



Bridges

THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM



Bridges would like to dedicate this issue to Brigadier General George B. Price, veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Millbrook High School's inaugural Lessons of Vietnam class had the privilege of hearing General Price speak at the North Carolina State Capitol on Memorial Day, 1997. He has become an integral part of Mrs. Poling's Community-in-the-Classroom Program ever since. We appreciate the General's willingness to travel all the way from Columbia, Maryland to spend a full day each May as a "guest teacher" in our United States History and LOV classes. General Price, you are an outstanding role model for all of us, and we salute you!



General George B. Price encourages LOV students to remember that "Your challenge as Americans is to find the profits of peace." (May 18, 2000)



With Sincere Appreciation

Compiled by Andrea Cathey and Keith Quinn

The Lessons of Vietnam students enjoy writing reflective letters to our guest speakers who so generously take the time to share their experiences with us. This is a compilation of quotes from letters written throughout the semester.

Dear Veterans,

"Thank you for coming to Mrs. Poling's Lessons of Vietnam class."

"I believe that our LOV class is so great because it allows veterans and children to speak freely of our past, and you veterans really teach and make us realize that part of our history."

"By taking this class, I have been educated so much about veterans and what they went through."

"You were faced with hardships and you bravely overcame them while maintaining the pride you felt toward our country."

"If it wasn't for your dedication, then our class would not understand the concepts of the war."

"I thought it was wonderful that you drew so many lessons from your time in the war."

"Your success both in and out of the military personifies a lot of what I hope to become."

"I think our country would be a better place if everyone saw our country through your eyes."

"This is by far the best class I have taken throughout all of my schooling."

"I feel fortunate to be so young and yet to have had the opportunity to meet and question those who have served."

"So many things you talked about remain in my mind."

"I know you have touched many people in my class."

"Because of you, the war will not be forgotten."

*Sincerely,
The Lessons of Vietnam Class*



Reflections on LOV

by Kate Phillips

If someone were to ask me what the LOV class was, I could not simply say "my third period class". This course requires commitment from the students inside and outside of the classroom. In class we are exposed to a unique experience. We meet and talk with the people in our history book—"living history", as it is called. The Vietnam veterans who visit give our LOV class a more complete understanding of the war period. They become our primary resources. With the veterans' help, students are able to analyze the controversies of the Vietnam War, both on the battlefield and at home. This is a personal learning experience, and our guest speakers create opportunities no other class currently offers.

Our commitment does not stop when the bell rings. We each have our veteran links to interview; the class takes a field trip to Washington, DC; and the LOV class has its own newsletter. Our newsletter, *Bridges*, is written and managed by Lessons of Vietnam students, Mrs. Poling, and Ms. Dawkins on their own time. Its articles range from interviewing parents, veterans, and teachers to discussing current events pertaining to the Vietnam era. Writing for *Bridges* allows students to vocalize their beliefs, as well as learn from the voices of others.

Being a part of the Lessons of Vietnam course has become an experience I will not forget. I want to thank my peers in the class, Mrs. Poling, and especially the veterans for their dedication. I am honored to be a part of such a committed and loving group. You all give so much, and that alone will encourage future students to learn the lessons of Vietnam.



LOV Class Honored as "Outstanding Character Education Program"

On Thursday, April 13, 2000, the MHS LOV class was recognized as the Outstanding High School Character Education Program by the Wake County PTA Council. The LOV class was nominated by Mrs. Kay Fitch and the MHS PTSA awards committee. Awards committee co-chairs, Ms. Delores Wise and Ms. Leila Aboulhosn, stated in their nomination, "The LOV class provides students with a better understanding of history and a greater respect for all veterans, especially the veterans of the Vietnam War. This class is the means for students to express their opinions of the government during the Vietnam War and make them aware of government policies of today. It also has a class link program in which students are 'linked' with Vietnam War Veterans for personal interviews...While providing a unique and interesting learning environment, the LOV class has reached beyond academics and touched these students in deeper ways. Understanding war, death, politics, patriotism, values, and commitment is a significant by-product of the Lessons of Vietnam class. These lessons are taught by real people who lived the struggle...LOV students have been encouraged to share their knowledge with their peers, and this knowledge has opened the lines of communication with their parents...This class helps develop students as leaders of tomorrow by understanding the past."



