

Bridges





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"Tear Down This Wall!" (Twenty Years Later)

By Aby Stoner

One of the most influential and symbolic events of the late twentieth century occurred twenty years ago with the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. This Wall, built in the morning hours of August 13, 1961, would divide East and West Germany for nearly three decades. Its destruction--which took place as instantaneously as did its construction--was celebrated around the world.

At the end of WWII, Germany and its capital city of Berlin were divided into occupation zones controlled by the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. Although eventual reunification had been planned, the relationship between the once Allied Powers turned Germany into a "West vs. East"--or "Democracy vs. Communism"confrontation for control. In 1949, the sectors of Germany occupied by the U.S., Great Britain, and France were unified into West Germany while the Soviet sector became East Germany. The same unification process created a divided East and West Berlin as well. Because Berlin was surrounded by the Soviet occupied sector, West Berlin became an island of democracy in the middle of a communist East German sea.

Within shortorder, living conditions within West Germany markedly improved as those in East Germany correspondingly deteriorated, prompting a mass emigration from East Berlin into West Berlin (and on to West Germany). As the loss by 1961 of

2.5 million its citizens through emigration did not speak well for the communist system, East Germany, with Soviet approval, decided to end it. As easy access to West Berlin was encouraging emigration, East Germany decided to build a wall, making its citizens prisoners in their own country.

In the early morning hours of August 13, 1961, construction of the Berlin Wall began. Four versions of the 100 mile wall were built to prevent those in the East from escaping. Upon awakening that morning, East Berliners were shocked to see the "prison" walls that had gone up overnight. That shock became international. The side of the Wall on which Berliners went to sleep the night of August 12 determined their freedoms--or lack thereof--for the next 28 years.

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The fall of the Berlin Wall occurred nearly as quickly as it rose. On June 12, 1987, President Ronald Reagan, during a speech delivered at the Brandenburg Gate, challenged the Soviet Union's leader, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, by saying, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" The stage had been set for its downfall. On November 9, 1989, announcements were made by East German government officials stating permanent reunification between the two Germanys was possible. Again, there was international shock. Were the borders really to be opened? As East Germans tentatively approached their prison walls, they found the guards manning them allowed them to cross. The city was very quickly inundated with residents from both sides of the Wall. Celebrations erupted as people hugged, cried, kissed, sang, and cheered. The two Germanys were reunited on October 3, 1990.



Artwork by Lizz Alfano

As the Wall collapsed, smashed into millions of small pieces by Berliners who once again were a united people, it also marked the collapse of the Soviet Union. This physical barrier, which had constrained the residents of East Berlin for decades, ultimately proved incapable of containing the spirit of democracy.

LOV Brings History to Life!

By Reid Baumann

As soon as I opened the web page (mhs.wcpss.net/academics/poling/index.htm), I found myself greeted by the smiling faces of Mrs. Poling's students. It was obvious to me the students in the Lessons of Vietnam class were not only taking part in something quite amazing, but they were having fun at the same time! There are Bridges Newsletters dating back to 2000 on this website, as well as a lot of information about the Millbrook High School LOV curriculum. This provides a further testimonial as to the amazing impact this class has had on people's lives both inside and out of Wake County.

I was perusing the 2002 *Bridges* Holiday Edition, and my eye was drawn to the article, *A Veteran's Reflection on Veteran's Day*. This article was written by a Veteran Link named Tom Dingbaum. It was an article that was filled with emotion, particularly regarding his discussion of his first and only visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It was when he remembered the lives of those who had perished, those

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who had been his closest and dearest friends, he broke down and cried. I, too, felt moved by the words he spoke and by the recollection of his long stay at Walter Reed Hospital. I personally felt his confusion and frustration over his fellow soldiers not being respected for their sacrifices back home. It was what he found in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that touched me most of all. He believed it was a fitting remembrance of those who died during the war. He felt the Memorial itself healed inner emotional wounds. This Memorial also has helped to resolve differences in America and the way the public feels about the war. Hearing words like this from a veteran really helped me gain a better understanding about the impact this conflict had upon the men who served.

By sharing their experiences, veterans enable me, generations after the Vietnam War, to walk for a moment in their shoes. What better way to learn history than from those who have lived it?

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President Obama's State of the Union Address: Where Do You Stand?

