



The *Bridges* Staff would like to dedicate this issue to Mr. Carl Bimbo and Mr. Phil Beane. Their support of the Millbrook High School Lessons of Vietnam Program has been invaluable - both inside and outside the classroom!

We Are All Connected By History

By Giang Nguyen

Sometimes I am faced with the questions: How does it feel to be Vietnamese? How does it feel to be part of a country that caused so much controversy and confusion in America? Well, much to my disappointment, this issue seems to have been ignored until I experienced the LOV class. I had no idea what an impact Vietnam has had on America. I was stunned to see that there are actually those who are willing to talk about this controversial war. Unfortunately, my memory of Vietnam is quite vague due to the fact that I had to leave at the age of five. My parents' explanation for leaving was that Vietnam seemed to have no future; it's an upside-down place where, without money, there is barely any hope.



Giang serves Vietnamese cuisine to her LOV classmates.

Now I have found that beauty still exists in people, especially those who are willing to face the truth and care to share their truths with my "lost generation" who thinks that Vietnam is just another country, another war, and therefore mundane history. Yet, our Lessons of Vietnam experience proves that history can never be forgotten. It is more than just boring text contained in volumes of books. I find that history is more important than ever, and everyone and everything is connected by it. We must all live together, and we must do so by

learning from each other, knowing that peace, if not now, then in the future, is not impossible.



A Gift of Knowledge

By Norma Kwée

As students in the Lessons of Vietnam class entered the fall semester, we had no idea how much we would personally grow through the Link Program. Each semester every student is linked with a person who has a close relationship with the Vietnam War. At the conclusion of the semester, students compile their experiences into a Link Project which we share with our links. Just by reading the following student excerpts, one realizes the powerful impact this program has!

"If you read a history book, many questions still remain. The link experience opened my eyes to so many truths."

"Understanding is the most important key to acceptance. Now I can accept that although Vietnam is thought of as a mistake, there were those who fought in the war who saw it as a mission of courage, while others returned feeling lost. I can accept the differing opinions of others while holding on to my own. I can accept the challenge when someone questions me about the Vietnam War. I can share with them the wisdom of my very own personal connection to a war many people do not understand and accept themselves."

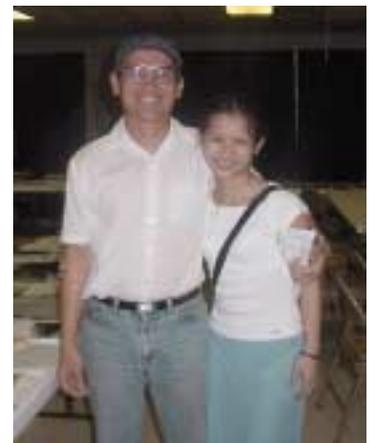
"I feel that it is important for teenagers today to have someone who they can learn from and help them to further their educational growth. I found the Link Program to be that kind of mentoring experience. I have always gotten the feeling that previous generations all too often write off my generation as undisciplined, uncaring, and ignorant. It was comforting and rewarding for me to be able to converse with someone who truly cared about my questions and ideas."

"Messages I receive almost everyday from my link provide me with information accessible only outside the classroom. Talking with my link via Internet results in quicker responses to my questions. Stories of tragedy and sacrifice bring to life the historical time period and fuel my quest for more knowledge."

"I definitely learned invaluable lessons that will aid me throughout my life. History will forever be present."

*"One thing that I have learned is that **this** is history. We are living in history; we are making history. We have the power to change it, and we have the power to pass it on."*

LOV students will take the lessons and insights they have learned from their links with them throughout their lives. Each one of us has been given a unique gift of knowledge. As LOV student, Erin Collins, commented, *"A gift. That is exactly what this project has been to me - a gift of knowledge. This is the most meaningful, because nobody can take away what you know."*



A great link match -- Giang Nguyen and her dad!



What Students Want to Know

By Kelly Cox

If a survey of 200 ninth through twelfth graders is any indication of what students know about the Vietnam War, then students are in dire need of a Vietnam-related education. A five-question survey distributed to two classes each of 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th graders at Millbrook HS revealed a gaping hole in the awareness regarding one of the most significant and controversial wars in American history.

