

The
DEFINING
GENERATION



By Doug and Pam Sterner

The Defining Generation

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"Even this evil is productive of good. It prevents the degeneracy of government and nourishes a general attention to the public affairs.

"I hold that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical."

*Thomas Jefferson
In a letter to James Madison regarding Shay's Rebellion*

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Introduction

Since the birth of our nation in 1776, no single generation of Americans has been spared the responsibility of defending freedom by force of arms.

In 1958 the first small American unit visited the land known as Vietnam. It wasn't until 1975 that the last troops assisted the Vietnamese evacuation process. Over 9,800,000 US troops served in Vietnam and more than 58,000 were lost. Many died after the war from wounds, the effects of Agent Orange and PTSD. Some suffer to this day. Most have gone on to become productive citizens.

It has always been popular throughout our Nation's short history to take wars and somehow, for posterity sake, condense them down into some catchy title and memorable synopsis. World War I was known as "The War to End All Wars". It wasn't!

Twenty-three years after the Doughboys returned home a new generation of Americans was confronted with the likes of Normandy, Guadalcanal, and Iwo Jima. The veterans of that war have become known as "The Greatest Generation" which is a fitting tribute to the men and women who may well have saved our world.

Then it was "The Forgotten War"... memories of Inchon and The Chosin Reservoir, Korea, where thousands lost their lives. As long as that struggle is remembered as "The Forgotten War", it is never truly forgotten nor are the brave men and women who wrote that chapter in world history.

Vietnam was not a popular war and we, as a nation, have struggled for over 25 years to define the Vietnam War. I have heard it called "The War We Lost", others have hailed it as "The Wasted Effort", but no one has put Vietnam into a context that really defines this chapter in our Nation's history.

I truly believe that the Vietnam experience has shaped our nation and the world, more than most wars in our Nation's history. The experience has forged the decisions of nine presidents.

Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy sent the first troops to Vietnam. President Johnson knew that in his heart he could not succeed as he intended in Vietnam, but that provided him the motivation to succeed here at home with regard to minority equal rights. First Amendment rights were used to protest Vietnam, but it also provided the media a means to cover the war so that it could be brought into millions of homes and watched for dinner. The Federal Elections Commission was developed out of the Watergate scandal to make politicians accountable to its citizens. The pro Vietnam California Governor, who went on to become President Reagan came to our Nation as though he was in the last period of a football game determined to rally our country to overcome the cold war and defeat the Soviet Bloc. President Bush Senior along with General Colin Powell used the history of Vietnam to gain a staggering defeat over Iraq in the Gulf War. President Clinton sent Pete Peterson, a Vietnam Veteran, to be our ambassador to Vietnam. The current President George Bush must use the lessons of Vietnam in Afghanistan. Whether you are in the chambers of United States Congress, the halls of the Pentagon, or listening to the news of the day, major decisions always use Vietnam as a reference point.

We can't say what would have occurred if we wouldn't have gone into Vietnam, nor can we say what would have occurred if we now occupied Vietnam. We can't speculate because it's not history. What is history is what I've described.

So how should we take the responsibility to encapsulate the Vietnam War with a historical defining phrase? Humbly I believe it should go down in history as the "The Defining War."

To define means to mark, to identify, to discover, to find meaning.

Through Vietnam we discovered ourselves, were given meaning, and an identity for which we can stand as a nation. It defined us either directly or indirectly, during the war or after, in terms of strength, compassion, tolerance, patriotism, rights, perseverance, determination, sacrifice, and freedom. Today, we are being tested with regard to how we define ourselves and the price we are willing to pay for our freedom. The Vietnam War was not our darkest moment but has been our nation's guiding light.

Peter C. Lemon, Recipient
Congressional Medal of Honor

From a Veterans Day Address in his home state of Michigan, 2001

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Preface

It was one of those moments in a young boy's life that stamps itself so indelibly upon the mind that the picture becomes eternally imprinted upon that area of the brain that contains the memories of a lifetime. Fifty years later when the picture resurfaces, I have to stop and chuckle and wonder, "Was it really like that?"

It was Sunday evening and the sun had fallen beyond the horizon. Twilight hung somewhere between sunset and full night. There were at least two-dozen of us, which comprised most of the kids who lived on the same block in Grants Pass, Oregon. We sat grouped together in the early fall chill, scattered across the lawn in eager anticipation as we peered intently through a large picture window. None of us dared to fear the worst, that the inhabitants of the house would close their drapes. This was the only family on the block with a television set.

There was little to fear. The year was 1956 and the inhabitants were members of a generation that only a decade earlier had fought and successfully won a world war, then returned with maturity beyond their youth to build the American Dream. That dream was an ideal lifestyle: a perfect little house with a white picket fence, a kitchen adorned with the newest appliances, and a late model car parked in the shelter of the garage. Theirs was a generation that took pride in its accomplishments during the war, as well as subsequent success in American society in the years that followed. Technology was advancing at a pace unprecedented in world history, and the truest mark of success was the ability to purchase the most recent gadget as quickly, or even before, the neighbors did. It was a competitive society intent on image and *keeping up with the Joneses*...or better yet, making the Joneses keep up with you.

For a family that had one of the new boxes that could transmit black and white images from New York to a living room in Grants Pass, Oregon, the best way to make the Joneses keep up with you was to put the electronic gadget directly across from the picture window in the perfect little home. That way everyone on the block could witness, and envy, your success. For we children who found ourselves looking through that picture window, there was really little fear that the inhabitants would close the drapes and end our odyssey.

In retrospect I think that perhaps more than any device beyond the automobile, a television set was the ultimate symbol of success in the 1950's materialistic lifestyle of the World War II generation. It was this very lifestyle against which we *baby boomers* would rebel when we came of age during the 1960s.

In 1956, such political commentary was still beyond our young minds. That would come later. For the moment, it was enough to watch the grainy black and white images in fascination, as if we had been caught up in some kind of fairy tale.

In no small measure our world was a fairy tale. Imaginary heroes came to life on the big screen in living color, automobiles with removable tops were the rage, and mortals could defy gravity to fly into outer space. Decades later those years would be remembered as "The Happy Days" and our parents would be defined as "The Greatest Generation". Still too dependent upon our parents to defy their authority, and still too innocent to rebel against their materialism, we did not realize on the night of Sunday, September 9, 1956, that we were about to witness the opening volley in a social revolution that would change our world. Our only concern was that tonight, an icon of the older generation was grudgingly opening the doors of his television program to a member of the younger generation.

The fulfillment was almost anti-climactic to the anticipation--here for a moment, then gone. As our group of neighborhood kids got up from the lawn to return home, we all knew we would be greeted by parents none too happy with us for coming home after dark. Of course, that indiscretion was not unique to our generation. Since the beginning of time children have stretched the limits of parental boundaries.

I felt like I had stretched it far beyond the mere fact of staying out after dark. If my mother knew where I'd been she would probably ground me for a week. That was okay with me. I'd gotten what I'd come for.

I had seen Elvis!

Actually, I had seen Elvis from the waist up. Ed Sullivan, in an effort not to upset the *older generation*, refused to let the cameras pan backward far enough to display the *vulgar antics of "Elvis the Pelvis"*. Now, as I prepared for bed, I had to wonder what the big fuss was all about. As a first grader, I didn't know a lot about Elvis Presley and was just beginning to develop an interest in the music of my generation. Thus it was not a desire to hear him sing that had led me to a neighbor's lawn that Sunday evening. I had gone in curiosity more than as an adoring fan. My young mind had to discover what it was about this boy from the South that made my parents so angry, and caused them to forbid me to listen to his music. I suspect the same was true of most of the other kids who had joined me in our forbidden adventure on a neighbor's lawn.

At any other time in history our actions would have been seen as a typical, youthful indiscretion, and as a testing of the parental authority that denied us the *forbidden fruit* of our Garden of Eden. Elvis' appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show, while one of the most memorable events of the *Happy Days*, could not be justifiably recognized as a defining moment in history. It was rather, the opening volley in a war brewing between the World War II generation and its offspring from the baby boom that followed. Our test of parental authority that night was about to become more than a youthful indiscretion. The seeds of revolution were brewing between the two generations.

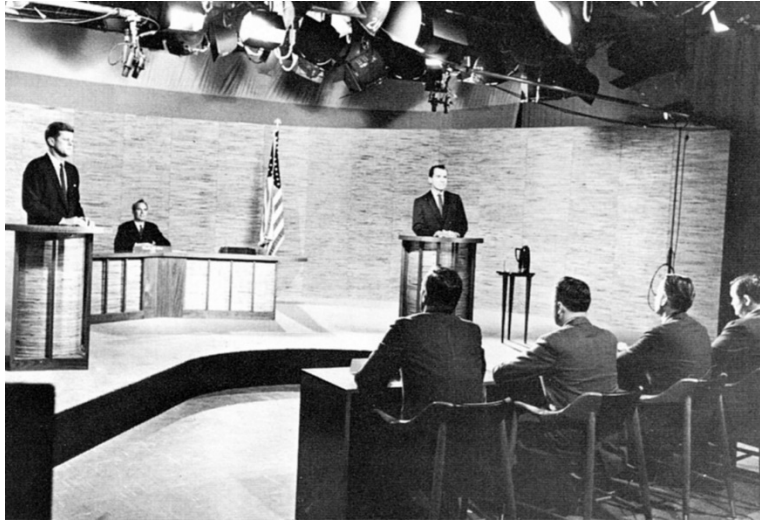
Within a few years, to the chagrin of our parents, Rock and Roll would become our marching song. The *Greatest Generation* with its post-war successes would become *The Establishment*--an untrustworthy and materialistic *older generation*. Our battle cry would be, "Don't trust anyone over 30"; and in a groundswell of rebellion against the old ways of an austere society, large numbers of young Americans would "Turn on—tune in—drop out!"

Living in the shadow of uncles who saved the planet in the World War, grandparents who's fortitude had enabled them to endure the Great Depression, and successful parents who had built for us a world of ease and comfort, ours became a generation in search of its own definition. The Establishment would watch our search for identity and purpose and call us "The Lost Generation".

Ironically, we would find that identity through the one thing that divided our generation most, the war in Vietnam.

Doug Sterner

Out With The Old



One of the most historic events in those years, and one that set the course for the Defining Generation, was the televised political debate on the evening of September 26, 1960. Though political debates were first broadcast on radio in 1948 and on television in 1956, this was to be the first television broadcast of a debate between the Democrat and Republican presidential nominees. Prior to that a televised debate would have only limited impact; in 1950 only one in ten American families owned a television set. In 1960 the trend had reversed and only one in ten American families did not own a television set. For this reason, this historic moment would be witnessed by a large segment of American society, estimated at 80 million viewers.

Most baby boomers were now entering their teens and were still too young to vote. Ironically therefore, it was our parents who set the pace for the sixties that eventually would usher in a broader rejection of the traditional and generate a desire for something new and different. Much of this came as a result of the Presidential election of 1960, decided in large part on the basis of the first of four presidential debates.

The debates pitted Vice President Richard Nixon against a younger-looking senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy. Both were members of the World War II generation; each having served as U.S. Naval Officers in the Pacific Theater. At the time of the debate, Nixon was 47 years old and Kennedy 4 years his junior. It marked the first time since 42-year old Theodore Roosevelt ascended to the Presidency after the death of William McKinley in 1901, that any man under the age of 50 would hold that office. In the years since Roosevelt, the average age of our Presidents at inauguration had been 55.

Though the age difference between the two candidates was minimal, in the election campaign of 1960 Richard Nixon came to represent the old, the traditional, and the status quo. Eight years as Vice President marked him as a professional politician, which perhaps for the first time since the election of Andrew Jackson more than a century earlier, was a liability rather than an asset.

Immediately prior to the first debate Richard Nixon had been ill and was still suffering the lingering effects of hospital recuperation. On the day before that debate the Vice President addressed five different rallies in Chicago, then awoke early on the morning of the 26th for a speech to the Carpenters' Union. For the Vice President it was politics as usual. He refused to practice for the televised event, insisting that he knew how to debate, which indeed he had demonstrated through a successful political career.

Nixon had chosen Chicago as the site for the first debate; a city steeped in traditional politics and recognized for all the dubious insider dealings that greased the wheels of the establishment. He was first to arrive at the studio of Channel 2, the CBS affiliate. While exiting his car he bumped his knee, which was still healing from an infection. Shaking off the pain his face could not belie, Nixon went into campaign mode as the Vice President, deftly working the phalanx of television executives, photographers, and reporters. It was the tried and true way of politics. This time, it didn't work!

The Defining Generation

The most basic question we had to address in the development of this treatise is exactly who were members of the Defining Generation. As the book progressed, it seemed that this term was subject to expansion beyond what we initially expected, e.g. that The Defining Generation was the young men and women who "came of age" (in their teens or early twenties) during that period often called the "turbulent 60s" and briefly into the 1970s. Generally, these young are identified by the single most prominent and divisive event of their period, the Vietnam War (1960 - 1975).

These young men and women have often also been described as "Baby Boomers", children born of the Greatest Generation in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Even here, historians of the period have difficulty pinpointing the exact start and end dates of the unprecedented birth of children in America. Perhaps the most-widely accepted standard is that the Baby Boomers are those 78 million children born between 1946 and 1964, though even that is subject to considerable disagreement.

Some who have studied our history believe the baby boom began three years earlier, in 1943 when the mid-war rotation of men in military resulted in the return of many soldiers from overseas posts on furloughs or reassignment. Some ascribe the end of the baby boom as early as 1958, when the spike in births reached its peak and began to decline measurably.

Historian Steve Gillon, author of Boomer Nation, refers to children born between 1959 and 1964 as *Shadow Boomers*. "I think in order to be a genuine baby boomer, you have to have some recollection of the Kennedy assassination," he told CBS News in 2006. "The Kennedy assassination is, it's the first event of national significance that people experienced simultaneously and through television."¹

Perhaps more importantly than describing The Defining Generation as being those who were conceived during the Baby Boom, whatever period of time one ascribes to the term, is identifying the movement that this generation witnessed, participated in, and ultimately made history as a part of. The 60s movement (which extended into the mid-'70s) is generally seen as a revolution of the young, the questioning of authority and ousting of the status quo as the determinant standard for life in the United States.

While the most dramatically vivid event of that period was in fact the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, ours was a revolution that had already been launched through the sweeping changes of the early 1960s: Kennedy's Commission on Women's Rights, introduction in Congress of the Civil Rights Act, establishment of the Peace Corps, and expansion of the space program, among other developments. Thus, we have come to believe that the "shot heard round the world" of the 60s revolution most likely was the January 20, 1961, inauguration of John F. Kennedy. The youngest man ever elected President of the United States, the man came to represent a break from the old ways and then illustrated it through a brief two and a half years in the Oval Office.

Ironically enough, it was perhaps the yearning for something new that resulted in Kennedy's 1960 victory over the sitting vice president who despite his own uncommon youth (for a Presidential candidate) had come to represent the old. Richard M. Nixon would reemerge during the latter years of the 1960s, serving through those turbulent years and forced as President to confront Civil Rights Protests, a women's movement demanding an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and an American public at odds with American involvement in the war in

Vietnam. Ironically, though all of these issues were still unresolved and continued to ferment turmoil in America, the revolution that began in 1961 ended thirteen years later on August 9, 1974, when Richard Nixon resigned as President of the United States.

History cannot blame the revolution of the Defining Generation on President Nixon; he was a victim of that revolution as surely as events in his life marked both its beginning and its end. Those events, however, do give us a relatively specific time in American history to pinpoint an era of sweeping change. For our purposes, the Defining Generation is those young men and women in their teens and twenties, including some who were born in the early years of World War II as the Defining Generation.

¹ The Graying Of The Boomer Generation, CBS News, February 5, 2006

Defining the New



"The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe—the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God.

"We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this Nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

John F. Kennedy in his Inaugural Address

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

John F. Kennedy was born in Brookline, Massachusetts on May 29, 1917, to a family that exemplified the capitalistic success of the American Dream. Graduating from Harvard in 1940, he served with distinction as a Naval Officer in the Pacific as a part of the Greatest Generation which fought and won World War II.

In 1946 Kennedy was elected to Congress and six years later defeated Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. to become a United States Senator. John Kennedy and Richard Nixon were from the same generation. Both had similar histories in terms of World War II military service and post-war political resumes. Even so, the Presidential election of 1960 marked Nixon as representative of the old, traditional political genre. John Kennedy came across as someone fresh, new, and perhaps even revolutionary.

On the night of their first historic debate, the issue wasn't that Kennedy made Nixon look bad so much as it was that Nixon that made Kennedy look good. The Vice President was tired, recovering from illness and a hectic campaign schedule, and was pained with the unexpected trauma to his injured knee. With the machismo that was characteristic of Nixon, the Vice President also refused to wear makeup for his appearance. On the television cameras Nixon looked a generation older than the vibrant young man in the sharply tailored suit seated opposite him. That was only the beginning.

While Vice President Nixon brought to the debates a tired and worn appearance and a traditional political commentary that smacked of status quo, the Senator from Massachusetts brought a charming, youthful vigor, and some rather revolutionary new ideas. In his opening statement, John Kennedy looked directly into the camera; his gaze meeting the eyes of 80 million Americans watching their television sets. In a strong voice that exuded confidence he stated:

"In the election of 1860, Abraham Lincoln said the question is whether this nation could exist half slave or half free. In the election of 1960, and with the world around us, the question is whether the **world** will exist half slave or half free, whether it will move in the direction of freedom, in the direction of the road that we are taking, or whether it will move in the direction of slavery."

That opening statement set the tone for the night. For the remainder of the debate, the Vice President found himself responding to the challenger, while Kennedy looked directly into the camera to challenge the viewers across America. NBC's Sander Vanocur was among the panel of broadcast journalists who posed questions to the candidates. After the debate he reflected that, "*It seemed as if Kennedy talked to the people and Nixon talked to Kennedy.*"

By the time the debate ended Richard Nixon's fate was all but sealed. Those who heard the debate on radio felt the Vice President had won the match, but the television audience was overwhelmingly attracted to the handsome, vital young man speaking challenging and inspirational words. Six weeks later the United States had its youngest president in a half century, and the role of broadcast media upon the political climate of America was forever changed.

Something far more subtle than the Baby Boomer's rejection of the status quo occurred that night in September 1960, however. The young Senator from Massachusetts introduced two key elements to an established American society. These would subsequently ignite passions within a generation that was coming of age and that would spark a full-scale revolution against the establishment.

Senator John F. Kennedy not only railed against the shortcomings of the present administration in his attack on the status quo, he called American society to a new sense of activism. Citing illustrations such as West Virginia school children taking their lunches home to feed a hungry family, or the poor prospects facing "Negro babies", he challenged:

"The question now is: Can freedom be maintained under the most severe attack it has ever known? I think it can be, and I think in the final analysis it depends upon what we do here. I think it's time America started moving again."

Combined with that call to a cause was a seemingly innocuous but effective rejection of established authority that began with the Senator's opening remarks. When it came the Senator's turn to give his opening statement, he began with:

"*Mr. Smith* (moderator Howard K. Smith), *Mr. Nixon...*"

Those four simple words indicated something far beyond the Senator's effective break from the tradition of referring to the incumbent as "Mr. Vice President". In those four words John Kennedy reduced the man who had been second in authority behind President Dwight D. Eisenhower for eight years, to the same status as a television newscaster. It was a practice the Senator maintained for the entirety of the debate. Mr. Nixon, despite his authority and position as Vice President, was to have no executive privilege in the debates. He would stand or fall, as any ordinary man, on the merits of his beliefs and his performance.

When John F. Kennedy raised his right hand on a chilly day in January 1961 to take the *Oath of Office*, he brought a sense of newness to the White House. His maturity, his experience, his heroic war service, and his personal achievements reassured the older generation that he was among their best and brightest. His good looks and charisma placed him somewhere between a political standout and a Hollywood celebrity. To the success-oriented and materialistic generation that elected him, he embodied all the Capitalistic success that the older generation wished they achieve.

But John F. Kennedy also became a part of the Defining Generation, despite his maturity and membership in the establishment. He looked far too young to be associated with the same, staid generation as the parents of those teens now entering high school. On November 25th, just three weeks after the election and two months before the inaugural ceremonies, the president-elect's young wife gave birth to a son, John, Jr. Two days later his oldest child, daughter Caroline, celebrated her third birthday. In the Whitehouse of the Kennedy family, for the first time in half a century, there was a new sense of youth and vitality.

Young girls of the baby boom found in the First Lady an almost mythical character. Twelve years younger than the President, the woman behind the man in the Oval Office was no longer a grandmotherly figure of sober and staid personality. This young socialite with the exotic sounding name of Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy became known simply as "Jackie". In the adoring eyes of both the older and the younger generation she was America's *First Princess*, and the halls of government assumed mythical proportions in a dream world called *Camelot*.

The Kennedy years became the one bridge between the gap that defined the older and the younger generation. The differences between the two were quickly clarified:

The older generation grew up during the years of the Great Depression, trying times when families pulled together to survive with little. Perhaps it was the experience of those lean years combined with memories of both want and need, that generated the drive for success in the post-war years that spawned to the materialism of the Greatest Generation.

The beneficiaries of that materialism were the young who were now maturing in a time of unparalleled prosperity and comfort. John Kennedy spoke to that comfort with a new challenge:

"Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." It was a message that challenged the young to view their inherited prosperity, not as a privilege to enjoy, but a responsibility to share that wealth with those still in need.

The older generation came of age on December 7, 1941, when isolationistic hopes and peaceful innocence was shattered by the realization that there was a real potential for evil within the world. That Greatest Generation responded by confronting that evil on fields of battle in both hemispheres and overwhelmed it through great sacrifice and indelible courage.

The younger generation was growing up during a *Cold War* that had no tangible enemy beyond Khrushchev. The only response to that evil was to "duck and cover", cowering beneath school desks in helpless fear of an enemy we could neither see nor resist. In that context, the evil of our world became vague, almost as mythological as a childhood boogiemán.

During the tense week that ended in the month of October 1962, a strong and determined President Kennedy reminded us that *"The path we have chosen is full of hazards...The cost of freedom is always high, but Americans have always paid it."* With the strength and determination that our parents had demonstrated in World War II, our President brought us triumphantly out of the missile crisis. Once again, the world was saved by the older generation. The young still sought for a sense of their own role and purpose.

The older generation grew up in a United States largely isolated from the rest of the world and concerned primarily with overcoming the problems of the Great Depression at home. President Kennedy reminded us that: *"The world is very different now... man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life."* This was a challenge to a new generation to avoid war that might now include new weapons with unprecedented potential to completely extinguish life on our planet. It was also a call to worldwide activism on behalf of human rights and dignity.

Unfortunately for the young, we had not yet come to the realization that sometimes the only way to preserve human rights is through aggressive force against those who would enslave others. Somehow, idealistically, we believed we could win the world with love and humanitarian aid. This eventually led to the call by one segment of the *Defining Generation* to "Make Love, Not War!"

The older generation grew up in a time when, right or wrong, time honored traditions ruled rational thought. Segregation of the races was not only accepted; it was the way of life. During the World War military units had been largely segregated, and ethnic minorities stereotyped. The U.S. Army had actually utilized Japanese American soldiers to train combat dogs, based upon an erroneous assumption that Oriental people had a unique scent the dogs could use to flush enemy soldiers from their hiding places in the Pacific Islands.

This younger generation was beginning to question these time-honored traditions that traced their roots all the way back to the American Revolution. President Kennedy became a champion in the efforts to establish a *civil rights* program that recognized every person on the basis of their humanity, not on the basis of their race.

The older generation grew up suspicious of advancing technology and wary of innovation. It had taken 30 years and the courts martial of one of air power's greatest proponents, and victory in the Second World War to convince the military establishment of the Greatest Generation as to the true value of the airplane.

John F. Kennedy looked beyond advances in technology, urging the young generation to dream of even greater advances and challenging us with unbelievable hopes: *"I believe this nation*

should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth."

Despite the 60s generation's later rejection of the *Establishment*, ironically each chapter of its search for meaning and purpose is somehow defined at least generally by leadership from the very generation against which we rebelled. John F. Kennedy was among the first to provide impetus for the social revolution of the Defining Generation. He was a man who was not content with the status quo, but who established new frontiers for the future – frontiers in outer space, frontiers in developing domestic policy, and frontiers in our Nation's role in the world.

One good example of these new frontiers was the President's adoption of a new kind of American soldier. He was an elite soldier, highly trained in all manner of warfare. He was further prepared to defeat the enemies of human dignity by winning the hearts and minds of the world through positive programs of civic action. This same president who defined America's responsibility to the world in establishing the Peace Corps, also became the champion of the Special Forces soldiers of the United States Army, more popularly known as "The Green Berets".

The Special Forces trace their heritage back to the French/Indian Wars of the 18th Century, and as a unit was born out of the O.S.S. (Office of Strategic Services) of World War II. Activated in 1952, the elite Green Berets made their home in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. By 1958 they had developed a concept of special operations through the deployment of a 12-man A-team. Highly trained and highly motivated, these men were seeking to redefine warfare, as well as the term "elite". With the typical suspicion and cynicism that marks the tendency of any older generation towards the younger, these soldiers were fighting for acceptance by the traditional US Army when John F. Kennedy became President.