By Emily Bower

After much anticipation and speculation on what was to be said, America tuned in to hear President Obama deliver his first State of the Union Address on January 27. LOV/RIR students weighed in with their thoughts and opinions on the proposals and plans that were put on the table and also how well the President conveyed his agenda.

The topic of economic clean-up arose multiple times throughout President Obama's speech. Whether through a new employment bill or by seeking new markets, it is clear the President is taking a broad approach in trying to deal with the current economic crisis. Senior Lizz Alfano agreed with President Obama's decision to tax the banks which previously had been bailed out by the American public, suggesting, "It's money that needs to go towards better use. It could decrease the deficit or go back to the people." Sara Perez shared

a similar opinion: "He is trying to hire more people, and two million people have jobs that otherwise would not." However, some students held differing opinions. Tessa Walters likes the sound of the ideas the President has proposed, yet wonders how practical they will be to implement. And some of the students disagree completely. "He dances around the tough topics, and he seems to think he has already solved it," said Beth Schumacher, wrapping up the widely varying opinions the class held on his economic policies.

Healthcare was a touchy topic. The majority of our class had expressed disagreement with the controversial proposal. Gillian Cronin and Elizabeth Klein shared similar views. "I don't believe in redistributing wealth or quantity versus quality in our healthcare system. More people would have care, but it would be of poorer quality," stated Gillian. Elizabeth believes that "all Americans should be able to have the freedom to choose their health care plans."

On the opposite end of that argument stands Eddie Somers: "People need a more affordable healthcare program. All patients need care." Danny Mizerk expressed a similar viewpoint, indicating agreement, but making it clear he believes it "will be difficult because of our hurting economy."

Even more students seem stuck in the middle of a terrible tugof-war between a policy which has provided for them their entire lives and a new policy proposing care for every citizen. Alysa Citero does not understand how the President is going to reform healthcare. She stated that she "wants to believe it's possible," but just does not have faith. And Ryan Fordice concluded that he "needs more information

to better understand," before he makes his decision on whether or not he supports the healthcare proposal.

Education struck a major chord with the students in the class. As seniors this year, we are anxiously awaiting decisions from colleges. all the while wondering how we will manage to cover the rising costs of education. Some students questioned the policies the President put forth, while others favored the ten thousand dollar grants and debt forgiveness discussed. Savannah Core feels while loan forgiveness sounds like a good idea, President Obama "did not explain it well enough." Tyler Floyd sits on the fence with his statement, "If he's able to make it happen, his education plan sounds great." And Natalie Morgan finds that she agrees with the President's efforts saying that "education is a crucial part of a strong country and it should be easier to pay for."

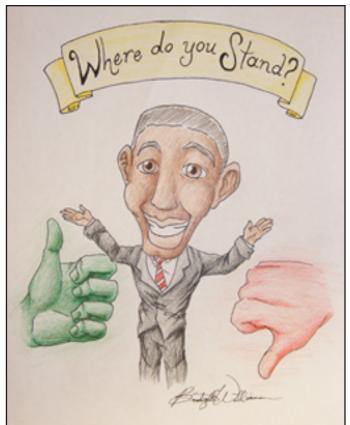
The fight over clean energy was an issue raised during the President's State of the Union speech. Elizabeth Plummer and Justin Abbott support the idea of America leading the way in a switch to clean energy. "I agree that we need clean and safe alternatives for energy. The United States should be the nation to lead the clean energy economy," said Elizabeth. Justin echoed her when he stated that he agrees with the President: "The United States should be energy efficient, so that we can lead the global economy." The subject of foreign policy was seemingly absent from the President's speech. One of the

biggest topics in this category, the Iranian nuclear threat, was given only a few lines. Even more surprising, there was nothing said about that country's sponsorship of terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan. Little detail was given regarding the current status of U.S. military

efforts in these two countries. Overall, our class had

varying opinions and views on the issues discussed. Hunter Davis felt President Obama delivered the speech well, but thought "it was filled with glittering generalities." Colby Cook said, "The President needs to focus more on what he can do, rather than what he has already done." And some members of our LOV/RIR class primarily had their families in mind. Karisan Lane commented, "President Obama has a lot of good ideas about the economy, healthcare, and education, but I am very worried about the cost of everything and how it will affect middle class families."

