV students listened intently to this heroic man who wore the Medal of Honor and the Green Beret. He was accompanied by his wife, Norma, comrade Ray Whitsell, and Mrs. Mouzetta

Zumwalt-Weathers. His commanding presence and thoughtful words held each student's attention. His inspirational stories expressed messages we can all use in our own lives: "Spirit on the battlefield is what determines the victory... We should never forget the sacrifices that others have made."

Colonel Donlon opened up our eyes to a new world of courage. Looking back upon his visit, his words have new meaning. Now that we know more of the war's history, we have a deeper appreciation for his sacrifices and actions. The message that made the most impact on LOV students was the *power of trust and teamwork*. The idea that a soldier can put his full trust in the one fighting next to him, knowing that each would risk his own life for the other, is simply beautiful.



## Words of a Generation

By Nicole Poston

Sighing justice permeates  
The words that each ear hears  
The man before us speaks of love and hate  
Of courage, death, and fear.

They spring to life, these words do  
They bring about warm tears  
That trickle down a face no one knew  
For many tens of years.

Sweet relief perhaps he felt  
As he came to terms with Truth  
His past had been what Fate had dealt  
As is everybody's youth.



## "... And the Hog Committed!"

By Stephanie Nicholson

When Brigadier General George B. Price recently came to speak to our LOV classes, none of us was prepared for the experience or challenges that awaited them. General Price is one of those people that you meet and *never* forget! His deep voice, domineering stature, and engaging eyes leave an unforgettable impression. More importantly, LOV students will always remember this man's *words of wisdom*.

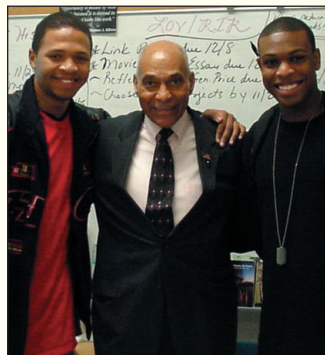
General Price continually emphasized the importance of being the "best American one could be"—his own personal goal. He challenged us to be active voters, to be informed citizens, to not take our freedoms for granted, and to de-materialize our lives. He encouraged us to "get involved with our own destiny." At the end of the discussion, General Price left us with one final question: *What is patriotism?* With help from my classmates' responses, I would like to take the opportunity to answer this question, so that we might show this amazing "guest teacher" the difference his compelling and powerful words have made on our lives.

Initially, our definition of *patriotism* would have been the same as Webster's: "love for or devotion to one's country." We would think of the Pledge of Allegiance, the Star Spangled Banner, the bald eagle, and "bleeding" red, white, and blue. Many of us would have thought that the only true patriots are those who serve in

our nation's military or participate in government. After a day of reflecting on General Price's visit, we came back with a different view and a refreshing definition of patriotism:

*Patriotism is being devoted to the betterment of one's country, this devotion inspired by both love and pride. A patriot lives up to his civil responsibilities, and tries to give back to his country by instilling this pride in the next generation. Patriotism is strengthened through tradition and history. A patriot must stay informed, question and support when necessary, and lend a hand to someone in need and expect nothing in return. Being a patriot does not mean waving the American flag, but simply being proud of the flag and that for which it stands.*

In the end, the most important lesson General Price taught us came from the story about eggs and ham. The difference between eggs and ham, he told us, is that "the hen contributed and the hog committed!" This seemingly elementary lesson is not as basic as it sounds, as many of us fail to demonstrate that we understand it. We go through life giving some here and there, when our service would best be utilized if we just made a *true commitment*. Like the hog, we, as Americans, should make a *commitment* to our country—to preserve, protect and defend it—no matter what.



