



Bridges

THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM



The *Bridges Staff* would like to dedicate this special issue to the memory of Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. and his amazing family. Admiral Zumwalt took a special interest in our *LOV* Program and came to speak to the fall, 1998 MHS *LOV* class. It is really marvelous to think that one of the Admiral's "final watches" was related to the education of our youth.



*Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers & Lt. Col. Jim Zumwalt
— Dedicated supporters of our LOV Program.*

We are indebted to his daughter, Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers, and his son, Lt. Col. Jim Zumwalt, for their continuing support of *LOV* as classroom speakers and resource links. Mrs. Mouza Zumwalt is also a most welcome "guest teacher." Grandson, James, has even contributed an article to this issue! And so, the Zumwalt tradition of teaching our youth the value of service, the lessons of sacrifice, and the importance of independent thinking lives on. The MHS *LOV* class is forever grateful.

Nhớ và Học

By Jennifer Dickson

Nhớ và học. Vietnamese for "remember and learn." To a *LOV* student, this phrase means so much more. It is hard to express what the *Lessons of Vietnam* class really means in a limited space. Though the class lasts only a brief semester, the lessons learned last a lifetime.

In schools today, the Vietnam Era is rarely taught; and if it is, due to a large curriculum crammed into a short year, it is often rushed. Ironically, this era shaped our world today. Our parents, aunts, uncles, and family friends lived through this controversial historical period; yet we know nothing about it. And, the lessons to be learned from the Vietnam War reach far beyond simple dates and names. The resounding effects still live on.

Simply recalling the date of the first American casualty or the number of names on The Wall is not all that we can learn. And this is not where our class stops; in fact, this is only the beginning. Through speakers and links, we are taught to remember those 58,229 men and women who died, to remember how dear our freedom is, and to respect the sacrifices made for us. When speakers such as Mr. Nelson, Mr. Dyer, Mr. Loc, Mr. Stogner, VADM and Mrs. Tidd, General Price, and the Zumwalt family come to speak, we learn the human perspective, outside the textbook; and here the real lessons begin. These lessons continue in our free time with our links, who share their perspectives with us, one-on-one, in a manner too valuable for words. The lessons go further in our reading of books on the Vietnam Era, offering yet another perspective. And when the year is over, the lessons still continue. It is hard to say right now just how much this class has affected us, for we are still too close for hindsight. But it is guaranteed that this is an experience we shall never forget.

To all who have helped to make this class possible: *Cám ơn* (Vietnamese for "thanks")! And, to all who have experienced the *LOV*: What will you *nhớ và học*?



What's in a Name?

By Robert Lodge

Walking alongside The Wall with the same silent gaze of the three stone soldiers overlooking the Memorial, I watched as name after name flashed before my eyes and vanished as quickly as they came. Yet not a single one was able to dig past my mind and bury itself into my soul. Then, suddenly, I spotted a name that struck deep — my own.

A chill crept down my spine as I read the name "Robert Lodge" over and over in disbelief. This was *my* name, *my* legacy, *my* fate. I placed my hand on The Wall and saw my reflection in the gleaming black panel. I began to notice the images of men, women, boys, and girls standing alongside my own. Suddenly, floodgates opened within my heart, as it seemed all the pain and agony of not only those on The Wall, but their loved ones as well, came rushing in. I pictured myself in the jungles of Vietnam, holding my friend as I slowly watched the life slip out of his eyes. I pictured myself holding a telegram, informing me that my father had not made it through the previous night's battle. I pictured myself in a grave, cut down not even a quar-



ter of the way through a life that held so much promise before a fateful step on a landmine.

In complete silence, I hoisted my friend upon my shoulders to rub Major Robert A. Lodge's name — *my* name — from the Wall in order to capture forever the emotions of that clear April afternoon. As I departed, I paused at the entrance of the Memorial exactly where I had stared alongside the statue of the three soldiers just a short time ago, and stood a completely different person.

We only get one shot at this crazy game called life. Over 58,000 individuals used theirs fighting for people like us who were nothing but names to them. Now, three decades later, we must return the favor by remembering these brave souls. So, before you go to sleep tonight, please remember Major Robert A. Lodge and the thousands of men and women etched alongside him for eternity. See their faces, hear their voices, and tell them that you are grateful. Maybe you will be inspired, just like I was, to make the most of your life before all that is left of you is a name.



Winning the Peace

By Brittany Elliott



The mission of the United States Institute of Peace is to promote peace throughout the world through political means. But, how is this institute really able to implement international peace considering the immense problems facing our world today? Mr. David Rabadan, Dr. Jeff Helsing, and Dr. Mike Dziedzic all agree that one of the essential solutions is **education**.