Whether you agree, disagree, or still want to know more, hopefully you were able to identify with some of the ideas and opinions that were expressed in our class. Where do you stand?



Artwork by Bridgette Williamson

U.S. Aids Haiti with Open Arms

By Rashaad Toney

One of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, Haiti has struggled with problems ranging from political mayhem, a health crisis, severe environmental issues, and an annual barrage of hurricanes within recent years. Now, Haiti is rocked by yet another great tragedy.

On January 12, 2010, a massive earthquake struck, reducing much of its capital to rubble. It was the worst earthquake in the region in more than 200 years. Thousands flooded the streets of Port-au-Prince seeking food, water, and shelter. Many were trapped in the debris. The latest assessment from the Haitian government put the body count at 230,000. The extent of the devastation created a serious obstacle for countries attempting to deliver much needed aid.

The Haitian earthquake created an urgent need for a response from the international community and private sectors. But, the only organization capable of delivering the magnitude of relief supplies and personnel needed was the U.S. Military. The U.S. Military provided medical help both on and offshore, airport operations, the re-opening of the seaport, transportation of thousands of tons of supplies, and the distribution of supplies throughout the Haitian capital and beyond. Aid distribution was hampered by rubble that blocked the transit from the airport to the population centers in need. With Haiti's water supply contaminated, the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne, aided by various relief groups, quickly provided victims with potable water.

The first four to five days of relief efforts were chaotic, but this chaos was soon replaced with military organization. The commander of the U.S. Military relief effort in Haiti, Lieutenant General Ken Keen, reported that his troops made a particular effort to

to tell the people that they were there to help, not to occupy.

Although many Americans could not physically help the Haitians, they generously donated to organizations such as UNICEF, The American Red Cross, and the Bush-Clinton Fund. Americans even donated money by text messaging "help" to 90999.

Experts say full recovery from this devastation in Haiti will take years. The earthquake only added more problems to many pre-existing ones. The Haitian people fear a bad hurricane season could set them back further, but they have been reassured that relief organizations plan to remain there until full recovery is achieved.

As health workers continue to treat broken limbs and battered bodies from the quake, relief groups and the U.S. Military are now preparing for the next stage of the disaster: disease. The goal is to halt the spread of cholera, which is a bacterial infection. People contract cholera by drinking water or eating food contaminated with cholera bacteria. The disease can spread rapidly in areas with poorly treated sewage and drinking water. Recovery workers are taking some major steps, such as removing the remaining bodies that could contaminate the water. Next, they will likely begin importing as much vaccine as possible for preventable diseases.

WTVD journalist and frequent LOV/RIR guest speaker, Larry Stogner, visited the battered nation twice in the past six weeks. Upon returning, he stated, "In my opinion, this relief effort will have to go on for years, not months. It will take that long just to get Haiti back to what it was before the quake--the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. To get it beyond that will take generations and more money that any one country is willing to spend."

Global Warming: A Moral Challenge

By Wesley Odum

"Global warming" is the term used to describe a gradual increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and its oceans, a change that is believed to be permanently altering the Earth's climate. While many view the effects of global warming to be more substantial and more rapidly occurring than others, the scientific consensus on climatic changes related to global warming is that the average temperature of the Earth has risen between 0.4 and 0.8 °C over the past 100 years. According to the U.S. National Climate Data Center, 2008 temperatures in the U.S. were below the 115-year average for most of the country. U.S. summer temperatures were cooler than average—the 34th coolest since 1895.

It is amazing that there is so much disagreement over global warming among journalists, scientists and politicians. Some say humans are not to blame, while others say we are. In the documentary film, An Inconvenient Truth, former Vice President Al Gore presents strong opinions about the situation we are facing. He believes we can no longer view global warming as a political issue, but rather, it should be viewed as one of the biggest moral challenges facing the planet. He and many others agree that we can solve the problem, but it is imperative that the nations of the world band together to do so.

Africa is the continent that will be the hardest hit by global warming and climate change. Africa and Western Asia stand to suffer the largest crop losses. It is estimated 50% of all malnutrition related



Artwork by Allie Haywood

deaths will occur in Africa. It is predicted that China's agricultural output will decrease by 37% over the next 50 years due to changes in rainfall, water availability, and rising temperatures. In America, we generate more emission gasses per capita than any other nation. That equates to about 15,000 pounds of carbon dioxide every year from personal transportation, home energy use, and energy used to produce all the products and services we consume.