The green beret was adopted as the unofficial headgear of Special Forces soldiers as early as 1953, despite the reluctance of the regular Army to authorize or recognize it. For ten years the distinctive head gear that marked a new generation of freedom fighters was worn only when they went in the field for prolonged exercises.

In 1961 President Kennedy planned a visit to the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg. He had already verbally indicated his support of this new breed of soldier. A few weeks before the President's visit the Army at last relented and authorized the men of Brigadier General William Yarborough's elite force official authorization to wear the green beret.

After visiting the center on October 12, President Kennedy sent a message to General Yarborough stating: "The challenge of this old but new form of operations is a real one and I know that you and the members of your command will carry on for us and the free world in a manner which is both worthy and inspiring. I am sure that the Green Beret will be a mark of distinction in the trying times ahead."

The President's support of this elite fighting force, soldiers who within a few short years would redefine warfare, is remembered well. Today the home of America's Special Forces is named the JOHN F. KENNEDY SPECIAL WARFARE CENTER.

The "trying times ahead" to which the President referred included a wide range of worldwide problems stemming from the Cold War. Among them was a brewing conflict in the small country of Vietnam in Southeast Asia.

After the 1954 defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu, the United States Central Intelligence Agency established a military mission in the southern capitol city of Saigon. During that same year the Geneva Conference established a demilitarized zone at the 17th parallel, dividing Vietnam into the Communist North, and a would-be democratic southern republic. President Dwight

Eisenhower pledged support to South Vietnam and the military forces of Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem. With that support, in 1965 the prime minister organized the Republic of Vietnam as an independent nation, declaring himself president.

It was President Eisenhower who sent the first advisors to Southeast Asia in support of President Diem. In 1959 the first two American soldiers were killed in Vietnam during an attack on Bien Hoa by the Communist forces. While Kennedy and Nixon were battling for the Presidency of the United States, the NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (NLF) was organizing in South Vietnam as an insurgent force that became known as the Viet Cong. When President Eisenhower departed the White House after the inauguration of President Kennedy he privately advised his successor, *"I think you are going to have to send troops."*

Even as the new President was settling into the Oval Office, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was pledging the support of his own Communist country in support of "wars of national liberation" wherever they might occur in the world. In North Vietnam, hopes of a reunited country under Ho Chi Minh were bolstered by Soviet support.

In May 1961 President Kennedy dispatched his Vice President to meet with President Diem in South Vietnam. The President also sent 400 *Special Advisors* to train South Vietnamese soldiers in their fight against the Viet Cong guerrillas. In the fall of that year, 26,000 Viet Cong soldiers launched an offensive in South Vietnam. Two weeks after President Kennedy's tour of the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg he again pledged his support of the Diem government and began increasing the number of advisors sent to Vietnam.

In his January 11, 1962, State of the Union address, President Kennedy defended his policy of escalating the American presence in South Vietnam by challenging: *Few generations in all our history have been granted the role of being the great defender of freedom in its maximum hour of danger. This is our good fortune.* Within 18 months the President backed up his commitment by sending some 16,000 American "advisors" to service in South Vietnam.

Most wars of American history have been wars of self-preservation, from the revolution that released our populace from the control of Britain, through the Civil War that preserved our union, to the World War that was initiated by the attack from abroad upon the American Territory of Hawaii. The Vietnam War was much different. The earliest stages of that war can be viewed from either of two extremes. The idealistic view is the one espoused in President Kennedy's Inaugural Address when he said:

"To those peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required—not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

To the other extreme was a more cynical view that, somehow, the conflict in South Vietnam was a political ploy to be exploited for sinister purposes. Regardless of which perspective an individual prefers when looking back at the war that divided a Nation and defined a generation, the real truth probably lies somewhere in between.

In 1961 President Kennedy announced that the torch of freedom had been passed to a new generation of Americans. Regardless of how historians view the Vietnam War, beyond dispute is the fact that the young Special Forces soldiers who went to South Vietnam accepted a unique and formidable challenge. They bore that torch of liberty, not only for the people of their homeland, but extended it throughout the world in a new sense of American responsibility to a global society.

Young, sheltered, and somewhat naïve, men and women of the 60's generation grew up in a fairytale world of Camelot, of prosperity, and with dreams of exciting frontiers. Unlike their parents who had experienced hunger in the Great Depression, uncertainty in the face of a European campaign of conquest by Adolph Hitler, a dramatic exposure to reality in the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the awesome responsibility of saving our world; we had yet to witness firsthand the full force of evil that could arise on our planet.

The passage from adolescence to adulthood comes when we see the fairytale world of our infancy supplanted by reality, when Santa Claus is exposed as myth, and when a world of labor and responsibility confronts us. The Greatest Generation came of age on December 7, 1941, when it was confronted with the reality of evil from outside our sheltered borders.

On November 22, 1963, President and Mrs. Kennedy traveled to Dallas, Texas. Thanks to television, that same medium that gave us the captivating world of Rock and Roll in 1956 and the fairytale world of Camelot in 1960, we were able to witness one of the most unforgettable events of our lifetime. As the President's motorcade passed a book depository on Elm Street, shots rang out. Camelot vanished as the blood of our President splattered across the pink skirt of *America's First Princess*. In that moment our young minds came face to face with reality in what our President had once described as a "dangerous and untidy world".

In that moment, the Defining Generation came of age.



Roger H. C. Donlon



Honor in Vietnam

Col. Roger Donlon retired from the Army in December, 24 years after heroic actions as a Special Forces A-team commander in Vietnam earned him the Medal of Honor. Story on Page 10.

“Don’t forget, the people you will be sent to help will look up to you and expect the impossible from you. Your Special Forces training and your on-the-job experience will see to it that their hopes are justified.”

Text from a Special Forces Training Brochure in the 1960s

Caught somewhere between the World War II generation and the Defining Generation were those young men and women who reached maturity in the 50s. Born shortly before or during the World War, they had not experienced the difficult times of the Great Depression. During the War they were old enough to feel its impact on the world, but still too young to understand its full implications.

Roger Hugh Charles Donlon was born in the family home in Saugerties, New York on January 30, 1934. He was the eighth of what would be ten children. (And this was yet ten years before the *baby boom* began..)

On Roger's ninth birthday he received an unusual birthday gift from his father – fifty small chicks. Years earlier Paul Donlon had raised chickens, but this surprise gift was far more than a father's attempt to direct a son's path in his own footsteps. Rather, it was an important lesson that with maturity comes responsibility. The time had come for Roger Donlon to prepare for the responsibilities of a real world.

"Well Roger," the elder Donlon asked, "now that you're in the chicken business do you know what to do?"

"No sir," Roger replied honestly.

Patiently, Paul Donlon explained the important points to his son. The chicks were young, fragile, and helpless. Roger would need to keep them behind the kitchen stove for a while, until they got bigger. They would need the warmth. Roger would also need to hold them, nurture them, and feed them until they were strong enough to care for themselves. Roger would also have to watch them carefully for any sign of rickets.

Impressed but tentative in the face of his newfound responsibility, Roger found a shoebox to hold some of the chicks. To the chagrin of his mother, he carried them through the house to show them to his father in the upstairs bedroom. From the bed to which he had been confined by advancing stages of cancer, Paul Donlon seemed pleased at his young son's commitment to the helpless chicks. Illness had given Paul Donlon an understanding of the plight of the helpless, and the importance to be placed on those who took concern for their welfare.

Roger accepted his new responsibility with great dedication, ensuring that his chicks were warm, holding them, feeding them, and checking on their welfare regularly. Slowly they matured and, as they grew their need for his attention declined somewhat. As those chickens grew and learned to care for themselves, Roger built a larger coop in the garage for them. All but one were doing well.

While 49 chicks grew stronger, one demanded constant care and concern. Despite young Roger's best efforts, this one became more and more lethargic. As its condition worsened, Roger took it to his father for a professional opinion.

"Rickets," Paul Donlon quickly pronounced. Looking his son square in the face he continued, "You will have to kill it, Roger."

As the 9-year old entrepreneur walked slowly down the steps from his father's bedroom his young mind was consumed with his new duty. He didn't know how to kill a chick and had been too proud to ask for his father's guidance in the matter. Having become adept at using a hatchet to prepare firewood for the stove, he headed for the woodshed.

Despite its weak and lethargic condition, the condemned chick would not keep its head still on the chopping block. For a minute Roger considered getting a single-edge razor to finish the job, then discarded that idea.

"So, I took hold of its head with one hand and its body with the other hand. I closed my eyes and twisted," Roger recalled. I almost became sick to my stomach. But daddy had spoken.

He explained it would have always been sickly and as a consequence, of no use to anyone and that it was best that it be killed. It was a dark day in my young life that I would never forget."

Roger continued to raise the remaining 49 chickens over the following years and they in turn, repaid his attention by providing eggs which he was able to sell door-to-door. He reinvested some of this capitol to increase his inventory to include some Rhode Island Reds and Plymouth Rocks. It was an important part of Roger's life, providing him the first opportunity to contribute to his family in a meaningful way.

When Roger was 13 years old Paul Donlon passed away. His death left Roger confused, hurt, and angry. Every time he saw his friends playing with their fathers, Roger ached to have known his own father better. The only piece of paper Roger ever owned with his dad's signature was his Boy Scout Tenderfoot test record, signed off by his father shortly before he died.

Roger was finishing high school when war broke out in Korea, and his desire was to leave school, join the Navy, and "get a piece of the action". His oldest brother Paul had served in World War II and earned the Purple Heart. Now Paul spoke words of wisdom to Roger. "Finish high school," he admonished, "go to college—there will be other wars." In time, the younger Donlon recognized the wisdom of this advice.

Roger's egg-money savings account enabled him to enroll at New York State college of Forestry at Syracuse University after high school. It was not a good year. Roger was a better worker than he was a studier, and his grades fell rapidly. Finally, he took a year's leave of absence deciding, "*It was better to drop out for a year than hang by a thread.*" In 1953, one month shy of his 20th birthday, Roger Donlon enlisted in the United States Air Force.

Roger's dream of flying for the Air Force was quickly crushed when a physical examination found his left eye to possibly contain the beginning of cataracts. In his disappointment he remembered the advice of his late father. "Son, remember, after any setback in life, get up quickly. Never let yourself become discouraged." Roger recovered from his disappointment and began what would be an 18-month quest to gain admission to the United States Military Academy at West Point. It was a monumental effort that required him to take his campaign to the halls of Congress, but the efforts paid off. On July 5, 1955, Airman First Class Roger Donlon was discharged from the Air Force and enrolled in the U.S. Military Academy.

JULY 5, 1964

It was nine years to the day since Roger Donlon had enrolled at West Point. That scholastic experience had been exciting and interesting, but one that had not been consummated. After a little more than a year Cadet Donlon left West Point to return to civilian life, bitter at his string of shattered dreams, mad at himself for his failures, and angry with the world in general. Like so many of the young people who would later define the decade of the 60s, Roger Donlon was still trying to define himself—to find his sense of meaning and purpose. He found it at last, among the men of the Army's Special Forces, the elite Green Berets.

On this night in 1964 Captain Donlon was slowly making his way around the tiny perimeter of the Army Special Forces camp at Nam Dong, near the borders of both Laos and North Vietnam. Hidden in the distant darkness were the nine villages of the Nam Dong valley, 5,000 Asian men, women and children who were struggling to survive in the midst of a brewing war. Donlon's 12-man A-Team had come here to help the villagers in the land of Katu Tribesmen and ensure their survival.

The motto of the Army Special Forces is *De oppresso liber* – "To Free the Oppressed." The most highly trained soldiers of the United States Army had come to Vietnam with that very

mission in mind, to do just that. The Green Berets were in a very real sense much like the 9-year-old Roger Donlon. They would nourish, shelter, comfort and nurture the fragile *chick* that was the Vietnamese people, until they could mature to sustain on their own. In the process these protectors had to closely watch for *ricketts*, the enemy from without that threatened to destroy the young before they could mature.

Captain Donlon's Detachment A-726 had arrived at Nam Dong only a month earlier, bringing with them not only a *hatchet* to guard against *ricketts*, but also shovels and bandages to nurture growth. In their first few weeks at what Captain Donlon later called the "Outpost of Freedom", the men of A-726 had seen little of the enemy. Instead, their efforts had been directed more towards digging wells, building schools, tending the sick, and helping the villagers to help themselves. Of course, these men were also soldiers, and they also served as military advisors to a force of 311 Vietnamese soldiers at Nam Dong who were organized into three strike companies.

As the sun set on this summer night, Staff Sergeant Merwin Woods, a member of Donlon's Team, sat in his bunker writing a letter home to his wife. "All hell is going to break loose here before the night is over," he wrote before he turned in to try and catch some sleep. At two o'clock in the morning, Captain Donlon arose to take his turn at guard duty. He was replacing Warrant Officer Kevin Conway, an Australian advisor operating in Vietnam much like his American counterparts.

All of the men were having trouble sleeping this night. There was a sense that something big was in the wind. The previous night Sergeant Michael Disser had been patrolling with some night fighters when he radioed back to the camp that: "The villagers are scared, but they won't tell me or my interpreters why." When dawn broke on Sunday morning, Sergeant Terry Terrin returned from a three-day patrol with disturbing news. His men had found the bodies of two murdered village chiefs; one of them had been systematically killed in his own doorway. Throughout the afternoon on Sunday, tension ran high in the basecamp, culminating in a confrontation between members of the Vietnamese strike force and the Nungs, ethnic Chinese mercenaries who served as bodyguards for the members of Special Forces in South Vietnam.

As Captain Donlon slowly made his rounds of the camp's perimeter, he was shadowed beyond the barbed wire by a Vietnamese Special Forces soldier. The pattern was routine. The two would encircle the camp, and then meet at the main gate.

The camp had recently implemented a two-gate system. The wide gate that admitted vehicles during the day remained locked at all times during the night. Nearby was a smaller gate, wide enough to allow the passage of one man at a time. As a precaution to ensure that the returning Vietnamese soldier was the same who had gone out earlier, at night that gate could be opened only by an American.

The brief circuit of the perimeter took less than half an hour and the time passed uneventfully. All was quiet. Perhaps too quiet! Clad in his black pajamas, T-shirt, and the jacket of his green nylon jungle suit, Captain Donlon waited for his Vietnamese counterpart to meet him and then opened the gate to admit him. Maybe the premonitions had been all wrong. So far this was a night like any other.

Captain Donlon strolled towards the mess tent. Inside there would be coffee and, more importantly, the guard roster that would tell him whom to awaken at 0400 hours to relieve him. He glanced down at his watch as he neared the doorway. It was 2:26 A.M. on Monday, July 6, 1964. As the Special Forces commander reached out to open the door there was a blinding flash of light when an enemy white phosphorus mortar shell hit the roof of the mess hall. The force of

the explosion knocked Captain Donlon backwards and to the ground. Suddenly, the young soldier's whole world became a nightmare.

In the nearby dispensary Sergeant Thomas Gregg, one of the team's two medics, rolled out of bed with the sound of the first explosion. Rushing outside with his 5-shot pump shotgun he ducked behind an old shower room, now being used to store medical supplies. Smoke swirled in the early morning darkness amid the sudden rain of enemy mortars. The incoming explosive shells filled the air with brilliant flashes that cast a spectacular lightshow across the small compound. Flames from the quickly burning mess hall reflected through clouds of smoke, and not more than 20 yards away Sergeant Gregg could see six shapes moving towards the fence. The shotgun boomed once, again, and then a third time as the Viet Cong soldiers were blown backwards in death. The medic turned back towards his dispensary, now also engulfed in flames. He rushed inside to try and salvage what medical supplies he could before the fire consumed them. From the looks of things, they would be needed.

Captain Donlon shook off the effects of the first explosion only to find his Team the object of an ever-increasing rain of mortar fire. In the communications room, Staff Sergeant Keith Daniels was on the radio requesting a flare ship and air strike from the big American base at DaNang, half an hour distant. The supply room took a direct hit and, fearing the ammo shack would be next; Daniels grabbed his AR-15 rifle and raced for the door. He threw himself outside and into the inferno, flying face down on the dirt as the room he had just vacated evaporated in a flash of intense fire.

Captain Donlon and his team sergeant, Master Sergeant Gabriel Ralph *Pop* Alamo turned their attention to the Command Post, now awash in flame. Smaller explosions rocked the supply room as the two men struggled to salvage what ammunition and grenades they could, in order to arm the team for the fight for life that lay ahead. As they feverishly worked against time, Sergeant First Class Vernon Beeson ran towards them to lend a hand.

Around the perimeter other members of the team raced to their own mortar pits to light the darkness with illumination rounds. In the first five minutes of the battle Sergeant Thurman Brown ducked a hail of incoming grenades, narrowly escaped death from an incoming 57-mm round, watched one of the team's Vietnamese interpreters lose both legs at the knees and bleed to death in half-a-minute, and faced down the muzzles of two Viet Cong soldiers before killing them himself. Somehow, he also managed to fire the all-important illumination rounds into the sky that enabled the rest of his team to establish a defense.

At another of the four mortar pits Sergeant Mike Disser and Staff Sergeant Raymond Whitsell fired an illumination round to light up the front gate. Peering cautiously over the protective berm of earth, what they saw was frightening. In the two-foot grass of the outer perimeter moved the shadows of hundreds of enemy soldiers, all converging on Nam Dong. Quickly they alternated between additional illumination rounds and high explosive shells, standing their ground against overwhelming odds. At the front of their position Pop Alamo knelt in the dirt to pick off advancing enemy with his AR-15 rifle. He was painfully burned from his earlier efforts to save the supplies from the burning Command Post, but he ignored the injuries to remain at his post and do his job.

The soldiers turned briefly at the sound of someone approaching. Kevin Conway, the Australian, casually walked towards them. He was smiling nonchalantly as if to inspire confidence in the embattled young Green Berets. Suddenly he stumbled, then fell--a neat round hole almost exactly between his eyes. A few minutes later the team's executive officer, Lieutenant Jay Olejniczak entered the position. Quickly he bandaged the small wound in the center of the

unconscious but still breathing Australian, before taking off his jacket to gently place it as a pillow beneath Conway's head. A half hour later Conway was dead.

The battle for Nam Dong pitted 12 American Special Forces soldiers (supported by 311 ARVN and 60 Nungs) against two reinforced Viet Cong battalions—800 to 900 guerilla fighters. The Americans were young, new to the jungles of Vietnam, and inexperienced in combat. The Viet Cong were native to the terrain and well accustomed to jungle warfare after decades of internal struggle. This, along with the sheer number of enemies, could have spelled certain disaster for Nam Dong. On that horrible night, 12 young American soldiers proved they had the same determination and courage as had their fathers of the Greatest Generation.

Captain Donlon's normal alert position was in the camp commander's hooch, but it had been hit several times by enemy fire and was unusable. Instead, he began working his way through the enemy fire to direct and encourage his men. Nearing the flagpole, he suddenly felt his body flying through the air when one round came too close. Hitting the hard dirt, he shook his head to clear the dizziness. The concussion had blown one of his boots off, but as quickly as he regained some presence of mind, he scuttled to the nearby mortar pit manned by Sergeant Woods. The soldier who had only hours earlier echoed his premonition of "hell breaking loose" in the letter to his wife, now bent himself to the task of trying to keep hell at bay.

On the far side of Disser's mortar pit beside the ammo bunkers was a deep excavation the soldiers called "the swimming pool." From that depression in the terrain, Sergeant John Houston yelled, "They're over here! In the ammo bunker!" Alone, he hugged the dirt to rain automatic fire on the advancing enemy.

Captain Donlon started towards Houston's position when another mortar landed near enough to throw him to the ground. This time his other boot was blown off, along with his pistol belt and all of his equipment. With only his AR-15 and two clips of ammunition, Donlon crawled to the edge of the mortar pit manned by Sergeant Disser to get more ammunition. As Sergeant Disser threw additional clips over the rim to his team leader, Donlon asked for a report.

"Conway's hit and Alamo's hit," Disser replied. "Conway's hit bad."

Donlon took the report in quickly, preparing to move on towards the Swimming Pool to reinforce Houston. Suddenly he saw movement near the gate. He yelled for Disser to put up another illumination round and its flickering light revealed three enemy slowly crawling along the road towards the gate. Donlon fired, killing two. The third started to crawl back into the grass and Donlon threw a grenade to halt his escape. All three turned out to be sappers, infiltrators who came with small shovels and explosives to blow the front gate.

Near the swimming pool, Sergeant Houston continued to do his best to repulse the enemy's advance at the ammo bunkers. He'd fire at them, then move quickly, fire again, and repeat the action. His effort was an attempt to convince the enemy that there was more than one man holding them at bay.

Donlon took stock of his own situation. He was badly burned, his face was cut, his arm was bleeding, and there was a wound about the size of a quarter in his stomach. Everything else was still working and he headed for Houston's position. Sergeant Terrin had been firing in support of Houston and got there first. Terrin noticed the young soldier whose wife was about to give birth to the couple's first son, slumped over as if reloading. John Houston said, "I'm hit." Then there was a small, choking cry, and silence.

The enemy breached the fence and began setting up an automatic weapon only yards from the swimming pool as Terry rushed towards Houston. An enemy round smashed into Terrin's AR-15, hurtling his ruptured weapon into the darkness and peppering his forearm with hundreds of

small shards of steel. Another round shot a grenade off the Green Beret's belt, but it didn't detonate. Sergeant Terrin just stood there for a moment, as if in shock. Captain Donlon rushed towards him. When he got there, Terrin was fighting one-handed; firing Houston's AR-15 at the enemy and throwing grenades after pulling the pins with his teeth.

"Get Houston down in the hole (the swimming pool)," Donlon shouted. Terrin nodded and, with the help of a nearby Nung, lowered the young sergeant's prostrate body into the pit.

"It's too late," Terrin shouted back up to Captain Donlon. "John's dead." Roger looked back towards the ammo bunkers, now littered with the bodies of dead enemy soldiers. His two brave teammates, with a handful of Nungs, had miraculously stopped the main assault. John Houston had accomplished the miracle at the cost of his life.

Captain Donlon continued his efforts to locate and organize the men of his team, ignoring the continuous rain of mortars, grenades, and small arms fire in order to reach the rear of the camp. There, team medic Thomas Gregg was lending support to Sergeant First Class Thurman Brown and Staff Sergeant Daniels. The soldiers and their Nungs had kept at bay an advancing force of at least 100 enemy and withstood a direct assault on the fence by 10 or 15 Viet Cong. The battle for Nam Dong had been going on for more than an hour.

"How's Beeson doing?" Donlon asked, concerned for the one member of the team he had yet to make contact with. Sergeant First Class Vernon Beeson was responsible for the mortar pit about 40 yards beyond Brown's. Donlon remembered seeing Beeson heading for his position when the first rounds hit the camp, racing over exposed ground as shells fell all around him, to somehow reach it and start firing back. Now, none of the men at the rear of the camp had heard from Beeson in quite some time.

Captain Donlon took off at a run for Beeson's pit. Around him explosions continued to rock the camp, the detonations both from burning buildings within as well as from the enemy mortars from without. The ground was hot and littered with debris. Donlon felt pain stab into his bare foot and struggled to remain standing. Reaching down he found a large share of plywood attached to his foot by the nail he had stepped on. So intense was the action, he had clomped along for several steps before the pain reached his brain. Quickly he reached down and tore off the piece of wood. Enemy fire began to rain directly on top of him, pinning him down. Unable to proceed further, Donlon limped back to Sergeant Brown's position.

Gregg came over the side of the pit and looked at his battered and bloodied commander. "You're wounded captain," he said. "Let me fix you up."

"No," Donlon replied, "I'm all right. Go take care of the others."

Donlon was still very concerned about the action back near the gate. The enemy had overrun the strike force position near the swimming pool, and things had been hot and heavy in Mike Disser's pit when he had headed out to reach Houston. Ignoring his wounds, Captain Donlon rose and headed back across the camp. When he was half-way there the fire in the supply room finally reached the ammunition and it went up in an explosion, throwing Donlon's body into the sky for the third time. Shrapnel ripped into his leg and the concussion stunned his senses. Pulling himself up, he forced himself to continue.

The situation was critical in Disser's mortar pit. Sergeant Alamo and Lieutenant Olejniczak hugged the dirt on either side of the small depression, firing continuously at the advancing enemy while Sergeant Disser worked the mortars with a fury. Alamo was bleeding from a shoulder wound, but he ignored the pain to stay at his post. The lieutenant bent for a moment to check Alamo out, quickly pronouncing, "You're all right."

Suddenly Disser gave a yell and turned from his mortar to pick up his AR-15 and fire over the two men's heads; at the rim of their position stood an enemy soldier. As the enemy fell backwards under Disser's fire he dropped a grenade inside the small area. The men had little time to ponder their good fortune when it failed to detonate, and then Olejniczak heard another grenade fall near his feet. He quickly hit the ground, aiming his feet towards the deadly orb as it exploded, the concussion slamming into the soles of his boots and crushing bones. As more grenades began to fall, Olejniczak tightened his bootlaces to keep his shattered feet together.

