

MILLBROOK HIGH SCHOOL  
RALEIGH, NC

SPECIAL EDITION: 2009



# Bridges

## THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM



### Vietghanistan?

By Andy Chenlo

To many, it is one of the most devastating events in American history. To others, it was a necessary sacrifice in order to prevent Communism from reaching our shores. However, almost everyone would agree that the Vietnam War is not something we want to see repeated. Yet, as the Obama Administration takes on one of its biggest challenges—the complex war in Afghanistan—the two are beginning to look disturbingly familiar.

The Vietnam War began in the 1960s, pitting North and South Vietnamese communists, supported by Russia and China, against the government of South Vietnam, assisted by the United States and fellow SEATO members. More than 58,000 American soldiers died in action; and estimates are two to three million North Vietnamese/Vietcong soldiers and Vietnamese civilians lost their lives.

The war in Afghanistan started as a direct result of Al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks against the U.S. Our invasion of the Taliban-run nation began on October 7, 2001, with strong support from Great Britain. As of May 1, 2009, 682 American soldiers have died there; unofficial estimates are that 2,118 Afghan civilians were killed in 2008 alone. Although the numbers have been drastically reduced, comparisons to Vietnam remain.

We want to believe every war has specific objectives. But, just as in Vietnam, there remains no general consensus by what measure victory will be defined in Afghanistan. Some Vietnam War supporters believe victory was achieved, as the 'Domino Theory' failed to become a reality. Detractors would disagree, pointing out that it is the Communist flag which flies over Hanoi today.

How then should success in Afghanistan be measured? Supporters of the Bush Administration would argue there have been no terrorist attacks on U.S. soil since 9/11 due to an aggressive strategy that has kept the war in the Middle East. However, this measure of 'victory' is not satisfactory to others. In Iraq and Afghanistan, over 5,000 American troops have lost their



Artwork by Zach Smithson

lives, alongside approximately 300,000 local casualties. Critics feel far more pressing matters are at hand, including a slumping economy and a U.S. international reputation in need of repair.

Both Vietnam and Afghanistan was/is an unconventional war. In Vietnam, an innocent-looking, local Vietnamese boy who befriended U.S. troops by day could transform into a resourceful Vietcong guerilla at night, determined to kill young Americans. The war in Afghanistan is strikingly similar. According to Vietnam Veteran and WTVD News anchorman, Larry Stogner, who visited Afghanistan in 2003, "This is not a conventional war between two armies wearing two different colored uniforms. You walk around in Afghanistan and you cannot tell the difference between an extremist

Al-Qaeda member and the town baker. That is exactly what happened with the Vietcong." While American troops continue to try to differentiate friend from foe, a new approach seems to be developing. In the valley of Loi Kolay, regularly held meetings take place between U.S. troops and tribal elders to discuss their town's weekly events. This often leads to a positive and encouraging attitude from the locals. "If we can reach a point where the villagers want to work with us and the Taliban are the only thing stopping them, that's success," according to Company Commander Captain James Howell. (*TIME Magazine*, 4/20/09)

As in Vietnam, U.S. troops in Afghanistan find themselves fighting in an unfamiliar and inhospitable terrain. Similarly as in Vietnam, U.S. troops, equipped with the most advanced technology, again find themselves being countered with homemade bombs and clever ambushes. Finally, it is worth noting as we strive for victory in Afghanistan, the Vietnamese, in defeating the U.S., and the Afghans, in defeating the Soviets (1979-1989), already boast a "superpower notch" in their belt.

Comparisons are never exact. Yet, as we look to the future, we cannot help but fear what was and what could be again. As we gaze into our Afghanistan mirror, we must ask if it is Vietnam we see gazing back.

### Students and Links in Action



Dan (l) and Cotter (r) meet their links, Col. Bill Mayall and Mr. Dave Rabadan.



WWII Veteran H.T. Conner shares a story with Tory after class.



Samantha makes a special rubbing of a name on The Wall.



MHS '97 grad, Sgt. Chris Keon, discusses the war in Afghanistan with Zack.



## On the Other Side of North Korea's Ballistic Missile

By Chantelle Martin

The firing of a ballistic missile by North Korea on April 5, 2009 has created controversy and tension around the world. North Korea's announcement about the test-firing occurred several days after Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and South Korea's foreign minister, Yu Myung-Hwan, advised the Asian nation not to do so. By conducting the launch, North Korea has violated United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718. This resolution was adopted in 2006 in response to North Korea's claimed nuclear test on October 9, 2006. It states that North Korea can no longer test or launch ballistic missiles and must suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile program. Additionally, Pyongyang must abandon its existing nuclear weapons program.

