



Bridges

THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM



The Greatest Sacrifice

By Brittany Macon

"As I looked at the faces on the Three Servicemen Statue and the Women's Memorial this morning, I could see in their eyes sorrow and pain but also pride for their country. And as I visited The Wall, I looked at what seemed to be an endless array of names, and I thought to myself...all of these people sacrificed their lives for us. They gave up their lives, their wives and girlfriends, their children, to fight in a war, a questionable war. Now...that is the greatest sacrifice."

~ Brittany Macon, April 20, 2007

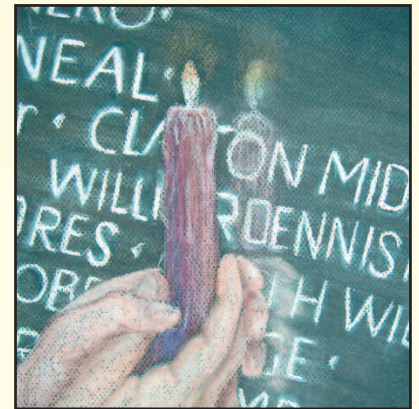
It was the last night of our incredible field trip to Washington, D.C. Our Candlelight Ceremony was led by LOV class Veteran speaker/link/chaperone, Mr. Phil Beane. This was his seventh trip to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with Millbrook High School students. We quietly assembled in a circle between the Lincoln Memorial and the Reflecting Pool holding our special "candles," which to me represented the legacy of our soldiers that still lives on.

We began our ceremony by reading the name of every North Carolina POW and MIA. After listening to Mr. Beane reflect upon

the sacrifices made by each of these men, students one-by-one entered the circle, sharing their heartfelt thoughts about the lessons of war. Patricia Riad concluded this poignant observance by singing a beautiful rendition of the last verse of the *Star Spangled Banner*.

After the ceremony, LOV student Amanda Higgins commented, "So many things were going on in my mind, especially the *value of life*. I couldn't imagine just living to age 18 and 'that's it,' like many of the boys whose names are now on The Wall. Every one of those people had family and friends who still hurt today."

Indeed, those soldiers whose names are on The Wall made the greatest sacrifice.



Artwork by Jessica Carrick



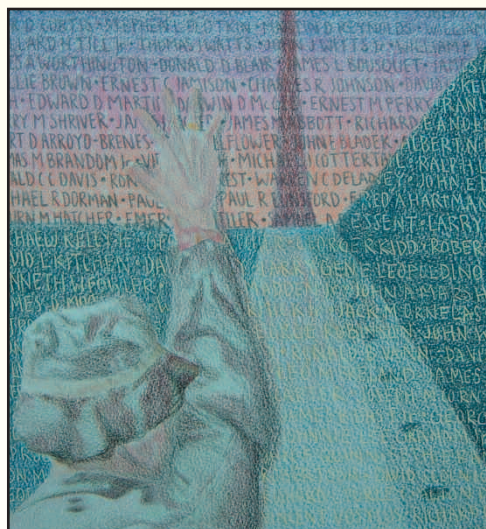
25 Years of Healing

By Patricia Riad

Reflective, black granite. Honor. Remembrance. Tears. Controversy. Embracing. Healing. These are just some of the words associated with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, often called "The Wall That Heals." It has been quite an amazing journey, as this year marks the 25th anniversary of the dedication of this memorial—once controversial but now the most visited in our Nation's Capitol. Presently, 58,256 names representing those who made the ultimate sacrifice are engraved on The Wall.

Our *Lessons of Vietnam (LOV)* class had the privilege of meeting Mr. Jan Scruggs, Founder and President of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, at the *Three Servicemen Statue* on Friday, April 20th. He slowly walked us down from the east portion to the west of The Wall, occasionally stopping to admire a letter left for a lost loved one. As we were walking, I overheard Veteran Phil Beane share with a LOV student, "When I come here, I look at the name of the first soldier who died in

my unit and then the last. Then I realize that any of those names in between could have been me." That moment is when the power of The Wall impacted me the most.



Artwork by Kristen Yakamovich

This beautiful structure, designed by Ms. Maya Lin, holds the souls of those who never had the opportunity to be appreciated by the country they bravely served. When a veteran places his hand on The Wall, it is almost as if the energy from those lost souls transfers to him. I saw many veterans at The Wall, some with tears in their eyes, and I witnessed its immense healing power.

General George Price, who visited our LOV classes on May 7th, reflected on his passionate support of The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, "I wanted the 10½ million people who served during that era to be recognized. It is a tribute to them. People can go and reconcile themselves with this period in history."

Twenty-five years later, the healing continues...



Two Perspectives: The War in Iraq

By Michael Funderburk

War is never popular. However, when faced with an unpromising enemy seeking to destroy our way of life, we are left with few options. It was necessary to go to war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it is even more important we win both.

After four years of seemingly little progress in Iraq, President Bush decided to increase the number of troops serving there. While some critics feel he did not heed the advice of the bi-partisan Iraq Study Group (ISG), that group actually did support a troop increase. President Bush initiated that part of the plan—the surge—which, thus far, has been successful.