Sergeant Disser was wounded in both knees and his arm, but he continued to crouch in place and drop rounds into his mortar tube. The enemy was close enough that their grenades rained about him like hail. Fortunately, many were duds and others detonated with little impact. The three Green Berets soon began to ignore the incoming explosives as mere pests.

One grenade bounced over the rim and landed in an ammunition box beside Sergeant Disser. He jumped to the left while Olejniczak and Alamo jumped right. The blast tore into Disser's foot and lower leg. As the smoke cleared, he crawled painfully back to drop another round down the tube.

Alamo had been hit again and was slumped nearby. Olejniczak was bleeding from wounds in his legs, left hand and elbow, shoulders and back. His weapon had been knocked from his hands, and now he was passing rounds to Disser as Captain Donlon arrived. "This is for Pop!" He shouted as he handed a round to Disser. "This one's for Conway!" he yelled as he passed another. Both men were running purely on adrenaline and training. They knew it was probably a matter of minutes before their position was swarmed, so they shouted their defiance with each new round dropped in the tube. Olejniczak had already decided that, although wounded and weaponless, the first Viet Cong to come over the rim of the pit would be killed with his bare hands. He would fight as long as he breathed, with whatever he had. When he died, he would go down fighting.

Donlon could see that the situation was hopeless. "Get out!" he ordered. Disser and Donlon's interpreter began to move back to a small ditch. Lieutenant Olejniczak staggered numbly, moving against his excruciating pain to get through the doorway of the bunker. Donlon kept his eyes on the advancing Viet Cong, firing from his AR-15 to cover his men's withdrawal.

Pop Alamo was sitting on the steps, bleeding from his face, shoulder, and stomach. Donlon yelled to Disser and Olejniczak to cover him, and then went to his Team Sergeant's aid. He pulled the badly wounded Alamo up by an arm, hooking it around his neck to drag him to safety. Donlon was at a half-crouch when a mortar hit the top of the stairs, throwing his body into space. "I'm going to die," Donlon thought.

When he came to, the Green Beret Captain was half in and half out of the doorway to the bunker. Pops Alamo was in the center of the pit, covered in blood. Donlon quickly took stock of his own condition. His shoulder was bloody, his fingers were numb, and he was bleeding from his face, leg, and the wound to his stomach. His head ached with deep, stabbing pains and was covered in blood. Captain Donlon was fortunate; Sergeant Gabriel *Pops* Alamo was dead.

Roger mustered the strength to grab the 60-mm mortar and carry it out of the pit. About 30 yards away were some cinder blocks and he set the tube down there. Nearby were four wounded Nungs, seemingly beyond resistance. All were wounded, one with an open scalp wound. Captain Donlon ripped off his t-shirt to bandage them, trying to use gestures and Pidgin English to motivate them. When he had checked the flow of blood from their wounds, he propped them up and placed their rifles in their hands. "Come on," he urged, "you fellows are going to be all right. You can still fight. Here's your weapon. Cover me. Do you understand? Cover me. I'm going over there (back towards the mortar pit). Use your weapon. Cover me." With that, Roger stuffed the last remnant

of his t-shirt into his stomach wound to stem the flow of blood and returned to the mortar pit to get more ammunition.

In all, he made three trips to the now abandoned position at the front gate. His mission was two-fold, to recover ammunition needed in order to fire from the mortar he'd just carried out of there, and also to insure that nothing would be left behind for the enemy to turn on his men when at last they overran the position. His efforts with the Nungs had inspired something...they were shooting back at the encroaching enemy. Though their fire was almost without control--it seemed as if they were shooting into empty air--at least they had recovered their determination to go down fighting. On his final trip from the abandoned mortar pit Captain Donlon recovered Sergeant Alamo's rifle and hauled it back. Nearing the cinderblocks, he felt the concussion of an exploding grenade as more hot metal fragments ripped into his left leg. Turning this new position over to Disser, Olejniczak and the four Nungs, Captain Donlon headed out once again to check on his other men.

Donlon returned first to Sergeant Woods' position, from which he had started his rounds less than two hours earlier. In that span of time he had seen his Australian friend and two teammates killed, four others wounded, and had been wounded himself more times than he could count. "How are you doing," he shouted over the din of the battle when he found Woody, knee-deep in ammunition brass and cast-off containers. Woody's feet were cut and bleeding, but he was still busy at work dropping 81-mm mortars around the camp.

"Hell, I'm all right," Woody shouted back. "But I think my right eardrum's busted. I felt some liquid running out of it. How's everybody else?"

Donlon hesitated for a moment, trying to determine if it was wise to tell Woody the truth, or let him think there might still be some hope. Finally, he opted for the truth. "Alamo's dead, Houston's dead, Conway's dead," he told him. "Lieutenant "O" (Olejniczak) and Disser are wounded. Brown's wounded. Terry's wounded. I don't know about Beeson. I can't get to him."

Woody took the news in stride, shouting to his Nungs to cover him while he swung his tube towards the helipad and continued to drop rounds down the tube of his mortar. Donlon stooped to help him, clearing away some of the debris that littered the pit and ordering some of the nearby Nungs to assist in order to give Woody more room to operate. While bending down he found a case of flares. He knew he needed more illumination and began stuffing some of them in the pockets of his pajamas. Then, with Woody's pit still well under control, Captain Donlon headed back into the burning remnants of what had once been the Special Forces camp at Nam Dong to see how his medics were doing.

Captain Donlon was staggering now, sounds of battle raging in his head as if about to cause it to explode. He couldn't straighten his battered and exhausted body, so he staggered along at a half crouch. Nearing the flagpole, another mortar round knocked him to the ground. He struggled up to his knees and crawled to the cinder block position where Disser and Lieutenant Olejniczak were still holding their own in the small ditch behind Sergeant Whitsell's mortar pit. The shallow 18-inch ditch that had been dug to lay communications wire was now filled with people...Nungs, Vietnamese...all of them bandaged. Sergeants Gregg and Terrin had been very busy, moving throughout the fire-ravaged camp to bind up bodies and encourage the wounded to keep fighting. When they found a wounded man without a weapon they treated him quickly, propped him up in a fighting position, found a rifle to place in his hands, and supplied him with ammunition to keep going. Only as a last resort did they give anyone sedatives. All knew that the enemy would make their big push soon, and every man capable of fighting would need to be fully alert.

Captain Donlon refused any attention for his own wounds, determined to keep going on sheer guts, willpower and training. After checking out the efforts of his medics, he left the trench to try and re-man the mortar pit they had earlier abandoned near the front gate. At least now his feet were covered, having borrowed boots from Sergeant Disser.

First, Donlon tried again to reach Beeson's position. As he moved through the camp the fires that still raged silhouetted him and an enemy machine gun began tracking his progress. He had to turn back, still unsure if Sergeant Beeson was alive or not.

Continuing on, he checked the other position at the rear where Sergeant Brown and Sergeant Gregg still held on. Gregg had to repeatedly assure his Captain that indeed he had contacted DaNang to advise of their situation. The request for help had been sent some two hours ago, and Donlon couldn't understand why there had been no support from the sky. Gregg wanted to bandage Donlon's wounds, but again the Captain refused. "There are a lot of men here worse off than me. Take care of them and catch me later. I'm all right. I'm tired, but I'm alright." With that, he continued on towards the pile of cinderblocks to try and get his mortar tube and set it back up in the abandoned position at the front gate.

It was 4:04 A.M. when Donlon heard the sound of an incoming airplane. He knew that it indicated, at last, support from DaNang. The first aircraft would be bringing in more illumination to light up the countryside and reveal the enemy positions. Air strikes would follow.

Then came another sound. It was a voice over a loudspeaker in Vietnamese, shouting something to the camp. Its strange appearance mixed eerily into the pre-dawn darkness, and for a moment both sides stopped firing. Sergeant Daniels turned to his interpreter, who looked shaken. "What's he saying?"

The Vietnamese interpreter was pale, visibly upset by the words. "He say lay down weapons. V.C. going to take camp and we all be killed."

"Over my dead body," Sergeant Daniels replied. "We'll lay down our weapons when we're too dead to pick 'em up."

There was another long pause of silence, and then the voice came over the loudspeaker again, this time in English. "Lay down your weapons! We are going to annihilate your camp, you will all be killed!"

In the pit Captain Donlon had just vacated, Sergeant Brown craned his ear against the sound of the loudspeaker and started cranking the knobs on his mortar tube. Daniels and Gregg tried to help him pinpoint the direction and distance to the eerie voice in the early morning. Then Brown went into action, dropping ten rounds down his tube in rapid succession. Enemy machine guns began firing once again, but the loudspeaker fell silent.

The arrival of air support caused the enemy attack to falter and the incoming enemy fire became less frequent. Captain Donlon rounded up some Nungs and managed to get the mortar pit at the main gate operational once again. Returning to Sergeant Woods' pit, he laid down at the rim facing towards Sergeant Beeson's position. Fully exposed to the enemy, he ordered Woody to line up on his prostrate body and try and drop some 81-mm explosives in Beeson's sector in case his teammate needed some outside support.

Despite the slackening of the attack with the arrival of American aircraft, the battle for Nam Dong continued until 7:00 A.M. For five hours the small outpost of freedom defied all odds to maintain its position. Close to 6:00 a.m. Donlon finally reached Beeson's position to find his Sergeant still lobbing mortars on the now retreating enemy. Beeson looked at the battered body of his commander and said, "Sit down, Captain."

"Naw, I'm all right," Donlon replied.

"Sir," Beeson replied firmly, "sit down, or I'm going to have to knock you down." With a sigh of exhaustion, Roger Donlon slumped to an ammunition box and finally allowed his multiple wounds to be treated.

The casualties of the battle for Nam Dong went beyond the dead and wounded that were flown out of the demolished outpost at daylight. Pops Alamo's wife was expecting a baby. Upon learning of her husband's death, she miscarried. Ironically, Sergeant Houston's wife was the only other spouse of a Detachment A-726 team member to be pregnant at the time of the battle. She gave birth to twins. One died at birth.

Alamo and Houston were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, and Olejniczak, Brown, Disser and Terrin received Silver Stars. Bronze Stars for valor were awarded to Beeson, Daniels, Gregg, Whitsell and Woods. Nine of the twelve Team members received Purple Hearts.

On December 5, 1964, all ten surviving members of Detachment A-726 were reunited at the White House where President Lyndon Johnson presented Special Forces Captain Roger H.C. Donlon with the Medal of Honor. It was the first of 246 such awards to be presented for heroism during the Vietnam War.

At Nam Dong, the Viet Cong had thrown a massive force of young, well-trained and well-supplied soldiers against a small contingent of Vietnamese, Nung, and American Special Forces soldiers. Through infiltration, careful mapping of the outpost, and great strategy, they had launched the perfect assault. Their best efforts had failed. First and foremost, the 12 Americans who had come to Vietnam to "Free the Oppressed" had proven that they were born of the same courage, determination, and fierce loyalty to each other that had enabled their fathers to win the World War. These young men might be members of a new generation, but they had all the best qualities of the old.

Second, these young Americans had demonstrated a fighting skill and professionalism that marked them as new and unique. The United States Army Special Forces showed a level of training and leadership that rivaled any soldiers in history. At Nam Dong, Team A-726 wrote a new chapter in history and gave us a new definition of valor.

Our special thanks to Roger and Norma Donlon for years of personal friendship, and for opening their lives to us in the interviews necessary to write this chapter. From the beginning of this literary effort, Roger and Norma believed in us and encouraged us to see the work to its conclusion.

Also consulted were:

Donlon, Roger H.C. *Beyond Nam Dong*: R&N Publishers, 2101 Wilson Avenue, Leavenworth, Kansas
Saturday Evening Post. "The Battle for Nam Dong". October 23, 1965. The Curtis Publishing Company

The 12 young men who fought the horrible battle for Nam Dong were NOT Green Berets. A Green Beret is a hat, or more appropriately, the headgear that became an authorized part of the uniform of America's Special Forces soldiers. The *hat* did not define the men; rather it defined a new kind of soldier. The brave young men, who worked and trained to wear the Green Beret defined the *hat*. Around the world in general, and in Vietnam specifically, their dedication and courage defined it well.

Thirty years after the end of the Vietnam War, Americans watched with both apprehension and confidence as United States Special Forces soldiers were among the first ground troops to begin operations in Afghanistan. Within a matter of weeks we saw an armed enemy crumble beneath the combination of American technology in the air, and the training and determination of our Special Forces soldiers on the ground. It is hard to believe that, in the 1960s, the men of the elite Green Berets' greatest battle for survival was at home.

The military establishment is among our most highly traditional segments of society and as such, one of the most resistant to change. American air power experienced its own struggle for survival in the years preceding World War II. Men like Eddie Rickenbacker, Billy Mitchell, General Kenneth N. Walker, and other proponents of an increased role for US military air operations; were deemed radical by traditional military. World War II vindicated these pioneers and led to the establishment of the United States Air Force.

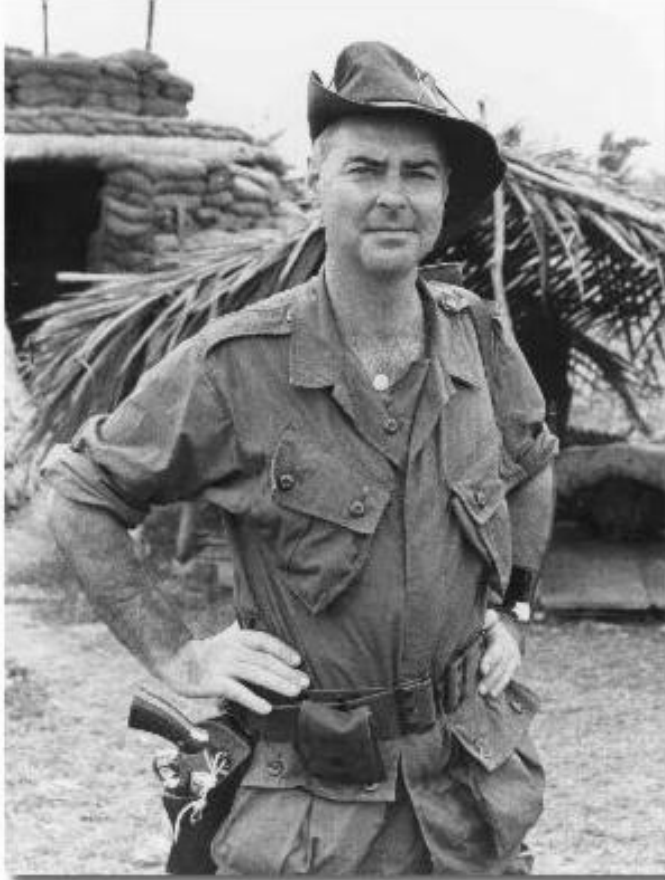
As the Pentagon struggled to find a way to deal with this small segment of its command at Fort Bragg, the future of Army Special Forces was tenuous at best. Much as early pilots had needed vocal proponents like Mitchell and Rickenbacker to promote their cause in the halls of government and the bastions of military power, the Army Special Forces now needed champions of its own to secure its place in the future of the American military.

The young American President who took the oath of office in January 1961 became the first powerful voice for the Green Berets. Though he certainly didn't end the Pentagon's suspicion or even outright antagonism towards these unconventional young soldiers, his support gave the Green Berets a powerful ally. While inside the Pentagon traditionalists continued to battle any plans for such elite units, none dared outwardly to defy the Commander in Chief.

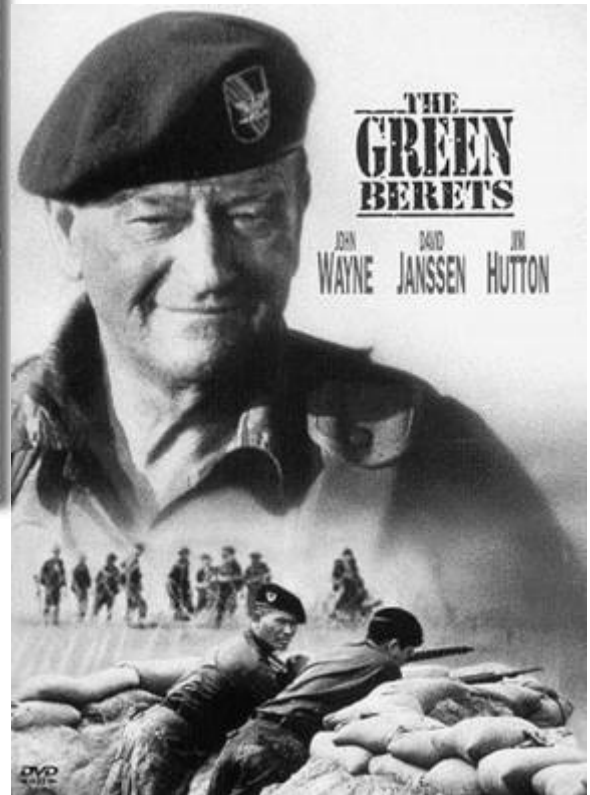
At Fort Bragg, Lieutenant General William Yarborough continued to accept volunteers for his Special Forces *experiment*. Training was rigorous, demanding, and uncommonly different, causing a high washout rate. Those who survived became the very best America had to offer. Still, these soldiers were often ridiculed by regular Army troops when they were seen wearing their green berets. Some laughingly called them "Girl Scouts" for their distinctive headgear, which at worst, others referred to as the "faggot hat." Of course, no one EVER used such terminology to the face of a Special Forces soldier.

The mission of the Special Forces, echoed in their motto, is to "Free the Oppressed." This they accomplished not only by armed resistance of the enemies of the oppressed, but also by first "winning the hearts and minds" of those they would free. While these men trained for the humanitarian missions that would achieve this goal on a global scale, they had yet to win the hearts and minds of their own Nation.

Robert Robin Moore



Robin Moore spent six months in Vietnam with members of the US Army Special Forces. Upon returning home, he wrote their story in The Green Berets. John Wayne personally directed the subsequent movie.



Robert Lowell Moore, Jr. was a member of what would later become known as *The Greatest Generation*. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, on Halloween night in 1925, he served in the U.S. Army Air Corps in the closing days of World War II, flying 14 missions in a B-17 bomber.

The war in Europe ended in time for 20-year old Moore to return home to register for classes at Harvard, which he did. Graduating in 1949, along the way he became friends with a fellow Harvard student who shared both his first name and his home state. More than a decade later that friendship with Robert F. Kennedy would become pivotal to the Special Forces' task of winning the hearts and minds of America.

Upon graduation from Harvard Robert *Robin* Moore went to New York to become a producer in the new broadcast media of television, while back at home his father, Robert Moore, Sr., was building his Sheraton Hotel chain. Robin produced some of television's earliest game shows and even hosted his own program, "Dining Out". The latter effort, sponsored by Canada Dry, gave the young man ample opportunity to enjoy some of the finest restaurants in New York City, the subject of his broadcast.

In 1953 Robin left New York, but not television, to help his father. For the next eight years he helped expand the successful hotel chain as Vice President of the Advertising Market. In his spare time, he was mentally returning to television for the subject matter of his first book, Pitchman.

Late in the '50s Robin's duties took him to the Caribbean to establish additional hotels. During this period the successful entrepreneur who wished to be a writer, had occasion to witness the insurgent warfare sweeping Cuba. After personally meeting Fidel Castro, Robin began writing a non-fiction book chronicling the Cuban communist dictator's guerrilla campaign to enslave the Caribbean Island. The story was told in his 1961 release, The Devil To Pay. Shortly thereafter, he wrote his third novel, Hotel Tomayne, about the family's hotel business. With three books under his belt, Robin Moore was beginning to realize his dreams of becoming a successful author.

Robin had personally witnessed the effects of guerilla warfare in the Caribbean; it was a subject that continued to interest him beyond what he had written in his second book. As he planned for his fourth work, he took note of a little-known group of American guerilla fighters that wore a distinctive green beret. With his subject matter discovered, he set out to research the Army Special Forces...and quickly learned that elite unit's primary foe was higher echelons of established American military authority. The politicians and generals, who had lived through massive World War II invasions by entire divisions, were quite uncomfortable with the small, elite and unconventional A-Teams that trained at Fort Bragg. They certainly didn't want to give this highly independent and somewhat rebellious segment of the Army any positive publicity.

Determined to get his story, Robin appealed for help from the United States Attorney General, friend and former Harvard classmate Robert Kennedy. With a powerful friend on his side Robin was able to make contact with the Special Forces Commander, General William P. Yarborough. The General and Robin quickly developed a friendship that has lasted them a lifetime, but General Yarborough was firm in his demands. If Robin Moore was to research the Special Forces, he would first have to train with them. That was fine with Robin, he wanted to do more than write about them, he wanted to BE one of them. To proactively thwart anticipated opposition from traditional military commanders, Kennedy arranged for Robin to meet with several Pentagon officials. Ultimately however, it was the young writer's research into Castro's own brand of guerilla warfare that resulted in Pentagon brass grudgingly consenting to his effort. In 1963 Robin Moore reported to Fort Bragg as a civilian, to train with the Army's elite.

Robin Moore's training was possible only because of efforts in his behalf by Robert Kennedy and General Yarborough and came with the knowledge and assent of the President himself. That didn't make Moore special at Fort Benning, Georgia, where he endured the rigors of Army Jump School. Neither did it cut him any slack at the Special force's "Q" course where, at 37 years of age, he was old enough to be a father to some of the younger men who trained with him. "That's when all my years of running paid off," Moore said in a 2001 interview. "I think my age also gave some encouragement to the younger men. They would watch me and say, 'If he can do it, then I can do it'."

Robin trained with the Special Forces for nearly a year with the intent to serve with them in Vietnam. His training was nearing a conclusion in the fall when he quickly learned how determined the U.S. Army brass was to keep him from writing his book. On November 22, 1963, the most powerful *admirer* of the Special Forces, President John F. Kennedy, was shot and killed in Dallas, Texas. Two days later Robin Moore's security clearance was revoked. It was a Pentagon effort to deny him the opportunity to serve in Vietnam, and to hopefully quash his efforts to write a book about the Green Berets.

Fortunately for Robin Moore, and even more fortunately for the future of American military operations around the world, General Yarborough stood by the man who would ultimately become the only civilian to ever write about the Green Berets by becoming one of them. Robin Moore arrived in Vietnam on January 2, 1964.

In Vietnam the brave men of the Green Berets wore *two hats*. One was the hat of the combat soldier, highly trained in unconventional warfare and able to bring rapid destruction on an armed enemy. The other was a hat of mercy, helping the people of South Vietnam build their communities. Green Berets assisted local tribesmen in building schools and educating their children. They also helped them dig wells to provide potable water, and even taught them how to turn their fields into more productive harvests. Furthermore, every A-team had at least two men who were trained as medics, and these were also busy combating disease, injuries, and the wounds of war suffered by Vietnamese natives.

As a writer in Vietnam, Robin Moore wore three hats. While he diligently recorded the events that would provide reference for the book to follow, he also performed the duties of a Special Forces soldier on foreign soil. He especially enjoyed the missions of medical mercy, working with the medics and members of his A-Teams to heal the bodies of the oppressed.

Robin Moore was also a soldier. "The teams liked to have me around because it gave them an extra trained gun," he says. "Yes, I carried a gun over there, and more than once I had to fight my way out of an ambush." To the men of the Special Forces in Vietnam, Robin Moore wasn't a writer along for a story. He was a brother, a fellow soldier, a Green Beret.

Robin Moore fulfilled a soldier's normal tour of duty in Vietnam and returned home in June to write his book. As the manuscript progressed, he also wrote an article that was published in *U.S. News and World Report* about Special Forces Operations in Vietnam. That article sparked the attention of Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee. It was another in those unusual twists of fate that set the stage for events yet to unfold. The man who was serving as Republican minority leader, Gerald Ford, invited Robin to the Capitol to share his observations about the growing action in Vietnam with the Committee. Robin set his pen aside long enough to do so.

The year 1964 was the beginning of the turning point for the Army's elite Special Forces. Even as Robin Moore was returning home in June, Roger Donlon and Team A-726 were arriving at Nam Dong. Elsewhere near the Cambodian border a young sergeant named Barry Sadler was

also finding his own purpose as he risked his life to "Free the Oppressed". By the end of that year, Donlon was being decorated by President Johnson as the Vietnam War's first Medal of Honor hero, and Robin Moore's book about the Green Berets was nearing completion.

Several events early in 1965 set the stage for the tremendous success Robin Moore would see in his book, The Green Berets. In February 1965, public opinion polls showed that 80% of the American public approved of U.S. Military involvement in Vietnam, despite the fact that few Americans knew anything about the brewing conflict.

On March 8 President Johnson sent the first combat troops to Vietnam (where the number of American military advisors already numbered 23,000 men). Three weeks after the first 3,500 Marines arrived to defend the American air base at DaNang, the President authorized the commitment of two more Marine battalions and secretly authorized the commencement of offensive operations. By the time The Green Berets reached bookstores in the late spring, the Vietnam conflict had become a WAR, albeit an undeclared war.

