



# Bridges

THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM



The *Bridges* Staff would like to dedicate this special issue to Vice Admiral and Mrs. Emmett H. Tidd. These two outstanding patriots have been strong supporters of Ms. Poling's Community-in-the-Classroom Program for several years.

We appreciate their willingness to travel all the way from Arlington, Virginia each semester to share their WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War experiences with our LOV and U.S. History classes. VADM and Mrs. Tidd, you are outstanding role models for all of us. We salute you!



VADM and Mrs. Tidd—Dedicated supporters of our LOV and USH programs.

## Experience the LOV

by Jumoke Blaize

Life is a quest to obtain as much knowledge and wisdom as possible in order for a person to fulfill a specific purpose. Each new day is a gift, an opportunity to learn more. In the Lessons of Vietnam class at Millbrook High School, the students are able to partake in an insightful course that journeys through one of the most controversial periods in our history.

To say that the Lessons of Vietnam class is just another senior elective, would be absurd. The class requires much personal commitment. As a student who walked into Ms. Poling's third period class not knowing anything about the Vietnam Era, I can now spew out a vast amount of information about this subject and more.

In order to make great advances towards the future, one must have a complete understanding of history. The LOV class firmly advocates the "Community-in-the-Classroom" approach. Parents are encouraged to get involved as much as possible. Each student is also "linked" to a Vietnam veteran in order to have a continuous one-on-one interview throughout a given semester. In addition to the link program, the LOV class has many speakers—veterans and others, whose lives were greatly impacted by the war. This course is so appealing to the student because it takes a step out of the traditional textbooks and places the subject directly in the face of each student. We are able to interact with "living history."

So much has been accomplished through the LOV Program! The gap between generations has narrowed. Numerous veterans have started to heal their emotional wounds. And, the relationship between some students and their parents has improved immensely. After experiencing the LOV class, students do not merely walk away learning the key lessons of the Vietnam War, but the true lessons of life.



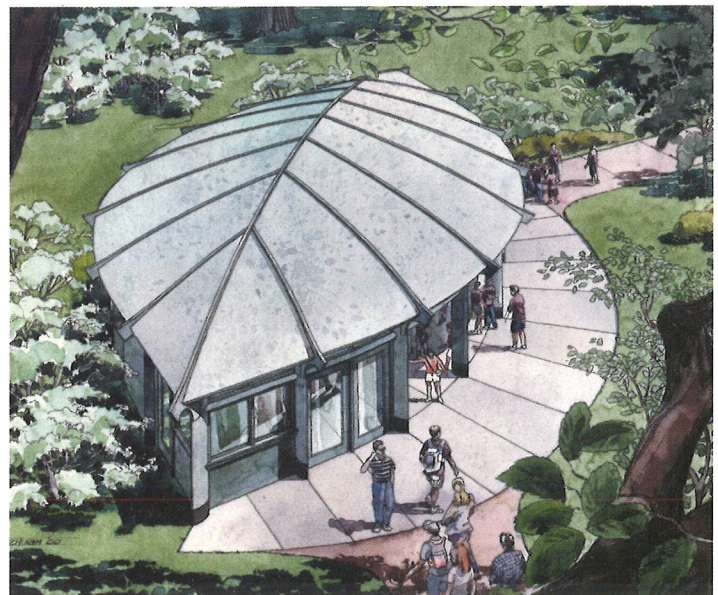
## The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center: A New Era of Teaching

by Stephanie Bostic

Many people who come to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial do not understand the full meaning of the "The Wall." However, all of that could change if the decision to build an education center is approved. The many supporters of the Center include Vietnam Veteran Senators Chuck Hagel, John McCain, Max Cleland, and John Kerry. If the Center is approved by Congress, the 4.4 million people who visit The Wall every year will have a better understanding of the sacrifices that were made during this tumultuous period. Ironically, many of these visitors are younger than the Memorial itself and lack important background information about it.

The inside of the Education Center proves to be a promising display of informative war memorabilia. In addition, it will have computers that will enable visitors to leave remembrances and recollections of the 58,226 men and women whose names are engraved on The Wall. This proposed Center will be open for approximately ten years, after which its impact will be re-evaluated.

Teaching today's generation more about yesterday's generation will help to "bridge the gap" between the two. The heroes of yesterday will not only be remembered, but they will also be appreciated and respected. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center may be the beginning of a new way of honoring those who served our country — those who returned, and those who did not.



The proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center will help today's youth better understand the lessons of the Vietnam War.



## NC Capitol Forum 2001: A Laboratory for Democracy

by Jenn Kowolenko

On March 23, 2001, forty-eight high school students participated in North Carolina's First Capitol Forum on America's Future. Various issues concerning the youth of today were discussed. All of these issues tied in with the central



Jenn Kowolenko and Stefanie Collins present global issue concerns at the State Capitol.

topics students were assigned to research: world conflict, world trade, the environment, and immigration.