Where is Vietnam located? A little over half of the students answered “Asia,” but it is apparent that many students have no clue where Vietnam is located on a map. The second question was not as straightforward as the first. **What was America’s goal in Vietnam?** As a survey group, we determined that the *best* answer dealt with the containment of communism. Out of the five questions on the survey, this one fared the worst, with only half of the students alluding to communism.

A clear indication of the need for more education in this area can be seen in the responses to these questions: **What is your strongest image of the Vietnam War? Where did this image come from?** *Forrest Gump, Rambo, Good Morning, Vietnam, and Platoon*, seem to be the main “educational resources” for high school students. Some of these movies are more accurate than others, but none of them give a true account of Vietnam, not to mention a balance of historical facts. The only uplifting response came from a sophomore who wrote, “Bravery. People sacrificed their lives so others could get their freedom.” The remaining answers dealt with blood, death, guns and the haunting images of the pain and suffering of U.S. soldiers and the Vietnamese. Most students tend to see Vietnam as a horrific fight for an unknown cause. On a more encouraging note, three-fourths of the students knew the answer to the questions: **Where is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (“The Wall”) located? What is engraved on The Wall?** Most students know that The Wall is located in Washington, D.C. and that the names of fallen soldiers are engraved on its surface.

In our school system, high school juniors are required to take U.S. History. Common sense would lead a person to believe that high school seniors who have completed this course would be the most knowledgeable about this topic. But surprisingly, this is not true. Seniors seem to have about the same knowledge about the Vietnam War as the freshmen, who had about 50% accuracy on our survey. The juniors scored the best and the sophomores fared the poorest with over 50% missing most of the questions.

Of the 55 students with relatives directly involved in the Vietnam War, there seems to be no difference between their knowledge and that of students without family connections. There is an apparent lack of family communication about this conflict. An overwhelming majority of the students (92.5%) conveyed that they **wanted** to learn about this period. Because students cannot gain this information from their families, they turn to the school curriculum to provide it for them. Since students clearly have a desire to learn about this

So Many Questions...

By Dan MacLachlan

When seniors enter Ms. Poling’s LOV class on the first day of the semester, they are asked to write at least three questions they have relating to the Vietnam Era. A major question is “Why?”

- **Why** did the war start?
- **Why** did the U.S. become involved?
- **Why** did President Johnson send troops?
- **Why** did we fight someone else’s war?
- **Why** did it seem that many of the protestors were college students?



Why?

- **Why** was there a lack of patriotism?
- **Why** is Vietnam considered a failure by so many?
- **Why** was there so much sacrifice of human life?
- **Why** were the soldiers losing morale?
- **Why** is the war still so controversial?

Students are also asked to share their expectations for the LOV class. Crystal Myers commented, “I expect to learn, in depth, about the culture of Vietnam, the war itself, and the controversy over it. I don’t really understand, so I look forward to learning about it.” Many others had similar responses. When we leave the LOV class this semester, we will probably still have more questions. After all, the media reminds us of these questions almost everyday.

Movie Review: *Hamburger Hill*

By Jennifer Baldinelli

This movie is billed as the most realistic war movie to come out of our American experience in Vietnam. It describes one rifle squad’s experiences in the thick of one of the more controversial battles of Vietnam, Hamburger Hill. Its heroes are Vietnam grunts who only want to survive, but they also feel great responsibility for their “brothers.” There are no love scenes in the movie or sub-plots to captivate the general public – nothing to cloud its message: You fight to win or you don’t fight at all. The movie depicts the themes of the battle from the perspective of a single, fictitious infantry squad, along with the medic supporting that platoon, their sergeant, and their leader.

Many people wonder if Vietnam was worth it. Was it worth all of the innocent lives that were lost, families that were wrecked, or havoc that was brought into the United States as a result of our entry into the war? As the philosophical mantra among the “grunts” in the movie said, “It [the war] don’t mean nothin’.” That’s a sad conclusion, considering that I am taking a class called the *Lessons of Vietnam*. Wasn’t there a lesson learned?