Moore's book gave the American public its first real glimpse into what was happening in Vietnam. For the parents of young men already serving there, or of an age that might call them to service, it gave the war a sense of purpose. For a generation that was coming of age, questioning traditions of the past, and rising in opposition to authority, the book provided an unusual hero. The philosophy of the Special Forces was that of an independent, unconventional, "damn the rules and get it done" type of role model the young could identify with, and dream to emulate. It seemed that all of America loved Robin's exciting tales of the Green Beret, and the book was an immediate best seller.

As Robin pondered his sudden success, once again his dream world collided with the realities of the traditions of the past. General Bud Underwood summoned America's favorite new author to the Pentagon for an important meeting. The Army was not at all happy with a book that glorified that independent thinking, unorthodox operating, *bastard child* of the U.S. Military.

When Robin arrived at the Pentagon, General Underwood informed him that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was preparing to prosecute him under the Secrecy Act. The General pointed to a copy of The Green Berets, clearly book marked with several bright red tabs. "Each of those tabs marks a top-secret piece of information (revealed in the book)," General Underwood announced.

The statement caught Robin Moore completely off guard. From the earliest days when he began his crusade to join and chronicle the story of the Special Forces, he knew he would face opposition from the military establishment. Now, with his book in print and selling out in bookstores around the Nation, he was brutally aware of just how far that opposition would go. As he reached out to pick up the marked copy of his book, General Underwood quickly snatched it up and growled, "This book is classified."

News of Robin's problem reached the halls of Congress, where only months earlier he had impressed members of the House Armed Services Committee. Gerald Ford came to the rescue in a most unorthodox manner, reading the classified sections of the book into the *Congressional Record*, thereby declassifying them.

The continued popularity of The Green Berets was only the first step towards defining a new type of soldier, and a new manner of warfare (though guerrilla warfare is actually as old as war itself). In the year that followed release of the book, Robin returned to Vietnam to report on the war for Hearst Headline Service, and joined with Al Capp of *L'il Abner* fame and Capp's brother Jerry in creating a series of Sunday comics titled *Tales of the Green Berets*. The strip ran for a year from April 1966 to April 1977.

In the winter of 1965 when Robin returned to New York from his coverage of the war for Hearst he received an unexpected visitor. Today he chuckles as he recalls, "I discovered Barry Sadler when he went AWOL (Absent Without Leave) from Wolmack Hospital at Ft. Bragg to find me in New York and seek my help in getting his song published." When you reflect on the results of that unusual event, one must wonder who really *discovered* whom. In many ways it was almost like some fate had decreed that the lives of the two would become interwoven to create, grow and perpetuate a legend for future generations.

Sources and Notes:

As one of the thousands of young high school students enamored by Robin Moore's The Green Berets in the 1960s, the opportunity to interview this great writer 30 years later was a privilege and personal thrill. The fact that in his excitement this author failed to push the "record" button on the tape recorder aside, Mr. Moore's patience and candor made it an interview quite easy to remember. Mr. Moore's personal insights into the life of Barry Sadler were also most helpful in writing that segment of this chapter.

Also consulted for this and the following chapter were:

Foreman, Charles, *Bachelor Magazine*. "Barry Sadler: From a Gun-to a Guitar Man", December 1966
Steele, Kevin E., *Guns*. "Barry Sadler – Synthetic Hero?", July 1980

Barry Sadler

*Special Forces soldier Barry Sadler (right) became an instant celebrity when he wrote **The Ballad of the Green Berets**. The song was an immediate success, remaining number one for five straight weeks in 1966 and was the #1 single for that year. It still ranks #21 for the rock era of 1960-69.*



Barry Sadler was the shiftless kind of young man who would have given his father ulcers, had there been a father to give them to. Barry's parents divorced when he was quite young, and only a few years later when Barry was seven years old, his father died of cancer at the age of 37. Barry was also the kind of young man who would ultimately have made his father proud, had his father survived.

Born in New Mexico, Barry spent his youth bounding around the Southwest with his mother and an older brother. It was a nomadic lifestyle that afforded little security and no opportunity. When Barry was twelve, he spent the summer in a logging camp in Mora, New Mexico, where he became enamored with music, primarily Western and Mexican ballads that were popular in the camp. He taught himself to play the harmonica, flute, drums, and the guitar. It was a summer that would follow Barry through the coming years of endless wander in search for self, eventually to find him, and perhaps also ultimately to destroy him.

After the ninth grade, Barry dropped out of high school and spent a brief period hitchhiking cross-country, before deciding he could perhaps find his place in the military. In 1958 at the age of 17, he convinced his mother to sign for him to enlist in the Air Force, where he trained for the none-too-exciting job of a radar specialist. Barry fulfilled his commitment to the U.S. military, but the four-year stint failed to fulfill him. Still restlessly searching for his niche in the world, Barry returned to civilian life and a series of minor musical engagements throughout Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, and Colorado. The *slim pickings* of the endeavor led Barry to California where he worked loading fruit for barely over a dollar an hour during the day and made music with his honky-tonk combo at night. Not only did this brief period of his life fail to fill his hunger for something more purposeful in life, he later vouched that it destroyed his appetite for peaches, pears and plums!

Finally, like a prodigal son returning home, Barry wound up in a military recruiting office, this time to join the Army. There he volunteered for jump school—it paid an extra \$55 a month. While earning his wings Barry learned about the elite soldiers of the Army Special Forces. This elite unit fascinated him, and Barry volunteered to join them. Soon thereafter he began training

with a class of 50 other would be Green Berets. Only 16 of the young men finished the course. Sergeant Barry Sadler was one of them.

In 1964 while Robin Moore was leaving Vietnam to begin work on his bestselling book about the Green Berets, Barry Sadler was arriving in Vietnam work with them. He was assigned to a B-Team for a time, working out of Kontum and Song Ba, and then moved to the central highlands at Plei Do Lim to join an A-Team. During his tour of duty in Southeast Asia his music followed him, and Barry was a popular balladeer among his fellow soldiers. Ever since his days of airborne training he had wanted to write a special song for American jump-qualified soldiers, "I had no idea what it would be, but I wanted it to include the line, 'silver wings upon their chests'." While serving in Vietnam, Barry finally put the finishing touches on what would become his legendary ballad. In Vietnam he even sang it for an ABC film crew while standing in front of a bunker.

By May of 1965 Robin Moore's Green Berets was hitting the bookstores at home, while Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler was wrapping up his tour in Vietnam. It ended abruptly on a routine patrol in the central highlands. Moving through the heavy grass, Staff Sergeant Saddler felt a sudden pain in his knee when it was pierced by a sharp bamboo spike. Punji stakes were a crude but common and often effective weapon, employed by the Viet Cong to protect their jungles. Bamboo poles, hewn to a razor-sharp edge and planted in holes or at angles in the grass, were a deadly menace to troop movements. At the least they could score the flesh...at worst they could impale the unsuspecting soldier. To turn even the least dangerous option more dangerous, the tips of the spikes were often coated with human excrement that could cause a rapid and even deadly infection.

At the time of his wounding Barry was already on antibiotics for dysentery, so he assumed that the threat of infection was minor. He shoved a cotton swab into the wound, covered it with a bandage, and finished his patrol. Within days serious infection caused his leg to swell and surgeons had to enlarge the wound to drain it.

The punji stake wound was deemed serious enough to end Sergeant Sadler's tour of duty in Vietnam. He was sent first to the Philippines where they pumped his body full of penicillin and struggled to save the leg. For a time, there was a very real fear that it would have to be amputated. During his month confined to an Army hospital bed, Sadler used his time to give more thought to the songs he had written, and the ones he still wanted to write.

As Barry's strong constitution fought back for recovery, he was sent home to finish his rehabilitation. Today, Robin Moore chuckles as he recalls, "I discovered Barry Sadler when he went AWOL (Absent Without Leave) from Wolmack Hospital at Ft. Bragg to find me in New York and seek my help in getting his song published."

It was an unconventional way to follow a dream, but for Barry it worked. Robin welcomed his unexpected arrival warmly, one Special Forces soldier and Vietnam veteran to another. Both had battled on foreign shores for the survival of the Vietnamese people. Now they teamed to battle on the home front for the survival of their elite unit. Along the way the 24-year-old Sadler found more than a mentor. In a very real sense, he finally found the *father* he had never been privileged to have in his youth.

Barry's arrival in New York was six months after the initial release of The Green Berets, which was now being prepared for a paperback issue. One morning from his bed on Robin's couch, Sadler could hear Robin on the phone with his publisher. They were having trouble finding a suitable male model to pose in uniform and green beret for the cover of the paperback edition.

Robin said into the receiver, "Hell, I got one of the real ones passed out on the couch; why don't I shower him down and send him over?"

Sadler later explained, "That's the reason I have that steely-eyed glassy look in my eyes in that picture (on the cover of the paperback edition), staring straight ahead. I was still about half-bombed."

Though Barry appreciated the \$65 he was paid to pose for the book's cover, he had come to New York to find help in getting his music heard, not to become a *poster boy*. In this effort, Robin Moore came through again. He worked with Barry to polish the songs that would comprise the young balladeers first album, and then called his personal friend Dick Robert at RCA-Victor to arrange for Barry to be heard. Barry walked into RCA an unknown Special Forces Vietnam Veteran, and walked back out an aspiring singer/songwriter with his first contract.

On December 18, 1965, Barry walked back into the RCA studios where a 15-piece orchestra and male chorus waited to help him achieve his dream. Before midnight Barry walked back out, a full 12-song album recorded on tape. Three weeks later *The Ballad of the Green Berets* was released as a single, immediately shooting to the top of the music charts and selling two million copies in five weeks. Ten days later the full album was released to similar success.

Between Moore's bestselling true stories of the Green Berets in action, Barry Sadler's inspiring new ballad, and the wholesome, clean-cut image of the professional soldier depicted by Sadler on the cover of both the LP and the books (glassy eyes notwithstanding), new passions were ignited in America's youth. A generation that was searching for identity and purpose found something appealing in the elite Green Berets and recruiting offices around the country were swamped with eager volunteers wanting "silver wings upon their chests". One would have thought the United States Army, now facing an ever-escalating involvement in Vietnam, would have been thrilled. They were not, and Robin Moore became the object of their dissent.

The anti-beret faction at the Department of Defense successfully brought pressure to bear on RCA to keep Robin Moore's name off the album jacket, though his name did remain on the label itself. David Wolper was the movie producer with an "in" with the military establishment. Shortly after the initial release of The Green Berets, Wolper signed up for the movie rights for The Green Berets. Army brass promptly notified Mr. Wolper that the Defense Department wanted to get Special Forces out of the U.S. Army as a unit, not glorify them by making a movie out of the book. Under this pressure, Robin Moore reluctantly but kindly released Wolper from the contract.

By mid-1966 the book continued to sell at a rapid pace, Sadler's ballad was playing repeatedly across the airwaves, and Sadler himself was making appearances around the country including a stint on **The Ed Sullivan Show**. Among the younger generation, the concept of U.S. Army Special Forces was generating an excitement that stirred emotions that had only been aroused by one other force in this new generation, Rock and Roll. The older generation responded to both Special Forces and Rock and Roll in the same manner, distrust and derision.

Six months after Robin Moore released David Wolper from his movie contract, a third person joined the battle to preserve the future of the Army Special Forces. This time it was not a little known but budding author, or a virtually unknown songwriter who had appeared out of nowhere. This time it was none other than the hero of the American war movie, John "The Duke" Wayne.

When "The Duke" contacted Robin Moore to obtain the movie rights for The Green Berets, he paid a token \$35,000 for the movie rights with the additional promise of 5% of the movie's profits. Robin asked Wayne how much the movie would have to earn before his own 5% kicked in, to which "The Duke" replied, "I dunno, Robin. Haven't figured what my salary is gonna be."

Even the venerable John Wayne was destined to face opposition from the Department of Defense in his bid to put the elite Green Berets on the big screen. According to Wayne's son Mike, *The Duke* took the opposition in stride and placed a call to the White House. "Lyndon," he said when he had the president on the phone, "I'm going to make this movie with or without you. What's it going to be?"

"Oh, with us, Duke," President Johnson quickly replied. "We'll help."

It was yet a year before filming began on location at Fort Benning, Georgia, home of the Green Berets. By the time the movie finally opened in New York in 1968 the American military establishment had a bigger war brewing than its efforts to abort the birth of Special Forces, or their now very real conflict in Vietnam. By 1968 the tide of public opinion was turning against American involvement in the war in Southeast Asia, and the Pentagon had its hands full just trying to keep up with the outcry and anti-war demonstrations of the populace at home.

Meanwhile the men of the U.S. Army Special Forces continued to do their jobs with courage and professionalism. Born in the conflict of war, these brave young men of a new generation of Americans proved their worth and overcame their detractors.

Robin Moore continued to enjoy enviable success as an American author, though he never lost touch with his roots among the Green Berets. When I interviewed him in December 2001, the 76-year old American icon was preparing for another trip abroad...this time to Afghanistan. "We don't want the Marines to try and take all the publicity," he told me.

In 1989 Barry Sadler was shot under mysterious circumstances in Guatemala. The sudden rise to fame took more than its toll on his young life, though he had bounced back to become a successful author himself before his death. Some would view his youthful demise as a tragedy. The fact remains, Barry Sadler did more living in his 49 years than most people will enjoy in twice that span. "He was a wild one," Robin Moore recently told me, "but he was a good man."

Perhaps the most fitting epitaph for the U.S. Army's unwanted poster boy of the 1960s was one he wrote himself. It was the title of his 1967 autobiography: I'm a Lucky One.

Don Bendell



My hair was long, with one blonde stripe,
The surfer's streak . . . my father griped.
I'd listen to the Beach Boys sing,
And thought that I was "everything."

My sandals laced up to my knees,
With cut-off cords, no BVD's.
I was a hippie, and a bum,
And joined the Army to have fun.

They changed my mind with morning runs,
Grenades, and push-ups, bombs, and guns.
They shaved my head and made me hurt,
And more than once, I ate some dirt.

In OCS, they said, "Now quit!"
But I said, "I will finish it!"
Then came the day and that gold bar,
Then jump wings and my brand-new car.

And soon, I won my green beret,
Then left to fight so far away.
In Vietnam, I fought with pride.
My cousin fled up north to hide.

POW's beat and caged,
While back at home the peaceniks raged.
Jane Fonda made me yell and scream,
When friends died who were on my team.

That war was fought with blacks and whites,
While Johnson fought for civil rights.
I was a drunk, a dooper, too,
But I got sober in that zoo.

Then I got sick, was almost dead,
The war still raging in my head.
They shipped me home; and told me, "Stay!"
Then I could only grieve and pray.

We won the battles, lost the war,
And I felt like a used-up whore.
I gave my all, my heart, my soul.
The passion really took its toll.

And then I tried civilian life,
Three kids, a house, and my first wife.
I didn't like neighbors, jobs, or stress,
And made my life a stupid mess.

I've raised myself: God helped me grow,
Since I left that war so long ago.
I've had some laughter, shed some tears,
A wife I've loved for twenty years.

My innocence gone, and life now changed,
Some folks still think that I am strange.
That war defined us, that's for sure.
It really made me more mature.

I have a code of honor still
And pray I'll never have to kill,
But know that I will never run . . .
I'm not that boy who was a bum.

During the decade and a half that the United States military was involved in the war in Vietnam, some two and a half million American men and women served *in country* (within the geographical area of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, the surrounding waters, or in the skies over this region). The bulk of these were conventional soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines not at all unlike their fathers who fought in World War II. Only a very small minority of the American combat force was the elite men of the Army Special Forces.

Despite their diminutive size in proportion in the overall American presence, the men of the Green Berets earned 17 Medals of Honor, more than 10% of the 160 total awards to members of the U.S. Army and nearly 7% of the overall total of 246 awards. Eleven of those seventeen heroes did not survive their moment of valor to ever wear the award.

A further glance at those seventeen awards reveals another notable statistic. Three of these Special Forces heroes were ethnic minorities and a fourth was a foreign-born Hungarian. In the Army Special Forces, the playing field was level for every volunteer. A man either made it, or washed out, based solely upon his ability to do the job.

Even while a revolution for civil rights was brewing at home, on the battlefields of Vietnam the young soldiers who traveled to foreign shores to *free the oppressed* had already learned and proven, what had yet to be understood in American society.

Defining Equality

When Worlds Collide

I was seven years old when our family moved from Colorado to Alabama. In my youth I just wanted friends to play with; the color of their skin was not a consideration. I was fortunate to grow up with parents who were not racially prejudiced and spent my early life in integrated neighborhoods. Initially, in my naiveté, I never really noticed the friction between blacks and whites that was growing around me in Alabama.

In my early teens my closest friend was Betty, the girl who lived next door. Betty was Black, but in my young eyes that didn't make her different. Quickly, and sometimes comically, I learned that we came from two different worlds.

The first time I visited Betty's house I noticed an unusual vase in the corner by the easy chair. I went over to look at it quizzically while Betty grinned and said: "That's just my mom's spittoon. Haven't you seen a spittoon before"? I told her that I hadn't, and she proceeded to explain its use to me.

We hung out together and often spent the night at each other's house. Betty had a garden in her backyard where she grew collard greens, okra, and black-eyed peas. The first time she fried up okra (after dipping it in cornmeal) I thought it was the greatest thing I had ever tasted. It has a sweet taste. I never did care for collard greens or black-eyed peas, though. To this day, I still love okra.

On one of the nights when I was sleeping over, Betty was watching television and told me to help myself to anything in the refrigerator. I saw what looked like a bowl of vanilla pudding. I got a spoon out of her drawer and put it into the bowl taking a huge bite. I immediately went to the sink and spat the disgusting food out. I asked Betty, "What was that?"

Betty looked at me strangely and said, "That's lard. Why?"

I explained that I had thought it was vanilla pudding and had taken a bite of it. She laughed and explained to me what lard was and how it was used.

Many times, Betty's uncle would bring a huge box of comic books to her house. We felt suddenly rich and would spend days reading the comic books together. In so many ways we were exactly alike. Other times Betty would tease me good-naturedly about our differences, especially when she was trying to teach me how to dance. I was shy and never could seem to move as fluently and provocatively as she did. She would laugh good-naturedly and say, "White people ain't got no soul."

My youthful naiveté changed when we moved across the highway. At first, I didn't realize that all of my neighbors were white. I just figured I hadn't met any of the Black neighbors yet.

Despite the move, I continued to walk to Betty's house to spend time with her. After about a week, when we had pretty well settled in, I invited her to my new home. "Are you sure that's ok?" She asked. I was puzzled why she would even ask such a question. She had been to my old house on numerous occasions. Why would she think she wouldn't be welcome at my new house as well?

We walked the couple of miles to my house and, as we did, I began to notice that Betty was very uncomfortable. When we got to my house we went inside to play together. Later, when dad came home from work, he drove Betty home. As far as I could see, nothing had really changed with our move across the highway.

As quickly as Betty departed, my new next-door neighbor, a white girl named Debbie, came outside to yell at me. "How dare you bring that nigger into our neighborhood!" she screamed. It caught me completely off guard.

"She's not a nigger, she's black," I countered. "And she's my best friend!"

"Then you're nothing but white trash", Debbie yelled back at me.

I didn't know what "white trash" was, but I knew from the expression on her face and the tone of her voice that it couldn't be good. And thus, began my first real glimpse of racial prejudice, and the collision of two worlds...Black America and White America.

In the months that followed I started to notice more and more the racial tension that plagued our city. As I moved up in the grades, I saw it becoming worse and worse in my school. One of the biggest issues at the time was "bussing", a practice that united us all in one manner. Both Black and White students hated it. For all of us, our young minds just didn't understand why we couldn't go to the school in our own neighborhoods. Instead we were all, whether Black or White, forced to ride buses great distances for from forty-five minutes to an hour, to attend the school that had been selected for us.

Bussing was the government's way of *leveling the playing field* and addressing the inequalities in education that resulted from segregated schools. The concept was that, in order for all kids to have access to an equal education, youths should be bussed to schools that needed more kids of either the White or Black race in order to achieve racial balance.

When I moved on up to Junior High School (what we now call Middle School), I was lucky in that I only had to be bussed three miles to attend classes. During this same period, I also quickly realized that the tension between the races seemed to grow as we became older. Often when I would walk down the halls on my way to a class, a group of black students would push me down the incline causing me to lose my balance. If I lost my grip and dropped my books, these same kids kicked them down the hall and laughed at me as I tried to gather them up. I was both confused and humiliated. Very often I just sat down and cried.

One girl in particular seemed to enjoy picking on the White students that she felt were particularly vulnerable. Quiet and shy, I numbered among this group, and she told me I was to wear my hair a certain way or wear certain clothes. She further advised that if I didn't do as she said, she would beat me.

I tried to explain to her, as well as other black students, that I hadn't done anything wrong. I asked why they hated me. They told me it was because I was white.

I asked why they hated me because of the color of my skin. They said it was because white people made black people slaves.

I told them I had never made anyone a slave, nor did any of my family. How could we have had slaves? We were from Colorado!

My feeble defense didn't seem to matter. To them, I was the enemy.

In the middle and late sixties, the tension and violence in our city reached dangerous levels. My parents heard reports of black kids stabbing and cutting people with the metal picks, worn in their Afros. A few white teachers had been killed. Everyday mom and dad sent me to school with the admonition, "If anything looks wrong, or you are fearful for your life, you leave the school immediately and come home."

One day I was walking down the hall to my next class when a teacher grabbed me and threw me into her classroom, slamming the door behind us. I explained to her that this was not my class. She yelled, "Stay here!" I looked out the window in the door and saw about fifteen Black kids with picks held above their heads running down the same hallway I had just been in.

A few days later the school principal called for my attention in the hallway. He told me, as well as several other students nearby, to go home immediately. The urgency in his voice let us

know that we were not to question him. I ran home shaking. Later I learned that a riot had broken out in our school and several students were badly hurt.

Mom and Dad watched the news every night, and I remember seeing pictures of race riots and marches. Once I asked mom what the marches were about, and she explained that these people were marching so that Black Americans would have the same rights as White Americans. She explained how the schools in Black neighborhoods were old and in poor repair, so that Black kids didn't have the opportunity for the same education as White kids. That, she told me, was why I had to ride the bus so far to school. She admitted that there were still a lot of problems, but also told me that many Americans were trying to correct them. From that point on I watched the news with a little more interest.

One day my friend Betty told me there was going to be a demonstration and that she might go to it. I asked my mom if I could go too. After all, I was for fair treatment for everyone. Mom was fearful of the violence that often occurred at the demonstrations and refused to let me go. Later I learned that Betty's mother felt the same way and had similarly kept my best friend at home as well.

Since I couldn't march in protest, I did the only thing I knew to do--I voiced my feelings on paper. In one essay, I wrote that I wish everyone were blind. If everyone were blind, there would be no prejudice. No one would be judged on the color of his or her skin. They would only be judged by what kind of a person they were.

I came to Alabama as an innocent child free of prejudice. After living in the South for nine years during the turbulent sixties, I unwittingly developed some. I never changed my belief that people should be treated equally regardless of the color of their skin. It was just that these experiences made me more fearful of Black people. If I was walking down the street by myself and a couple of Black kids were on the other side of the street, I would start to tremble. I would also look quickly around to find another route while praying that they would not hurt me.

Eventually we moved back to Colorado. A few days after we arrived, I saw my first Black person. He was a kid about my age.

I felt the same fear rising up in me as he crossed the street to stand in front of me. "You're new here, aren't you," he inquired.

I replied that I was.

He smiled and said, "Welcome to the neighborhood."

Pam Sterner

Dr. Martin Luther King



I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

*Dr. Martin Luther King
August 28, 1963*

The term "Civil Rights" conjures images of slavery, the American Civil War, segregated communities in our Southern States, along with marches and demonstrations in the 1960s to force American society to live up to the words echoed in the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Of a truth however, the issue of equal rights for all Americans regardless of race, has existed since the birth of our country. Since 1776 it has been a national problem. While the Civil War settled once and for all the issue of slavery in the United States, it failed to achieve the American credo echoed in the document that founded our nation. Over the following two centuries racial prejudice continued and even accelerated.

Black Americans have served in the United States military since long before there was a United States of America. During the early days of settlement, British colonists welcomed both slaves and free blacks into provincial militias in order to defend small settlements from attack by native Indian tribes as well as other European powers. As the population of Black soldiers grew however, White Americans in the colonies began to fear the potential for slave rebellions and started excluding all Blacks from military service. In 1639 Virginia passed a law prohibiting any Black American from serving in the military. The New England colony of Massachusetts followed with a similar law in 1656, and Connecticut passed a similar law in 1661.

Despite such laws, when enemies threatened the American colonies, Black Americans were quick to serve and were welcomed as needed soldiers. Black militiamen fought and died during King William's War (1689 – 1697), Queen Anne's War (1702 – 1713), and the French and Indian War (1754 – 1763). When the shot that was heard round the world was fired at Lexington on April 19, 1775, one of the eight American casualties was Prince Estabrook, a Black militiaman.