General George B. Price with LOV Students





## A Storyteller...and a Hero

By Sara Burns

In 1965, Joseph L. Galloway found himself in a distant and foreboding place of sweltering heat and thick vegetation. This young, ambitious journalist cautiously waited for what Vietnam had in store for him. It was not what he expected. He bore witness to and was part of a series of savage, bitter battles in the Ia Drang Valley. He saw

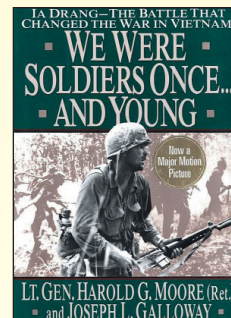


Storyteller, Mr. Joe Galloway

a place of tangible fear, anguish, and desperate hope turn into the birthplace of heroism and brotherhood. In a world where all they had was each other, the boundaries between race, religion, and heritage dissipated. As the battles intensified, soldiers fell one-by-one. As Mr. Galloway recounted, "They gave their lives, not for a president or policy, but for each other." The soldiers he encountered in the Ia Drang Valley had an everlasting effect on him. Galloway now feels he was fated to witness their bravery and self-sacrifice to memorialize for history their actions and deeds.

Meeting Mr. Joe Galloway at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on April 16th was both an honor and privilege. His quiet dignity and resilient spirit were inspiring—and his candid, articulate words have stayed with all of us. Afterwards, when I viewed The Wall up close, I was able to look past the 58,235 inscriptions and see individual people with their own unique stories. As Mr. Galloway wrote in *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young*, "[I] wondered what it would be like if they had had the chance to serve this country "by their lives instead of by their deaths." He helped us better understand the pain the wound we call "Vietnam" has brought to our country—and why it has taken so long for it to begin to heal.

This thoughtful journalist calls himself merely a "storyteller," and he only wishes for the names of the men he fought beside never to be forgotten. He believes as long as we remember them, they will never really be gone. However, I, like many of my classmates, consider Mr. Joseph Galloway a *hero*, not only for saving lives on the battlefield, but also for sharing the legacy of his brave comrades with the rest of us.



## Iraq: Another Vietnam?

By Josh Whitmore

To many critics of President George W. Bush, there are striking similarities between the conflict in Iraq and the Vietnam War. First, our government did not have clear-cut objectives in Vietnam; and, with the small pockets of insurgents in Iraq, it often seems like we do not have a workable reconstruction plan in Iraq. In most wars, uniforms, ethnicity, etc. clearly identify the enemy, but in both Vietnam and Iraq that was/is not the case. This results in unconventional warfare, which is exactly what the enemy wants. In Vietnam, troops could be ambushed while driving through a "peaceful" area; and in Iraq, random bombs are killing U.S. troops and innocent Iraqis. In both cases, we had and have little control of how and when we fight the enemy. Lastly, support for the Vietnam War declined during the ten-year ordeal; and support for U.S. involvement in Iraq is declining as well. A recent *Newsweek* poll indicated that four out of ten Americans now believe Iraq will become "another Vietnam."



Yet, while there may be similarities between these two wars, Iraq is not "another Vietnam." There are clear differences. Iraq is a desert; it is not supplied by a superpower; and it is a land of many cultures, which leads to fragmented languages and religions. Vietnam is a humid jungle; the enemy there was aided by Russia and China; the society there is basically homogeneous. A major difference between these conflicts is the absence of a Draft. All those now serving in Iraq volunteered to do so. As a result, troop morale and attitude has been different in the two wars.

There are much deeper differences, too. The goal in Iraq is more difficult to attain. In Vietnam, the goal was essentially maintaining the status quo: to stop the spread of communism into the South, but not necessarily destroy it in the North. In Iraq, we have to destroy the enemy to allow democracy to fully replace the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. We must also end the chaos that has ensued. One reason the U.S. thought it necessary to get involved in Vietnam was the "domino theory"—i.e., if Vietnam

fell to communism, so too then would the rest of Asia. However, in Iraq, there seems to be a "reverse domino theory"—if *Iraq becomes democratic, this will lead to democracy for other countries in the region.*

Some have called the conflict in Iraq "George Bush's Vietnam." However, several differences exist that, hopefully, will prevent Iraq from becoming "another Vietnam."

