



Bridges

THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM



A Tribute to a Lifelong Teacher

By Lauren Brand



Ms. Poling and I
working on Bridges!

For the past two years, I have had the pleasure of working closely with Ms. Lindy Poling, as I have edited and graphically designed the *Lessons of Vietnam* Program's *Bridges* Newsletter. Almost immediately, I learned how special she is to her students and how many lives she positively impacts. During my junior year, I was quick to realize that I could not leave Millbrook High School without enrolling in her *LOV* class. I was glad I did.

Fifteen years ago, Ms. Poling embarked on a dream, which included an educational study tour in Vietnam, to start a program to educate my generation on the importance of the Vietnam Era. Her dream soon became a reality, and the MHS *Lessons of Vietnam* course, nicknamed *LOV*, has far exceeded all expectations. Now, 28 semesters later, Ms. Poling is transitioning to the next chapter in her life... retirement.

Ms. Poling skillfully uses her *Community in the Classroom* approach to support the *LOV* curriculum. By inviting guest speakers into her classroom and linking each student with someone who has a firsthand experience of the Vietnam Era or the War on Terror, she brings history to life—allowing students to be exposed to personal accounts, something a textbook could never do. These lessons last a lifetime; and while they leave a distinct impression on the students, these interactions, for many of these veterans, serve as a way to heal and come to grips with their own feelings about the Vietnam War and war today.

Ms. Poling's teaching contributions over the past 35 years have not gone unrecognized. She was most recently honored as 2010-2011 *National History Club Advisor of the Year* and has received numerous accolades on the school, county, state, and national levels.

This past May, General George Price came to visit her *LOV* students for his twenty-seventh time. One of the very first statements he made was, "Ms. Poling is just super! She has devoted so much time to you, and cares so much

about you." A long time *LOV* link and speaker, Larry Stogner of *ABC11 News*, commented, "I've never met a teacher with more passion for her subject and her students. Only Ms. Poling could have kept me coming back for more than 12 years. And I have enjoyed every minute of it!" Captain Sean Keenan, USMC, MHS Class of 1992, submitted, "Ms. Poling possesses the uncanny ability to inspire even the least motivated students with an energy that changes lives!" And Kate Phillips, MHS *LOV* Class of 2000, added, "I am excited to be teaching *LOV* at Fuquay-Varina High School. I hope to teach my students how the lessons of the Vietnam War still apply today." My Veteran link, Lt. Col. Jim Zumwalt, sums up Ms. Poling's impact on her students perfectly: "When one casts a stone into a pond, it creates a ripple effect that changes the character of the shoreline. Similarly, in teaching the *LOV* class, Lindy Poling—by casting stones of knowledge into the Millbrook 'pond'—has changed the character of the students she has taught over the years."

Ms. Poling has also influenced others on a national level due to her association with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and the National History Club (NHC). NHC Executive Director, Bob Nasson reflected, "Lindy has served on our Advisory Board for five years, and she's always been a great source of advice...

she has had a strong impact on other history teachers and clubs across the country."

And then there is *Bridges*! What started as a fledgling publication in 1999 has become an internationally recognized newsletter—something of which all *Bridges* staff members—past and present—can be very proud.

I am blessed to have been taught by Ms. Lindy Poling. She has helped me discover my passion for journalism, and has inspired me to live a life focused on caring for others. Ms. Poling says that she "will miss her wonderful students the most" when she retires. During her retirement, she plans to travel, continue developing history-related curricula, and hopefully, write a book about her teaching experiences. All who know this lifelong educator are extremely grateful for all that she has done, as she has truly "bridged" the gap between my generation and the Vietnam generation.

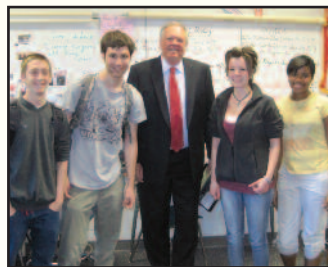


"LOV Salute" to Ms. Poling, Oct. 17, 2009
Video: <http://abclocal.go.com/wtvd/video?id=7072630>

★ ★ ★ ★ Lessons of Vietnam Students and Links in Action ★ ★ ★ ★



An incredible learning opportunity
at the U.S. Institute of Peace!



Veteran link, Mr. Larry Stogner,
poses with LOV students.