During the American Revolution no fewer than 5,000 African Americans served in General George Washington's Continental Army. Thousands more served in local militias. Despite the fact that these volunteers were badly needed for the war effort, even as early as 1776 there was a prevailing attitude that the Black soldier was inferior to the White. Unlike later wars, during the American Revolution free Blacks and slaves were integrated into white units, but most were relegated to support roles as substitute soldiers for white colonists. Most served as guides, general laborers, messengers, and teamsters. Black slaves who distinguished themselves in battle were promised freedom for their valor, but in the support roles where most Blacks served, it was difficult for them to demonstrate the battle prowess that could earn them freedom.

When the war ended and the demand for volunteers to earn American freedom diminished, the United States quickly forgot the dedicated service of the Black soldier and returned to segregation in the South and a basically all-White Army throughout America. When Congress passed the Militia Act in 1792, the implicit intent was to limit the American militia to "able-bodied white male citizen(s) between the ages of 18 and 45." Such prejudice became even more blatant in the 1798 act to formally organize the United States Marine Corps. That legislation excluded "Negroes, mulattos (of African and European descent), and Indians" from service.

The fledgling new United States Navy became the one area where Black Americans could find some semblance of equal opportunity. When the War of 1812 began, fully ten percent of the United States Naval force was Black. With the beginning of war, the Army once again accepted Blacks into military service (though the Marine Corps remained totally White until World War II).

These Black soldiers and sailors served honorably throughout that brief war. General Andrew Jackson, whose force at New Orleans during the famous battle of 1814 included two Black battalions, noted: "I expected much from you...but you surpass my hopes...the American nation shall applaud your valor, as your General now praises your ardor."

When peace at last returned to the United States in 1814, the Black soldier found his services no longer needed or wanted. In 1820 the United States Army ordered that no blacks be accepted as recruits. In 1839 the Navy limited its own ranks to a maximum of five percent of black sailors. The moratorium on military service for Blacks continued virtually unabated until 1863 when, at the height of the Civil War, they were out of necessity finally allowed once again to serve as a result of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

Even while those in the North railed against the slavery of the South however, the racial prejudice of the American Yankee was quite evident in the practice of segregation of Whites and Blacks. It took nearly two years of bitter warfare and the possibility of a Union loss of the war to convince the Northerners to reluctantly admit Black Americans into military service. Frederick Douglas pushed the cause to force the Union Army to finally admit Black recruits arguing sarcastically that: "Colored men were good enough to fight under Washington, but they are not good enough to fight under McClellan."

When at last President Lincoln opened the military service to Black volunteers on New Years Day, 1863, these soldiers were placed in segregated, all-black units. Almost universally they were under the command of White officers. In the Union Army of the Civil War, Black soldiers were encouraged to fight for their own freedom, and then denied equal opportunity in service. Not only was there a prejudice against Black soldiers in positions of leadership and authority, the inequality was more vividly apparent in the soldier's pay. White Union soldiers were paid thirteen dollars a month, their Black counterparts only seven dollars a month...less than half. Such was the subtle hypocrisy that continued in the American military until after the end of World War II.

During the Civil War Black soldiers served with a distinction in battle that, though not unique in comparison to prior conflicts, was at last recognized. Twenty-five Black Americans received Medals of Honor for their battlefield valor, and in 1865 Martin R. Delany became our Nation's first Black field officer when he was commissioned as a major in the Union Army.

Among the heroes who earned Medals of Honor in the Civil War was a free Negro who enlisted from Baltimore "to save the country from ruin". After serving through engagements at Yorktown, Pennsylvania, and Fort Fisher, Sergeant Major Christian Fleetwood noted in his diary: "This year has brought about many changes that at the beginning were or would have been thought impossible. The close of the year finds me a soldier for the cause of my race."

Sergeant Major Fleetwood demonstrated that the Black soldier was an equal to his White counterpart, earning the Medal of Honor while carrying the flag of the United States through the horrible fight at Chapin's Farm, Virginia, in the fall of 1864. Despite this recognition, and the great strides towards acceptance of the Black soldier earned during the Civil War, Fleetwood was realistic. Following the war, he authored a pamphlet titled *The Negro as Soldier* in which he wrote:

"After each war, of 1776, of 1812, of 1861, history repeats itself in the absolute effacement of remembrance of the gallant deeds done for the country by its brave black defenders and in their relegation to outer darkness. History further repeats itself in the fact that in every war so far known to this country, the first blood,

and, in some cases, the last also, has been shed by the faithful Negro, and this in spite of all the years of bondage and oppression, and wrongs unspeakable."

The valor demonstrated by Black soldiers of both sides in the Civil War led to the formation of all-Black cavalry units to defend settlers in the American West. Known as *Buffalo Soldiers*, these Americans established a tradition of valor and service. Of 426 Medals of Honor awarded to U.S. soldiers for action during the Indian Campaigns of the American West, eighteen were presented to Black soldiers.

Until 1948 however, in the United States Army, Black soldiers were segregated in all-Black units...certainly no indication of changing prejudices. The United States Navy, once the bastion of acceptance for Black volunteers, demonstrated similar prejudices even more vividly following the Civil War. While Blacks continued to be recruited for the Navy, most were relegated to menial tasks as cooks and stewards. There was no issue of segregation in the Marine Corps – it remained lily white.

An indirect result of military service was the opportunity for Black soldiers to demonstrate their equality to their white fellow soldiers. Though the Army remained segregated, all-Black units such as the 10th and 12th Cavalry fought alongside White regiments. In battles such as the famous Spanish-American War charge at San Juan Hill, these Buffalo Soldiers did their duty so well that the white soldiers fighting next to them could not deny their valor. Though only one Black soldier earned a Medal of Honor in that historic battle, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt later spoke of the Buffalo Soldiers' valor and devotion to duty when he said: "I don't think that any Rough Rider will ever forget the tie that binds us to the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry."

When given opportunity on the battlefield, Black Americans were proving that all men regardless of race are created equal. Those who witnessed their service and sacrifice could not help but change long-ingrained misperceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices against men of color. During the Spanish American War, six Black servicemen received Medals of Honor, four of them for risking their lives to save a trapped element of White soldiers at Tayacoba Bay in Cuba.

The opportunity for Black soldiers to demonstrate their valor and thereby change the prejudices around them continued to be rather limited, however. Prejudice within American society, as well as in the military, continued in its age-old traditions. When World War I began more than 2 Million Negroes registered for the draft, presenting some serious questions to a still segregated American society:

- Where would such a large force of Black volunteers be trained? Certainly, they would need a separate (from the white draftees) facility, as the two races could not train together.
- In what units would these Black soldiers serve? Segregation of Black soldiers from Whites was a time-honored tradition.
- What if some of these men qualified for commissions as officers? It was still widely believed that the Black man lacked the intelligence and leadership abilities of his White counterpart.

In all, nearly a half-million Black Americans were trained and readied for service with the American Expeditionary force. By mid-1917 a number of Black soldiers were training at Camp Dodge near Des Moines, Iowa, where 625 of them earned commissions as second lieutenants. The war department established the Ninety-second and Ninety-third Divisions, nearly all-Black in

composition but now at least commanded by a large contingent of Black officers as well. (During the war Fort Dodge trained and commissioned 639 Black American officers, a historic stride. Even so, though 13 percent of the American World War I active Army was Black, less than seven tenths of one per cent were commissioned as officers.)

Despite these great strides, change can be agonizingly slow, and World War I American society continued to cling to its views of the Negro as inferior to the white. In the military, though 140,000 Black soldiers were deployed to Europe where no less than 40,000 of them saw combat and served with honor and distinction, the accepted practice was to relegate Black soldiers to support tasks. They served the Army as janitors, stevedores, cooks, and in other menial tasks. Black combat units were unceremoniously turned over to the control of the French Army causing Colonel William Hayward, commander of the 396th Infantry Regiment to comment: "Our great American general (John J. Pershing) simply put the black orphan in a basket, set it on the doorstep of the French, pulled the bell, and went away."

It was a stinging indictment of the man known as *Black Jack* Pershing for his service as a White officer in the Black 10th Cavalry during the Indian Campaigns and the Spanish-American War. To the general's credit, early in the War when the British government requested that *Negro troops* not be sent overseas, Pershing returned his official reply to note that, "Colored combat divisions" were being sent to France and: "I cannot and will not discriminate against these men."

The General's admirable statement aside, discrimination and segregation were a way of life for the soldiers who would one day father the Greatest Generation. Many White soldiers refused to serve with Black soldiers, and at home the Jim Crow laws forced Black soldiers to sit in the back of troop trains, far behind the white troopers, when regiments were transported to awaiting ships from their training camps. The practice was common, even in what we today consider the "less-prejudice" Northern states.

During the war, two soldiers of Colonel Hayward's 369th Infantry became the first American enlisted men, Black or White, to be awarded the French Croix de Guerre. Those few Black units that did see combat served with great distinction. Along the way Black soldiers earned hundreds of Croix de Guerres, dozens of Distinguished Service Crosses and Silver Stars—but no Medals of Honor.* Thousands gave their lives on the battlefield, proving that death was the one force in the world of American military that did not discriminate against any man on the basis of race.

Beyond that however, World War I was not a defining moment in the push for American civil rights. Race riots in the military resulted in deaths and court martial, verbal and physical abuse by civilians directed towards Black soldiers training at Spartanburg, South Carolina, made headlines, and labor strikes by Negro stevedores tended to overshadow the valor of the Black soldier on the battlefield. Major General Robert Lee Bullard, who commanded the Second Army including the Ninety-second division, wrote in his memoirs that the Negro soldier was, "Lazy, slothful, superstitious, imaginative...if you need combat soldiers, and especially if you need them in a hurry, don't put your time upon Negroes."

Such was the attitude that proliferated throughout much of America in the post-World War I years. Between 1918 and 1937 the Negro soldier presence dropped to less than two percent of

* In the early 1990s a review of these high awards resulted in the upgrade of the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously awarded to Corporal Freddie Stowers to the Medal of Honor. It was presented to his surviving sisters at the White House by President George Bush on April 24, 1991.

the Army and National Guard. It was becoming increasingly apparent that, despite the Black man's efforts to prove his equal in time of war, military service alone could not achieve the dream of Americans not being judged by the color of one's skin but by the content of their character.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929, Martin Luther King, Jr. was the son and grandson of prominent Southern ministers. Reverend A.D. Williams, young King's grandfather, pastored the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, and was founder of that city's NAACP chapter. Martin Luther King, Sr. went on to succeed his father as that church's pastor, and himself became a leader in the civil rights movement. He became the single most pivotal force in equal treatment for all.

In his youth King had witnessed first-hand the hypocrisy in American society in so much as the civil rights of Black Americans was concerned. When King was seven years old, West Point cadet Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. walked up to salute General John J. Pershing to receive his diploma and commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. army. He was the first Negro since Charles D. Young, forty-seven years earlier, to graduate from the Point. The son of Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., one of the few high-ranking Black officers still in the Army after World War I, as cadet the younger man had not been spared prejudice and discrimination at the U.S. Military Academy. White Upperclassmen tried to force him out with silent treatment, instructors did their best to derail his plans for graduation, and during his four years as a cadet he lived alone in segregation, while other cadets shared two-man rooms.

In 1940 young Captain Davis was a professor of military science at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama when his father was promoted to Brigadier General. That same year President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Selective Service Act which included verbiage designed to end racial discrimination in the military forces. The following year young Davis broke the "color barrier" in the Army Air Corps, which had long maintained that Negroes "lacked technical ability to fly airplanes." In the years of war that followed, the Tuskegee Airman would prove this prejudice totally in error.

Twelve years old when World War II broke out, King no doubt also knew the stories of how other elder Black *brothers* had tried to earn their own place in the *Greatest Generation's* effort to save our world. Everyone, it seemed, knew the story of Dorie Miller, the Black mess steward aboard the *USS Arizona* at Pearl Harbor.

At the start of World War II, the U.S. Navy was among the most hostile of the services towards Black recruits. There were no Black officers in the Navy, and those Black men who chose to serve in enlisted roles were banished to the galley to cook or serve meals to officers in their quarters. They were not allowed combat training and most served their time without ever being allowed to train with or handle any form of weaponry. Despite this lack of training, when Japanese bombs rained down on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Messman Miller ignored the danger of incoming rounds and roiling explosions to race towards a silent machinegun. With no prior training, the brave 23-year old sailor raked the heavens with return fire, shooting down at least three enemy aircraft until his ammunition was exhausted.

One would think the actions of Dorie Miller provided ample proof to the World War II Navy that Black sailors were no different from White sailors. Six months after Pearl Harbor Dorie Miller received our Country's second highest award, the Navy Cross, from Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. The young hero became a symbol of Black valor for millions of young black boys back home, his picture repeatedly published and his name a household word. But during World War II

Navy traditions and prejudices died hard. A year after his heroic action the aircraft carrier *Liscome Bay* was sunk at sea by a Japanese torpedo. Among the dead, which included most of the crew, was Dorie Miller...a combat hero who was still at sea and still serving his Nation in uniform...as a Naval mess steward!

The Greatest Generation, despite its valor and sacrifice to save our world, continued to struggle with the prejudices of its forefathers. Segregated military units continued to be SOP (Standard Operating Procedure), with the soldiers of many white units refusing to fight side by side with their Black counterparts. The perception of the Black soldier as inferior both intellectually and militarily continued to relegate most Negroes to support roles. More than one million Blacks served in the United States Armed Forces during World War II (90% of them in the Army), with a half-million serving in overseas duty. It is a sad commentary that 75% of these were confined to roles of quartermaster, engineer or transportation. While young Black men and women (nearly 4,000 Black women served in World War II) pleaded for an equal opportunity to participate in the defense of their Nation in the same manner as other Americans, it was often an opportunity denied.

Those soldiers who did see combat, particularly those of all-Black units like the Tuskegee Airmen, the Ninety-second Division and the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion, served and sacrificed with the same valor as other soldiers. A 1943 War Department press release listed nearly 300 high awards including Distinguished Service Crosses and Silver Stars to Black soldiers during the war. But of 455 Medals of Honor awarded during or in the ten years following World War II, not one was awarded to a Black American serviceman, sailor or marine.*

On the positive side of the ledger, the service of these Black Americans did set in motion more badly needed changes in the segregated and highly prejudicial military establishment. In 1941 the U.S. Army began integrating its officers' candidate schools, and on June 1, 1942, the United States Marine Corps admitted its first Black recruit in a century, a former Nashville, Tennessee, dogcatcher named George Thompson. On March 17, 1944, as the war was winding to a conclusion, the U.S. Navy commissioned its first group of black officers who became known as the "Golden Thirteen." Two months after the Golden Thirteen got their commissions, the War Department issued a directive prohibiting racial discrimination in transportation and recreational facilities on all army bases.

Ten years before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat and move to the rear of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, a young Army Lieutenant on a military base in Texas similarly refused to move to the back of a bus. His action was seen as a disobedient act that prompted charges, but he was completely vindicated at his subsequent court-martial for the incident. Years later that same young soldier, Lieutenant Jackie Robinson, would again challenge the racial barriers in the United States, this time as a civilian when he became the first Black professional baseball player.

The most sweeping change in American civil rights since the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution following the Civil War was probably Executive Order 9981, issued by President Harry S Truman on July 26, 1948. That act, which desegregated all elements of the US Military and established the Fahy Committee to examine all existing

* Following the 1991 presentation of the Medal of Honor to Corporal Freddie Stowers for World War I valor, a similar review was made of all high awards to Black servicemen during World War II. The review resulted in upgrades, and on January 13, 1997, President Bill Clinton presented Medals of Honor to seven Black heroes for their World War II valor. Only Lieutenant Vernon Baker of the Ninety-second Division survived to personally receive the award.

regulations and practices in the military, placed in effect a National policy of "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the Armed Services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin."

Six months after Executive Order 9981 was issued, the young son of a poor Mississippi sharecropper received his flight wings at Pensacola, Florida, to become the Navy's first Black aviator. Jesse LeRoy Brown's odyssey had not been without its share of confronting hate and prejudice. Naval instructors had been quite to the point in telling him, "No nigger would ever sit his ass in a Navy cockpit."

The equal opportunity and equal treatment Jesse Brown earned and was due in the long process to receive his wings was never forthcoming from the stateside Navy. When hostilities broke out in Korea on June 25, 1950, Ensign Brown's ship the *USS Leyte*, returned from its post in the Mediterranean for some quick repairs before assignment to Korean waters. The quick return to American shores before deployment afforded the young Black officer opportunity for a five-day visit with his wife and young daughter at home in Mississippi. Following the all-too-brief reunion, while en route to Birmingham, Alabama, to catch a flight back to his ship for deployment to combat duty, he was almost denied a seat on the bus...because he was Black.

Three months later Ensign Brown's Corsair lay crumpled on a Korean hillside as, yet another Black hero shed the same red blood as his white counterparts, in the service of his country. But to the men with whom he served in combat; Jesse Brown had become simply a Naval Aviator...not a Black aviator. In his service during time of war, Brown at last found that measure of civil rights and respect he was due. In his last moments of life, a fellow White aviator, Lieutenant Thomas Hudner, deliberately crashed his own fighter on the same hillside in a failed rescue attempt. Hudner then stayed beside Jesse until he died. (For his own actions, Tom Hudner was awarded the Medal of Honor and Jesse Brown received the Distinguished Flying Cross. On March 18, 1972, the US Navy commissioned the *USS Jesse L. Brown* (DD-1089), the first Naval vessel in history to be named for a Black American.)

The Korean War became the first conflict since the war of 1812 in which, in some cases, Black and White soldiers and sailors fought side-by-side in the same units. The process of integration continued throughout the war and, along the way, transformed the Marine Corps beyond almost any other branch of service. At the beginning of the Korean war Blacks numbered only 1,075 in the nearly 75,000-man strong Corps. Nearly half of these Black Marines served as stewards. By the end of the Korean War the Marine Corps achieved almost total integration at all levels.

Of 139 soldiers cited with the Medal of Honor for their valor in battle during the Korean War, two were posthumous awards to Black soldiers. It marked the first time since the Spanish-American War that any Black soldier would be so highly recognized for his heroism and sacrifice. That fact aside, both Private First Class William Henry Thompson and Sergeant Cornelius Charlton earned their Medals of Honor while serving in the 24th Infantry Regiment, a unit that even during the Korean War remained a segregated all-Black Regiment with lineage to the Civil War enlistment of Blacks to military service.

In 1954, a year after the end hostilities in Korea, the last segregated military unit was disbanded. That same year the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* to integrate another American establishment...the school system. It was also the same year that a sailor named Carl Brashear broke the color bearer to become the Navy's first Black diver. The

acclaimed 2001 movie *Men of Honor* details his efforts and provides a somber picture of a military force integrated by law, but still divided by intense prejudice and hatred.

The following year the young man named Martin Luther King, Jr. received his degree in systematic theology, to return to the South and pastor the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. The struggle for equal rights for Black Americans was moving from its battlefield in the military, which was now quickly becoming a model for the rest of American society, to the cities and towns of America.

Five days after Rosa Parks refused to adhere to Montgomery city rules mandating segregation on buses, the city's Black residents launched a boycott and elected Reverend King as president of the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association. The action launched King into a leadership role in the growing Civil Rights movement and, two years later along with other southern Black ministers, he founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). In the interim, in December 1956, the US Supreme Court declared Alabama's segregation laws unconstitutional.

As the civil rights movement became almost another American *Civil War*, many leaders emerged in both the Black and White communities. American servicemen were called out to enforce racial integration in Arkansas, and to protect the civil rights of students in Alabama, as well as elsewhere. Dr. King continued to rise in prominence as the leading Black voice for civil rights, much more so after his house was bombed and he was arrested and convicted along with other leaders on charges of conspiring to interfere with bus company operations through his boycott.

In 1958 Dr. King published his first book, Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story. The following year he made a tour of India learning Gandhian non-violent strategies to social change. It was Dr. King's advocacy for changing America through non-violent protest that perhaps most marked him as an American hero of the 1960s, but it was his oratorical skills that made him most effective.

As the 60s generation came of age other leaders arose within the Black community, including the more militant outcries of Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X. Carmichael, for his own part, originally joined in the organization of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee in 1960 in an effort to get out the vote in the elections of that year. As the civil rights movement became more and more of a violent battleground in the years beyond, Carmichael became active in the Black Panther Party.

Malcolm X, the son of a Baptist minister in Lansing, Michigan, also drew a wide following. Born Malcolm Little, as a young man he had witnessed the burning of the family home by the Ku Klux Klan, and a few years later the murder of his father. Malcolm always believed his father's death was directly related to the Ku Klux Klan, and lost not only his father in the tragedy, but his mother who never recovered from her grief and had to be committed to a mental institution.

Beyond their efforts to gain civil rights for all Americans regardless of race, these three prominent leaders of the movement had at least one additional attribute in common; all were gifted and skillful orators. Their message resonated across a broad segment of American society, Black and White, and primarily among the young.

The 60s and the young people of our Nation will long be remembered for their radical and revolutionary rejection of tradition, and for their rebellion against parents, government, the church,

and other forms of authority. It is a generation today that is often castigated for a moral and spiritual decay during the period.

It is true that these young, in their own search for meaning and purpose, often *dropped out* of established social custom to reject ageless traditions and ways of life. At the same time, they may have proved the words of Thomas Jefferson that "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing." Among the traditions many of them rejected from the generation of their fathers and grandfathers, was the long-held racial prejudices that divided our nation.

The civil rights movement provided these young men and women with a cause and a new sense of purpose. The battle often became not only one of Blacks against Whites, but generational: one of younger against the elder. While the movement didn't then, or even since, erase racial prejudice from American society, it did become a giant leap towards a better society.

Although the most extreme and militant youth clamored after the likes of Malcolm X, the mainstream tended to look to Dr. Martin Luther King for guidance. His non-violent strategy appealed to a youthful population enamored with the ideals for peace. More importantly perhaps, his words struck a chord within the hearts of a congregation that by the nature of youthful idealism, prefer positive dreams to a negative reality.

Dr. King voiced that dream in his most remembered oration which was delivered from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on August 23, 1963. His dream envisioned an American society that believed all men were created equal, sharing equal rights and equal responsibility. In 1963 such hopes appeared to me nothing short of a *daydream*. But his dream resonated with a generation of Americans unafraid to discard old traditions and explore new ways of living.

The year following Dr. King's famous *Dream Speech*, he was named *Time* magazines' "Man of the Year" and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. But in the years that followed his non-violent approach to change drew increasing criticism from other Black leaders. Despite all this, the venerable Dr. King's preeminence as the leading voice of the civil rights movement was never supplanted, and remains one of the most positive beacons of guidance ever shed upon our society during the turbulent 60s.

While many of the older generation resisted the civil rights movement on the basis of old and ingrained prejudices, as the movement grew and its success appeared more and more imminent, Dr. King became preferable to the more radical among the Black leaders. This was especially true where the Vietnam War was concerned.

In the early stages, the veterans who had survived World War II generally supported American involvement in Vietnam. Black leaders like Carmichael and Malcom X became quite vocal in their opposition to the war, and even challenged Dr. King for his early silence on the subject.

By the mid-sixties however, the sight of numerous young Americans returning home in black body bags started to shake American confidence in the effort. It also appeared that an unusually large number of the casualties were Black soldiers. In the end, Dr. King broke his silence and lost much of his support in conservative White America because of his growing, and eventually vocal, opposition to the Vietnam War.

Until his death by assassination on April 4, 1968, Reverend King continued to mourn the large number of dead young Blacks that had fallen on the fields of battle, ten thousand miles away. The number of African American casualties was indeed staggering in comparison to all previous wars, leading many to claim that Blacks were being committed to combat roles in excess of white soldiers.

The true fact of the matter was, for the first time in American history, the military had found a level of true civil rights for all soldiers, sailors and marines regardless of race. This equality could be seen on two distinct levels:

The number of Black soldiers serving in the military

In previous wars, resistance to Blacks in military service limited their numbers to totals far lower than their proportion of the American population. Even during World War II Black soldiers comprised only about 7% of the military population. During the Vietnam War, though the Negro population represented only about 10% of American Society, 13.5% of the young men of service age were Black. Of a truth, the Vietnam War included a far larger percentage of Black soldiers than any war in prior history. That was a credit to the growing demand for civil rights, not a negative to be deplored.

During the Vietnam War Black soldiers had equal opportunity for combat assignments

During the Vietnam War the ancient myth that Blacks were inferior as soldiers no longer held as it had in previous wars. For the first time in history (with some exceptions from the Korean War) Black soldiers were not denied the opportunity to, as many Blacks had complained in previous wars, *fight to defend their country like any other Americans*.

Though reports in the media in the mid-1960s, as well as the rebuke of civil rights leaders like Malcom X propagandized that the war in Vietnam was a "White man's war being waged by underprivileged young Black soldiers," the truth is far different. "During the ten-year period of the war, 7,257 African Americans died in Vietnam, or 12.5 percent of the KIAs (Killed in Action), slightly under their proportion in the population of draft age males.