LOV teacher, Mrs. Lindy Poling, accepts PTA award on behalf of the MHS LOV class.



Project Hanoi

by Kate Phillips

In commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, students from Millbrook High School were asked to post questions to students at Hanoi University on the VVMF's www.teachvietnam.org website. This is a new project that all LOV students are excited about. We asked a variety of questions in order to help bridge the gap between two countries once divided by war. Some of our exchanges are as follows:

“What do you call the war?”—Kathryn Keplar

“The Vietnam War is called the American War here in Vietnam. My father served in Vietnam and he sometimes talks about it. I would like to forget about the war and focus on the future.”—Quang Anh, 20

“Is the Vietnam War a large part of history taught there?”—Joanna Salisbury

“We do not learn a lot about the war in school. The war is very sad. I want to close the past. I want to share my experiences with students in America.”—Hunog Giang, 21

“How do you feel about Americans?”—Kate Phillips

“America is a country of freedom and the Vietnamese want to be free. We should live in peace and be friends.”—Huo, 21

“Do you think Vietnam, being ruled by a communist government, is better than a democracy?”—Catherine Waldorf

“In many ways I wish Vietnam were more like America. America has lots of good technology and computer equipment and a good education system.”—Anonymous

After the Vietnamese students answered our questions, they asked questions of us. The communication between the two groups has proven to be successful, and we plan to continue a dialogue on these interesting and important issues.



The LOV Class in Washington, DC: A Parent's Perspective

by Nafisa Haidermota, MHS Mom

I was fortunate to go on the recent trip to Washington, DC with the Millbrook LOV class. This trip was truly an educational experience.

We had the opportunity to meet three well-known people. At the Capitol, students interviewed Senator John Edwards. Our students were encouraged to introduce themselves and ask the Senator questions. The students showed a great interest in government and exhibited a real desire to become better citizens. We later met Mr. Jan Scruggs, Founder and President of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Through questions and answers, we learned about the design, location, color, and importance of the Wall. With the help of our veterans on the trip, students learned how to locate veterans' names on the wall. At Arlington National Cemetery, we met Mr. Phil Bigler, the 1998 National Teacher of the Year and former Arlington historian. With his guided tour we learned about President John F. Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy and Christa McAuliffe, the teacher who died in the Challenger crash. We also saw the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Changing of the Guard Ceremony. The students gained a sense of discipline and duty by watching this. Another important place we visited on the trip was the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. On the banks of the Potomac River, amidst the cherry blossoms, this memorial created a sense of harmony in contrast to the loss of lives in the war.

This special trip was also a global learning experience. All of us gained cultural exposure when we ate in a Vietnamese restaurant. To be such a success, a trip like this takes months of planning. My heartfelt thanks goes out to two very dedicated educators, Mrs. Poling and Ms. Christos. Throughout the trip, we all gained memories that will be cherished for a lifetime.



Kyla Mcknight, Kate Phillips, Alicia Cole, and Catherine Waldorf pose in front of a section of the Berlin Wall at the Newseum in Arlington, Virginia.



Journalists Zalin Grant, author of *Survivors*; Joseph Galloway, co-author of *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young*; and Wallace Terry, author of *Bloods*, engage in an interesting panel discussion entitled, “Reporters on the Frontlines”. (Mr. Galloway has recently joined the MHS LOV class as an e-mail “link”.)

