



# Bridges

## THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM

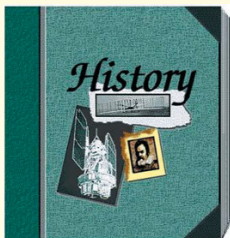


### The Value of History

By Susan Woodson

By the time we reach our senior year in high school, we have taken many history courses. Until this year in LOV, most of us did not truly understand the value of history. We have had the unique opportunity to personally interview well-informed individuals, listen to outstanding guest speakers, and write thoughtful reflections. Many LOV students have come to the realization that history has a profound effect on our daily lives. Here is a sampling of student comments from a recent LOV survey:

- "Students need to learn history because some of them are our future leaders of America. [We] need to know what mistakes from the past *not* to repeat."
- "History is more important than ever, and everything and everyone is connected by it."
- "This class has taught me that lessons from history apply to the situations of the present. A lot can be learned from history, which can be used for one's entire life."
- "I have learned 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."



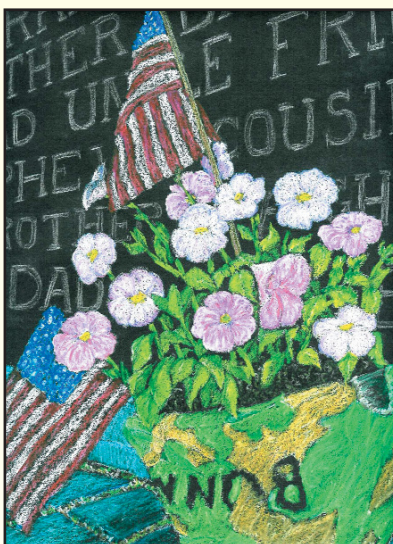
### What are the Lessons of Vietnam?

By Courtney Moore

The Vietnam War serves as an ever-present reminder of what *not* to do in war. When asked, "What are the lessons of Vietnam?" one might simply reply, "to have 'no more Vietnams!'" Yet, the answer lies much deeper than that. The history of this conflict has taught us many lessons. By interviewing twenty-five respected friends of the LOV class, I was able to discover just what those lessons are.

First and foremost, a nation should only enter a war when its national interests, security, and allies are at stake. We have learned that it is essential for a nation to make such a commitment only if all other alternatives have been exhausted. When people feel their country and way of life is threatened, they will resort to extremes to protect their homeland. It is important never to underestimate the enemy. According to former South Vietnamese Ambassador Nguyen Xuan Phong, "People's warfare combines feelings of national pride and human dignity, national sovereignty and independence, collective and individual security, traditions and customs...All of these [can] be...expressed in concrete acts of war by the entire population." We have learned never to downplay the enemy's resourcefulness. Vietnam Veteran, Lt. Col. Jim Zumwalt, said, "Never engage an enemy on the battlefield unless you know and understand him first...that is know what makes him tick, know how he thinks, know what motivates him to fight..."

When asked, 'How do you think we should apply those lessons to the international problems of today?' VADM Emmett Tidd replied, "...with common sense, logic and patience consistent with the likely threat and potential danger that would result to our security and vital national interests..." We must stay dedicated to our goals—as Medal of Honor recipient, Col. Roger Donlon, empha-



### Offerings at The Wall

By Will Allen

sized, "[We should] always honor our commitments."

To avoid future conflicts, the United States need not act as the international police force for every nation that does not play by our rules. It is vital to develop the support of the oppressed people. We need to understand the mindset of those involved by understanding their situation without forcing our standards upon them.

To be successful in any war, a nation's government and its people must be united. If citizens are not supportive on the homefront, then what can we hope to accomplish overseas? Regarding our current conflict in Iraq, war protestors made a point to distinguish between *war* and *warrior* by protesting against government decisions *instead* of the soldier. There has been better communication between our government and the American public.

Our military has been allowed to make important strategic decisions without government interference, as was done in Vietnam. Now that major combat operations have ended, we must support the rebuilding of a nation. "The important issue will be how to help the Iraqis govern themselves," responded Mr. Jan Scruggs, President of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

With every action taken, there is always a lesson to be learned. It is necessary that we apply those lessons learned to the issues challenging us today. To do so, we must take the time to learn from history's mistakes so as not to repeat them. Have we really learned the *lessons of Vietnam*? As General George B. Price stated, "Only history will answer that question." It is true; only the history of the present will reveal what may happen in the future. It is our responsibility to learn and apply the lessons given to us by those who still live to teach them.