LOV students who participated in the Capitol Forum were Richard Downing, Stefanie Collins, Latosha Parker, and myself. We were assigned to become experts on our special topic as well as be prepared to present and debate our opinions. LOV teacher, Lindy Poling, the Lead Teacher of the NC Capitol Forum, facilitated the program with Secretary of State, Elaine Marshall, and Dr. James Clark of NCSU.

After the morning discussions, students gathered to prepare to convince the Senate Foreign Relation Committee that their recommendation would be the best course of action for the United States in the 21st Century. Finally, students were asked to choose which "future" they favored. The most popular future was: "Defend U.S. Interests Throughout the World." Then we presented our ideas to several North Carolina lawmakers for further discussion.

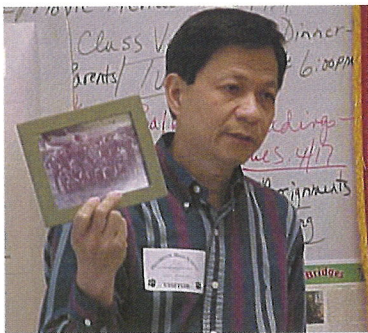
Overall, students found the day most educational. In the words of our Superintendent, Bill McNeal, regarding WCPSS student participants, "I have never been more proud."



## A Refreshing Perspective

by Willie Johnson

*"There were bombs everywhere. All the planes were gone or were bombed. I just saw a plane, started the engine, and took off!" ~ Son Pham*



Mr. Pham shares a photograph of his Air Force colleagues.

The LOV class had the opportunity to experience war through the eyes of Millbrook Dad, Mr. Son Pham, an ARVN airman who twenty-six years ago, left South Vietnam and is currently an IBM consultant. Mr. Pham gave us personal accounts about Vietnamese life and culture, as well as the War. The former pilot kept an upbeat and humorous tone about his traumatic experiences. "During flight school in the U.S., all we could say was 'Thank you, sir,' so when we did something wrong, and our officers said, 'What the heck are you doing?' we just said, 'Yes sir, thank you!'" He concluded his visit with us by discussing his views on the role of the United States and whether or not our involvement in Vietnam was justified. "The United States should have done a better job in the first place, but it was the right thing to do. If it is good now but not later, it is not good. If it is good now and good later, it will always be good."

## Honoring the Women Who Served

by Kourtney Elliot

On the last day of our field trip, our group made our way to the Women's Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. This Memorial was dedicated on October 18, 1997. As our group walked in, we caught a glimpse of the skylights which projected shadows of inspiring quotations on the wall. We then saw a video which told us stories about women who have defended our country. Next, we viewed, in chronological order, the history of women in the military. Our knowledgeable tour guide, Veteran June Eldridge, gave us information regarding each of the exhibits. We saw uniforms and mementos from the Revolutionary War Era to the present. We were in awe of the computerized registration room where extensive information regarding women who served in our armed forces can be found.

More than two million women have served in the military since America was founded. It was not until 1948 that women were given a permanent place in the armed forces. As a result of this excellent tour, we all developed a greater understanding of the progress women have made over the years. We also gained a higher level of respect for all of the women who have proudly defended our country's freedom.



Women's Memorial Deputy Director, June Eldridge, discusses the legacy of women in military history.



## The Perfect Tour

by Jenny Kropff

Who better to give us a tour of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial than the person who came up with the idea in the first place? On Friday, March 30, 2001, the MHS LOV class was privileged to have Mr. Jan Scruggs, President and Founder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, give us a tour of this special Memorial.

No one could have been a better tour guide! Mr. Scruggs started our journey at the Three Servicemen Statue by telling us about its history. Next, we moved on to The Wall and learned how it was constructed. We then gathered together at the Women's Memorial. Here, Mr. Scruggs enthusiastically entertained our questions. After our tour was over, each classmate, teacher, and chaperone received a gift bag containing a poster and two books about The Wall.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to Mr. Jan Scruggs and VVMF Program Director, Ms. Tricia Edwards, for this outstanding experience and our memorable gifts.



The 2000-2001 MHS LOV students and chaperones were pleased to meet with Mr. Jan Scruggs (back row, 3rd from left) at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



## Two Lessons from the Vietnam War — Remembrance and Forgiveness

by Sara Ostrow and Willie Johnson

The war has been fought. The casualties tallied. The events forever etched in history. But, what about the lessons learned?

One of the lessons is that of remembrance — to carry on the legacies of those who have made their mark upon this world. In order to fully preserve the memories of these



Robert Peterson greets his link, Mr. Joe Galloway.

bave men and women, it is the mission of generations present and future to become living monuments themselves.