General George Price shares
his words of wisdom.



Hannah & Paris enjoy meeting
their link, Mr. Ron Worstell.

LOV Lessons

Compiled by the Bridges Newsletter Staff

For the past fourteen years, Ms. Lindy Poling has taken her *Lessons of Vietnam* students on a three-day field trip to Washington, D.C. Students are given the opportunity to dine at a Vietnamese restaurant in Georgetown and visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Holocaust Museum, Arlington National Cemetery and many other historical sites. They also participate in a Candlelight Ceremony near The Wall. Many individuals find that this trip is a true bonding experience.

At the conclusion of our field trip, students are asked to fill out a survey. One question asks, “*Did you learn any life lessons from the LOV field trip?*” Following is what MHS LOV students had to say:

- I think it is our job to keep this memory of history alive, and this is the purpose of the LOV class.
- This trip has taught me so much about myself—and respect for veterans. It is important to remember that even though the soldier leaves the war, the war never leaves the soldier.
- I will talk with my grandfather about his experiences in Vietnam. I did not know much about what he went through, or how to talk to him...Now I have a chance to change that.
- I really understand the meaning of saying “thank you” to our service members.
- I definitely learned more about our country, making me prouder to be an American.
- After watching the *Changing of the Guard*, many people came up to me to tell me that they now fully understand patriotism. To me, that was the best part of the trip.
- There are stories and lessons to be learned from every person you get to meet. Make use of every chance.
- I realized just how fortunate I am to live in this country. Freedom is not free, and I don’t think I truly realized that before.
- This trip has taught me how to be a better citizen; it taught me to be more patriotic; it taught me to be more informed; and it taught me to be more reflective of the past when considering the future.
- I learned that it is our job as future government servants to share our knowledge of the Vietnam Era, so we can affect others like this class has affected us.
- I’ve learned that no matter what our race or family background, people can come together and make amazing connections.
- I will never forget the bonds that were formed here, because for this weekend, we were not just classmates, we were a huge family.



Artwork by Sarah Anderson

LOV—A Journey Without End!

By Pamela Kass

A wise man once said, “The consequences of today are determined by the actions of yesterday.” The truth of this quote is evident when discussing the Vietnam War. Indeed, many lessons for future generations have come to pass since that day.

My grandfather, Chief Anthony Martin Voelker, Jr., proudly fought in the Korean War. After returning home to the United States, he built a life with my grandmother, having five beautiful children and sustaining a career as the Chief Police of New York City of Organized Crime Control for nearly thirty years. Through his example and lessons taught, I have always had a great respect for men and women in uniform.

My LOV experiences have only amplified my reverence for men and women in the Armed Forces. Through my LOV teacher’s enthusiasm for history and her *Community in the Classroom* methodology, my knowledge and appreciation of history have flourished.

Throughout the LOV course, I have had the honor of meeting incredible heroes from the Vietnam Era. Many were Vietnam Veterans, including an Army Ranger, a Brigadier General, a Prisoner of War, a Donut Dolly, an Army Combat Photographer, and a Lt. Colonel. I was also introduced to a Vietnamese refugee, a peace activist, and many current U.S. military personnel. These living examples of history answered many questions that history books could not.

In addition to our classroom speakers, I have had the privilege

of “linking” with a man of many titles: veteran, husband, father, college professor, and now, friend. Through my correspondence with Dr. Thomas Murray, we were able to talk about his tour of duty in Vietnam, current world issues, as well as our families, life goals, and aspirations. Words cannot describe how grateful I am to have been able to converse back and forth with my link and take away my own lessons from his wise words.

This past April, Ms. Poling, Ms. Christos, 38 LOV seniors, and four chaperones embarked on a journey to our nation’s capitol. My Aunt Maggie, who is a professional photographer, joined us in Washington, D.C. Her photos of LOV students meeting their “links” for the first time,

hearing keynote speakers at the United States Institute of Peace, and “rubbing” names on The Wall truly captured the essence of our trip. My favorite part was when students had the chance to share their LOV experiences during our Candlelight Ceremony at the base of the Lincoln Memorial.

As a result of this course and our field trip, I have gained an entirely new

perspective on my role as an American, as well as my future education plans. Inspired by Ms. Poling’s *Lessons of Vietnam* class, I plan to travel to Vietnam after college and immerse myself in the country’s history, culture, and people. Also, due to my LOV experience, I now plan to major in education and minor in History. The LOV class has truly been a journey for me—but one that has not yet ended!