While viewing this movie, I could not help but draw a parallel to what is going on in the world around me. I was moved by the youth of the soldiers of the Vietnam War. Since so many of my male friends are of “draft age,” it scares me to think that they could, one day, all be gone. I cannot imagine a world without my friends to lean on, my father to guide me, or other family members that I dearly love. War is like a monster; it comes at us with a ferocious roar and threatens to take away all that we cherish. Will our “New War” take my father, my brother, or some of my classmates? Will it take away my freedom to live the way I choose? Will it limit my rights as a woman? This country has survived the monstrosity of war before. This time, will we let the lessons we have learned help us to survive without traumatic losses?



LOV Links ~ Spring 2002

Doug Black	Mr. Phil Beane
Cullen Brown	Mr. Bob Gray
Julius West	Mr. David Rabadan
Eric Robson	Mr. Dan Sheehan
Ronel Estrada	Mr. Rob Wilson
Shahin Eskamaei	Mr. Dave Samuels
Melissa Hinnant	Mr. Phil Price
Zulu Nwankwo	Mr. Rob Bozeman
Zach Schuch	Mr. Frederick Downs
Chris Thum	Mr. Charles Sapp
Cameron Singleton	RADM H.B. Robertson
Brandon Jones	Mr. Bill Bacon
Robert Lodge	Mr. Mike Gormalley
Thomas Patterson	2 nd Lt. Sean Keenan
Jamie Harding	Mr. Jim Zumwalt
Carlos Iniguez	Mr. Stephen Sossaman
Ofon Essiet	Mr. Tom Anderson
Brittany Colman	Mr. Qui Nguyen
Liam Johnson	Mr. Cecil Martin
Allison Carter	Mr. Mike Carter (Dad) & Mr. Bud Gross
Brian Dickens	Mr. Erick Dickens (Dad) & Mr. Kit Lavell
Jenn Dickson	Mrs. Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers & SSG Mark Weems
Jessica Buie	Mr. Larry Bissonnette & Ms. Denise Reed
Madhvi Patel	Ms. June Eldridge & Mr. Carl Bimbo
Andrew McGrady	Mr. William McGrady (Dad) & Mr. Joe Sinnott (Uncle)
April Mallett	Mr. Larry Stogner & Mr. John Odom
Crystal Myers	Dr. Mel Stephens & Mr. Robert Carlson
Dan MacLachlan	VADM & Mrs. Emmett Tidd
Aaditya Shah	Mr. "Murf" McCloy & Mr. George Scaife



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and <http://mhs.wcpss.net>



Walking in the Enemy's Shoes

By Brittany Elliott

Walking a mile in someone else's shoes is an idea often thought about but seldom carried out. When one has anger or malice towards another, viewing the situation from the other's perspective is virtually impossible. But this is not the case for Lt. Col. Jim Zumwalt, son of the late Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Commander of Naval Operations during the Vietnam War.

Empathy runs in the family so it seems, for when Jim Zumwalt's brother, Elmo III, was diagnosed with cancer as a result of Agent Orange, Admiral Zumwalt made great strides to raise the awareness of its devastating effects, even though he lost his son in the process. He knew that he and his family were not the only ones suffering from the loss of a loved one. Not only were there people grieving in the United States of America, but also in Vietnam.

When the Zumwalt family visited our class, Mrs. Mouza Zumwalt reminded us that her husband was not fully informed about the harmful effects of Agent Orange. He did not "know his enemy" until it was too late. Knowing the enemy is the key to victory, according to *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu. However, Lt. Col. Zumwalt showed us that one could apply this principle to gain common ground with one's opponent as well.

He shared with us an insightful and touching story of a time when he met a former North Vietnamese soldier. The man related to him that he, too, lost a



Lieutenant Colonel Jim Zumwalt

brother as a result of the war. In that moment of truth, there was a connection between the two, an understanding that went beyond ethnicity, or the fact that the man standing in front of Lt. Col. Zumwalt was, at one time, the "enemy."

The conversation these two men had proved to be significant for Lt. Col. Zumwalt's healing process. He continues to go back to Vietnam, constantly learning the other side of the story, constantly walking the long, difficult mile in his former enemy's shoes.