Before this recent missile launch, the six-nation nuclear disarmament talks were making minimal progress. North Korea had agreed to shut down its nuclear facilities in replacement for food and stabilizing relations with Japan and the U.S. Now, however, North Korea has negated its original agreement and plans to rebuild a nuclear facility at Yongbyon.

In reaction to Pyongyang's violations, the U.N. is proposing financial sanctions on eleven North Korean companies allegedly involved in trading ballistic missile technology. Many critics of financial sanctions against North Korea are skeptical as the U.S. has previously caved in on Pyongyang's demands to release assets frozen under the sanctions in hopes disarmament talks would be continued. Meanwhile, North Korea has now thrown international inspectors out of the country to prevent monitoring of its activities related to restarting its nuclear facility—while threatening to exit the disarmament talks.

Sadly, with foreign food assistance rejected by Pyongyang despite massive food shortages in the country, the only thing North Korea's leadership is determined to feed is its nuclear weapons program.



Artwork by Lizz Alfano

## An Economic Tsunami

By Nick Orban

The U.S. is in a recession the likes of which have not been seen for quite some time. In fact, the whole world is witnessing an increase in unemployment, a decrease in spending, and a downward spiral in consumer confidence.

It began in the fall of 2007 with early signs an economic crisis was coming. Within a year, the rest of the world was similarly affected. Global stock markets fell—among them the big three: the New York, London and Hong Kong Stock Exchanges. A major impact on stocks occurred with government intervention in companies, such as Bank of America and AIG.

And, just like government intervention, bailouts have become a big part of the global economic crisis.

While the U.S. is not the only country to help struggling corporations, its bailouts have been the largest, totaling \$9.7 trillion. Comparatively, the entire value of U.S. mortgages is valued at \$10.5 trillion. The UK and the "Euro Zone" have given bailouts equivalent to \$1.4 trillion and \$900 billion, respectively.

Asia is an area of particular interest in this economic crisis. Unlike the West, Asian countries have not had a sub-prime mortgage crisis. Many Asian nations, in fact, have recently experienced rapid growth. This has led to increased foreign investment in the region, mostly from the Western world. But, as we well know, one country's economy is closely interconnected with the rest of the world community. Thus, Asian countries are starting to suffer. Many countries' currencies are depreciating. Because of the economic downturn, international spending is down, which means Asian economies, relying heavily on exports, feel the effects as well.

The U.S. may be one of the hardest hit countries in the world. Consumer confidence is at 25 points—the lowest since it was instituted in 1967. Unemployment is at its highest rate since 1981. Total job losses have hit over 4 million, including 2.6 million in just the last four months.

This economic tsunami, sweeping across the globe, has given everyone a reason to worry. But, there may be hope. Federal Reserve officials predict the U.S. may be out of its recession by the end of this summer. If so, the rest of the world community, hopefully, will regain confidence as it witnesses the beginning of the economic tsunami's ebb.



Artwork by Lizz Alfano

## How LOV Changed My Life

By Susan Woodson, MHS LOV Class, 2003

Almost six years ago, I graduated from Millbrook High School. I never pictured myself coming back to speak to Ms. Poling's LOV/RIR students and telling them how this class led me to where I am today.

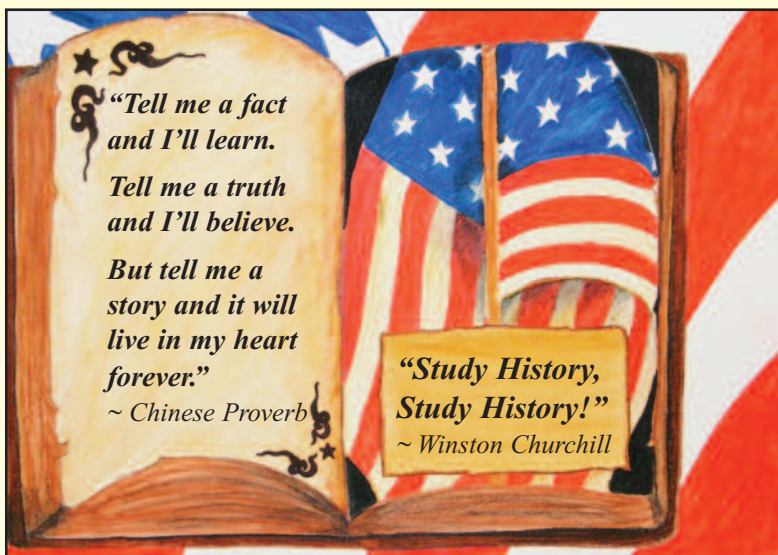
Following high school, I attended N.C. State University. Due to my *Lessons of Vietnam* class, I had become interested in the Vietnam War, so I majored in History and pursued minors in French and International Studies. During my undergraduate years, I studied abroad in France which led me to appreciate the beauty of Europe and inspired me to visit Vietnam.