## A Real and Lasting Peace

By Matthew Turrentine



Imagine waking up late one morning only to hear that a suicide bomber has just killed 25 people in a Tel Aviv shopping center. Imagine what it is like to live under curfew with armed soldiers challenging you almost any time you come out of your home. Imagine living in absolute fear for your life as you travel to work. Returning home—alive—after a hard day's work has a whole new meaning in Israel and her occupied territories. But, why? Why has this become a routine existence?

Homeland. Israelis want to insure the survival of Israel as a Jewish homeland. Palestinians want a homeland of their own. Dr. Jeffrey Helsing, Program Officer at the U.S. Institute of Peace, explains, "The conflict is a struggle for land, existence, security, justice, and acceptance—by both peoples. How can Israeli sovereignty and security be reconciled with the national aspirations and needs of the Palestinian people?"

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, almost every other international crisis has taken a backseat to something more important—TERRORISM. But the war in Iraq and post-war reconstruction have forced the Bush administration to refocus on **all** of the Middle East. And, a recent Palestinian agreement that designates a new prime minister and cabinet is a hopeful sign that Palestinians and Israelis may start moving forward with the peace process once again.

I agree with Dr. Helsing who believes, "If there is a real transformation of Iraq by the Iraqi people—aided by the United Nations, the United States, NGOs, etc.—then there will be an increasing pressure on other Arab nations to reform and liberalize...Ideally, the prospects of a more stable, democratizing Middle East will give Israel enough of a sense of security, and Palestinians enough hope, that they can come together to make a real and lasting peace."

## What Price Tyranny?

By Bev Loudon

Terror, democide (a government's killing of its people), and oppression are terms associated with today's dictatorships. As the United States battles to finally liberate the Iraqi people, many wonder when others living under the siege of tyranny will have their day to bask in the sunlight of freedom.

Based on information from independent human rights organizations such as Freedom House, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, veteran international journalist, David Wallechinsky, recently compiled his "Ten Worst Living Dictators" list for *PARADE* magazine. North Korea's Kim Jong Il, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, and Burma's Than Shwe were ranked in the top five.

Our nation has deemed *Operation Iraqi Freedom* a vital action to eliminate an unstable dictator, free his fear-stricken people, and rid the country of its weapons of mass destruction. However, North Korea has admitted to having weapons of mass destruction. Her citizens also suffer a silent agony of torture and poverty. Staggering numbers of North Koreans have starved to death, and over 15,000 are imprisoned in labor camps. Will the United States liberate North Korea's people by eliminating this oppressive dictatorship?

Than Shwe of Burma is a strict and oppressive ruler. Human Rights Watch reports that Burma holds the world's largest number of child soldiers. Than Shwe also subjects his people to massive forced labor, which the International Labor Organization recognizes as "a contemporary form of slavery."

These dictators violate at least 23 of the 30 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* principles. Freedom from discrimination, freedom from torture, and freedom from slavery do not apply in these authoritarian governments. Mr. Wallechinsky maintains that these regimes are among the most ruthless in "suppressing those freedoms and human rights that Americans take for granted."

While America does not wish to initiate additional world conflicts, starvation, slavery and torture should no longer be tolerated. Therefore, we must ask, "If America will not reach out to those who are still suffering under the brutal hands of greed and power, who will?"

## Emotions of War

By Kim Dragos

After what many consider a defeat in Vietnam several decades ago, our country became acutely aware of the dangers of war, and even more skeptical of committing our troops to another one. There is no one who understands this more than the courageous veterans who served in Vietnam so many years ago, and who now reluctantly watch as their sons enter a raging battlefield, much like the one that will forever dwell in their own memories.

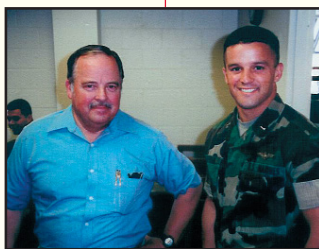
"My emotions were totally engaged in ways that they never were since Vietnam," says Mr. Dan Sheehan, a *LOV* class link and former Navy pilot of twenty years. As his son serves his duty in Iraq, Mr. Sheehan reflects, "It's one thing to fear for yourself at a time when you feel you have at least a little control in the events. It's totally another thing to fear for someone else at a time when you have absolutely no control over events." During his service in Vietnam, Mr. Sheehan watched several of his com-

rades die; therefore, he understands all too well the dangers of combat.

Another veteran link, Mr. Bob Brown, says of his son who recently served in Afghanistan, "I have no fear for him if he is left to his own decisions. But the military is not like that. You must obey orders that sometimes come from the unknowing."