### Students Speak Out on Iraq—2004!

- "The time to fight about whether this is a just war has passed. The fact is we have begun something, and we must remain committed." — Sophia Malik
- "Our situation in Iraq is such that defeat is inevitable. Longer occupation will cause our Muslim allies to lose sight of the fact that we are in Iraq to help and not to impose." — Oderah Nwaeze
- "Stability in Iraq has to be overseen by American peacekeepers. People are anxious for our troops to return home, but Democracy doesn't happen overnight." — Brian Ellis
- "Too many Americans are dying... Freedom does come with a price, but this one is becoming too costly." — Kelly Young
- "I think that we need to remember that we're saving people from a madman (Saddam)! We need to see this thing through and not leave Iraq a country in chaos." — Lauren Sullivan
- "Iraq is a blunder. The Bush Administration lied to the people of the U.S. Where are these WMD's—and how and when do we leave?" — Tom Bolick
- "We really need to start winning the Iraqi people over... Greater rewards for those who join us and harsher penalties for those who oppose." — Daniel King
- "Have we begun a war without an end in mind?" — Ben Kaufman





## Creating Our Own Legacy

By Ashley Bell

Through Mrs. Poling's *LOV/RIR* class, students are blessed with the opportunity of hearing speakers share their personal thoughts and experiences of the Vietnam Era. A recent visitor, Mrs. Larry Hines, served in the American Red Cross as a Supplemental Recreation Activities Overseas Worker (often times referred to as "Donut Dolly") in 1968-69. Her primary responsibilities were to facilitate everyday activities, while providing care and compassion, for the American troops.

Mrs. Hines promptly caught our attention with her determination, spirit, and wisdom, as she described "the most impressionable year of her life." She challenged us as high school seniors to truly make each new day more meaningful and productive. "Make your lives interesting!" she said passionately. She encouraged us to "venture out of our comfort zones and to begin to create our own legacy."

Mrs. Hines also taught us about the hardships and pain that she witnessed first hand in Vietnam. She was often the last contact for some of the young dying soldiers in the hospitals. As she tried to explain the impact that this had on her life, she expressed some of her personal political views and her belief that "war is absolutely the worst thing that can happen to an individual." Now, many might question how she was able at the young age of twenty-one to raise the morale of so many young soldiers. Yet, after meeting Mrs. Hines, this question was quickly answered. She is indeed a remarkable woman who embraced this difficult challenge with an immense amount of love, energy, and compassion.



Mrs. Larry Hines shows a picture of her Red Cross colleagues.

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## Point of View: The Fourth Estate and Its Impact on War

By Brian Ellis

Media Literacy has become a popular *LOV/RIR* topic! Recently, Ms. Poling presented us with Project Look Sharp's engaging *Media Construction of War* Curriculum in which we analyzed a progression of *Newsweek Magazine* covers from 1965-1975. We critically examined each to ascertain the messages communicated to the reader. My interest piqued; I began to pick up on various nuances on the nightly news. For example, while the U.S. military has fought in Iraq for over a year now, little effort seems to be made by the media to accentuate the positive—such as, until last month, the relatively low number of U.S. casualties.

Similarly, more and more news reports seek to compare Iraq to Vietnam. If there is one obvious parallel between these two conflicts, it is the role mainstream media plays in influencing public opinion regarding each "story." Whether or not Iraq is "another Vietnam" is irrelevant. What bothers me is that this

topic even necessitates a debate. The effect the media had during Vietnam was enormous, but may pale in comparison to the role it plays in Iraq. In Vietnam, a number of journalists listened to what a government spokesman reported to them and then proceeded to write as if they had a more informed position than they really did. Only a limited number of journalists actually wrote their stories from field experience. When I asked one of these respected journalists, Mr. Joe Galloway, "To what extent did the media impact public opinion?" he responded, "The media can neither stop nor start a war." In contrast to Vietnam, most reporters in Iraq are assigned to infantry units, reporting their observations with tracers flashing in the background and RPG's exploding nearby.

There have been controversial photographs released of civilian contractors burned alive—their bodies then hung from a bridge. Images such as these remind us of similar shocking pictures from the Vietnam War, such as a Vietnamese child running and screaming after being badly burned by napalm. That 1972 picture in *Life Magazine* re-introduced a malleable audience to the term "baby killer," as did the pictures of My Lai taken a few years earlier. Similarly, today's photos from Iraq leave one believing every city in the country is as dangerous as Fallujah.

I believe the media profoundly affects popular opinion—at issue is whether that intent is deliberate or not. Veteran/journalist, Mr. Larry Stogner, makes a good point in that regard. He believes "the cost of freedom seems much higher...when you see in graphic terms the price that's being paid." I agree—it is clear; any escalation in exposure to the realities of war will always correlate with America's distaste for it.



The Bridges Staff — Class of 2004