"Blacks were not in Vietnam because an evil government drafted them out of the ghettos to use as cannon fodder; they were there because of the courage and patriotism of young black men, despite the fact they lived in a country where they frequently experienced racism."¹

Even as Dr. Martin Luther King spoke of a dream for a new American society where, "My four children will...live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character," that dream was being realized in the one segment of American society against which he and other leaders spoke out.

In the jungles of Vietnam, for the first time in military history, soldiers were judged on their actions and their character, not the color of their skin. For the first time in any war, Black officers were deemed competent to command White soldiers. Black pilots flew beside white counterparts, using helicopters to save the lives of wounded men of all races, or flying the most intricate of bombers and fighters to defeat the enemy.

In the mess halls, white cooks served meals to Black and White soldiers. In the jungles a white infantryman stood back to back with a Black infantryman as they worked together to hold a

common enemy at bay. The exaggerated reports of the media and subsequent sensationalized Vietnam War movies cranked out by Hollywood aside, the true fact of life in Vietnam was that the playing field was leveled for every man. While others at home sought the meaning of equality, the Vietnam War finally defined it. Black, white, red and yellow, every man had equal opportunity to serve, equal opportunity to fight, and equal opportunity to die in the service of his country.

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Jimmy Stanford & Vince Yrineo

By early 1965 American military advisors to Vietnam, including Green Berets, numbered some 23,000 men; though United States was not yet officially at war with the North Vietnamese or the Viet Cong. The mission of the American soldiers, airmen, sailors and Marines was to advise and assist the South Vietnamese forces in their efforts against the growing insurgency.

On February 7, 1965, the Viet Cong attacked the garrison at Pleiku, killing eight American soldiers. In response President Lyndon Johnson ordered retaliatory bombing attacks against North Vietnam by American Air Force bombers flying out of bases in Thailand. The operation was labeled *Rolling Thunder*.

On March 8 the first U.S. Marine combat troops arrived in South Vietnam. Their mission, too, remained defensive at first. They were charged with protecting the American air base at DaNang against the kind of attack that had killed eight of their American comrades the previous month. By the end of March two more Marine battalions were authorized for deployment and were subsequently secretly authorized to begin the first American offensive combat actions.

Within the month the Joint Chiefs of staff ordered deployment of the Army's 173d Airborne Brigade, based in Okinawa, to South Vietnam. When the 3,500 "sky soldiers" arrived at Bien Hoa Air Base on May 3, 1965, they became the first major U.S. Army ground combat unit committed to the growing war. Paratroopers all, they were not the elite like the men who wore the Green Beret. They were however, among the finest of the Army's traditional combat units. Perhaps the only noticeable difference between that combat brigade and the airborne combat units of previous wars was the color of the Brigades' soldiers. For the first time in American history Black, White, Yellow, Red, and Brown soldiers fought together as one integrated unit.

There was nothing in the orders that sent the young Sky Soldiers of Company B, 2d Battalion, 503d Regiment of the 173d Airborne Brigade into the enemy-infested jungles near Phu Cong, Vietnam, on October 22, 1965, that alluded to either advisory or defensive roles. The mission of Lieutenant Jimmy Stanford's platoon, as well as the other platoons in the company, was "Search and Destroy"--find and kill.

Since the arrival of the Sky Soldiers in Vietnam six months earlier, more than 325 U.S. Army soldiers had been killed in action, many of them men of the 173d Airborne Brigade. Forty-one of those were Black American soldiers, comprising 12% of an ethnic minority at home that comprised an almost identical proportion of the American population.

Already on this day Lieutenant Stanford's platoon had suffered one casualty when Specialist Fourth Class George Luis of Pahoa, Hawaii, had been instantly killed by a bullet to the head. Luis was the third Asian-American soldier to sacrifice his life in the same period. (Casualty statistics from May to October 1965 also included two Native American Indians.¹) Vietnam had indeed become the *proving ground* for the concept of equal rights in service, as well as equal opportunity to sacrifice one's life in that same service.

Lieutenant Stanford was thankful for every man in his platoon, regardless of color. Each man provided additional fire power to accomplish the mission. Even so, Stanford was not without

¹ Because Hispanic soldiers were identified as Caucasian in the casualty records, it is difficult to break out the number of casualties suffered in the same period by that ethnic minority that contributed in equal measure in Vietnam.

his own personal prejudices. "I was a real redneck," he admitted unabashedly to Don Terry during an interview for a 2002 story in the "Chicago Tribune." The 29-year-old officer had grown up in the segregated town of Lake Jackson, Texas, and told Terry he couldn't remember seeing Blacks (outside) after dark when he was growing up in the 1930s and 40s. "They stayed in their place, we stayed in ours," he continued.

The prejudice that Stanford struggled to overcome was the product, as is all prejudice, of experiences thrust upon him during the formative years of his youth by an older generation unwilling to face the winds of change. Stanford recalled in that interview the child of a black woman who worked for his family when he had been only 6 or 7 years old. The two youths, too young yet to develop irrational racial prejudices, often played together and became friends. Friends that is, until one fateful day when Stanford's father saw the two of them together and chased the Black boy away while admonishing his son "to go play with his own kind." After that "I'd give them hell," he recalled. "It was just normal racial harassment, nothing serious, practical jokes, name-calling, kid stuff."

Lieutenant Stanford's own ingrained prejudice had not yet negatively impacted his relationship with his men. He had been transferred only a few days earlier to command Company C's 3d Platoon, so he was not well-known yet to the men who would follow him into battle. Furthermore, as a career soldier with more than a decade of Army service, and a man who had worked his way through the enlisted ranks to a commission as a Second Lieutenant, Stanford had learned not to allow his personal prejudices to negatively influence his job performance.

For Lieutenant Stanford, this ability to ignore personal prejudice for the sake of the mission was fortunate. Two of his subordinate squad leaders in 3d platoon were black, as were several of the men who served in all of the squads. His senior NCO, Platoon Sergeant Vince Yrineo, was Mexican American; so was one of the squad leaders.

Thirty-six-year-old Platoon Sergeant Yrineo understood racial prejudice first-hand, though not against himself. His first insight into the injustice of judging fellow Americans based upon the color of their skin occurred early in 1942 when President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. That action ultimately resulted in uprooting more than 110,000 Americans from their homes and placing them behind the guarded barbed wire of "relocation camps", all because of the color of their skin. American men, women, and children were subjected to this unwarranted exclusion from American society which was, despite more innocuous terms nothing short of *imprisonment*, for having as little as one-sixth Japanese ancestry.

Twelve-year-old Yrineo's family moved from Tuscon, Arizona, shortly after war broke out in order to be near a brother who was in military service and stationed in California. In his home in Los Angeles Vince's best friend was a Japanese American boy his own age. Murio, as he vaguely recalls his friend's name 55 years later, was a regular visitor to the Yrineo household. There was no racial prejudice in the Yrineo household, no admonitions to "play with his own kind" as Stanford had been told in his youth. For young Vince Yrineo, Murio was more like a brother than a neighbor. When his best friend and his family were uprooted and sent away to a "relocation camp" because of the color of their skin, Vince was both crushed and angry. "That was completely out of line," he says.

Though four of his older brothers served in World War II, by the time Vince was old enough to join the military the war was over. Vince joined the Navy and, though he never experienced any racial prejudice against himself for his own Hispanic-American heritage, the injustice directed against Black Americans was obvious. "I served on a small ship," he recalled, and besides me there was only one other Mexican in the crew. We never had any problems."

"Did you witness any prejudice against Black Americans?" I asked in a recent phone interview.

"No," he replied. "We never saw any Blacks. If there were any in the crew, they were down in the galley as cooks."

Vince returned to civilian life after a brief stint in the Navy, then joined the Army to become a career soldier. He went to jump school and was serving with the 11th Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, when President Harry Truman desegregated the U.S. Army. "There was a line of barracks nearby that housed 400 Black Airborne soldiers in one company," he recalled. "The day they were to join our ranks, they moved across the street and into our barracks, and there was not a single problem."

Over the next decade Yrineo continued to serve during the period in which the military changed rapidly from one of America's most segregated sub-cultures into what may have been our country's first truly integrated institutions. He believes that the Korean War, during which he served in non-combat assignments, set the stage for the expanding opportunities for Black soldiers. He doesn't recall witnessing any overt prejudicial acts against his comrades in military service during the period.

As a Platoon Sergeant, Yrineo finally saw combat duty when the 173d Airborne Brigade was deployed to Vietnam in 1965. In mid-October he also witnessed one of his first major evidences of lingering racial prejudices when Lieutenant Jimmy Stanford transferred in as his Platoon Leader. "He was a real redneck," Yrineo recalls from first meeting his new commander. While preparing to brief his squad leaders for a mission planned for October 22, Lieutenant Stanford told Sergeant Yrineo to "go get those niggers."

"My platoon had two black squad leaders, one white, and one Mexican. I told Stanford, *'I don't have any niggers in my platoon!'*," Vince recently recalled. "I simply wasn't going to take that shit from some redneck shave tail, and I wanted him to know right away where I stood."

On October 22, 1965, helicopters inserted Stanford's 3d platoon, along with other platoons of the "Bravo Bulls" (Company B) into a clearing in the jungle near Phu Cong at the southern edge of the Iron Triangle. The platoon moved out quickly, advancing into the jungle to hack their way through dense foliage to seek out the enemy. More often than not, the enemy found the Bravo Bulls first, and their arduous incursion into the Viet Cong lair was peppered with sporadic sniper fire and occasional small engagements. Early in the day an enemy round struck one of Stanford's soldiers, Private First-Class George Luis of Hawaii, in the head killing him instantly. Despite the loss of a comrade and the challenge before them, Stanford's men continued to seek out the enemy.

Late in the afternoon an enemy force hidden behind the heavy undergrowth temporarily pinned down lead elements of the company with heavy fire. Following initial contact however, as they had throughout a day of multiple skirmishes, the enemy retreated. Stanford, Yrineo, and their young soldiers immediately and aggressively pursued. Three soldiers, two Black and one white, were grouped around Lieutenant Stanford and Platoon Sergeant Yrineo as the "Sky Soldiers" hacked their way through "wait-a-minute" vines and thick vegetation to reach a small, burned out clearing. There as enemy bullets impacted the ground around them, the five men hit the dirt in a tight perimeter, seeking shelter behind some burned out tree stumps.

Amid a hail of incoming bullets, in a heartbreaking moment the ever-present potential for sudden death became ominously more real. With a dull thud that might go unnoticed in any other environment, but which was quickly recognizable and unmistakable to a soldier in a combat zone, an enemy grenade landed in the midst of the five men of third platoon.

"We didn't even see where it was coming from," recalled Private John "Hop" Foster, a 19-year old Black kid from Pittsburgh, in a 2002 interview for the "Chicago Tribune." "Either they (the Viet Cong) opened up the ground and threw it up or they were in the trees and tossed it down."

So closely bunched together were the five men, all of them faced probable death from the explosion that would occur within seconds. "It was about a foot from my face," recalled Lieutenant Stanford, who also remembered a shouted warning from one of his men, a Black kid the men of the platoon often called Skipper. "Then out comes this black hand and grabs it!" he continued.

Then came the explosion, not the sharp thunder of detonating explosives that would throw thousands of deadly white-hot shards of steel into the bodies of five under-fire soldiers. Rather, it was a muffled sound as a single body absorbed the blast and shrapnel after the man behind the hand Lieutenant Stanford had just seen, hugged the deadly orb to his chest and fell on top of it.

Some shards of hot metal struck Private Lionel Hubbard, a Black soldier from Brownfield, Texas who recalled for Don Terry nearly 40 years later, "If it wasn't for Milton, I know I wouldn't be here talking to you right now." Hop Foster was wounded moments before the grenade exploded when a bullet glanced off his steel helmet, and additional fragments from the grenade struck both Lieutenant Stanford and Platoon Sergeant Yrineo. But all four men, despite their wounds, survived and were subsequently evacuated, thanks to a young Black man from Chicago.

"It was the most incredible display of selfless bravery I ever witnessed," Jimmy Stanford said later. Vince Yrineo who, as a Platoon Sergeant lost far more young soldiers during his service in Vietnam than he cared to remember, still remembers them all. The young man who died that day to save Yrineo's life held a special place in those memories. For decades he kept the battered and sheared dog tag of the man who saved his life, only recently sending it to Skipper's stepmother.

"Jimmy and I went on to become very good friends," Yrineo recently told me. He changed drastically after that day." In fact, after serving a second tour in Vietnam as a Green Beret, Stanford finished his career with a 4-year assignment in the Army's Office of Race Relations and Equal Opportunity.

Of that day and the 18-year-old Paratrooper from Chicago who saved the lives of four comrades, Stanford said, "A day doesn't go by that I don't think about him. Milton Olive changed me. I made a vow never to forget him."



Milton Lee Olive, III



"(Milton Olive) is the eighth Negro American to receive this Nation's highest award. Fortunately, it will be more difficult for future presidents to say how many Negroes have received the Medal of Honor. For unlike the other seven, Private Olive's military records have never carried the color of his skin or his racial origin, only the testimony that he was a good and loyal citizen of the United States of America."

*President Lyndon B. Johnson
April 21, 1966*

When one Black boy was born in Chicago on November 7, 1946, it was a day of mixed emotions for Milton Olive, Jr. The newborn child was Milton and Clara Lee Olive's first child. He was also destined to be their last; Clara Lee died four hours giving birth to a new life. The third generation in a line of Milton Olives, that infant was given his mother's middle name, becoming Milton Lee Olive, III. Throughout his life however, he would become affectionately known to his family, and years later to his comrades in the Army, as "Skipper" or "Skip".

For Milton Olive, Jr., the news on that day went from bad to worse. Not only had he lost his young wife, the prognosis for the survival of his infant son did not bode well. Doctors gave him little chance of surviving more than one or two days. But the under-weight, fragile little boy fought for life with a resolve that belied his scrawny frame. He survived those first critical days and was soon released from the hospital to the South Side Chicago home where he would grow up, with periodic visits to live with his grandparents in Mississippi.

Skipper was never a South Side Chicago hard case like many of the young boys who had to grow up in what was often a rough side of the city. Rather, he was more of a quiet kid, never hanging out with neighborhood toughs or seeking trouble. That rather placid personality, however, was never misunderstood as a character weakness by those who knew him. Skipper was a scrapper when circumstances demanded it; his very survival against a gloomy medical prognosis had demonstrated this vividly.

Even in those early, formative years after his birth, Skipper's health was always a matter of concern. "It wasn't until he was in the first or second grade that we began to quit worrying, and realized he would survive," recalled Barbara Penelton, his aunt, during a recent interview.

After Skipper's birth, his father relied heavily upon his extended family to help him raise the young boy. Many of Skipper's early years were spent living with relatives in Chicago or with his grandparents on their farm in Lexington, Mississippi. Then, when Skipper was ten years old, his father married Antoinette Mainor, a teacher in the Chicago public schools, and young Milton moved home to live with his father and stepmother.

In contrast to his infancy where he had battled simply for life, in adolescence Skipper enjoyed a rather comfortable home life. His father doted on his only son and, unlike so many poor Black families in the South, could afford to cater to his son's whims and desires. "He got new bicycles for his birthday and cameras for Christmas," wrote Don Terry in a 2002 *Chicago Tribune* story about the man who became a local hero. "At family gatherings, when his cousins were dressed in jeans and t-shirts, he was often decked out in a suit that matched his dad's.

"Olive loved taking photographs with his father, who made a few extra bucks snapping newlyweds and church picnics. Stuck inside the pages of his (Skipper's) Bible was a business card his father had made for him years earlier: Milton Olive III, Chicago's Only 12-year-old Professional Photographer."¹

Miles away from Chicago, Skipper had a "second-family" in Mississippi, and during his summer school vacations he frequently returned to his grandparent's farm. When he was ready to begin high school, Skipper opted to remain on the farm. For the next two years he attended an all-Black school that was an extension of a local Pentecostal church.

While living in Mississippi Skipper could not help but become intimately aware of the glaring disparity between the rights and opportunities afforded to White men and women as opposed to their Black American counterparts. He was quickly caught up in the Civil Rights

¹ Special thanks to Don Terry and *The Chicago Tribune*, for permission to re-print these and other selected quotes from the May 12, 2002, article: *The Men Of Olive Company; Four Soldiers Survived Vietnam Because Milton Olive Didn't*

movement. In the summer between his Freshman and Sophomore years some 200,000 civil rights advocates marched on Washington, D.C., to hear Dr. Martin Luther King deliver his famous "Dream Speech." As he began his sophomore year trouble continued to broil in the South. On September 13, 1963, a bomb exploded at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, a key site of many civil rights' organizational meetings. The explosion killed four young girls: Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins, who were attending Sunday School that morning. The tragedy prompted immediate riots in Birmingham that resulted in the death of two more young Blacks.

On January 23, 1964, while Skipper was mid-way through his second-high school year, the requisite three-fourths of the 50 United States ratified the 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that had passed the Congress a year and a half earlier. While that amendment said nothing about the rights of Black Americans, it was in fact a sweeping reform. The Amendment reads simply: *"The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay poll tax or other tax."*

Poll Taxes had been enacted in eleven Southern states after Reconstruction as a measure to prevent poor people, which included the vast majority of Southern Blacks as well as poverty-stricken and uneducated White people, from voting. While the Poll Tax violated a provision of the 14th Amendment insuring "equal protection under the law", and despite having been found unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, at the time the 24th Amendment was ratified five southern states (Virginia, Alabama, Texas, Arkansas, and Mississippi) still used the illegal tax as a means of silencing the voice of its Black population.

Ratification of the 24th Amendment could not have occurred at a more opportune time. For two years the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Nacional Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had struggled to strengthen the political voice of Black Americans in the South through organized voter registration drives. The three diverse organizations found strength in uniting under the umbrella of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), and in September 1963 sponsored a highly successful *election experiment* in Mississippi. The *Freedom Vote* was intended to illustrate the desire of Mississippi's poor black population to be involved in the political process. More than 90,000 of them voted in a mock election pitting candidate of an unofficial Freedom Party against the official State Party Candidates. It set the stage for a turbulent, but historic change in the tide of the Southern political process over the next year in a stirring, and often dangerous, clamor for civil rights that caught up young Skipper Olive in its enthusiasm.

Skipper became one of 3,000 students who attended one of the 50 "Mississippi Freedom Schools" as part of the Mississippi Project led by COFO in an effort to educate the state's Black population about their rights and their potential to change their society by making their voices heard at the polls. Though they were too young to vote, (in the election of 1964 the National age for voting rights was 21), COFO concentrated largely on 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students.²

When the traditional school year ended in the Spring of 1964 the Mississippi project evolved into a massive voter registration campaign that was called the *Freedom Summer Project*. It was an effort in which Skipper was an ardent supporter and active participant. As project volunteers spread out across Mississippi to visit Black homes and register new voters, they needed

² On July 1, 1971, the 26th Amendment was ratified, lowering the voting age to 18 years of age.

"guides" to help them get around the largely rural, poor Southern Communities. Skipper became one of those guides, despite the danger of escalating violence.

The violence was in fact, both real and extreme. On June 21, 1964, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, two White student civil rights activists who had come to Mississippi from Northern colleges for the summer project disappeared. Along with them was a local CORE volunteer, a young Black man much like Skipper Olive and only 4 years his senior, James Chaney. Though the three men's bodies went undiscovered until August 4, it was an immediate certainty after their disappearance that the three men had been murdered.

In retaliation against the Freedom Summer Project, during June, July, and August Mississippi's most ardent segregationists and white supremacists burned 37 Black churches and the homes or businesses of 30 Black families. More than 1,000 core volunteers, many of them white students from Northern universities, were arrested; 80 volunteers were viciously beaten.

While the violence could not deter Skipper from his new-found mission in life, it certainly became a concern for his grandmother. When the young man refused to leave behind his volunteer duties with the Mississippi Project, Grandma Olive sent him back to his father in Chicago with the comment, *"He's going to get killed, and get us killed."* Her fears were not unfounded; the violence of that hot summer in Mississippi often spilled over to destroy the family of those who sought to change America at the voting booth.

When Skipper returned to his father's home, he was much like many 17-year-old boys both Black and White of any generation; shiftless, uncertain about his future, and still seeking to find himself. His father sought to provide guidance by offering Skipper three alternatives. The young man could either go back to school (in Chicago), get a job and go to work, or join the military.

Initially Skipper opted to return to school. When he attempted to enroll for his Junior year at Chicago's Highland High School however, he learned that some of the credits he had earned during his first two years in a Mississippi Pentecostal High School would not transfer. At Highland High he would not be an upper classman scheduled to graduate in 1966. Rather he would have to repeat much of his Sophomore year.

Discouraged, Skipper then turned to his father's second option. Quickly he learned that there were few jobs available to a 17-year-old Black boy who did not have a high school diploma. Before considering the third alternative, Skipper borrowed money from a cousin and took a train back to Mississippi to rejoin the Mississippi Project. Shortly after his arrival word reach his grandmother that Skipper was back, living temporarily with a school employee and continuing his dangerous activities in the civil rights movement.

The chain of events that wound up sending Skipper back to Chicago left him feeling both disappointed in himself and embarrassed in front of his family. He had dropped out of school, joined a growing but not always popular civil rights revolution, failed to find a job, and bounced back and forth from one family member to another. At last, shortly before his 18th birthday, Milton Lee Olive, III, decided to prove he could do something positive. With a cousin he joined the United States Army.

Further determined to prove his worth, Skipper applied for jump school in order to become a paratrooper. He was proud of his uniform, wearing it regularly when he came home on leave, and was doubly proud of his jump wings. Writing home to the family he noted, *"You said I was crazy for joining up. Well, I've gone you one better. I'm now an official U.S. Army Paratrooper. How does that grab you? I've made six jumps already."*

On June 5, 1965, one month after the Sky Soldiers arrived at Bien Hoa Airfield, Private First-Class Milton Olive joined the 173d Airborne in Vietnam. Within a month he earned his first

Purple Heart when he was wounded in action, an incident he hid from his family in order to spare them undue concern for his safety. Already back home there were subtle but divisive whispers about the wisdom of Skipper's father having sent his only son off to war. Milton Olive, Jr., indeed had to question his own wisdom in that action. In his defense, it was of little comfort to him to point out that when he had offered his son that option, there was no real war in Vietnam and few Americans even knew that the Southeast Asian country existed.

Private First-Class Olive was a good Sky Soldier and well liked. His somewhat cherubic countenance, his quiet demeanor, and his tendency to avoid brash and vulgar language made him stand apart. Combined with Skipper's propensity to constantly quote scripture, in Vietnam he earned a second nickname. The men of Bravo Company's third platoon often called him "Preacher."

Though Skipper made it a point not to communicate things that would worry his family, such as the wound that had earned him a Purple Heart, he wrote home regularly and not only to his father and step-mother, but to his cousins as well. Early in October he sent a letter to the farm in Mississippi in which he wrote, "Grandma, please send me some cookies." In a letter penned later that same month he wrote a poignant line reveling much of what he felt about life in the war zone. *"We all do a man's job and wear a man's clothes and call ourselves men,"* he noted, *"but some of us are still little boys."*

Even as Skipper wrote those words, a package with the previously requested cookies was on its way to Vietnam. They would not arrive in time. Weeks later when the unopened package was returned by the Postal Service to the farm in Mississippi, it was a traumatic moment for an aging grandmother whose heart had already been broken.

Early on the morning of October 22 Army helicopters inserted Bravo Company at the edge of the dense jungle outside Phu Cong. Quickly the heavily loaded troopers fanned out in a sweep towards the hidden enemy. The enemy did not remain hidden for very long. Amid a hail of gunfire that for a time pinned down the platoon, Private First-Class George Luis was shot in the head and instantly killed. The "little boys" of 3d platoon had little time to grieve the loss of their comrade. There was still a man's job to be done. Attacking into the jungle, they drove the enemy backward and into retreat.

As the enemy raced backward into the jungle, Lieutenant Jimmy Stanford rallied his men to give chase. Following their leader, Platoon Sergeant Vince Yrineo and three men of the 3d platoon gave chase. The three were John "Hop" Foster, a 19-year old Black private from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; 20-year old Private Lionel Hubbard, a Black kid from Brownfield, Texas, and Private First-Class Milton Lee Olive, III.

As the five soldiers pursued the fleeing enemy, they suddenly found themselves racing into an ambush. An enemy bullet crashed into Foster's steel pot and glanced downward to draw blood above his eye. "How bad is it?" he shouted above the din of battle to his nearby comrade.