It is not the unknown, but the known, that continues to worry these veterans as they recall painful memories from their own experiences. Mr. Sheehan is concerned about the war's long-term effect on his son. "I saw the Vietnam War harden people against compassion and concern for humans; my hope is that my son will be able to cope without losing his sense of honor and duty, sense of humor, and compassion."

As these veterans watch their sons engage in combat, they must continue to find a balance between the fear a father has for his son, and the respect a veteran has for the soldier.



LCDR Dan Sheehan, U.S. Navy Ret.  
and son, Dan, Captain,  
U.S. Marine Corps



## Thinking on Our Own

By Liz Lodge

As I look back on my high school career, I realize what a significant impact the *LOV* class has had on me. My classmates and I have had the opportunity to relive history, as we have listened to speakers who have made history. We have gained a better understanding of our nation's foreign policy—then and now. We also have learned how to think critically on our own.

I was very curious about how this class has affected the opinions of former students regarding the world today, so I invited former *LOV* students to share their views in relation to the following questions: *How has the class helped you to better understand or deal with the war in Iraq? In what ways has LOV affected your views on the foreign policy of the United States?*



Liz Lodge (r) interviews Elizabeth Rawls, Millbrook High School Class of 1997

Most agreed that the *LOV* class helped them to develop their own ideas and gain interest in current issues. Jayme Canty, '02, claims this class "helps me want to learn more about the war [in Iraq]." Many went from seldom watching the news to making it a nightly ritual. By being exposed to a wide variety of viewpoints, they began to realize how polar opinions can be. In order to gain

an accurate understanding of an issue, one must "read and talk to many sources," said Elizabeth Rawls, '97. *LOV* has taught individuals to critically analyze issues rather than blindly accept what the evening news reports. Jayme also acknowledges, "Critical thinking is something you use everyday... You have to develop an opinion on your own about life, society, and wars."

Many *LOV* graduates used this lesson in critical analysis as a tool to develop their own opinions about important issues. Crystal Myers, '02, commented, "The varying opinions of the [Vietnam Era] by different people left a huge impression on me." This idea of varied viewpoints can also be seen today. Regarding the recent war in Iraq, I received answers from both ends of the spectrum. A large number of interviewees support our current U.S. foreign policy. Lori Girton, '98, feels "the U.S. is justified in waging the war against Saddam Hussein, because he has deliberately ignored previous agreements." On the other hand, Stephen Miura, '01, was incensed that the U.S. "ignored the UN's vote to continue inspections."

UNC-CH freshman, Crystal Myers, concluded, "The *LOV* class helped me understand the inner workings of war. Instead of blindly following our president or jumping on the college war protest bandwagon, I was able to comprehend what was going on and make a better judgment of how I felt." There is no doubt that the *Lessons of Vietnam* program has given students the ability to use critical analysis to formulate our own thoughtful opinions. Isn't that what **real** learning is all about?



## The Media: Love It or Hate It?

By Rebecca Schley

As most Americans continue their normal everyday lives, the only thing that connects them to the foreign conflict thousands of miles away in Iraq is the media. With today's technology and twenty-four hour news coverage, we are forced to take the good with the bad, perhaps wisely not accepting anything at face value. There is always a love-hate relationship when it comes to the media: We can't live with it; we can't live without it.

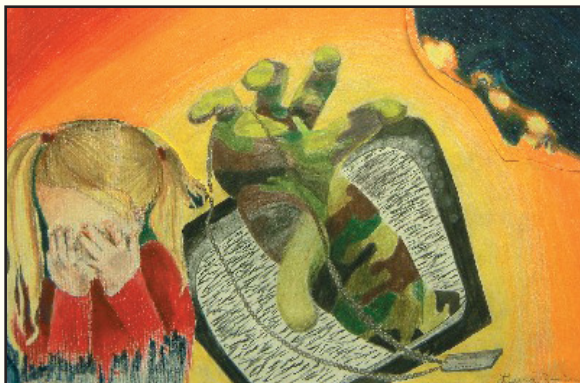
While embedded journalism has been around since World War I, it reached new levels with the current war in Iraq. International War Correspondent, Mr. Joseph Galloway, praises the embedded journalist program. He believes, "Readers and TV viewers are getting a close up real time picture of what's happening; how soldiers live and die in the front lines. This is reporting at its very best. Everyone is a winner." During WWI, WWII, and Korea there was absolute censorship. Military censors reviewed reporters' stories and photos before they could be published. Vietnam was, until now, the most openly reported of all U.S. wars. Mr. Galloway feels this full coverage can be beneficial, because more people may urge our leaders to find **other ways** to solve diplomatic problems rather than sending our young men and women off to fight and die.