After completing my degree in 2007, I chose to stay at N.C. State and pursue a Masters Degree in International Studies, focusing on Southeast Asia. I decided that I would go to Vietnam in the summer of 2008, no matter what obstacles I might confront. During my first year of graduate school, I searched and found an internship with the Institute of International Education. I was given the opportunity to intern in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam for two months!

So, last May, I traveled to Vietnam—excited and anxious. As part of

my internship, I worked with a Vietnamese staff, advised Vietnamese students on U.S. higher education, gave presentations about U.S. culture, and gave a Pre-Departure Orientation to Vietnamese students. It was an amazing experience, and led me to pursue the field of International Education. I also traveled throughout this beautiful country and visited Can Tho, Hoi An, Nha Trang, Hanoi, Halong Bay, and Sapa. The best part of my summer experience was forming close friendships. In July 2008, I returned home, but I told my new friends I would definitely be back.

When Ms. Poling asked me to come back and speak to her LOV/RIR classes, I enthusiastically agreed. After reading her students' reflective letters, I realized I had made an impact far beyond just sharing my journey. I never thought my visit would make a difference regarding the perceptions these students had about today's Vietnam. I also never thought my presentation would make a difference in their understanding of future career possibilities. But it did. I hope LOV/RIR students realize that one class like this can change their lives forever!



Artwork by Ceci Martinez

## Life Book

By Ceci Martinez

*Hatred and racism were destroying our country,  
The enemy didn't care back in Vietnam.  
They didn't care where you came from,  
But still young men would go,  
Not knowing if death might come fast or slow.  
Seeing things that people wished they would never see,  
At the same time wondering and thinking,  
"Could the next one be me?"  
This is the risk you took,  
Not knowing you were writing pages of your  
life's book.  
This is the legacy that you have shared with me,  
You opened my eyes to a war I truly see.*

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A tribute to my link, Veteran Chuck Abbott



## LOV Finds "Missing Link"

By Ashley Honeycutt

Ms. Lindy Poling sensed something was missing in teaching the history of the Vietnam War. She wanted to bring history alive for her students, but found a "missing link" existed. So, in developing her *Lessons of Vietnam (LOV)* curriculum, she sought to "link" an older generation of Americans, whose experiences were closely tied to the Vietnam War Era, with students taking her course.

In addition to meaningful historical study, the *LOV* course provides a source of personal enrichment by learning through the insights of an older generation's experiences. Not only touching the hearts of *LOV* students, the linking program provides mentoring veterans a chance to share parts of their lives with students eager to hear their stories. Veteran link Bob Gray said, "Linking has given me an opportunity to pass along my feelings to a younger generation in hopes they will better be able to understand why I/we were involved in Vietnam."

The linking process has naturally evolved over the years. It began as an assignment for students to personally interview a local Vietnam Veteran. But, as the class's popularity grew, Ms. Poling had to find additional links for her students. So, in 2000, with the help of her good friend, Vice Admiral Emmett Tidd, she began connecting students and veterans through e-mails. "Vice Admiral Tidd helped me find amazing people from all over the world who have turned out to be incredible pen pal links for my students!" she said. Once the course added the *Recent International Relations* component in 2003, Ms. Poling brought in links who have been involved with the *War on Terror*. Today, she has about fifty links in the program whose experiences involve Vietnam, the first Gulf War, Iraq, or Afghanistan, among whom are five former students.

But what does linking really mean to those involved? When asked, several Veteran links shared that the linking program has given them a chance to think through their feelings regarding their participation in an unpopular war and bridge the generation gap. Veteran link, Dan Sheehan, commented, "In order to answer questions accurately, I had to think and study. And, the students' wide-ranging and penetrating questions really make me work."

Most Veteran links also said this experience allowed them to remember things about the war they had previously forgotten. Veteran Ken Delfino, who has had a dozen student links since 2003, added, "Every link I have had has opened yet another door to a room of memories that had been locked."

