



Bridges

Lessons of Vietnam



Candidates Give Voters Much To Consider

By Sarah Edwards



There is roughly one month left before the Presidential Election of 2004. The candidates have accepted their parties' nominations, and it is now down to the issues. Two of the main issues are homeland security and the war in Iraq—issues on which the candidates have differing viewpoints.

According to President Bush, his top priority is to protect the country from terrorist attacks, and his administration has tripled the homeland security budget to nearly \$30 billion. Senator John Kerry has proposed a list of thirty-one goals he would implement, if elected. However, these goals—including making the National Guard responsible for homeland security and ensuring federal resources get to first responders quickly instead of trickling through bureaucracy—are supposedly already being taken care of by President Bush. Senator Kerry does not believe the President is allocating enough money towards fire and police departments, and

he wants to hire 100,000 new police officers by giving these departments more funds.

Many people across the nation are torn in regards to the war in Iraq. President Bush continues to take the stand that the war was necessary. Even though we did not find weapons of mass destruction, he believes Saddam Hussein was a major danger to his country as well as the rest of the world. Senator Kerry, however, feels the war should have been a last resort. He does not support the \$87 billion in reconstruction money the President wants to spend in Iraq and Afghanistan, and instead would focus on getting our allies to help us rebuild these countries.

The nominees have made their points, and on November 2nd, the public will choose which candidate they support. The debate on these issues has been intense, giving voters a lot to consider that day. With both candidates still clinging to their respective political strongholds in 39 of the states, the remaining 11 swing states will certainly make this election an interesting one.



The True Meaning of Our National WWII Memorial

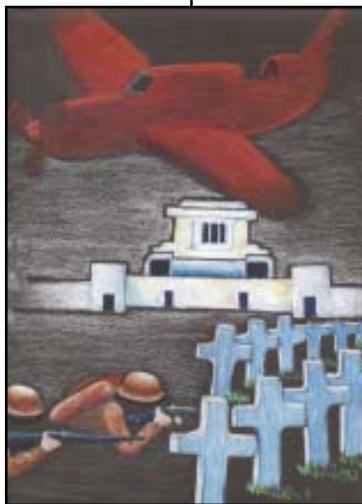
By James Sarayiotos

On May 29th, 2004, over six million people attended the dedication of our new National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC. This memorial honors the 16.1 million men and women who served. Since then, its design and structure have been criticized by some as lacking the elegance befitting such a major monument. As well intended these judgments may be, I believe they lose sight of the overarching significance of its symbolic message: the eternal remembrance of their sacrifices.

Let us look beyond the material aspect of the granite and bronze and reflect, instead, on its ineffable and immortal symbolism: the remembrance of the veterans of the *Greatest Generation* who served and the 405,000 who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. 1,056 veterans are dying every day. But, it is still not too late for many Millbrook High School students to ask their grandparents about their World War II experiences and chronicle them in their family archives.

No expression better captures the sentiments of such remembrance than the *Eulogy of Pericles* in 431 BC honoring the Athenian dead of the Peloponnesian War. Though recited in the fifth century BC, the ideals so eloquently expressed are as applica-

ble today as they were then. Imagine if Pericles had given his oration at the dedication in Washington, reminding us that eternal remembrance of their sacrifices is the noblest of shrines:



Drawing by Jamie Pilley

...So died these men as became Americans. And you, their survivors, must yourselves realize the blessings of America till love of her fills your hearts; and then when all her greatness breaks upon you, you must reflect that it was by courage, sense of duty, and a keen feeling of honor that men were enabled to win all this as the most glorious contributions they could offer. For this offspring of their lives by them all, became a sepulchre and the noblest of shrines, where in his glory is laid up to be eternally remembered. For the entire earth is the sepulchre of fallen heroes.

So, when we gaze upon this magnificent memorial, let us reflect upon its truest meaning: America's eternal expression of its appreciation and sorrow.

Sgt. James C. Sarayiotos served under Gen. George S. Patton in the Sixth Armored Division, Third Army ETO, 1942-1945. He has been a member of the Bridges Advisory Board since 1999.