Rendezvous with War

by Joanna Salisbury

Mrs. Lindy Poling recently attended the 25th Anniversary Symposium on the End of America's Longest War, “Rendezvous with War: Veterans, Correspondents, Historians, and Film Makers Reflect on the Vietnam War” at her alma mater, The College of William and Mary. Topics ranged from “Love the Soldier, Hate the War” to “Selling the War Story: Hollywood Hits and Bestseller Lists”. The highlight of her trip was meeting so many accomplished individuals who were there. Now, as she reads the books written by these famous authors, she can put a face and personality with a name. This makes these books much more meaningful. Mrs. Poling welcomes the opportunity to share these new insights with her students.



Everett Alvarez, Jr., the first US Prisoner of War, makes a point regarding the current status of POW's in Southeast Asia.



Significant Imprints from the Wall

by Kyla Mcknight

The annual Millbrook High School Lessons of Vietnam class trip to Washington, DC left nothing to be desired by either students or chaperones. We were fortunate enough to visit the Wall on several occasions, and the impressions and memories made there will resonate for a lifetime. In preparation we viewed “To Heal a Nation” and read veterans' articles about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. We also interviewed many community members about its meaning prior to our visit. The trip participants were privileged to meet Mr. Jan Scruggs, Founder and President of the VVMF, make rubbings of meaningful names on the Wall, and partake in an emotional candlelight ceremony.

On a brisk March morning, everyone was up and ready to meet Mr. Scruggs at 9:00 a.m. Before this meeting, we all composed at least three questions that were of interest to us. Mr. Scruggs gave a wonderful tour of the statues adjacent to the Wall and the Memorial itself. Then he gave us a full half-hour to ask our questions. Time passed by much too quickly.

When our group went to the Wall to do rubbings of special names, each and every one of us felt silent emotions. As I perused the book of names of the over 58,000 men and women to look for my family members, a humbling feeling passed through me. These heroes have finally been remembered by some who were not even born when they lost their lives. I, myself, found twelve relatives who died during this tragic war.

On that same night, our 26-member group gathered at the apex of the Wall and read the 48 names of MIA's from North Carolina. Our two veteran chaperones, Mr. Bud Gross and Mr. Dave Samuels, led this special ceremony. Emotions flowed through us all, yet they remained unspoken.

I have learned so much about the Wall, but I never knew I would learn *so much more* by actually seeing and touching it. I did not truly understand the importance of this memorial until I stepped in front of its black granite panels. I thank Mr. Jan Scruggs and the VVMF for creating such a moving place. Our special visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial left an imprint on me as profound as the names etched into the Wall themselves.





Sarah Milkovich poses with her veteran link, Mr. Larry Stogner.

Lessons Learned from the Fall of Saigon

by Joanna Salisbury

On April 28, 2000, the LOV class had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Larry Stogner, WTVD anchorman, speak about his personal experiences in the Vietnam War. Mr. Stogner visited during the week of the 25th anniversary of the fall of Saigon. For many veterans, this time is very emotional. Mr. Stogner feels "the war is still hard for us because it is the only war we lost." His tour of duty became one of survival. "We went in one by one, not unit by unit...trickling in and trickling out, hopefully standing up." Like other veterans, Mr. Stogner does not think we fought the war in the most efficient manner. "Unlike other wars, we took one tiny step at a time and did not enter using full force...We fought a defensive war."

Viewing the Wall is very emotional for him, especially seeing the names of the soldiers he once knew. The Vietnam War has etched a mark in his mind, and holds a special place in his heart. "There is something magnetic about 'Nam, something magical. I cannot put my finger on it." The LOV Class learned many lessons from Mr. Stogner's visit: we should make ourselves aware of political issues; and when America chooses to engage in war, we should do so with 100 percent offensive effort. We will be forever grateful for the time all of our "guest teachers" have taken to share their memories with us.



Honoring Those Who Have Given Service to Our Nation

by Allicia Cole

On our 2000 LOV field trip to Washington, DC, we had the privilege of not only going to Arlington National Cemetery, but also having former Arlington historian, Mr. Phil Bigler, give us a special tour. He worked there for two years in the early 1980's and had a hand in helping shape the cemetery into what it is today. He is also very passionate about history and shared stories with us that only a few people know. Listening to Mr. Bigler's stories and getting to see the Changing of the Guard Ceremony made this day worth the long trek.