Mr. David Rabadan was a history teacher before and after he served in Vietnam. He commented, "We are all affected differently by what we have seen and what we have not seen." Mr. Rabadan chose to use his experience in Vietnam for the good of his students by using his photographs to instruct them about the effects of war. His current work in the U.S. State Dept. Office of Global Demining is educating people who live in areas of the world infected with landmines. Not only does his group take mines out of the area, but it also teaches children and adults about mine awareness.

Dr. Jeff Helsing expanded our knowledge regarding peace initiatives by explaining many of the complex issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He emphasized that **words make a difference**. If someone is **communicating** with another, then he is truly **educating** that person. Perhaps, if the Middle Eastern leaders were really communicating, this conflict could soon be resolved.

Finally, Dr. Mike Dziedzic talked to us about the role of the military in peace operations. He explained to us that terrorist groups thrive on the instability of a country. Without education comes instability. People who possess knowledge and good communication skills can help protect themselves from being ruled by anything from a corrupt president to a terrorist group.

In the final analysis, we all came to understand the importance of education and communication. Without each working hand-in-hand, there is no way we can win the peace.

Foreign Policy Choices: 1965

By Jamie Harding

Imagine it is the summer of 1965. As the situation in Vietnam deteriorates, President Johnson and his administration recognize the need for a thorough re-examination of American policy, tactics, and strategy. What should be the main objective of the U.S. in Vietnam? What steps should the U.S. take to reach these objectives?

These questions were raised in our *LOV* class. We separated into groups and were each given a different option to debate. **OPTION 1** was to Americanize the war, and fight to win. **OPTION 2** was to escalate military forces slowly and control the risks. **OPTION 3** proposed using limited involvement and in the meantime, negotiating a withdrawal. The 4th and final **OPTION** advocated pulling out U.S. troops immediately. These four options were then open for discussion and debate.

"We have to get out of Vietnam. It's not our type of war," commented one student. Another student remarked, "The U.S. is in a land that does not want our help." Thomas Patterson argued, "Our military is trained and used to winning wars, no matter what the situation." His group felt communism should be stopped in its tracks before it could spread anywhere else.

This debate inspired more questions than answers: Did we do the right thing? Was there anything else we could have done? Through this activity, students were forced to initially work as a team, and then go on to think independently by developing their own **OPTION 5**. By researching and debating U.S. foreign policy options in 1965, we now have a better understanding of the difficult challenges our policymakers faced.

Rearview Mirror

By Jennifer Dickson

At this point in the year, time is slipping away. The people and events of our last few weeks as seniors are zipping past us like speeding cars. So many times that is how life works; the times you want to remember fly by and are gone in a flash. But every now and then, a fleeting moment is caught in slow motion, and forever saved in our memory as the most vivid memory of our high school career. For me, this moment was the *LOV* class candlelight service during our trip to Washington, DC...High school seniors, standing in a circle at the Reflecting Pool on the Mall, holding fluorescent glow sticks under a perfect moon, respectfully reading the names of Wake County soldiers, sharing special memories and lessons learned. It is impossible to describe the atmosphere in that small circle; but the atmosphere is not what is important. Long after we have forgotten the "feeling" of the night, the lessons we learned will live on. I want to share with all of you, my personal glimpse into the "rearview mirror" of life and the *LOV* class; the same reflection I shared in our tight gathering on the Mall.

When Ms. Poling asked me to reflect on this experience, I thought it would be easy. But in reality, it is difficult to put into words. Our classroom format is unlike any other. We gain new perspectives and open our eyes. We are asked to push harder, think higher, and delve deeper. As Ms. Poling always says, "We leave with more questions than answers." I think the most amazing aspect of this class is not what we get, but what we **give**! Because of our interest and concern, we are helping our past heal. As Charles B. Watson wrote in *Voices from the Wall*, "...In one voice, gentle and kind, every voice of every person on The Wall was telling me...Remember us with love, accept, forget and forgive."

This is exactly what we were doing on that emotional April evening — loving, accepting, forgetting, forgiving, and yet always remembering... And that is the most important lesson.



Reflections on The Wall

By Kelly Cox

For my classmates and I, finally seeing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was what most of us considered the pinnacle of our trip. After an informative question and answer session with Mr. Jan Scruggs, the mind behind the Memorial, we had a chance to "experience" The Wall for the first time.

Physically, it was much smaller than I had anticipated, yet much more beautiful, which surprised me—maybe because I had heard the phrase "black gash of shame" all too often. The polished granite shone like a mirror reflecting everything and everyone around it. It did not look black at all, but more like a vast array of brilliant colors. The other surprise was the massive number of people hovering around The Wall. People of all ages and all walks of life neither seemed to be sad or ashamed at what they saw. Instead, they seemed *peaceful*.