MHS LOV Class Field Trip—Washington, DC—2011

A Family Circle of “LOV”

By Jordan Holmes

Lieutenant Colonel James G. Zumwalt (“Jim”) is a veteran of the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the *LOV/RIR* class. As a member of the prestigious Zumwalt family, military service runs deep in his genealogy. Starting with Jacob Zumwalt, a member of their family has fought in every war America has participated in since the American Revolutionary War.

Initially commissioned in the Navy, Lt. Col. Zumwalt served onboard the *USS Perkins* during his first tour to Vietnam in 1969. He later transferred to the Marine Corps, returning to Vietnam in 1971 as a member of a Battalion Landing Team onboard an amphibious ship. As a Marine Corps officer, then First Lieutenant Zumwalt garnered attention as his father, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., was the youngest Chief Naval Officer at age 49 to ever be appointed to that position. “I had people who were difficult to deal with because of the fact my father headed the Navy,” Lt. Col. Zumwalt said. “I also had people who went out of their way to be helpful, and people who treated me no differently.”

During the Gulf War, Lt. Col. Zumwalt’s main responsibility was processing and transporting Enemy Prisoners of War (EPW). By the third day of the war, his unit of 120 Marines had to manage over 12,000 prisoners. “It was a real security and logistical challenge, but we were well organized and able to do it very efficiently,” he said.

In 2000, this dedicated Marine made his first appearance in the *LOV* class. His visits have included topics ranging from geography quizzes on the Middle East, to sharing his experiences

in Vietnam and North Korea. Lt. Col. Zumwalt’s presentations are always engaging and interesting, combining his humorous personality with the information he gives. He recently shared with us his new book, *Bare Feet, Iron Will*, which includes interviews that he conducted with the enemy as a result of over 50 trips to Vietnam since the war ended.

We are also blessed that Lt. Col. Zumwalt’s sister, Mouzetta, visits our classroom, sharing the wonderful story and legacy of their amazing parents. Her powerful impact is reflected in a recent letter by one of my classmates: “You challenged me to think differently. You also challenged me to think about my future and what my legacy will be.”

This past fall, *LOV* students welcomed another family member to our classroom—Lt. James E. Zumwalt. He has served two tours in Iraq as a Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technician. During his first tour, he and his team responded to calls to search out Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and disarm them. The Lieutenant’s second tour was very different. He and his four-man EOD Special Operations platoon actively pursued the bombmakers. Due to technological advances, Lt. Zumwalt’s team had a substantial advantage over its enemies. This young officer’s new job at the Pentagon involves training and preparing current EOD technicians for their deployments to Afghanistan.

Lt. Zumwalt did not forgo showing us his fun and vibrant personality while relaying important information to all of us. He later shared with me that the feedback he received from speaking in our *LOV* classes, “reinforced his goal to become a junior or senior English teacher in the future!”

There is no doubt that the Zumwalts have shown an unparalleled commitment to educating future generations about our nation’s history. Thirteen years ago, Mrs. Poling introduced herself to Admiral Elmo Zumwalt at Texas Tech University’s Vietnam Center and convinced him to visit her *LOV* class. Soon after, Lt. Col. Jim Zumwalt and Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers joined her *LOV* Program. And, now Admiral Zumwalt’s grandson, James, has become a part of the tradition. To all of us, they represent an amazing family circle of “*LOV*.”



Jordan poses with the Zumwalts!

Military Service a Part of the Tidd Family’s DNA

By Elisabeth McCachren, *LOV* Class 2005, and the Bridges Staff

When I was a senior taking *Lessons of Vietnam*, I had the privilege to meet many honorable veterans from all over the country. From 1998-2006, *LOV* students were treated each semester to a special visit from Vice Admiral Emmett Tidd and his wife, “Muggs.” The Tidds continue to be strong supporters of Ms. Poling’s *LOV* program today.

Vice Admiral Tidd committed over 33 years of his life to military service for the United States Navy. He served our country in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. As Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt’s Chief of Staff and Navy Recruiting Commander, a strong bond developed between the two men.