Understanding My Father

By Chelsea Tucker

When you ask my classmates why they signed up for *LOV/RIR*, they respond, “I like controversial subjects!” or “I want to meet people who *were there!*” or “My friend took this class and really enjoyed it!” I have a more personal reason. My father is a Vietnam Veteran, and he has never spoken openly with me about his experience as a soldier. I am hoping to learn more about the Vietnam War, so that I will be able to know what questions to ask him.

Recently, we were asked to interview someone who lived through the Vietnam Era. I decided to interview my father. That was the first time I actually talked with him about the conflict. It was also the first time we had a truly serious conversation. As he let his emotions flow, I saw a side of my father that I had never seen before. I asked him how he felt about my taking this class. He is a man of few words, but he says a lot with those few words—and the look in his eyes said even more. At first, he seemed surprised that I chose to take *LOV*, but he is very glad to see me take an interest in a big part of his life.

I hope that my father decides to go on our *LOV* field trip to Washington, D.C. in the spring. I want to be with him as he sees and touches The Wall for the very first time. I want to talk with him about his thoughts, emotions, and his dreams. I have no doubt *Lessons of Vietnam* is going to be an important experience in my life—one which will tighten the bond between a father who fought in the war and a daughter hoping to learn more about it.

Lessons from the Cold War

By Claudia Ortiz

In our *LOV/RIR* class, we learn a great deal about the history surrounding the Vietnam War. To help each other better understand the Cold War Era, each student was given an opportunity to choose a related topic to teach the class. Several project topics were presented, such as: the Domino Theory, the FBI, the Rosenberg Trial, the CIA, the Cuban Missile Crisis, McCarthyism, and the U-2 Incident. Creative posters and power points supported these informative presentations. At the end of each presentation, each group quizzed the class. This gave us an opportunity to make sure that we all understood the topic well enough as we go deeper into our study of the Vietnam Era. Cham Nguyen and Aaron Rubio did an excellent presentation on the Chinese Revolution, a subject many of us knew little about. Bryant Lewis and Claudia Ortiz taught the class about the FBI—then and now. James Bawden and Caitlin Blackerby did an interesting presentation on the controversial Rosenberg Trial.

These Cold War projects helped *LOV* classmates build respect for each other. Enthusiasm and teamwork seem to be growing every day in this unique learning environment!



Cham and Aaron present the Chinese Revolution to *LOV/RIR* students.

Time to Get Past the Vietnam War?

By Kathryn Stell

Senator John Kerry and President George W. Bush both attended elite New England prep schools and Yale University before beginning public service careers. But the two year difference in their ages make a big difference relative to their Vietnam War Era experiences.

Kerry graduated from Yale in 1966 as the U.S. was escalating its involvement in Vietnam. He, like most young men then, joined the military, soon requesting assignment in Vietnam. Some of his crew members call him brave for doing so; others feel he was motivated by a future political career. Author Larry Heineman suggests it doesn't matter as, when push came to shove, Kerry chose to fight, earning three Purple Hearts. Returning to the U.S. in 1970, Kerry joined *Vietnam Veterans Against the War*. Heineman observed, “John Kerry wasn't the only veteran to come back from the war spiritually exhausted and morally outraged—ready, willing and able to denounce his own government for its conduct of the war.” Kerry testified against the war before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He later ran for Congress, winning a seat from Massachusetts. In running for president, Kerry has emphasized his Vietnam War experience to present himself as a balanced candidate. As Todd S. Purdum has said, “Because he has struggled to define how he would use American power, Mr. Kerry counted on his Vietnam service to prove his standing as a soldier-patriot, and his Vietnam protest to show his willingness to question well-intended policies gone bad.”

When George W. Bush graduated from Yale in 1968, anti-war protests were underway, and fewer young men were

joining the military. Bush served in the Texas Air National Guard. His current critics attack him for having used family connections to get into the National Guard during the Vietnam War, and then allege that he skipped duty. However, it is clear Mr. Bush learned how to fly, and was not required to go to Vietnam, although he applied for a program



Photo by CNN.com

which would have allowed him to do so—but was rejected due a lack of training familiarity with the types of aircraft being flown there. In 1972, he transferred to the Alabama National Guard to work on the campaign of a family friend. Critics again allege payroll records indicate he failed to complete his drills there in 1972, although White House spokesman Trent Duffy claims Bush kept his service commitments, or he would not have been honorably discharged in 1973 to attend Harvard Business School. At Harvard, Bush opposed the anti-war movement. He went into the oil business after school, and later began his political career.