I came to realize that each name on The Wall is not just a name, but a person; someone's boyfriend, brother, father, sister, or friend. Each one of those names has a story behind it, a family, a face. More than 20 million people have a direct connection to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Maybe the reason I did not see many people crying was because they were remembering and celebrating the lives of so many brave Americans. These were Americans who fought because they were trying to improve the condition of our world.



True Education

By James Zumwalt

There are certain times when our experiences do not languish in our past but continue with us in the present — their whispers subtly becoming the conscience of our future. The same is true for a country — its wars and the painful memories they generate reshape a nation's people into what they are today.

This was best exemplified by Texas Tech University's 4th Triennial Symposium on the Vietnam War. There I lived a thousand lifetimes in just three days, experiencing stories of the conflict, its aftermath, and its generation of young people — some confused, but all courageous, in their service to country. The stories of two people in particular stand out most — two men for whom fate took different directions as Saigon fell under communist control.

Nguyen Xuan Phong was a South Vietnamese ambassador whose indomitable love for family and country brought him back to Saigon, days before its fall. Later arrested, he spent five years in a "re-education" camp, living in political silence for another 22 years. That silence ended at the April conference in Lubbock, Texas. He shared his pain as his country fell, not so much for its defeat, but more so for sorrow of the unfulfilled promise made to his worried mother that Vietnam would be free. He passionately criticized Vietnam's current human rights violations now enslaving his people, imploring representatives present from Hanoi "to let my people go!"

As Ambassador Phong was returning to Vietnam in 1975, a U.S. cargo aircraft departed Saigon, evacuating orphaned Vietnamese babies. A single mother here in the U.S. quickly adopted one of the babies, giving him the name Scott Andrew Winterbottom. Ironically, as Scott gained his freedom, Ambassador Phong lost his. Today, Sgt. Winterbottom defends the very freedom won for him in 1975 as a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps.

I learned that even today, this war remains a part of those who experienced it, living and breathing inside all of us still. The Vietnam Center's devotion to evolution is insuring that these lessons are learned so that the echoes from the past will not become the call of the future.



Ms. Poling with Vietnamese scholars, veterans, and policymakers at the Vietnam Symposium.

Past, Present, Future

By Crystal Myers

Although he has been busy traveling all over the nation regarding the new movie, *We Were Soldiers*, international journalist, Joseph Galloway, took the time to meet with our *Lessons of Vietnam* class on our recent field trip. We had an in-depth conversation about the effects of the War — past, present, and future.

As a journalist-turned-soldier, Mr. Galloway had a lot to say about the War and The Wall. He asked us to think of the mindset of a high school senior in the 1960's. "Think of the burden put on young people at the time—the draft, the War, and death." When asked what the Memorial means to him, he replied, "It's the most moving piece of art I've ever seen." He then simply asked us to remember that freedom is not free. As he gazed at The Wall, he solemnly reflected, "It's been paid for."

Of course, we could not miss the opportunity to ask Mr. Galloway about *We Were Soldiers*. "I am very proud of it. Most vets loved it," he said. Having seen the movie myself, I know! When it ended, a profound silence filled the theater. People left with a newfound respect for the Vietnam Veteran, for many feel this was the first movie to paint an accurate picture of the War. Mr. Galloway continued, "The soldiers were just like you. They simply did what their country asked them to do without complaining. There is no glory in the war, but honor in the soldier. Remember — love the warrior, not the war."

Over the years, Mr. Galloway has been a strong supporter of our *Lessons of Vietnam* program. He said that classes like ours are very important, because "they teach young people what we've done in the past and what not to do in the future. You are tomorrow's leaders and you must use the lessons from the past in order to live a more peaceful life in the future."



A Taste of Vietnam

By Giang Nguyen

Vietnamese food! How foreign and peculiar that sounds to those who have never had the chance to experience it. How does it taste? Is it like Chinese food? Will I like it?



Millbrook students "LOV"-ing Vietnamese cuisine!

These questions bombarded me as we neared our destination, the Saigon Inn. I could see the eagerness in my LOV classmates' faces...Finally they would have the opportunity to "taste" part of Vietnam.

After a four-hour bus ride, and a lengthy, yet interesting seminar at the Peace Institute, everyone was looking forward to the best part of the day — dinner! With a warm welcome from Saigon Inn owner, Mr. "Pat P," everyone sat nervously and anxiously waiting for the unexpected. Our tastebuds were immediately satisfied by the savory dumpling soup and delicious spring roll appetizers. By then, all uncertainty was thrown aside, and every dish that followed was eagerly consumed. Each one was not only vibrantly colorful, but also as tasty as it looked. Chicken, shrimp, beef, and vegetables...Vietnamese food may be our next favorite dish!