"You'll live," Milton Olive shouted back with a grin as he continued to rake the hidden enemy with his rifle. The smile quickly vanished, and Skipper shouted again, *"Look out, Lieutenant, grenade!"*³

All five members of 3d platoon were in a tight perimeter and the enemy explosive might well have cost all five men their lives--but for the subsequent actions of an 18-year old boy from Chicago. Quickly Milton Olive reached out to grasp the deadly orb, hugging it to his body and then falling on top of it. It exploded almost immediately, tossing the slender paratrooper's body

³ These were Milton Olive's last words as told by Jimmy Stanford. John Foster remembers events slightly differently. According to his account Olive shouted, "Look out, Hop, grenade!"

into the air and flipping him over on his back. Red blood flowed from the multiple wounds of a shattered Black body, but four men survived and continued to battle the hidden enemy. Before the contact was broken Stanford, Yrineo, Hubbard, and Foster were all wounded. But all four men survived to return home, raise families, and to never forget they had been spared by the sacrifice of a comrade.

On April 21, 1966, the elder Milton Olive and his wife Antoinette were honored guests at the White House. On that day President Lyndon Johnson read a citation detailing the heroic acts of their young son just six months earlier, while Lieutenant Jimmy Stanford and Private John Foster looked on. Then, with Chicago Mayor Richard Daly, members of Skipper's extended family, and other dignitaries gathered for the somber but impressive ceremony, President Johnson presented Milton Olive the Medal of Honor posthumously awarded to the grief-stricken father's only son. In that moment, Milton Lee *Skipper* Olive, III, became the first Black soldier of the Vietnam War, and the third Black American since the Spanish-American War, to receive his nation's highest honor. He was also the first Black American in history to be awarded the Medal for actions performed while serving in a non-segregated Army combat unit.

Before the ceremony concluded the President read a letter, revealing for the first time the text of a letter Skipper's father had sent the President upon receiving word that his son would receive the Medal of Honor. Milton Olive, Jr., had written:

"Our only child and only grandchild gave his last full measure of devotion on an international battlefield 10,000 miles from home. It is our dream and prayer that someday the Asiatics, the Europeans, the Israelites, the Africans, the Australians, the Latins, and the Americans can all live in One-World. It is our hope that in our own country the Klansmen, the Negroes, the Hebrews, and the Catholics will sit down together in the common purpose of good will and dedication; that the moral and creative intelligence of our united people will pick up the chalice of wisdom and place it upon the mountain top of human integrity; that all mankind, from all the earth, shall resolve 'to study war no more'."



Specialist Lawrence Joel



We have come here today to honor the courage of a very brave soldier. His was a very special kind of courage--the unarmed heroism of compassion and service to others. The conduct of Specialist 6 Lawrence Joel reflects, I believe, the role America itself must play on every battlefield of freedom. As we salute the valor of this soldier, we salute the best in the American tradition.

Just as he cared for his fellow men, so does freedom in War Zone D, so shall we.

Just as he bound up their wounds, so shall We.

Just as he cared for his fellow men, so does all America care for those with whom we share this planet.

President Lyndon B. Johnson

The sacrifice of Milton Lee Olive, III, might well be used by some to validate the common, but erroneous perception of many anti-war protesters in the 60s that the Vietnam War was being fought by poor, youthful Blacks with no education and no job skills, most of whom were drafted and sent unwillingly to war. While to some degree that might be an accurate assessment of Milton Olive's background, it is a narrow view that misses the entire lesson to be learned from his heroism and sacrifice. Indeed, Skipper dropped out of high school to join the military, but he did, in fact, find in his role as a soldier a purpose, identity, and a measure of equality. The same could be said for many of his White counterparts who opted for the opportunities military service afforded after they dropped out of school or perhaps ran a fowl of the law. Furthermore, Milton Olive was neither poor or drafted.

In a July 5, 1986, speech by General William C. Westmoreland before the Third Annual Reunion of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots' Association (VHPA) at the Washington, D.C. Hilton Hotel, the former commander of the Armed Forces in Vietnam addressed some of the myths that have for years prevented an accurate assessment of the men and women who served:

MYTH 1: A disproportionate number of blacks were killed in the Vietnam War.

According to General Westmoreland's research, which is further verified by the CATF¹ (Combat Area Casualty File), 86% of the men who died in Vietnam were Caucasians, 12.5% were black, 1.2% were other races.

MYTH 2: Most Vietnam veterans were drafted.

General Westmoreland reported that two-thirds of the men who served in Vietnam were volunteers. This was a reversal from World War II when two-thirds of the men who served were draftees. The Vietnam War military was one of the largest volunteers military forces in our nation to that date.

MYTH 3: The war was fought largely by the poor and uneducated.

General Barry McCaffrey² addressed this myth in a 1993 speech by noting that servicemen who went to Vietnam from well-to-do areas had a slightly elevated risk of dying because they were more likely to be pilots or infantry officers. Vietnam Veterans were the best educated forces our nation had ever sent into combat; 79% had a high school education or better.

MYTH 4: Those who served and died were young men, often high school dropouts or recent graduates in their early teens.

The CATF database reveals that Average age of the 58,148 killed in Vietnam was 23.11 years. The average age of an E-1 Private who was killed in Vietnam was 20.34 years, and the average age of an Infantryman killed in Vietnam was 22.5 years.

On November 8, 1965, just sixteen days after Milton Olive sacrificed his life to save the lives of four other men, Specialist Fifth Class Lawrence Joel became the second Black American to earn the Medal of Honor. In stark contrast to the aforementioned myths, at the time of his action Joel was 37 years old, a high school graduate, highly trained as a combat medic, and found a comfortable lifestyle in a military career he enjoyed. Amazingly, Specialist Joel also survived multiple wounds in that heroic action to become the first living Black Recipient of the Medal of

¹ The CATF is the primary database of Vietnam War casualties cited in most studies of the war, and serves as the basis for the roll call of those whose names are listed on the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C.

² *Speech by Lt. Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey*, (reproduced in the *Pentagram*, June 4, 1993) assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Vietnam veterans and visitors gathered at "The Wall", Memorial Day 1993.

Honor since the Spanish-American War, and the first ever admitted to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

All the positives aside, Lawrence Joel's early life had not been without its share of problems, far beyond the color of his skin. Born on February 22, 1928, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, he was a year old when the stock market crashed on October 29, 1929, and spent his formative years growing up in the poverty of the great depression. By 1936 the depression had taken so heavy a toll on Joel's parents that they separated and could no longer care for their son. Joel later recalled many tears shed during his boyhood as he pondered his unfortunate circumstances. At age eight, Joel was given up to foster parents. Thereafter, Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Samuel raised Joel along with their five daughters.

Unlike many of the young men of the World War II era, Joel remained in school and gained his high school diploma in 1945. After graduation, at age 17, Joel joined the Merchant Marines. One year later at age 18 he joined the U.S. Army, attended jump school to become a paratrooper, and served overseas in post-war Italy.

When Joel's four-year Army commitment ended, he returned briefly to civilian life, but found his options limited. In a 1967 interview for "Time" magazine he said he had come to realize that "You couldn't make it really big (as a Negro on the outside)." Discouraged with his non-military options, and forsaking initial goals to become a beautician, Joel decided to reenlist and make a career in the Army.

Already jump qualified, he received new and extensive training to become a medical aidman. The non-combat role suited well his quiet demeanor and peaceful attitude. Joel wasn't a pacifist, he was once busted for arguing with a sergeant, but he was a simple, peaceful man who cared deeply about others. In the media attention surrounding award of the Medal of Honor years later at a time when the war in Vietnam was becoming increasingly unpopular, reporters asked Joel about the morality of the conflict. Joel replied with firm conviction, "Most of the men who have been to Viet Nam feel this war is right."

Specialist Five Joel's subsequent assignment to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade demonstrated just how dramatically the Army had become color-blind in the 1960s. While Black and other minority soldiers had previously been privileged to receive the specialized training of a medical aidman, it was always intended for the healers that would serve in their own, segregated units. When the aforementioned Spanish-American War Corporal stated, "They (Black Soldiers) can drink out of our canteens," after witnessing the heroism of the Buffalo Soldiers at San Juan Hill (actually Kettle Hill) in 1898, it was a telling statement. Half-a-century later in many Southern States, Blacks could not drink out of the same water fountain used by their White neighbors. Meanwhile in Vietnam, Black medics like Joel performed the most intimate and basic life-saving measures on their counterparts, Black, White, Red, Brown, and Yellow.

On November 8, 1965, Specialist Joel accompanied an Infantry Company into combat in the Iron Triangle, not far from where Milton Olive had sacrificed his life to save his comrades two weeks earlier. He was unarmed and carrying a medical aid bag filled with bandages, syrettes of morphine, plasma, and instruments to give not take, life.

After disembarking from helicopters, the lead squad moved out to pave the way for the rest of the company. Almost immediately they were hit by withering fire from a well-hidden and numerically superior Viet Cong force. Nearly every man in the lead squad was killed or wounded, while the remaining squads scrambled for cover to begin engaging the enemy in what was to become a bitter 24-hour firefight.

Ignoring the bullets that struck all around and the explosions of grenades, Joel rushed forward to reach the wounded and dead of the lead squad. While moving from man to man, death impacting all around him, one enemy machine-gun bullet struck Joel in the right leg. Determined to help his comrades he paused only long enough to rip open his throwers and stuff a bandage into the ruptured flesh. Gritting his teeth against unbearable pain, he quickly administered morphine to himself to enable him to continue his important tasks. Over the next 24 hours it was the only relief he would seek for himself. Then he continued to hobble across the battlefield, patching up bullet wounds, giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to wounded and even to the corpses of those he hoped desperately to revive. His subsequent Medal of Honor citation states, "Although painfully wounded his desire to aid his fellow soldiers transcended all personal feeling."

Locating one man who desperately needed blood, Joel quickly inserted a needle and then, despite the hail of bullets from both sides that crisscrossed the battlefield, he knelt bravely in full view of all to hold the plasma bottle high enough for the fluid to flow into nearly-drained blood veins. Reaching yet another man from whose chest bubbled the last remaining ounces of blood, he grabbed a plastic bandage bag and firmly held it in place while silently praying for a miracle. The flow of blood slowed, then congealed. Joel administered plasma and treated the wounded man's pain before moving on. Thanks to the intrepid medic's resourcefulness and persistence, the soldier survived.

Joel's citation continues, "After being struck a second time and with a bullet lodged in his thigh, he dragged himself over the battlefield and succeeded in treating 13 more men before his medical supplies ran out." Even then Specialist Joel refused to leave the wounded men who so desperately needed his help. He sent word to the rear that he needed more medical supplies, and while waiting for them to arrive he continued to do what little he could by shouting words of encouragement to men for whom hope seemed to have vanished.

When at last one soldier crept forward with the additional medical supplies Joel had requested, he saw the valiant medic's ripped fatigue trousers and bloody bandaged legs. "You better head back to the rear and get treatment," he suggested.

"I'll be alright," Joel responded. Then, as another platoon charged forward to dislodge the entrenched enemy, Joel took off behind them knowing well there would be many more injuries requiring his service. Throughout the day and into the night, time after time he limped and crawled into the areas under the deadliest fire to find, treat, and comfort his comrades. Time and again his fellow "Sky Soldiers" told him to get down, or fall back, or head to the rear for treatment. Each time Joel refused, pushing his own wounded legs to do the impossible, and forcing his exhausted body to sustain.

By the following morning the battlefield was littered with the bodies of more than 400 enemy. Nearly 50 young "Sky Soldiers" were also dead, and many more wounded. Even when the contact was broken, as Specialist Joel and others moved about the field of battle to locate and evacuate the wounded, and to recover the bodies of comrades, sniper fire continued to make it dangerous work.

When Joel had done all that he could do, the pressure of the previous 24-hours finally caused him to come crashing back down. Time Magazine reported, "Joel recalls looking at himself: hands encrusted with blood to the wrists, legs thick with edema and dirty bandages. He lay under a tree and cried for the first time since he was a boy in Winston-Salem."

An officer found Joel and, stunned by the young medics' wounds, immediately ordered him to the rear for treatment. His comrades, equally stunned by his incredible display of courage,

compassion, and absolute fortitude during one of the Brigade's most deadly battles of the war, nominated him for the Medal of Honor.

During the Vietnam War 13 members of the 173d Airborne Brigade received Medals of Honor, almost unprecedented at the brigade level. Specialist Sixth Class Lawrence Joel was one of only three of these to survive his moment of heroism. When Joel and his wife, along with his foster parents Mr. and Mrs. Samuel were invited to the White House for ceremonies on March 9, 1967, it was an historic event. The young man who had joined the Army because he believed "You couldn't make it really big (as a Negro on the outside)," became the first Black American in history to receive the Medal of Honor from the President of the United States.



To the men of the 173d Airborne Brigade, an elite unit that proved in Vietnam that valor was a common thread among so many "Sky Soldiers", William Joel became legendary. He retired from the Army in 1973 and died in 1973 from complications of diabetes at the age of 53.

Had there ever been any doubt about that young man's potential, it was quickly erased for those who became aware of his actions and heroism on the fields of battle in Vietnam. When awarding the Medal of Honor, President Johnson himself noted, "As we salute the valor of this soldier, we salute the best in the American tradition."

Said Lawrence Joel when queried prior to that ceremony, "I'm glad to be alive. I just wish I could have done more. It was just my job."

Black Medal of Honor Heroes of the Vietnam War

In all, of the 245 Medals of Honor awarded to soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines during the Vietnam war, 20 were bestowed upon Black heroes. The fact that not one Black defender of freedom in either of the World Wars received the Medal of Honor was corrected in the 1990s with belated presentation of one Medal of Honor to one World War I black soldier, and to seven from World War II. Even with that correction, it is obvious that during the Vietnam War, for the first time in our nation's history, great strides were made to correct this long-standing slight of our heroes:

	Total MOH Awards	Black Recipients	% of Awards To Blacks
Civil War	1522	25	2%
Indian Campaigns	426	18	4%
Peace Time Awards	193	9	5%
Spanish-American War	110	6	5%
World War I	124	1	1%
World War II	464	7	2%
Korean War	132	2	2%
Vietnam War	245	20	8%

Those Black heroes who were at last recognized were trend-setters, establishing new precedence on the battlefield. In addition to Milton Olive and Lawrence Joel, these "heroes of color" included the following 18 men: (* before a name indicates a posthumous award)

***DONALD RUSSELL LONG**

On June 30, 1966, 28-year old Sergeant Donald Long of Ashland, Kentucky, was serving with Troop C, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, in Vietnam. His unit was conducting a reconnaissance mission along a road when they were suddenly attacked by a Viet Cong regiment from concealed positions. Sergeant Long left the relative safety of his armored personnel carrier and braved a hail of enemy fire to carry wounded men to evacuation helicopters. As the platoon fought its way forward to re-supply advanced elements, he repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire at point blank range to provide needed supplies. While assaulting the Viet Cong positions, he inspired his comrades by fearlessly standing unprotected to repel the enemy as they attempted to mount his carrier. When the enemy threatened to overrun a disabled carrier nearby, he again disregarded his own safety to help the severely wounded crew to safety. As he was handing arms to the less seriously wounded and reorganizing them to press the attack, an enemy grenade was hurled onto the carrier deck. Immediately recognizing the imminent danger, he shouted a warning to the crew and pushed to safety one man who had not heard his warning over the roar of battle. He then threw himself over the grenade to absorb the blast and save the lives of eight of his comrades.



***JAMES ANDERSON, JR.**

On February 28, 1967, 20-year-old Private First-Class James Anderson, Jr., of Compton, California, became the first marine in history to receive the Medal of Honor. Anderson's company was advancing in dense jungle northwest of Cam Lo in an effort to extract a heavily besieged reconnaissance patrol. Private Anderson's platoon was the lead element and had advanced only about 200 meters when they came under intense enemy small-arms and automatic weapons fire. The platoon reacted swiftly, getting online and returning fire. Private First-Class Anderson found himself tightly bunched together with the other members of the platoon only 20 meters from the enemy positions. As the fire fight continued several of the men were wounded by the enemy assault. Suddenly, an enemy grenade landed in the midst of the Marines and rolled alongside Private First-Class Anderson's head. Unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for his personal safety, he reached out, grasped the grenade, pulled it to his chest and curled around it as it went off. Although several Marines received shrapnel from the grenade, Private Anderson's body absorbed the major force of the explosion. In this singularly heroic act, he saved his comrades from serious injury and possible death.



***MATTHEW LEONARD**

Before Matthew Leonard departed his home in Birmingham, Alabama, he warned his wife Lois what to expect if, while he was in Vietnam, two soldiers ever came to the door. At age 37 Leonard had been in the Army for nearly 20 years, had been married to his elementary school sweetheart for 17 years, and the two were raising five children. A veteran of the Korean War, Matthew Leonard knew all too well that combat duty was unpredictable, dangerous, and all too often deadly.



Six months earlier Matthew and Lois had picked out their dream home, a modest but spacious six-room house in Birmingham. Because the career soldier had orders to Vietnam, the insurance companies considered him a high risk and refused to insure the home. Matthew promised his wife he would purchase the home when he returned, but also added, "Lois, if I don't make it back, go on with our plan and buy a house."

On February 28, 1967, at the base of the *Black Virgin Mountain*, a solitary peak that rises out of the flat jungle, Platoon Sergeant Leonard's men were attacked by a large enemy force employing small arms, automatic weapons, and hand grenades. Although the platoon leader and other key leaders were among the wounded, he rallied his men to throw back the initial assaults. During a pause that followed he organized a perimeter, redistributed ammunition, and inspired his comrades by his forceful leadership. Seeing a wounded man outside the perimeter, he dragged him to safety but was struck by a sniper's bullet which shattered his left hand. Refusing medical attention, he continued to move from position to position to direct the fire of his men. The enemy moved a machinegun into a location where it could sweep the entire perimeter and this threat was magnified when the platoon machinegun in this area malfunctioned. Sergeant Leonard crawled to the gun position and was helping to clear the malfunction when the gunner and other men in the vicinity were wounded by fire from the enemy machinegun. He rose to his feet, charged the enemy gun and destroyed the hostile crew despite being hit several times by enemy fire. He moved to a tree, propped himself against it, and continued to engage the enemy until he succumbed to his many wounds.

On December 19, 1968, Lois Leonard and her children traveled to Washington, D.C., to receive Matthew Leonard's Medal of Honor. Upon returning home Lois took what little money remained from Matthew's savings and life insurance and bought the couple's dream home. Photos, news articles, and the Medal of Honor were proudly displayed on the living room walls.

Over the next several decades Lois scrimped and saved to pay off the mortgage and raise the five children alone. By 2003 however, with one disabled child and herself in failing health, she had been forced to borrow more than \$64,000 against a home that was now also badly in need of repair. I received news of Lois Leonard's plight on February 10 in a plea for help from a local veteran who was spending his days at the local Wal-Mart trying to raise the needed funds. I immediately placed two phone calls, one to local media and the other to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. On Saturday, February 15, a local newspaper reported, "The 70-year-old disabled woman faces eviction from that home, unless she comes up with \$64,000 by Tuesday." Lois faced her predicament stoically, telling one reporter, "My husband always told me, 'Lois, we don't have a lot of money, but we've got a lot of love,'" Leonard recalled. "He'd say, 'We married for richer or poorer. You're in the poorer right now.'" When asked what her husband would think about her imminent eviction, Lois replied, "He would be real sad."

Immediately the few living Medal of Honor recipients came to the aid of one of their own, a Black hero from the Vietnam War that none of them had ever met. Teaming with the Fisher House Foundation, Medal of Honor Society President and Vietnam War recipient Gary Littrell negotiated a reduction in Lois' financial obligation to \$40,000. Action was delayed until the paperwork could be finished. Solely by chance and not design, the check arrived on February 28. Thirty-six years to the day after her husband died in Vietnam, Lois Leonard tore up the mortgage on her and her deceased husband's dream home, and with the more than \$50,000 raised by neighbors, fellow veterans, and Matthew Leonard's fellow Medal of Honor recipients, enough money remained to replace the furnace that had been broken for years, and to make other needed improvements.

***RUPPERT LEON SARGENT**

First Lieutenant Sergeant, a 29-year-old Richmond, Virginia man, became the first black officer from any branch of service in history to receive the Medal of Honor. Though raised a Jehovah's Witness, after two years of college Sargent saw military service as providing opportunities not to be found elsewhere. Though his service was in contradiction to his religion, and his enlistment was opposed by his mother, Leon Sargent became a soldier, first as an enlisted man and six years later, after being accepted into Officer Candidate School, as a Second Lieutenant.



On March 15, 1968, Lieutenant Sargent was leading a platoon that was investigating a reported Viet Cong meeting house and weapons cache when his men discovered a tunnel entrance that he observed was booby trapped. He tried to destroy the booby trap and blow the cover from the tunnel using hand grenades, but this attempt was not successful. He and his demolition man moved in to destroy the booby trap and cover which flushed a Viet Cong soldier from the tunnel, who was immediately killed by the nearby platoon sergeant. First Lieutenant Sargent, the platoon sergeant, and a forward observer then moved toward the tunnel entrance. As they approached, another Viet Cong emerged and threw two hand grenades that landed in the midst of the group. First Lieutenant Sargent fired three shots at the enemy then turned and unhesitatingly threw himself over the two grenades. He was mortally wounded, and his two companions were lightly

wounded when the grenades exploded. By his courageous and selfless act of exceptional heroism, he saved the lives of the platoon sergeant and forward observer and prevented the injury or death of several other nearby comrades. It was in stark contrast to the usual similar tales of heroic sacrifice wherein an enlisted man threw himself on a grenade to save an officer. In Sargent's case, it was leadership by example, the Platoon Leader giving his life for his subordinates.

In further contrast to other awards of the Medal of Honor, Rupert Sargent's award was not presented in a Presidential ceremony at the White House, or a well-publicized event at the Pentagon. Sargent's widow refused to accept the award, not in protest, but on the basis of her religious belief as a Jehovah's Witness that she owed her loyalty to God alone and not to any earthly government. After much persuasion, in 1969 she finally agreed to accept the award in a private meeting at her home that included only the couple's two children.

***RODNEY MAXWELL DAVIS**

Sergeant Rodney Davis received a posthumous award of Medal of Honor for his actions on September 6, 1967. The 25-year old Marine from Macon, Georgia, and 1961 graduate of Peter G. Appling High School, had already served six years in the Corps, including a three-year tour of duty as Guard with the U.S. Marine Detachment in London, England.

In Vietnam elements of Sergeant Davis' platoon were pinned down by a numerically superior force of attacking North Vietnamese Army Regulars near Quang Nam Province. Remnants of the platoon were located in a trench line where Sergeant Davis was directing the fire of his men in an attempt to repel the enemy attack. Disregarding the enemy hand grenades and high volume of small arms and mortar fire, he moved from man to man shouting words of encouragement to each of them while firing and throwing grenades at the onrushing enemy. When an enemy grenade landed in the trench in the midst of his men, Sergeant Davis, realizing the gravity of the situation, and in a final valiant act of complete self-sacrifice, instantly threw himself upon the grenade, absorbing with his body the full and terrific force of the explosion. Through his extraordinary initiative and inspiring valor in the face of almost certain death, Sergeant Davis saved his comrades from injury and possible loss of life and enabled his platoon to hold its vital position. He gallantly gave his life for his country.



WEBSTER ANDERSON

Thirty-six-year-old Sergeant First Class Webster Anderson of Winnsboro, South Carolina, survived grievous wounds to personally receive the Medal of Honor from President Richard Nixon in 1969. His award was for actions two years earlier; Anderson had spent the interim recovering from those wounds during which both legs and part of one arm had to be amputated.

A career soldier with 14 years in the Army, on October 15, 1967, Sergeant First Class Anderson's defensive position was attacked by a North Vietnamese Army infantry unit supported by heavy mortar, recoilless rifle, rocket propelled grenade and automatic weapon fire. The initial onslaught breached the defensive perimeter. Anderson mounted the parapet of his howitzer position and became the mainstay of the defense of the battery position. He directed devastating direct howitzer fire on the assaulting enemy while providing rifle and grenade defensive fire against enemy soldiers attempting to overrun his gun section. While protecting his crew and directing their fire, two enemy grenades exploded at



his feet knocking him down and severely wounding him in the legs. Though not able to stand, Webster Anderson propped himself on the parapet and continued to direct howitzer fire upon the enemy. Seeing an enemy grenade land within the gun pit near a wounded member of his gun crew, he seized the grenade and attempted to throw it over the parapet. As it was thrown from the position it exploded and he was again wounded. Although only partially conscious, he refused medical evacuation and continued to encourage his men in the defense of the position.



Before presenting the Medal of Honor to Webster Anderson and two other young heroes in 1969, President Richard Nixon said: "Oliver Wendell Holmes once spoke about the 'contagion of courage,' that courage some way, when we see it in others, helps to build it up in all of us, and in a whole nation." Over the next three decades before Webster Anderson's death at age 70 on August 30, 2003, the triple-amputee demonstrated a resolve and courage in his post-war life that was as moving and inspirational as had been his actions that fateful day in Vietnam.

***RILEY LEROY PITTS**

When Captain Riley Pitts arrived in Vietnam late in 1966, he had a college degree, an ROTC commission, a budding military career, and a wife and two children back home in Oklahoma. Though initially assigned to a desk job, he repeatedly requested a combat command. Fifteen years earlier such a request would have been scoffed at--before Vietnam it was unthinkable that a Black officer would command White troops whether in battle or in peace time. But much had changed in the 1960s, and Pitts at last received his command. By fall he was Company Commander for Company C, 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division.