While the Admiral was traveling the world with the U.S. Navy with long separations from the family, Mrs. Tidd was at home raising their two boys. “Muggs” jokingly told us that she kept a picture of her husband by the door and told her sons, “If a man comes to the door who looks like that, he’s your father!” After meeting this amazing lady, many students commented that they now believe the hardest job in the Navy is to be a wife and mother. Through faith and perseverance on both Tidds’ part, their marriage has survived over 60 years. And, despite Admiral Tidd’s impressive military record, he shared with us that he is *most proud* of his marriage and family.

The Tidds have become a true “Navy family.” They have been blessed

with two sons and four grandchildren. Both sons have followed in their father’s footsteps—also achieving flag rank in the Navy. The younger son, Rear Admiral Mark L. Tidd, is now serving as Chief of U.S. Navy Chaplain

Corps and Chaplain of the Marine Corps. The elder son, Rear Admiral Kurt W. Tidd, USN, is currently Vice Director, Operations, Joint Staff, at the Pentagon. The Tidd’s daughter-in-law, Commander Eileen Tidd, is a retired Navy medical officer. Clearly, military service is part of the Tidd family’s DNA!

Hundreds of Ms. Poling’s students have had the honor of meeting the Tidds over the years. Ms. Poling exclaimed, “Vice Admiral and Mrs. Tidd have gone well above and beyond the call of duty and are appreciated, respected, and loved by all who meet them!” In reflecting on one of their past visits, a student commented, “They are a testament to the American spirit, at home and abroad.”

In current times, we are often reminded of the Vietnam War, and it is critical that we understand the lessons of that era. Vice Admiral Tidd explained to us, “It is important for us to share with you something that affected our lives so greatly.”

Now, more than ever, it is imperative for our generation to listen to those of an older generation who are willing to keep history alive, in hopes we will listen and learn—and not repeat past mistakes.



Vice Admiral and Mrs. Emmett Tidd

Reflections on My Grandfather

By Chris Dudley

I have been to Arlington National Cemetery once before with my grandfather, John Cingranelli. He wished to pay his respects to William E. Stuckmeyer, the commanding officer who saved his life during World War II. At the time of my first visit, I was too young to understand the solemnity of the occasion—and my grandfather's tears shed on his hero's grave. Sadly, my grandfather passed away last year.

My second visit to Arlington is one I will always remember. Our charter bus arrived at the Cemetery on the morning of April 16, 2011. A heavy rain



was dismally pelting the pavement. I decided to break away from the larger group, with my teacher's permission, to visit the grave of William E. Stuckmeyer. After a long walk searching for his burial place, I finally reached my destination. Upon reaching his impressive marble gravestone, I suddenly recalled that

day many years ago when I witnessed my grandfather mourn the man who saved him. The difference, this time, was that I was mourning in his place.

By the time we were ready to embark on our journey home, I was exhausted and saturated with rain water. But, above all else, I was thankful... thankful that I was given the opportunity to come with my *Lessons of Vietnam* class to our nation's capital and reach the inner peace I have been searching for since the death of my beloved grandfather.

A Lasting Impact

By Emily Bower, LOV Class 2010

History. How should we study it? Why is it important? Does it really have an impact on how we live our lives today?

These are just a few of the questions my history professor threw at my class on our first day as college freshmen. As we discussed the answers to these questions, the Vietnam War continued to arise as a topic of conversation. It became very clear in that first hour how extremely fortunate I was to have taken *Lessons of Vietnam* during my senior year at Millbrook High School. As my professor talked about major battles, guerrilla warfare, and different tactics used throughout the war, I was able to comment on his lectures, and I felt as though I was a step ahead of many of my classmates around me.

Although I had correctly assumed that the *LOV* class would help me in my history classes, I was pleasantly surprised to find that it also had a significant impact on my understanding in my literature classes. Many of the novels I have read were written during the Vietnam Era, so my ability to better understand the literature and compare it to the events that were unfolding during that time period has proven invaluable to me.

Taking *Lessons of Vietnam* was definitely one of the smartest decisions I ever made. My ability to analyze historical events has helped me hold my own when talking about the Vietnam Era to many of my professors, and it has made me realize what a gift the *LOV* class was. It laid the groundwork for me to be successful in college—I'd venture to say more than any other class I took senior year; and I know that Ms. Poling's class was just the first stepping stone on what will be a long path to success.