We delightfully ended our meal with a refreshingly artistic dessert of fresh oranges. The overall verdict, you may ask? What more could we say but, "It was great! We love Vietnamese food!"

The Women Who Served

By Madhvi V. Patel

Many people do not even realize that many women chose to risk their lives to take part in wars that many felt "men should fight." *The Women in Military Service for America Memorial* was dedicated on October 18, 1997. The Memorial houses artifacts associated with military women throughout our nation's history. One of the impressive quotes displayed in the Memorial is as follows: "It isn't just my brother's country, or my husband's country, it's my country as well. And so the war wasn't just their war, it was my war and I needed to serve in it."

Ms. June Eldridge, my LOV class link, is the Deputy Director of the Women's Memorial. She welcomed the LOV class on our recent field trip to Washington, DC. Ms. Eldridge spoke about the many roles that women played in the military, including serving as spies, nurses, and members of the Air Force, Army, and Navy. The tour of the Women's Memorial was even more special because of all the "inside stories" she shared with us, as well as her detailed explanations regarding the symbolism in each display.

The Women's Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery stands for courage, perseverance, bravery, and compassion. The women who served will forever be given the honor and dignity they deserve, because so many cared that this memorial was erected in their memory.





MHS LOV students and chaperones at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



LOV Teacher Receives National Honor

By Norma Kwée

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Ladies Auxiliary recognize the best teachers who teach citizen education topics regularly and promote America's history and traditions. The honor of 2002 *National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year* has been awarded to our very own Ms. Lindy G. Poling. She has taken the elective, *Lessons of Vietnam (LOV)*, to new heights through her dedication and hard work. Her "Community-in-the-Classroom" Program brings veterans, correspondents, activists, refugees, policymakers, and others into the classroom to share their experiences. Ms. Poling has truly inspired her students to become active citizens, and her program has helped many veterans come to terms with the War. Congratulations, Ms. Poling! Keep up the great work!

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Websites: www.wcpss.net/community_in_the_classroom/ and <http://mhs.wcpss.net>

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VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND

Lessons in Decision Making

By Melissa Privette

In 1982, several Vietnam veterans believed that popular movies such as *Rambo* and *Top Gun* exploited combat and promoted violence. These veterans began a program called the "Veterans Education Project" (VEP) which provides young people with a more realistic view of war. The veterans felt that students need to see the "big picture" of service, war, and foreign affairs, both positive and negative. They also wanted to give teens considering joining the military an opportunity to talk to men and women who had "been there."

The VEP, a local program in Amherst, Massachusetts, now consists of 25 volunteer veterans who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and more recent wars. Its mission is "to provide perspectives that will help teens understand history more clearly and make balanced, reasoned decisions in their own lives," says VEP Director Mr. Rob Wilson. "We also share stories about our lives that illuminate an era of history." The VEP helps teach young people responsibility by presenting them with model decision-making situations that encourage positive choices.

In addition to sharing oral histories, some VEP veterans use their stories to explore the realities and consequences of violence that kids often do not see. While teenagers tend not to listen to their parents or teachers about the dangers of violence, they are more likely to listen to a veteran who shares an understanding through his or her own **true** war experiences. The group's work with teenagers in the area of violence prevention has achieved awards from local and national organizations, including the National Council on Juvenile Crime and Delinquency.



Teaching Vietnam

By Norma Kwée

Unlike most war memorials, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial continues to take on a life of its own. The newest addition to the *Echoes from the Wall* curriculum developed by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is the "Teach Vietnam Teachers' Network."

Educators from all over the United States will work together to develop new tools for teaching the Vietnam Era to students. Studies have shown that many students have very little understanding of the Vietnam War. Through this program there will be more access to teacher/student resources. Along with creating new ways to teach students, other goals of the network include helping the Memorial Fund promote its mission and education programs throughout our country.

Participating teachers will attend the network as state "ambassadors," learning new ways of teaching about Vietnam and then sharing ideas with other teachers in their home states. The four-day conference will be held in Washington, DC this summer. The "ambassadors" will experience the history firsthand through workshops and training. One of the workshop leaders, our own Ms. Lindy Poling, will be presenting "Teaching Vietnam Through Personal Stories and Experiences," with Mr. Rob Wilson and Mr. Stephen Sossaman of the Veterans Education Project. She will also share copies of our *Bridges* newsletter with this national network of teachers. Through these workshops and programs, teachers across the nation will be better informed to teach the uninformed, which in turn will make it possible for those who served in the Vietnam War never to be forgotten.