For those of you who know little about Arlington, here are some facts about it. It is a cemetery for military personnel and their dependents, such as spouses or children; and there are approximately fifty funerals a day. Many famous and influential people are buried there, such as Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and President John F. Kennedy. It is very large and requires many hours of maintenance to keep it looking immaculate. The headstones must be straightened every five years, and there are restrictions on what type of headstones are allowed. Because of the great number of funerals held there each day, Arlington is expected to be closed to new burials in the year 2060.

I enjoyed getting to visit one of Washington's greatest monuments, Arlington National Cemetery. It was a meaningful experience for students and chaperones. Once again, we would like to thank Mr. Bigler for making the trip so interesting. For those of you who plan to visit Arlington National Cemetery, let me offer you the advice given to our class by Mr. Bigler. It is a beautiful place, but it is still a place of mourning; so be respectful and honor the ones who have given their lives in service to our great nation.



Historian Phil Bigler shares an interesting story with LOV students at Arlington National Cemetery.



A Night to Remember

by Joanna Salisbury

Each semester the LOV class holds a dinner for veterans, parents, students and teachers. Students present speeches, and the audience has the opportunity to ask questions of our veterans. After the dinner, parents are invited to reflect on this special evening of fellowship and learning.

1. Why did you attend the dinner?

"I was very excited about the interest this class has sparked in my daughter. She has never been so motivated by a teacher or subject! I also wanted to learn more about the Vietnam War myself."

2. What was the most memorable comment of the evening?

"I was most impressed by the responses to the question 'What did you learn?' It appeared to me that the people who answered dealt with their war experience as they dealt with other life experiences — some with anger and some with an attitude of learning from a bad situation."

3. How did you view the veterans input?

"With respect. I thought they were very honest, and enjoyed sharing their experiences with the young people."



Mr. John Odom urges students to become active citizens.

4. What is something that you learned at the dinner?

"I learned that each and every veteran came away with a different attitude. I could see in their faces that at least some of them have ongoing issues (scars) that they have had to learn to deal with. By learning and seeing this, I have nothing but compassion and admiration for them."

5. How do you feel about the Community-in-the-Classroom Program?

"I think this is an excellent program...If parents and community would work together in unison with the teachers, public schools could really shine. After all, aren't we all supposed to be in this together? That's what a good education is all about."



Ben Floyd rubs the name of a North Carolinian at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Reflections

by Jason Costa

Candlelight Ceremony, March 24, 2000, Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Upon looking at this Wall, I can't help but realize how lucky I am. I have grown up in a country where I am free to make my own choices. I can't help wonder had I not been born in the 1980's, my name could have been on this wall. The brave men and women who served and died for this country are the true American heroes. Their struggles on the battlefield were equally matched with their struggles back home. They had to fight for the recognition that they deserved. Thank you to all the veterans for fighting in that war, and thank you for preserving my right to proudly say I am an American.



A Lasting Impression

by Joanna Salisbury

What teaches history? Books, magazines, news reports, and teachers? Perhaps, but nothing teaches high school students the lessons of our history like those who lived it. In our Lessons of Vietnam class, Mrs. Poling invites special guests, mostly war veterans, to speak to us. They give their opinions, personal recollections, and favorite memories; and they truly make history come alive!

Every guest speaker has his or her own interpretation of the Vietnam War, and a lesson I learned at the LOV class dinner on March 28 was that every soldier fought a different war. As each person tells of his or her own experience, that lesson becomes more and more apparent. Mr. Bob Patrikios, a Millbrook Dad, recently visited our classroom. He discussed many issues, and brought ideas to the table that I had never thought of before.