There is much we can do to help stop global warming. Small changes in our daily routines can add up to big changes. We must live within the limits and boundaries of what our world can produce and simultaneously handle. In June 2007, China announced her action plan to address global warming by increasing energy

efficiency. This plan includes improving energy efficiency 20% by 2010 and changing tax laws to penalize businesses that are heavy polluters. China refuses to commit to reducing its emissions by a specific amount, but recently announced an ambitious new renewable energy plan. The U.S. government's plan includes investing money in energy efficient technology, renewable energy, forestation and public awareness campaigns to educate people on the best ways to save energy and reduce their carbon footprint.

Global warming is the major environmental issue facing the world today. We must find a way to fix the problems we have created for future generations. If we fail, the results could be disastrous.

"And That's the Way It Is!"

This was the way the CBS Evening News anchorman ended his report for nineteen years. He began reporting in 1937 when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was President. He reported on the Vietnam War, President John F. Kennedy's assassination, and Watergate. He was there when man landed on the moon and the Beatles had their first appearance on American television. He was Walter Cronkite, the television news anchor who gained the nickname "the most trusted man in America."

What is less known by many is the controversy that surrounds him for his comments during the Vietnam War. Cronkite reported on location in Vietnam as well on the CBS Evening News. His reporting style for many years was very objective. That changed one evening when, at the end of his usual broadcast, he closed the segment, "Report from Vietnam: Who, What, When, Where, Why?" with an editorial commentary expressing disapproval with the war. The editorial portrayed his personal point of view, and while he acknowledged this, many viewed it as evidence of waning public support for the conflict.

Walter Cronkite continued reporting for the CBS Evening News until 1981. Much of what the American public witnessed during the 20th Century was reported through his eyes, whether it was coverage of the lunar landings or Watergate. He was the "comfortable old shoe" (online.wsj.com) who brought much of America together every evening. It was a job he enjoyed doing.

On March 6, 1981, he turned over his anchorman responsibilities at CBS Evening News to Dan Rather. He made many more television appearances after his retirement as he became more politically active. Walter Cronkite passed away on July 17, 2009 at the age of 92. "And that's the way it is!"

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North Korea Overplays Its Nuclear Fear Card

By Rose Wilhelmy

A 2002 agreement by North Korea to freeze its production of plutonium was short-lived. Between 2002 and 2007, it has been estimated Pyongyang processed enough plutonium to manufacture five nuclear weapons. In 2005, during the Six Party Talks, Pyongyang agreed to stop its nuclear testing program, rejoin the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and rid itself of nuclear weapons. This promise too was short-lived as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) continued nuclear underground testing, becoming

the ninth member of the world's nuclear arms club in October 2006.

Since North Korea announced it has plutonium stored in rods sufficient to build two bombs. The country also conducted a second nuclear test in May 2009. This prompted President Obama state he would work with our allies to create a stronger deterrent than his predecessor to counter nuclear threats such as this. At U.S. urging, the UN Security Council on June 12, 2009 unanimously passed resolution allowing member states to



Artwork by Lizz Alfano

inspect North Korean cargo vessels suspected of transporting nuclear weapons components.

This issue of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program has continued to create international tensions. Some experts believe the DPRK seeks to use its nuclear program as a means of conducting "diplomacy by extortion"--i.e., using the fear of a nuclear arsenal to win special trade agreements in exchange for ending its program. Some critics have suggested a meeting between North and South Korean leaders be undertaken to reduce tensions, as Seoul needs assurances Pyongyang is not an immediate threat. But previous meetings between the two states have proven to be unsuccessful.

North Korea's track record of making and breaking agreements has done little to create an atmosphere of hope that it has any intention of scuttling its nuclear program. In the high stakes poker game to curtail North Korea's nuclear program, Pyongyang has simply played the fear card too often to instill Seoul with any expectation-absent on-site inspections of the North's nuclear facilities--negotiations will result in halting that program.

Websites

www.wcpss.net/community in the classroom http://mhs.wcpss.net/academics/poling/index.htm http://www.nationalhistoryclub.org