Bonds of Brotherhood

By Sarah Ward

The bond between soldiers is one as special as a brotherhood. It is one not easily broken even when struck by the harsh reality of death. The veterans of the Vietnam War know this burden all too well, and many have visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in order to honor and remember those who perished, as well as to help their own healing process.

My link, Mr. Dan Sheehan, shared with me his most vivid memory of Vietnam by recounting the first death in his squadron. The pilot's name was Peter F. Russell. He was killed on May 23, 1969 by a 30-caliber ground shot that missed the bulletproof middle panel of the windshield of his aircraft only slightly and ended up passing through the plexiglass, taking the Navy pilot's life. Pete had previous combat experience, and was "thoroughly professional, highly skilled, and willing to share his knowledge and expertise with all of us," said Mr. Sheehan. His death was a true tragedy to the Black Ponies of VAL-4, "because for the first time, death in Vietnam had become a reality." My link shared with me that the sight of Russell's Bronco rolling down the runway with his lifeless body slumped over the seat still haunts him. It was Pete Russell's name Mr. Sheehan gave me to rub on The Wall. It was an opportunity for me to feel a connection so many other veterans have felt before me.

On Friday morning, April 15, MHS *LOV* students made a pilgrimage to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and met with Veteran Links, Dave Rabadan, Bill Mayall, Ron Worstell and Ric Vandett, all of whom spoke about their experiences and what this Memorial means to them. It was so powerful to listen to them speak and see the actual glow of The Wall in the background. It made their stories come alive with passion as we saw their faces change with the mood of their stories. Then, they helped us find the names we were searching for. At first, the names seemed like letters on something like a chalkboard to me. But, as we continued our walk, I began to see the names and symbols etched on the

shiny black granite, and I began to wonder what had happened to each of them. One of the veterans mentioned to us that The Wall resembled an iceberg and the names inscribed on the actual granite were only the visible surface. Yet, the actual story of each name lays hidden deep in the ground as a holding place for each one's soul.

I walked along searching for panel 24W and, as I took in the magnitude of all the panels together, I began to feel a connection. Eventually, I came upon the correct one and began to search for Pete Russell's name. I finally came across it on line 90. It was then it really hit me that, yes, these are actually names of real people who lived, breathed, and walked on this earth. As I was

rubbing Peter F. Russell's name, I wanted to know more about him. I even felt a bond to Mr. Sheehan. I was able to feel a small part of the pain he experienced in Pete's death. I rubbed his name again so my link and I could each have a copy; and then, I realized I did not want to leave. I wanted to stay and gaze at that piece of carved rock and remember all those who served my country in wars past, present, as well as those who are willing to serve in future wars.

As I continued to stare at Peter F. Russell's name, I could see myself in the reflection of the stone. The power of seeing my own face through all the names was overwhelming. It was as if I was seeing myself in a new light. I was not seeing one reflection of just a teenage girl about to turn 18, but of a newly educated American citizen now wanting to make a positive contribution to the lives of others.

I came back to that special name at least three more times that morning, and I still have the distinct vision of the last time I saw it. There is no doubt that my linking experience with Mr. Sheehan and my personal visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has helped me to better understand the bonds of brotherhood, as well as strengthen my connection to those who so bravely served our country.



Artwork by Brigitte Mourning

In the Aftermath of Revolution: Putting All the Pieces of the Egyptian Puzzle Together

By Colette Baldelli

A remarkable event has occurred in Egypt. The citizens of the state, through peaceful protest, convinced President Hosni Mubarak to step down. How was this even possible? What sparked these massive protests in Tahrir Square? To find the answer, we must look to a relatively small state in North Africa: Tunisia.

In a rural town, a fruit vender named Mohamed Bouazizi had enough of his oppressive government. When police confiscated his produce, making it impossible to support his family, he set himself on fire in protest. This act sparked a wave of other protests in the region, encouraging citizens to demand freedom from governmental oppression. The Tunisian people were successful in forcing President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali to resign.

The actions in Tunisia inspired the people of Egypt. Learning from previous failed attempts, the Egyptians decided not to have a specific person leading the protests. As a result, the government could not pinpoint and prosecute a single leader. The Egyptian revolutionaries also learned how to surpass the blocks imposed by their government on internet sites so they could share grievances and organize protest activities. They could organize quicker than the government could respond. The major key to their success was their ability to facilitate disciplined, nonviolent protests, much like the 1960s civil rights protests in the United States. The nonviolent nature of the protests left the Egyptian military without cause to intervene, eventually leading them to side with the protesters. This chain of events led to Hosni Mubarak stepping down as the leader of Egypt.