We know so much more about the Vietnam War than any movie, television show, or textbook could provide, because of engaging speakers and authors we have met personally. Standing at The Wall with Mr. Joe Galloway, international journalist and author, he wondered aloud, “What would their lives have been like had they lived?” Although their deaths were tragic, Mr. Galloway has been able to preserve and share the courage of their actions through writing and speaking to groups like our LOV class.

Galloway said, “We were in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people.” Although he believes this, Mr. Galloway traded his position as a journalist to fight in the Battle of the Ia Drang. This was “the bloodiest and most costly battle of the war.” His book, which he co-authored with Lt. General Hal Moore, *We Were Soldiers Once and Young*, is based upon this 1965 battle. He felt that by writing everything down, the true accounts of this terrible ordeal would not be forgotten.

While we remember the men and women of the United States, let us not forget the men and women of Vietnam who fought and died in this war. If you examine a coin, you see that it has two opposite sides bound together by the same material. Such is the case with war. The only real difference between the soldiers were the sides that they were fighting for. They were bound together by the strength of their convictions. This leads us to another lesson of Vietnam — forgiveness.

In our LOV classroom, some American veterans have demonstrated a greater respect and understanding of their North Vietnamese counterparts. They are enemies no more. To quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.”

We are thankful to Mrs. Poling for her tireless efforts “to bring history to life” and to make sure the important events and lessons of the Vietnam War are not forgotten.



## We Will Always Remember...

by Bridget Jefferys

Many of us who went on the field trip had our perspectives totally changed in positive ways regarding duty, sacrifice, and honor. A number of students said that they finally realized the magnitude of 58,226 names after seeing and touching The Wall. We also gained a better comprehension of how each death impacted so many lives on a personal scale. The names on The Wall represent not only the person who died, but also all of the families and friends who lost a loved one. Visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial made us realize we will always be remembered by the ones who love us.

## Rubbings: A Newfound Respect

by Stephanie Bostic

On our recent visit to Washington, DC, my classmates and I were able to visit many places, including the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the FDR Memorial, and the Smithsonian Museum of American History. However, one particular experience which will forever be engraved in my memory is making rubbings at The Wall.

Each student was given the opportunity to rub a name from a panel on The Wall. My first reaction was to wonder what the purpose of this was. However, once I began my rubbing, I came to realize that every veteran of the Vietnam War, or any war, deserves honor and respect for their sacrifices. Each of my fellow classmates stood at The Wall with such poise and knowledge that the purpose of our Lessons of Vietnam course became completely clear. It just took rubbing the names to point out the obvious.

As we concluded the rubbings that afternoon, I heard a story that made everything truly worthwhile. A veteran of the Vietnam war approached LOV classmate, James Lamb, and asked him where he had gotten the pencil and paper for the rubbings. James kindly offered the man his pencil and paper so that he could rub the names of his comrades-in-arms. As a result of the important lessons that we have all been taught throughout our Lessons of Vietnam class, I was able to appreciate James’ gesture, and at the same time feel sympathy, compassion, and respect for this veteran.

Six more names have recently been added to The Wall. For my classmates and I, this symbolizes more soldiers to honor and respect, more empathy for their families, and new heroes to treasure.



Sara Ostrow helps veteran-chaperone, Mr. Carl Bimbo, rub a special name.



## A Silent Thank You

by Stephen Miura

When I first saw The Wall, I thought it was a well-planned monument. But after our initial visit during our Washington, DC field trip, we returned to the Mall area for a candlelight vigil honoring Wake County soldiers who did not return. We passed by The Wall once again. My classmates and I slowly gathered in a circle near the Lincoln Memorial. We all lit the fluorescent glow sticks we were given. Our veteran chaperones, Mr. Phil Beane and Mr. Carl Bimbo, gave eloquent tributes to those who served. After they were finished, each of us read the names of the Wake County, North Carolina soldiers etched on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Several of my classmates then stepped forward and told poignant stories about their visit to the Memorial earlier that day.

As our candlelight vigil drew to a close, I began to look around. Everything was so beautiful. The water of the Reflecting Pool glistened against the Washington Monument in the pale moonlight. Sound bytes of Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech could be heard playing at the Lincoln Memorial. The sudden thought of what it must be like to live in a non-democratic country made me put things in perspective. I then realized how good my life is. I looked in the distance at the polished black granite wall, and a rush of appreciation swept over my entire body. Over 58,000 people died for the democracy I live in. On the way back to the bus, we passed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for the final time. I gazed at this magnificent symbol and said a silent “thank you.”





LOV student, Laura McGuirt (r), enjoyed "linking" with Mrs. Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers and Mr. Jim Zumwalt.