Earlier this year, the Commander-in-Chief decided to increase troop levels by more than 20,000 to enable our military to clear insurgents out of certain areas of Baghdad and keep local residents both safe and secure. Prior to the troop surge, operational plans in Iraq involved more of an insurgent-clearing operation, after which U.S. forces would depart. If the U.S. held to that strategy, it would have been difficult to establish a stable democracy as whenever U.S. forces departed an area, insurgent forces reoccupied it. General David Petraeus is now leading the military in a new direction. The streets of Baghdad are reportedly becoming safer, Iraqi police forces are becoming more proficient, and even Muqtada al-Sadr's insurgent forces are waning.

While 60% of Americans favor a timetable for withdrawing U.S. troops, this majority is influenced by a media that seems adverse to reporting good news. When things go wrong in Iraq, the American public is bombarded with negative media reports. But recent indications that the situation is, for the first time, looking somewhat optimistic are rarely reported.

Now that America has a more workable strategy to win this war, it is time for Americans to pull together to support our troops. Should we lose Iraq now, it will not be due to a failure of the American military but a failure of American will.



By Antony Burton

Thomas Jefferson once said, “An association of men who will not quarrel with one another is a thing which has never yet existed, from the greatest confederacy of nations down to a town meeting or a vestry.” Perhaps it is unreasonable for us to propose that Iraq will become a place of *total* peace. But the goal of our occupation is to make Iraq a



Artwork by Kayleigh Schnackel

place where disagreements are settled not through violence, but reasonably, through effective communication. This is going to be a painfully slow process; one which will not only demand the patience of our generation but our children's generation as well. America's greatest challenge in this war is keeping the faith to fight for a cause perceived to have little immediate consequence for most Americans.

Today, nearly two-thirds of Americans feel that the recent “surge” of troops has either “not made much of a difference or has actually made the situation worse.” This negative perception exists in spite of positive reports from the White House. In this battle of perception, the recent decision by British Prime Minister Tony Blair to begin withdrawing troops from Iraq has not made a positive contribution, as many Americans see it as detrimental to our efforts—not militarily, but in the sense that America will be losing its closest ally.

A recent Gallup poll revealed 53% of Americans believe “the insurgents in Iraq will step up their attacks and Iraqi security forces will be unable to make the city secure,” while only 36% say the security forces will be able to keep the situation in Baghdad largely under control. This is a very interesting statistic when one considers that 60% of Americans are in favor of a

timetable for withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq by fall, 2008. This glaring inconsistency reveals apathy by many Americans towards the overall well-being of the Iraqi people. In short, most Americans do not believe the reconstruction of Iraq is worth the American lives it will cost in order to be successful.

President George W. Bush is already losing the war of perception—a war which may largely dictate the outcome of the Iraq War itself.

Students Speak Out on Iraq—2007

- “Looking back on WWI and WWII...We need to be engaged at full force until the opposition is suppressed and stay engaged until we accomplish this goal.” ~Ryan Jones
- “I believe the war in Iraq is turning into a mess and we should not be there. There are plenty of problems within the borders of our own country and a HUGE National Debt.” ~Eric Carstens
- “We must help other nations live in a way in which all the people have the freedom of their own actions and beliefs without the fear of the government controlling their lives.” ~Amanda Higgins
- “These soldiers are fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles; so even if you oppose the war, support our troops...our family.” ~Andrew Frasch
- “Iraq was supposed to be a war to stop terrorism, but it seems that terrorism is only increasing.” ~Mae Olorvida
- “A lot of us base our opinions of the war on the media. All we hear about is a new protest and more deaths. Maybe the next time we think about war, we should ask the people we intend to help, not the ones in front of a camera.” ~Zac Walker



Artwork by Mae Olorvida

A PRISONER'S STRUGGLE

*Light shining brightly on my face,
Every breath fresher than the one before,
Rough hands turned soft as they carry me.
Thoughts linger in my mind, "Am I still alive?"
One part of me wants to die,
The other wants to survive to tell this tale.
Still not sure of my being, I turn,
Blue eyes I meet.
"You're fine, old man. You're going home."
I close my eyes, and for once, I let myself smile.*

~By Mae Olorvida

A Very Special Gift

By Eric Carstens

Several months ago, *Lessons of Vietnam (LOV)* teacher Ms. Lindy Poling was contacted by three very special Missouri teachers—Mr. Dan Wright, Dr. Fran Reynolds and Mr. Bob Burns. The trio, along with Ms. Poling, shared a common bond. For about ten years, they had also been teaching a course at Rock Bridge High School in Columbia, Missouri quite similar to Millbrook High School's *LOV* class.