Where will this new found freedom take the Egyptians? Speaking to MHS LOV students on April 14, Dr. Jeffrey Helsing, Dean of Curriculum of the Academy for International Conflict and Peacebuilding at the U.S. Institute of Peace, gave insight into the formation of a sustainable democratic government. He stated that, as he watched the protests on

television, he noticed a group of young Egyptian people simply cleaning up trash in Tahrir Square. One might ask: how can the act of cleaning up trash lead to a strong sustainable government? Dr. Helsing provided the answer. When he lived in Egypt, the streets were strewn with garbage—mostly because the citizens felt they were only subjects of the state; and, therefore, had no responsibility or sense of duty to their country as they had no voice. “Now, for the first time, citizens of Egypt feel they matter and can be effective agents of change. Their lives, and their children’s lives, can finally have an impact on the way their government governs; they now have a reason to take care of the state because it is finally theirs!” Dr. Helsing exclaimed.

Trash collection, coupled with a sense by Egyptian citizens they truly can make a difference, is only one part in solving the complex puzzle to establish a stable democracy. Egypt must now come together to form a legitimate government recognized and respected by the people and by other governments around the world. Egypt must also meet the basic needs of its people; thus, economic development is very important, as is everyone’s overall well-being. The newly formed government must be fair and just, passing laws applicable to all. The social well-being of Egypt’s citizens must be taken into consideration with the development of an education system, healthcare facilities, public transportation, electricity, water, sewage, trash collection, and many other infrastructure-related services. Finally, the people must attain a sense of security in their daily lives. The government has the power to use force, but it is accountable for any abusive exercise thereof. Each of these puzzle pieces must come together to create a stable government.

Egypt has been through a lot these past few months, but there is still much more left to be done before the Egyptian people can breathe easy over what they have accomplished.



Artwork by Jonathan Butler

Libya: The Challenge of Winning Hearts and Minds

By Kayla Gibson

Since the beginning of this year, people in several Arab countries have been fighting for their freedom from tyrannical dictators. On January 14, the Tunisian people ousted their leader, Ben Ali. On February 11, Egyptians forced President Hosni Mubarak to step down. Then, Libyan rebels wanted independence from their leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Their fight has not been so easy.

With the rapid and largely peaceful collapse of regimes in both Egypt and Tunisia, the Libyan people thought they too could launch a successful revolution. Protests against the Libyan leader and his government began in February 2011, but Colonel Gaddafi resisted with brutal force. Backed by his supporters, he vowed to track down the protesters, house by house, and kill them. Although the protesters, the Libyan National Council, are not backing down easily, they have found it a challenge to raise an effective army.

Since mid-March, NATO intervened, employing airstrikes to protect the Libyan people from their tyrannical leader. Western leaders insist this intervention is not about regime change, but rather about protecting civilians. President Barack Obama recently stated, “To brush aside America’s responsibility as a leader and—more profoundly—our

responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are.”

Libyan rebels continue to face setbacks, and some question whether NATO should have stepped in earlier. Analyst Jawad al-Anani commented that if western powers acted sooner, “It could have been done easily. This should have been Grenada, not Vietnam.”

Some Americans are now worried U.S. involvement in Libya is progressing more into a Vietnam than a Grenada, as no clear exit strategy has been mapped out. Should Colonel Gaddafi prove able and willing to fight the rebels for as long as it takes to regain control of Eastern Libya, the question becomes how much more the United States is willing to undertake to prevent him from doing so.

It is still possible for the rebels to succeed. While Muammar Gaddafi’s forces are strong, the rebels hold control of Eastern Libya and have already been recognized as a national council by France.

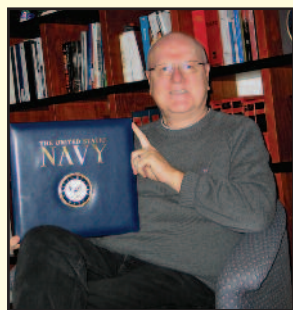
Either Gaddafi loyalists or the Libyan National Council must win the hearts and minds of the Libyan people in order to ensure victory. Failing to do so, leaving a nation divided, may mean months, if not years, of conflict.