The Vietnam War Era experiences of these two 2004 Presidential candidates may seem irrelevant to some; however, to others, the growing similarities between our current War on Terror and the Vietnam War make it relevant. Both candidates were heavily influenced by impressions formed during the Vietnam Era. Still, the War on Terror is but one of many issues affecting this election. Many voters are tired of hearing about Vietnam and want to focus on those issues. Journalist Joseph Galloway recently commented, “Vietnam is important, but it is old business. We have today's and tomorrow's business to tend to this fall, and we and the candidates who want our votes need to get down to it without further digressions and side-shows.”

Remembering the Vietnam Era

By Caitlin Blackerby

Early in our *LOV/RIR* course, every student chooses to interview someone who has memories of the Vietnam Era. These very important questions and answers seem to ignite the first spark in our inquiring minds. Neighbors, teachers, friends, and family members all contributed to our quest in one way or another. This assignment gave us our first taste of what we will be experiencing as the semester rolls on as we meet classroom speakers and links who were directly involved in important events during this controversial era. Most of our interviewees had vivid memories of watching the news as the war progressed. Here is a compilation of their responses to some of our questions:

1. In what ways did the war affect your life?

"It affected my soul and my views. It helped me make decisions, and it helped me look at the world through the war."

–MHS Teacher

"The guilt...the tears...for the men who were not coming home, and their families...I began my journey as a liberal for social action and justice. "

– MHS Mom

"It made me grow up from a teenager to a man and showed me how others lived in the world and what we take for granted, the simple things It taught me how to survive in today's world. "

– MHS Dad

2. What lessons has it taught us?

"Not to get into another war without thinking, and that our government should only be involved in wars when it can help the entire world and prevent further bloodshed."

– MHS Mom

"That if we get involved in a war, we have to be prepared to do everything necessary."

– MHS Dad

"I don't think we've learned like we should've...We've learned that volunteer armies are stronger than the ones who were drafted."

– MHS Teacher

– MHS Grandmother

"'Fight to Win'- the value of life and reality of war and to honor our soldiers ALWAYS!"

– MHS Mom



Claudia Ortiz interviews Mrs. Gill.



Hopes and Fears at the 2004 Olympics

By Noel Balbuena and Angad Ahuja

The heart-wrenching, riveting games that many people have been anticipating the past four years have finally come and gone—the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece. Although there was widespread anticipation of the games, fear was still a factor. What kind of fear you may ask. The *threat of terrorism!*

If you watched the Games, you probably noticed the empty seats in the background. Events such as volleyball, women's water polo, gymnastics, and even popular events like swimming and basketball, failed to attract a full house, even at the birthplace of the Olympics. Athens natives tried to escape what the press called "the harsh reality of terrorism" by leaving the country for vacation.

This not only affected the fans and the games themselves, but athletes suffered. For example, many athletes chose not to display their countries' flags. This lack of patriotism was due to national rivalries. In the case of the United States, our actions in Iraq have brought us many "enemies," giving rise to anti-American sentiment. For example, pandemonium erupted at the Falero Olympic stadium during the men's preliminary round of a taekwondo match between Steve Lopez of the United States



Drawing by Samantha Wilkerson

and Raid Rasheed of Iraq. When the small but vocal supporters of the U.S. began the familiar refrain, "U-S-A," the rest of the crowd responded with a united chorus of "I-R-A-Q." After the match Lopez said, "The U.S. is the best country. It's the most powerful country and everyone's envious...Everyone always wants the United States to lose."

Another example of anti-Americanism was evident as about 2,000 demonstrators marched through the city center in the first of many protests during the Olympics, chanting slogans opposing the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Secretary of State Colin Powell, while scheduled to attend, did not do so due to "urgent responsibilities," giving rise to the speculation that the cancellation of his visit was linked to the strong protest against U.S. foreign policy.

All in all, the Athens Olympics were exciting, dramatic, and memorable. Legends were established and records broken. It was encouraging to see Iraqi athletes compete for the first time absent the fear and torture, prevalent under Saddam Hussein's rule, should they fail to win. And, athletes and Olympic enthusiasts alike were grateful that fears regarding terrorism never became reality.