Dear Mr. Zumwalt and Mrs. Zumwalt-Weathers,

Thank you so much for coming to speak with our class. Your honesty, insight, and humor kept us interested. It really means a lot to teenagers when adults take time out of their schedule to share their experiences with us. We talked of how my generation seems to not get enough credit. Your visit reassured us that some adults do believe we are worth it. Your stories were touching and left us with questions and a heightened interest in the individual soldiers of the war. Thank you so much for taking an interest in educating young people.

Sincerely,  
Laura



## LOV Teacher Tapped for USIP Institute

by Stephanie Bostic

LOV teacher, Ms. Lindy Poling, is one of twenty-seven educators nationwide selected to attend the 2001 U.S. Institute of Peace Summer Program. During her week at our nation's capitol, Ms. Poling will examine questions of war and peace, as well as innovative approaches to non-violent conflict resolution. She is very excited about having the opportunity to draw upon the insights of leading foreign policy officials, scholars, and outstanding teaching colleagues. Ms. Poling looks forward to sharing new curriculum ideas with her students next semester.

## Bridges Staff

**Editor:** Stephanie Bostic

**Production Editor/Designer:** Adrienne Acosta

**Staff:** Leah Barefoot, Jumoke Blaize, Kourtney Elliott, Willie Johnson, Carter Garrett, Bridget Jefferys, Meredith Joyce, Jenn Kowolenko, Jenny Kropff, Kim Le, Lindsay MacPherson, Stephen Miura, Stacey Nance, Sara Ostrow, LaTosha Parker, Andy Smith

**Advisors:** Ms. Lindy Poling ([lgpoling@juno.com](mailto:lgpoling@juno.com)), Mr. Tim Sarraino

**Advisory Board:** Vice Admiral and Mrs. Emmett Tidd, General George B. Price, Mr. James Sarayiotis, Mr. John Odom, Mr. Joe Galloway, Mr. Larry Stogner, Ms. Tricia Edwards

**Websites:** [www.wcpss.net/community\\_in\\_the\\_classroom/](http://www.wcpss.net/community_in_the_classroom/) and <http://schools.wcpss.net/MillbrookHigh/>

A generous grant from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund made possible the publication and printing of this issue of *Bridges*.



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND



## Foreign Officer Brings It Back Home

by Willie Johnson

On April 18, 2001, our Lessons of Vietnam class had the opportunity and the privilege to hear guest speaker, Mr. Robert Carlson, a political officer currently stationed at the U.S. Office in Pristina, Kosovo. Mr. Carlson read about our LOV Program in *USA Today* and contacted Ms. Poling regarding a class visit. A soft-spoken man, he discussed a wide range of topics from his college class on the Vietnam War to the war in the Balkans.



Mr. Carlson awards Crystal Myers a Hard Rock/Kosovo T-shirt for her A+ questions.

Mr. Carlson did not serve in the Vietnam War, but he watched the events transpire through television. He then told us about his college class taught by a Vietnam veteran who gave student assignments similar to our link project. "Out of all the students who picked veterans to interview, I was the only one who chose a Vietnamese...His name was Thanh." Through Thanh's experience, Carlson gave us a view on post-war Saigon and the injustices suffered by the South Vietnamese. "There were spies on every corner. All the teachers and his uncle were sent to re-education camps. The language and history were rewritten by the North." Mr. Carlson also explained that each group was different from the other, and these cultural divides were one of the reasons that the Vietnam War began.

We learned that the life of a foreign officer is neither easy nor boring. Someone asked him what a typical day is like. He responded, "I don't ever have a typical day!" He travels with armed guards in the Balkans where the Albanians "see [former president] Clinton as God," while the Serbs have less than flattering opinions about the United States. While he gave us the frank response that what we are doing in Kosovo is simply keeping opposing groups from going at each others' throats, he also gave the impression that our efforts were not a lost cause. Not one to be short on quotes, Carlson exclaimed, "Someone once said, the art of diplomacy means telling someone to go to hell and making it sound like an invitation!"



## A Letter to the Bridges Staff

**Editor's Note:** The *Bridges* Staff would like to share the following excerpts written by Mr. Robert Wilson, Director of the Veterans Education Project in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Dear *Bridges* Staff:

...Thank you for understanding how important the first-person stories of the men and women who lived through the so-called "Vietnam Era" are to a study of history. We are excited to see that you are not only talking to Vietnam veterans of the U.S. military, but to ARVN soldiers, to Vietnamese refugees and to people who were active in the U.S. peace movement in the 1960's and 70's. You may not realize it, but your listening to your elders' experiences during the war and asking respectful questions about what they went through validates their experience. This is especially true for the veterans of the war—men and women, Vietnamese and American. Sharing wartime stories and lessons, even the painful and difficult ones, can be a very positive, healing experience to a veteran when the people listening really care and are trying to understand, as you are...I will share copies of your newsletter with teachers here in Massachusetts and hope that they will be inspired!