I originally thought *LOV* students learned the most from the linking experience, but I was delighted to find that many of our Veteran links feel they have learned a lot, too! Lt. Col. Jim Zumwalt, who has been a link since 2001, said, "I find myself sometimes playing the role of teacher and sometimes playing the role of student..." I asked these links what they had learned about high school students, and the response was almost unanimous—they have learned we are not at all what the media portrays us to be! Col. Bill Mayall was especially complimentary: "I have been so impressed with the students' intellectual curiosity and their sophisticated grasp of geo-political events, as well as their interest and commitment to important global events that matter."

It is amazing how much these student/Veteran pen pal links come to appreciate each other. Exemplary citizens share with students their experiences about life, history—and issues that really matter. *LOV* students feel extremely privileged to have so many people from earlier generations willing to take the time to respond to our continuous questions. And, as Dr. Ric Vandett pointed out, Veteran links appreciate us just as much as we appreciate them. "None of us returned from Vietnam asking to be made to feel special, but we did want to be appreciated for serving our country," said Dr. Vandett. "Ms. Poling and the students of the *LOV* classes have gone out of their way to make us all feel appreciated and my sincere and humble 'thanks' go to you all."

On behalf of *Lessons of Vietnam* students and their teacher, I'd like to say, "Thank you—and welcome home!"



Dr. Ric Vandett and Aly King  
continue their classroom discussion about  
the *Lessons of Vietnam*.





## A Special Thank You



*Veteran Philip Beane*

Dear Mr. Beane,

Thank you for joining our Lessons of Vietnam class on our Washington, DC field trip for the ninth time! It was a spectacular experience! You have made a tremendous difference by sharing your life story and expertise to younger generations so that we may learn important lessons from events which have had a huge impact on our society.

It was very touching to hear we were at The Wall on the anniversary of the day some of your friends in your platoon were killed. This made the experience of rubbing names much more real. Listening to your remarks and those of my classmates during our Candlelight Ceremony made me realize how much this class and this trip have affected us all.

I believe we were all put on this earth for a reason, and maybe your reason is to enlighten, motivate, and encourage high school students to learn all that we can...to experience life and to live with no regrets.

Thank you for serving our country. You will never be forgotten.

Sincerely,

Sara Mang and the MHS Lessons of Vietnam Students

## LOV Teacher Receives Leadership Award

By Karissa Wojcik



LOV teacher, Ms. Lindy Poling, received the WCPSS Exemplary High School Social Studies Leadership Award on May 6th, 2009. In her presentation, Senior Administrator Melinda Stephani highlighted Ms. Poling's local, state, and national contributions to the field of social studies—including her *Lessons of Vietnam* Program. Congratulations, Ms. Poling!

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## Point of View: Plausible Peace?

By Michelle Goldenberg

The fragile six-month ceasefire between Israel and Gaza ended on December 19, 2008 with an eruption of rockets fired from the Gaza strip into Israeli communities. The militant Hamas party/terrorist organization controls the Gaza Strip and won a democratic election into office in 2006. At present, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton refuses to work with Hamas until it recognizes Israel as an established state. She also sees a two-state solution in the future. This may be feasible, but creating two states will not settle the deeply rooted animosity between the two cultures. This conflict dates back to British occupation of Arab land during the end of the 19th century. Before Israel was even established, plans for two states in modern day Israel were being considered, with Jerusalem serving as a dual capital. The land distribution was completely misconstrued, because each side wanted very specific pieces of land that did not abide by a clear division line.

If a two-state solution will not work, then what? Israel has already annexed the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to create Palestinian settlements, and yet this conflict is as potentially disruptive as ever. Establishing borders and checkpoints only creates the illusion of safety or peace, while the real war—one of ideology—rages. Not only do Islamic fundamentalists not want a Jewish state to exist, they refuse to even recognize Israel. Spending an extended amount of time in Israel last summer gave me the opportunity to speak with Palestinian and Israeli civilians alike. I now better understand the complexity of the situation. For the most part, Palestinians and Israelis both want peace. Collectively, they are tired of losing family, friends, and their homes. The majority of the hatred between the two cultures is fostered by extremist groups on each side. Neither desires a solution. Palestinians want to rid the world of the Jewish people, and Israelis want Palestinians to leave and establish themselves in another Arab nation.

People may need to stop thinking about common sense solutions, because none exist. Both sides have diametrically opposed ideologies. This is not unlike America's main political parties. Both have extremely different viewpoints. While they may be able to agree on certain issues, their core philosophies will never change. The same is true for the Israelis and Palestinians. However, unlike America's political parties, neither of these groups will be content until the other ceases to exist.



*Artwork by Bridgette Williamson*



*MHS LOV Class Field Trip—Washington, DC—2009*