...And the Death Toll Rises

By Jessie Rowley

"I don't think people realize that people are dying there," commented Rosanna Powers, a resident of Manassas, Virginia, referring to the war in Iraq. The fact of the matter is that people are dying—a lot of them at that. 1,061 Americans have died in Iraq as of October 5th, 2004. Some people believe this war may become "another Vietnam." However, after 19 months of fighting, we are nowhere near the devastating losses of that conflict. In Vietnam, 1,000 soldiers were often lost in a single month.

The war may seem thousands of miles away; that is, until one of those fallen soldiers is someone you know. North Carolina has two major military bases, Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune. It is estimated that Fort Bragg sent about 20,000 soldiers to Iraq, and Camp Lejeune sent 15,000-20,000. The National Guard and Reserves have been called up to help fight the war. This is the first time since the Korean War that the Guard and Reserves have taken such an active stance in a war—40% of the total soldiers to be exact, of which 4,000 are North Carolinians. North Carolina has lost 23 of her soldiers, about 2.4-3.7 deaths per million of her population. This may not seem too high to you. But think of it this way—North Carolina is the state with the 12th highest death rate.

The average age of the fallen soldier is 24 years, although 15 of the fallen were only 18 years old—only a few months older than the author. 23 women have died, 16 in combat, the most since World War II. About 25% of the deaths were non-combat related, including everything from heart attacks, electrocutions, suicides, and drowning.

Sadly, casualties are a factor in any war. Whose job is it to decide how many... are too many?



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

A Virtual Tour of LOV

By Chelsea Hutcherson

As a senior this year at Millbrook, I chose to take *LOV/RIR* based on my eagerness to learn about the Vietnam War and how it affects our world today. After reviewing "Ms. Poling's Page" (<http://mhs.wcpss.net/academics/poling/index/htm>) on the MHS Website and the WCPSS "Teaching Vietnam" website (www.wcpss.net/community_in_the_classroom/vietnam/), I learned a great deal about what lies ahead this semester.

The planned curriculum of this course includes many topics, including the history and culture of Vietnam, how the war was fought, and the legacy of the Vietnam Era. As if the material isn't engaging enough, the class offers so much more. One of the main attractions is the "Linking Program," an amazing interaction between students and actual living Vietnam veterans. Students are able to communicate with former soldiers, POW's, journalists, refugees, and authors. This experience gives us all a broader understanding of war and politics. One student who linked with a veteran named Bob Isenberg concluded, "Not only have I learned more about the Vietnam War than I ever thought possible, I have also learned many life lessons such as the importance of history and being an active citizen." Reading former students' impressions about *LOV* heightens our appreciation for the class.

Inviting community speakers in the classroom is a major feature of this program. Meeting different people exposes students to different viewpoints about this important historical era. Guest speakers offer insightful views and share fascinating stories with us about their lives. They often use vivid imagery and humor, and they teach lessons that encourage all of us. What could be a better way to *educate and build character* at the same time?

An absolute "must-see" on the website is the alluring archive of the *LOV* class newsletter, *Bridges*. Dating back to 2000, this amazing publication has presented students with the opportunity to write, edit, and do their own graphic design work. Articles include personal stories, editorials, artwork and poetry. Rising journalists have a chance to shine as part of the *Bridges* staff.

As this interesting website has shown, *Lessons of Vietnam* is more than a class; it is an *experience!* Although the Vietnam Era may be a difficult memory for a lot of Americans, studying its important lessons and interacting with those who lived through it is the best way I have found to get more involved in the world around me. Take this virtual tour, and I am sure you will agree!



Welcome to Bridges, 2004-2005

By Claudia Ortiz and Emily Abbott

This year's *LOV/RIR* classes are excited to present our 2004-2005 *Bridges* newsletter. It is our goal to continue discussing the lessons of Vietnam, as well as keep you updated on the latest national and international topics—particularly the war in Iraq. More interviews, student commentary, artwork, web reviews, link features, and National History Club activities will be included. We hope our readers will find our publication interesting and thought-provoking. We are proud of these dedicated writers and designers who work hard to produce *Bridges*. We are looking forward to working together to create the most memorable *Bridges* ever!