A Wonderful Gift!

Dear Colette,*

I received your wonderful link project in the mail on Saturday. You have managed to bring tears to an old sailor's eyes. Thank you so much for such a beautiful gift.

I will cherish it for the rest of my life. I have placed it prominently on my den coffee table where it shall remain for all my family and friends to see. I have my first grandchild expected on March 2nd to look forward to now. When he or she is old enough, I intend to share my letters from you.



Mr. Dodd proudly displays his special gift from Colette.

Your final letter to me was very touching. It was difficult for me to finish reading it before tears came flowing down my cheeks. I had never been thanked like I have been since linking with the students from the Lessons of Vietnam classes. You kids are incredibly wonderful. I know Mrs. Poling is extremely

proud of each and every one of you.

I have attached a photo of me with my wonderful gift. I wish you all the best, Colette. Once again, thank you so very much.

*Yours truly,
Mr. Dodd (Ken)*

P.S. Let me know how you're doing in the coming years.

***Editor's note:** Colette Baldelli received this beautiful thank you letter from her link, Mr. Ken Dodd, a PBR Veteran!

A True American Hero

By Bria Artis and Camden Freeman

He was locked up in a foreign country in a 7' by 7' cell with little food and water. He was deprived of the most basic of human rights. He was forbidden to communicate with those in adjacent cells. While enduring all this, he did not know whether he would ever see his wife and newborn daughter ever again. These are but some of the struggles Ex-POW Porter Halyburton endured during a 7 1/2 year ordeal after his plane was shot down over Hanoi.

Recently Commander Halyburton came to speak to our *Lessons of Vietnam* classes about his experiences and the lessons he learned during his imprisonment. Surprisingly, the focal point of his speech was not on the hardships. Instead, he chose to focus on *forgiveness*. Cdr. Halyburton told the story of how on the day of his release from the Hanoi Hilton, he turned and faced the walls that had confined him for so long and valiantly said, "I forgive you." After hearing this amazing speaker, senior Kirsten Russell reflected, "It's funny how every single one of us has complained about something in our lives, and then you meet someone like Cdr. Halyburton. It amazes me how a man can go through pure torture and yet still be so forgiving."

Another major theme of Cdr. Halyburton's presentation was the importance of *communication* amongst the POWs. Their North Vietnamese guards disallowed them any form of communication with each other. As a way to deter prisoners from disobeying, their captors instituted heavy punishments, such as torture and isolation. To defy the strict rules, the POWs devised a way to "talk" unbeknownst to their captors. This method of communication, known as the Tap Code, relied on using a set of taps to represent a row and then another set of taps to represent a column. Each letter of the alphabet was placed in a 5 by 5 grid (with the exception of the letter 'k'), and those taps were used to identify a letter and spell out a message. Cdr. Halyburton credits the Tap Code with contributing to his survival as a POW. It was a way to keep morale high and a way for POWs to have a small victory against the North Vietnamese.

Cdr. Halyburton emphasized his belief that "our lives are determined by the choices we make." From the very beginning, the North Vietnamese, who wanted confidential military information, gave him the option: "better place or worse place." He would later find out that the "worse place" the North Vietnamese had threatened him with would lead him to a cell that also housed an African-American Air Force pilot named Fred Cherry. In the book *Two Souls Indivisible* by James S. Hirsch, Cdr. Halyburton, who grew up in a segregated South, tells of how he made the choice not to let racial tensions destroy his morale. His choice to not give the Vietnamese confidential information led to his friendship with Fred Cherry, who he claims saved his life.



Bria and Camden meet their link, Commander Porter Halyburton.

Overall, Cdr. Halyburton's presentation was filled with encouragement and inspiration. His stories of the POWs' selflessness and loyalty to country are ones *LOV* students will never forget. Senior Pam Kass wrote in her letter to Cdr. Halyburton, "I undeniably admire the courage, poise, enthusiasm, and strength you demonstrated throughout your visit to our *LOV* class... You did not let your experience as a POW define who you are as a person, but you let your challenges be a learning lesson for future generations."

Linking with Cdr. Halyburton has given us a unique insight into the horrendous challenges our pilots faced in captivity. It has been an honor to link with a true American hero.

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