It all started when Mr. Wright found himself teaching a unit on the Vietnam War in his U.S. History class in the late 70s. He decided to consult with fellow teacher Bob Burns about his approach to this controversial era. Both men were Vietnam veterans. Mr. Wright and Mr. Burns subsequently approached their administration in the early 80s about teaching an elective that would focus solely on Vietnam, but they were told their idea was "too politically sensitive." After almost ten years of trying, the duo finally received approval for their special course. They decided to confer with Dr. Fran Reynolds, a reading and writing specialist who had a broad knowledge of literature, as well as her own personal experience from the Vietnam War. During that era, she had been a social activist in California. The three joined forces, developing an extremely popular curriculum that enabled them to share a wide range of views on the subject matter with their students. Mr. Wright commented, "Students discovered the joy of learning without the goal of a grade. They learned there was

freedom in the quest for knowledge." This is a philosophy shared by our teacher, Ms. Poling.

The Missouri trio had built quite an extensive library relating to Vietnam and wanted their legacy to continue on after their course at Rock Bridge HS ended. For five years, dozens of boxes of books and curriculum materials sat in Mr. Wright's garage. One day, this retired teacher was searching the internet and came across the *Ms. Poling's Classes* web page on the Millbrook High School

website. Impressed with what he saw and following a 90-minute phone conversation with Ms. Poling, the Missouri teacher and his colleagues were positive her classroom was the appropriate home for their wonderful collection.

A few weeks later, ten large boxes of books arrived at Millbrook HS! With an addition of approximately 200 new resources added to Ms. Poling's library, *LOV* students now have many more choices for their book review assignments. And, when we finish, we can always choose another book to read!

Thank you, Mr. Wright, Dr. Reynolds, and Mr. Burns! Due to your kindness and generosity, your legacy will continue through the knowledge gained by MHS *LOV* students for years to come.

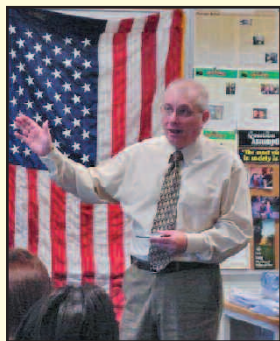
Editor's Note: *Mr. Dan Wright and Dr. Fran Reynolds are serving as new pen pal links this semester. Welcome to our Lessons of Vietnam Program!*



Artwork by Jessica Carrick

Teaching the Next Generation

By Michael Zurawel



Mr. Jack Field

meaning behind the pictures.”

Every *Community-in-the-Classroom (CIC)* speaker has a standout quality. They make history *come to life*, and students can then make a connection on a personal level. The main dynamic that makes all of Ms. Poling’s guest speakers so effective is their *passion*. She finds individuals like Mr. Field who have been passionate about their subject since elementary school—and don’t mind taking a vacation day from work to come to MHS each semester. And, to Mr. Jack Field and all of our wonderful *CIC* speakers we say, “Thank you for taking time out of your busy lives to enlighten and inspire the next generation!”

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Websites:

www.wcpss.net/community_in_the_classroom
<http://mhs.wcpss.net/academics/poling/index.htm>
<http://www.nationalhistoryclub.org>



Genocide—Never Again?

By Emma Mazur

The genocide in Darfur, Sudan, is a catastrophe that seems to defy a near-term solution. It is important that young Americans try to do what we can to affect an end to the systematic killing of innocent Darfurians by their own government. This tragedy has now entered its fifth year, still with no solution in sight. The Sudanese government makes and breaks peace agreements and cease-fires, enabling the *Janjaweed* to keep on killing as it shields this brutal militia from international intervention. Sadly, it has taken the deaths of an estimated 450,000 civilians for some in the international community to finally acknowledge that *genocide* is taking place in Darfur.

Having visited the Holocaust Museum during our Washington, DC field trip, I can only hope the world community acts more quickly in Darfur to protect civilians than it did to prevent the Holocaust. Six million European Jews died during World War II as part of a program of deliberate extermination planned and executed by Nazi Germany. While the world promised “never again,” sixty years later, “again” has arrived. Will the lessons of the Holocaust never be learned?

Last month, a week-long global initiative known as *Global Days for Darfur* sought to call attention to the escalating violence there, but failed to trigger any kind of response to this crisis. Rallies, marches, and vigils were held. One highlighted event took place in New York City where hundreds of activists demanded Fidelity Investments, the largest holder on New York Stock Exchange of the Chinese oil company PetroChina (PTR), divest its funds from Sudan-related investments. By doing business in Sudan, PTR has become one of the biggest contributors in funding the genocide there, as approximately 70% of Sudan’s oil revenue goes to its military. The NYC event was one of more than 382 held in 273 cities within the U.S. alone.

To make our own voices heard, on May 22nd, 2007, the *Darfur Awareness Club* at Millbrook HS will host an event called the *Darfur Awareness Leadership Forum*. This event, funded by the North Carolina Holocaust Council, seeks to educate local high school students about the critical situation in Darfur. The Forum will suggest ways students can help, providing them with the tools to return to their own high schools to build their own similar clubs.

As President John F. Kennedy once said, “The greatest danger of all would be to do nothing!”



MHS LOV Class Field Trip—Washington, DC—2007