Mr. Patrikios joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1965 and served as a CAP Marine until 1968. He feels the CAP Marines had quite a different experience than the other branches of the military. "For us, the war became personal, because it was easy to develop an attachment to the Vietnamese villagers." When Mr. Patrikios returned to the States, he commented, "I only wanted to go back...and once I realized I could not volunteer anymore, I did not re-enlist in the Marines."

Many veterans feel their sole purpose in Vietnam eventually became to survive. Mr. Patrikios stated, "I wasn't fighting for the US Government or the South Vietnamese Government. I was fighting for the Marine next to me and the innocent people in my village."

For Mr. Patrikios, the Wall has a personal meaning. "When I visited the Wall in '84 for the first time, I learned how to cry again. We were forced to hide our emotions in Vietnam. You did not have time to cry."

Regarding political control over the military, many veterans feel we fought with one hand behind our back. I cannot help but think that if our soldiers could have fought the war the way they were trained, the outcome might have been different. We lost so many lives, and it frustrates me to think this could have been prevented had we taken other actions.

Every veteran instills in us lessons they learned in Vietnam and/or as a result of the war. They encourage us to incorporate them into our daily lives and institute these lessons in others. Mr. Patrikios taught several lessons: **be informed; do not accept everything the government says; and above all, VOTE.** Speakers like Mr. Patrikios make history come alive, and they are the basis of the LOV class' success. This truly represents what learning is all about.



Community-in-the-Classroom Featured in NCSS Publication

Mrs. Lindy Poling's article, "The Real World: Community Speakers in the Classroom" was published in *Middle Level Learning*, a supplement to *Social Education* (May/June issue). This publication has a national readership of over 20,000. Her article discusses the benefits of bringing "living history" into the classroom. It also highlights her website, "Best Practices in a Community-in-the-Classroom Social Studies Program." (www.wcpss.net/community_in_the_classroom/)

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The 1999-2000 MHS LOV classes and chaperones were pleased to meet with Mr. Jan Scruggs (front row, 5th from left) at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Their Memory Still Burns Within Us

by Catherine Waldorf

On Friday night, March 24, 2000, the 1999-2000 Lessons of Vietnam classes held a small candlelight ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Three students read special passages. Catherine Waldorf and Alicia Cole read poems, and Jason Costa read his personal reflections regarding the Wall. Then student and adult participants read the names of the 48 MIAs and POWs from North Carolina.

It was very special being gathered at the apex of the Wall at night when the lights softly illuminated the panels with all the names on them. Mr. Dave Samuels spoke to us about how Vietnam affected the lives of so many. Mr. Bud Gross explained to us the awesome responsibility of being the generation that would have to keep the lessons of Vietnam alive for the next generation. I have no doubt that members of the LOV classes are fully committed to carrying out this significant responsibility.



Hearts Left at the Wall

by Andrea Cathey and Keith Quinn

The Wall, one of the many places the LOV class visited on our class trip, is perhaps one of the most touching tributes to the Vietnam War. Equally as moving is the collection of mementos left at the Wall displayed at the Smithsonian Museum of American History.

In remembrance of the lost soldiers, various items have been left by visitors since the Wall's 1982 dedication. A story is told through each memento in the display, and all that is left to the viewer is his or her own personal ideas of what that object could possibly signify. Family and friends of the deceased or missing have not solely been responsible for leaving these mementos. Thousands of people with no personal connection to any of the names on the Wall have left small American flags and beautiful flower wreaths in their honor. The Smithsonian exhibit only contains a small percentage of the artifacts placed at the Wall. Behind the glass in the museum are a large array of POW bracelets, dog tags, newspaper clippings, beer cans, teddy bears, fatigues, heart-warming letters and birthday cards from family and significant others. We also observed that many veterans had been moved to leave the medals that they had earned during the war at the Wall in honor of their fallen friends.

The display at the Smithsonian Museum of American History is an amazing sight. Not only does it portray how families and friends of the soldiers were affected, but also how meaningful the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is to people from all over the world.



Keith Quinn searches for a special name on the Wall.