While reporters persistent-

ly try to get the best story, they constantly put themselves in the line of danger. Although most journalists sensibly choose to be embedded with the troops, there are those who decide to go beyond simple reporting of the news—by making it. Veteran/journalist, Lt. Col. Jim Zumwalt, sees Peter Arnett, who was fired by NBC News for discussing his personal observations on Iraqi state TV, as the perfect example. Lt. Col. Zumwalt commented, "There is a certain line over which a journalist should not cross, but he clearly crossed it, by aiding and abetting the enemy."

In reporting something as 'up close and personal' as war, one should always consider the families of the soldiers. Mr. Bob Horton, a former writer for *U.S. News and World Report*, has seen military families interviewed on television. His impression is that they hunger for any news they can get about the young men and women fighting in Iraq. Local WTVD News Anchor, Larry Stogner, observes, "Some families are horrified that we're showing how violent war can be. Others thank us profusely for taking them so close to the front...for showing pictures of their loved ones..."

There seems to be only one thing for certain...No matter how a story is portrayed, there will always be controversy!



*The Media's Grasp on War*

By Laura Bonin





## Teaching Vietnam

*LOV* teacher, Ms. Lindy Poling, will travel to Washington, DC July 15-19 to participate in the second annual *Teach Vietnam Teachers' Network* Conference, sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. She will present a workshop titled, "Those Who Served: Inviting Veterans into the Classroom," with Mr. Rob Wilson, Director of the Veterans Education Project (Amherst, MA).

Eighty-eight teachers from thirty-seven states will have the opportunity to hear from those who "were there"—veterans, journalists, policymakers, and others, as well as from innovative classroom instructors. The conference will give teachers effective strategies and practical lessons for teaching students about the Vietnam War. The importance of service learning will also be a major focus. Each participant will develop a project to encourage Vietnam and veteran-related education within his or her community.

VVMF Education Director, Ms. Tricia Edwards, hopes "that teachers will come to appreciate and understand the various views on the war...and leave feeling better prepared to teach their students about the Vietnam War and...also the ways in which it has impacted our nation since."

Ms. Poling is looking forward to participating in this meaningful conference. She is also excited about sharing our *Bridges* newsletters with educators from all over the nation!



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## Why CIC Works

by Michele Wahula

The *Community-in-the-Classroom* (CIC) Program has been invaluable in helping *LOV* students form their own opinions about important global issues. Vietnam veterans, current military personnel, and people with a close association to the Middle East are among those who have come into our classroom to share their views. As senior Mike Lebov commented, "We are able to create our own opinions by questioning the information given to us. Speakers provide us with information we may have missed and give an analysis on a situation we may not have been able to experience firsthand." 18-year-old Tabitha Bryant interjected, "I am now more inclined to ask questions and demand more answers from my government and leaders."



*Community-in-the-Classroom*

People who have the strongest opinions are often the people who are least informed. When more knowledge is gained, it becomes more apparent that there are not always clear-cut answers. *LOV* student Angela Gonzalez concluded, "When students are exposed to a variety of opinions, they grow as intellectuals; and by understanding other people's points of view, hopefully, we can all get along better."

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## Students Speak Out on Iraq!

● "Operation Iraqi Freedom is not a "war for oil," as some protesters have called it, or the redemption of a father's legacy, but rather a war for the liberation of a country run by a ruthless dictator. The war in Iraq is a just war based on the protection of America's freedom, as well as freedom for Iraqi citizens. Saddam Hussein's cruelty to his own people and harboring of terrorists—combined with the possible possession of weapons-of-mass-destruction (WMD)—could result in more tragedies like those of September 11th, 2001. As Americans, we feel that it is necessary to protect our freedoms. Nevertheless, "freedom is not free," VADM Emmett Tidd recently reminded *LOV* students. Without a regime change now, we are risking innumerable lives and endangering future generations."

~ Joseph Massey and Blake Hamlin

● "Why have we found ourselves in yet another war? Where are these weapons-of-mass-destruction?

Why Iraq and not North Korea?"

~ Udoka Nwaeze

● "Many other nations besides Iraq need humanitarian support and 'liberation.' Why is the Bush administration not taking action in these impoverished and corrupt nations?"

~ Bev Loudon

● "After 9/11, it seemed clear to all of us that it was time to deal with nations that foster terrorism. That is why there was little opposition to the war in Afghanistan. However, when it comes to the war in Iraq, many of us still have lingering questions. If we stay in Iraq too long, will the U.S. be viewed as an occupying force? In countries like Iraq where religion plays a major role in politics, will it ever be possible to build a real democracy?"

~ Angela Gonzalez