After his company landed in an airmobile assault on October 31, 1967, several Viet Cong opened fire with automatic weapons. Captain Pitts led an assault which overran the enemy positions and was then ordered to move north to reinforce another company engaged against a strong enemy force. As his company moved forward intense fire was received from three directions including four bunkers, two of which were within 15 meters of his position. His rifle fire proving ineffective against the enemy due to the dense foliage, Captain Pitts picked up an M-79 grenade launcher and began pinpointing the targets. Seizing a grenade taken from a captured Viet Cong's web gear, he lobbed it at a bunker to his front, but it hit the foliage and rebounded. Without hesitation Captain Pitts threw himself on top of the grenade which, fortunately, failed to explode. He then directed the repositioning of the company to permit friendly artillery to be fired. Upon completion of the fire mission, he again led his men toward the enemy positions, personally killing at least one more Viet Cong. Displaying complete disregard for his personal safety, he maintained continuous fire, pinpointing the enemy's fortified positions, while at the same time directing and urging his men forward, until he was killed by multiple gun shots.

CLARENCE EUGENE SASSER

The son of a very poor farming family in Angleton, Texas, when he gave up his college deferment and was drafted in 1967, Clarence Sasser was surprised that the Army chose to train him as a medical aidman. It was obvious the military saw in the young man a potential he had not

yet found in himself. At the time, Clarence was simply thankful for a decent monthly income to help his struggling family back in Texas.

Clarence exceeded the Army's expectations beyond all comprehension on January 10, 1968, just 51 days after he arrived in Vietnam. While on a reconnaissance in force operation his company was making an air assault when suddenly it was taken under heavy small arms, recoilless rifle, machinegun and rocket fire from well-fortified enemy positions on three sides of the landing zone. During the first few minutes, over 30 casualties were sustained. Without hesitation, Specialist Fifth Class Sasser ran across an open rice paddy through a hail of fire to assist the wounded. After helping one man to safety, he was painfully wounded in the left shoulder by fragments of an exploding rocket. Refusing medical attention, he ran through a barrage of rocket and automatic weapons fire to aid casualties of the initial attack and, after giving them urgently needed treatment, continued to search for other wounded. Despite two additional wounds that paralyzed his legs, Sasser literally dragged himself through the mud toward another soldier 100 meters away. Although in agonizing pain and faint from loss of blood, he reached the man, treated him, and proceeded on to encourage another group of soldiers to crawl 200 meters to relative safety. There he attended their wounds for five hours until they were evacuated.

Following ten months of intense hospitalization during which Clarence regained the use of his legs, on March 27, 1969, President Nixon presented Sasser and two fellow soldiers with the Medal of Honor. After his discharge Clarence returned to college to obtain a degree in Chemistry. After a brief stint in the oil industry he went to work for the Veterans Administration, where he continues to serve veterans today. At the time of this writing he is one of only two living Black Medal of Honor recipients, and the sole surviving Black recipient of the Vietnam War.

On April 30, 1971, a young Black man was shot and killed while attempting to rob a Detroit liquor store. In a city where tenements abounded, where unemployment was 13% for Whites and double that for Blacks, such tragedies were not uncommon. The incident might well have rated no more than one or two lines in the back pages of the Detroit newspapers. When the identity of the would-be robber was revealed however, it was suddenly front page news. The young black man who died while trying to steal \$25 was a recipient of the Medal of Honor.

DWIGHT HAL JOHNSON

Specialist Fifth Class Dwight Hal Johnson was born on May 7, 1947, in Detroit, the son of an unmarried, single mother struggling to make a life in a run-down tenement. Despite her surroundings and a climate of drugs, crime, violence and racial prejudice that robbed most young men of the poor black Detroit tenements of any hope, she raised her son to rise above all of that. Young Dwight grew up becoming an Explorer Scout who avoided gangs, didn't use drugs, and remained in High School long enough to graduate with the Class of 1965. Drafted one year after graduation, he arrived in Vietnam to serve on a Tank in the 4th Infantry's 69th Armored Regiment in February 1967.

Contrary to the popular notion that the war in Vietnam was one continuous battle, many who served in the combat theater never heard a shot fired. Specialist Johnson nearly finished his one-year tour without ever seeing combat. That changed quickly on January 15, 1968.



On that day Johnson's tank was in heavy contact with a battalion size North Vietnamese force when it threw a track and was immobilized. Specialist Johnson climbed outside the armored protection of the vehicle armed only with a .45 caliber pistol and killed several enemy soldiers before he ran out of ammunition. Returning to his tank through a heavy volume of enemy fire, he obtained a submachine gun to continue his fight against the advancing enemy. Engaged in extremely close combat when the last of his ammunition was again expended, he killed an enemy soldier with the stock of his submachine gun. Now weaponless, he ignored the enemy fire and climbed into his platoon sergeant's tank, extricated a wounded crewmember and carried him to an armored personnel carrier. He then returned to the same tank and assisted in firing the main gun until it jammed. In a magnificent display of courage, he exited the tank and again armed only with a pistol, engaged several North Vietnamese troops. Fighting his way through devastating fire and remounting his own immobilized tank, he remained fully exposed to the enemy as he engaged them with the tank's externally mounted .50 caliber machinegun; where he remained until the situation was brought under control.

Returning home shortly after his first and only combat action, Johnson's two-year active duty commitment was fulfilled, and he was discharged and returned to Detroit. There the young man who had served his country honorably--even uncommonly valiantly--found it impossible to get a job. At one point he applied and tested for a job with the phone company. Though he passed the test he was never hired. He later learned three White applicants had been hired ahead of him.

Dwight Johnson's luck changed on November 19, 1968. On that date President Richard Nixon presented the young hero with the Medal of Honor for his actions in Vietnam eleven months earlier. Suddenly, everyone wanted to hire Johnson, regardless of the color of his skin; Dwight Hal Johnson had gone from being an unemployed, down-on-his luck Black Vietnam War Veteran to instant celebrity. Subsequent events however proved that the change in the young man's luck was not for the better; it was from bad to worse.

By the time Dwight Johnson received the Medal of Honor public support for the war in Vietnam had morphed into passionate and sometimes violent demonstrations to bring the war to an immediate end. In Detroit Dwight Johnson became a hometown hero, not because of his valor on the fields of battle, but because he was a Black kid from a run-down tenement who had become a celebrity. The kind of heroism that earned Johnson and others like him accolades from the President and the distinctive blue ribbon of our highest military award doesn't come on a good day. Rather, such valor is spawned on the worst of days, a day in which that young hero may have watched close friends die in grotesque manners or suffered horrible wounds himself. For the man who has become a hero, the deeds that made him such generally happen on the day he most wishes to forget.

An adoring public wouldn't let Dwight Johnson forget that day and, for the young hero, while there was an outpouring of opportunities for financial support, there was no support system to address the nightmares that plagued him time and again. After taking a job as an Army recruiter, those nightmares were further heightened by an anti-war faction that turned on him for enlisting more young men to fight in Vietnam. At one speaking engagement the demonstrators called him an "electronic nigger" for allowing the Army to use him to enroll young Black men to fight a "White man's war."

Despite new jobs and increasing sources of revenue, Johnson found it difficult to adjust to his new celebrity status, or to properly manage his financial resources. He was AWOL from his recruiting job and flat broke on April 28, 1971, when he admitted his wife Katrina to the hospital

for minor surgery. Under pressure to pay the \$25 admitting fee, Johnson promised the clerk he would return with the money the following day.

Two days later while visiting with his wife in the hospital, Katrina told her husband that the hospital continued to pressure her for the \$25 fee they had been promised. Dwight kissed her goodbye, assuring her he would return with the money the following morning. After darkness had fallen across the Motor City, Dwight Johnson entered a liquor store in a White neighborhood with a gun. In an ensuing struggle Johnson fired his gun, hitting the clerk in the shoulder before the pistol was wrested from his grasp. The clerk turned the gun on his attacker, pressing the trigger until the weapon was empty and an American hero lay dying on the floor.



Dwight Hal Johnson was not the first Medal of Honor recipient to get into trouble, nor would he be the last. Heroes are human; it is that very humanity that makes them heroes for they are those who have risen above the limitations of human ability to achieve above and beyond the call of duty. Sadly, for many historians Dwight Hal Johnson is too often remembered as the "hero who went bad." It is a short-sighted view that neglects the truth of what really happened; Dwight Hal Johnson was an American hero who was failed by the very Nation he served so valiantly to defend.

***EUGENE ASHLEY, JR.**

Sergeant First Class Ashley was the first Black Special Forces recipient of the Medal of Honor. On February 6 & 7, 1968, during the Tet Offensive, the 36-year old soldier from New York earned the Medal of Honor during an attack on the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei. Sergeant First Class Ashley supported the camp with high explosive and illumination mortar rounds. When communications were lost with the main camp, he assumed the additional responsibility of directing air strikes and artillery support. He organized and equipped a small assault force of local friendly personnel. During the ensuing battle he led a total of 5 vigorous assaults, continuously exposed to a voluminous hail of enemy grenades, machinegun and automatic weapons fire. He was plagued by numerous booby-trapped satchel charges in all bunkers. During his fifth and final assault, he adjusted air strikes nearly on top of his assault element, forcing the enemy to withdraw and resulting in friendly control of the summit of the hill. While exposing himself to intense enemy fire, he was seriously wounded by machinegun fire but continued his mission without regard for his personal safety. He then lost consciousness and was carried from the summit by his comrades only to suffer a fatal wound when an enemy artillery round landed in the area.



***CLIFFORD CHESTER SIMS**

By the time he was starting grade school Clifford Sims was an orphan. Born Clifford Pittman on June 18, 1942, in Port St. Joe, Florida, the young boy never knew his father. His mother was killed after hitching a ride in a gasoline tanker that exploded in a traffic accident, and his stepfather was killed in action while serving his country. For a few years' relatives tried to help out but ultimately young Clifford was homeless, save for an old school bus in the woods near Panama City that served as shelter until at age 13, he was adopted by James and Irene Sims.

Sims joined the Army in 1961, married his high school sweetheart Mary, and by 1964 the couple had a daughter they named Gina. Late in 1967 he left Mary and Gina behind in Port St. Joe to answer the call of duty, arriving in Vietnam as a 25-year old Staff Sergeant just in time to witness the massive Tet Offensive.

On February 21, 1968, Staff Sergeant Sims' squad was assaulting a heavily fortified enemy position concealed within a dense wooded area when it encountered strong enemy defensive fire. Once in the wood line Sims led his men in a furious attack against an enemy force which had pinned down another platoon and threatened to overrun it. After a successful defense, he was ordered to move his squad to a position where he could provide covering fire for the company command group and to link up with yet another platoon which was under heavy enemy pressure. After moving 30 meters he noticed that a brick structure in which ammunition was stored was on fire. Realizing the danger, he took immediate action to move his squad from this position. Two members of his squad were injured by a subsequent explosion, but Sergeant Sims' prompt actions undoubtedly prevented more serious casualties from occurring. While continuing through the woods amid heavy enemy fire, he and his squad were approaching a bunker when they heard the unmistakable noise of a concealed booby trap being triggered to their front. Staff Sergeant Sims warned his comrades of the danger and unhesitatingly hurled himself upon the device as it exploded, taking the full impact of the blast.

Sims' posthumous Medal of Honor was presented to his young widow at the White House by Vice President Spiro Agnew on December 2, 1969, in the same ceremony in which Eugene Ashley's posthumous award was also presented. Decades later Mary Sims was using the Internet to seek out some of her late-husband's former comrades. Her search found George Parker, a soldier who had been wounded and earned a Silver Star on the same day Clifford Sims died. A few months later the two were married.

***RALPH HENRY JOHNSON**

Ralph Henry Johnson was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on January 11, 1949. After growing up and attending elementary schools in Charleston, at age 18 he joined the Marine Corps Reserves in Oakland, California and was discharged three months later to become a regular Marine. He arrived in Vietnam in January 1968 as a Private First Class and served as a Scout in the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion.



In the early morning hours of March 5, 1968, during Operation ROCK, Private First-Class Johnson was a member of a 15-man reconnaissance patrol manning an observation post on Hill 146 overlooking the Quan Duc Valley deep in enemy controlled territory. They were attacked by a platoon-size hostile force employing automatic weapons, satchel charges and hand grenades. Suddenly, a hand grenade landed in the three-man fighting hole occupied by Private First-Class Johnson and two fellow Marines. Realizing the inherent danger to his two comrades, he shouted a warning and unhesitatingly hurled himself upon the explosive device. When the grenade exploded, Private First-Class Johnson absorbed the tremendous impact of the blast and was killed instantly. His prompt and heroic act saved the life of one Marine at the cost of his life and undoubtedly prevented the enemy from penetrating his sector of the patrol's perimeter.

CHARLES CALVIN ROGERS

The son of a West Virginia coal miner, born one month before the Stock Market crash of 1929 and reared during the Great Depression, Charles Calvin Rogers was a young man determined to be a successful man, despite his humble beginnings or the limitations his nation placed on a boy with Black skin. Studiously finishing high school, Rogers attended West Virginia State Institute, graduating in 1951 with two degrees: one in Chemistry and one in Mathematics. Courtesy of his participation in the school's ROTC program, he also graduated to a commission as a U.S. Army Second Lieutenant.



Over more than 15 years of service, including serving during the Korean War shortly after receiving his commission, by 1967 Rogers had risen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. It was an unusual accomplishment for a young man, but not enough to sate Calvin Roger's appetite for a successful career. His own service while distinguished and exemplary, lacked the combat command critical to a would-be rising star in the United States Army. "I wanted the combat experience, and I felt it was imperative to my career to get a combat command," he said by way of explanation for his multiple requests to be sent to Vietnam. By the fall of 1968 Lieutenant Colonel Rogers was commanding the "Big Red One's" 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery at First Support Base Rita, and had nearly completed a one-year combat tour. Due to rotate home in mid-November, he extended his tour to accept a desk job with the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, another calculated career move. Shortly after midnight on Halloween night, and only days before he was schedule to leave FSB Rita for his new assignment to a desk in Saigon, the North Vietnamese hit the small outpost in the Fishhook region near the Cambodian border with everything they had.

Following three days of incessant indirect fire (mortars and artillery) Fire Support Base Rita was subjected to a concentrated bombardment while being simultaneously hit by a human wave ground assault led by sappers who penetrated the perimeter. Colonel Rogers aggressively rallied his artillery crewmen to man their howitzers and directed their fire on the assaulting enemy. Knocked to the ground and wounded by an exploding round, he sprang to his feet and led a counterattack against an enemy element that had penetrated the howitzer positions. Painfully wounded a second time during the assault, he pressed the attack killing several enemy and driving the remainder from the positions. Refusing medical treatment, he reestablished and reinforced the defensive positions. As a second human wave attack was launched against another sector of the perimeter, he directed artillery on the assaulting enemy and led a second counterattack against the charging forces. At dawn the enemy launched a third assault. Seeing a howitzer inoperative due to casualties, Colonel Rogers joined surviving members of the crew to return it to action. When he was too severely wounded to physically lead the defenders, he continued to give encouragement and direction to his men in defeating and repelling of the enemy attack.

Lieutenant Colonel Rogers spent three months in a hospital in Japan recovering from his wounds and then, after successfully reversing the orders of his doctors, he returned to Vietnam for his previously requested assignment with MACV. When President Nixon invited him to the White House to award him the Medal of Honor on May 14, 1970, Rogers became the highest-ranking Black soldier to ever receive his nation's highest award. Calvin Rogers, son of a Black West Virginia coal miner had certainly lived far beyond the dreams and hopes of most young Black men. For Rogers, however, it wasn't enough. After attending the prestigious Command and

General Staff and Army War Colleges, he retired in 1980 with the two stars of an Army Major General on his collar.

With a Medal of Honor, master's degree, and a distinguished military career to his resume, following retirement Rogers continued to excel. Ordained as a Baptist minister, he went to Germany to minister to American troops until his death on September 1, 1990 at age 61.

***JOHN EARL WARREN, JR.**

First Lieutenant John Warren, a 22-year old Army officer from New York, distinguished himself at the cost of his life while serving as a platoon leader in Vietnam on January 14, 1969. While moving through a rubber plantation to reinforce another friendly unit, his company came under intense fire from a well-fortified enemy force. Disregarding his safety, First Lieutenant Warren began maneuvering with several of his men through the hail of enemy fire toward the hostile positions. When he had come to within six feet of one of the enemy bunkers and was preparing to toss a hand grenade into it, an enemy grenade was suddenly thrown into the middle of his small group. Thinking only of his men, First Lieutenant Warren fell in the direction of the grenade, thus shielding those around him from the blast. His action, performed at the cost of his life, saved three men from serious or mortal injury.



***GARFIELD MCCONNELL LANGHORN**

Garfield Langhorn was a quiet, studious young man who graduated from Riverhead High School in New York with the Class of 1968. After joining the U.S. Army, he was sent to Vietnam as a radio operator with the 1st Aviation Brigade.

On January 15, 1969, less than a year after he graduated from high school, 20-year old Private First Class Langhorn's platoon was inserted into a landing zone to rescue two pilots of a Cobra helicopter that had been shot down by enemy fire on a heavily timbered slope. He provided radio coordination with the command-and-control aircraft overhead while the troops hacked their way through dense undergrowth to the wreckage, where both aviators were found dead. As the men were taking the bodies to a pickup site, they came under intense fire from enemy soldiers in camouflaged bunkers to the front and right flank; and within minutes they were surrounded. Private Langhorn radioed for help from the orbiting gunships, which placed minigun and rocket fire on the aggressors. He then lay between the platoon leader and another man, operating the radio and providing covering fire for the wounded who had been moved to the center of the perimeter. Darkness fell, making it impossible for the gunships to give accurate support; and the aggressors began to probe the perimeter. An enemy hand grenade landed in front of Private Langhorn and a few feet from the virtually helpless casualties. Choosing to protect these wounded, he unhesitatingly threw himself on the grenade, scooped it beneath his body and absorbed the blast. By sacrificing himself, he saved the lives of his comrades.



***OSCAR PALMER AUSTIN**

Oscar Austin was born in Nacogdoches, Texas, but grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, where he graduated from Phoenix Union High School with the Class of 1967. Within a year he joined the Marine Corps and by early 1969 was serving in Vietnam. During the early morning hours on February 23, 1969, Private First-Class Austin's observation post was subjected to a fierce ground attack by a large North Vietnamese Army force that was supported by a heavy volume of hand grenades, satchel charges, and small arms fire. Observing that one of his wounded companions had fallen unconscious in a position dangerously exposed to the hostile fire, Private First Class Austin unhesitatingly left the relative security of his fighting hole and, with complete disregard for his safety, raced across the fire-swept terrain to assist the Marine to a covered location. As he neared the casualty, he observed an enemy grenade land nearby and, reacting instantly, leaped between the injured Marine and the lethal object, absorbing the effects of its detonation. As he ignored his painful injuries and turned to examine the wounded man, he saw a North Vietnamese Army soldier aiming a weapon at his unconscious companion. With full knowledge of the probable consequences and thinking only to protect the Marine, Private First-Class Austin resolutely threw himself between the wounded man and the hostile soldier, and, in doing so, was mortally wounded.



***ROBERT HENRY JENKINS**

Robert Jenkins was born and raised in Florida, where he graduated from Central Academy High School in 1967. Six months later he joined the U.S. Marine Corps and arrived in Vietnam to serve as a Machine Gunner in July 1968. He had completed nine months of his one-year combat tour when he was killed in action on March 5, 1969.

Early on that morning Private First-Class Jenkins' twelve-man reconnaissance team was occupying a defensive position at Fire Support Base Argonne south of the Demilitarized Zone. Suddenly, the Marines were assaulted by a North Vietnamese Army platoon employing mortars, automatic weapons, and hand grenades. Reacting instantly, Private First-Class Jenkins and another Marine quickly moved into a two-man fighting emplacement, and as they boldly delivered accurate machinegun fire against the enemy, a North Vietnamese soldier threw a hand grenade into the friendly emplacement. Fully realizing the inevitable results of his actions, Private First-Class Jenkins quickly seized his comrade and pushing the man to the ground, he leaped on top of the Marine to shield him from the explosion. Absorbing the full impact of the detonation, Private First-Class Jenkins was seriously injured and subsequently succumbed to his wounds. His courage, inspiring valor and selfless devotion to duty saved a fellow Marine from serious injury or possible death.



***WILLIAM MAUD BRYANT**

William Bryant was a career soldier from Detroit, Michigan, who was a member of the elite Army Special Forces. He was the last Black American of the Vietnam War (as well as since that war) to be awarded the Medal of Honor. It was presented to his family by President Richard Nixon for the valiant Green Beret's actions on March 24, 1969.



Throughout 34 hours of incessant attack 36-year old Sergeant First Class Bryant moved throughout his position directing fire, distributing ammunition, assisting the wounded, and providing leadership and inspiration. When a helicopter drop of ammunition was made, he ran through the enemy fire to retrieve the boxes and distribute needed ammunition. He led a patrol outside the perimeter and came under intense automatic weapons fire. He single-handedly repulsed one attack and, seeing a wounded enemy, crawled forward alone to capture him for intelligence purposes. Finding the man dead, he crawled back to his patrol and led his men back to the company position where he organized a patrol in an attempt to break through the enemy. He advanced 200 meters when this patrol was pinned down and Sergeant First Class Bryant was wounded. He rallied his men, called for gunship support, and directed suppressive fire on the enemy positions. Following the last gunship attack, he charged an enemy automatic weapons position, overran it, and single-handedly killed its 3 defenders. Inspired by his heroic example, his men renewed their attack. While regrouping his small force for the final assault Sergeant First Class Bryant fell mortally wounded by an enemy rocket.

It is probably an over-simplification to take men or women of the caliber of the 20 Black Vietnam War heroes and categorize them by ethnicity, or for that matter by any other category. They should be remembered for what they were—American heroes. That said, the parsing out of these 20 Black heroes does at the least, serve well to demonstrate the great strides towards equality of Black Americans during the War in Vietnam. These heroes came from a variety of backgrounds: North, South, East and West, from broken homes and stable families, from poor neighborhoods and hard-working middle-class families. Among them can be found a few high school dropouts, far more high school graduates, and several college educated men. One faced legal problems, others rose to the pinnacles of their profession. All of them accomplished unbelievable and sacrificial deeds that deserve the highest platitudes we can bestow upon them. They are, indeed, a cross-section of America: Black, White, Yellow, Red and Brown.

Furthermore, these 20 men provide vivid example to the fallacies of many so-called "facts" ascribed to the Vietnam Veteran:

- Fifteen of the 20 Black Medal of Honor recipients died in their moment of heroism, a casualty rate of 75%. That is only slightly higher than the 62% casualty rate of all 246 Vietnam War Medal of Honor heroes.
- The youngest Black recipient was 18-year old Milton Olive; the oldest was 39-year old Calvin Rogers. The average age of these 20 heroes at the time of their actions in Vietnam was 26.7 years of age.
- At least 15 of these men enlisted to serve their nation; they were volunteers. Only two are specifically identified as having been Drafted.

- Six of these heroes were "lowly Privates First Class". Ten were seasoned Non-Commissioned Officers; four were Officers.
- Two of the twenty were highly trained medical aidmen. Two others were members of the Army's elite Special Forces.

All of them were dedicated Americans who served, sacrificed, and in most cases gave all that they had including their lives, in answer to the call to duty.

Sammy Lee Davis



"I went to war and found out about love--what real love is. I didn't go to war to kill people; I went to war because I loved my daddy and wanted him to be proud of me. I went to war because I loved my grandpas and I loved my country. And when I got over there (Vietnam), the reason we fought so hard was because we discovered that we loved each other. We were all we had, and we became brothers. There, in Vietnam, I learned about what real love is."

Sammy L. Davis

One can tell very little by looking at blood pooling on a field of battle; it has no unique signature to tell the observer if it was shed by friend or foe. The stain of conflict that soaks into the soil cannot of itself, by visual appearance, identify nationality to tell you whether it was North Vietnamese, South Vietnamese, or even American blood. Neither can it speak of race or gender. Men and women bleed alike, and whether their skin is white, black, red, brown or yellow, all blood runs the same shade of crimson. It is the true equalizer, speaking only of personal tragedy and the inevitability of the one thing all people of the world have in common, mortality.

Beyond the battlefield, however, it is easy to allow prejudice and stereotypes to cloud our understanding. There are not a few who would immediately assume that a pool of blood in front of a counter in a liquor store was spilled by a would-be Black thief, or that a similar pool behind the counter was shed by an Asian liquor store owner defending his turf. Blood on a switchblade in a back alley could be quickly identified as being shed by a young Hispanic or Puerto Rican gangbanger. The fact is, in all these cases one can be, and most likely is, wrong! Such is the way that some in society draw generalizations that are ethnically based prejudice that denigrate an entire race of people.

The following pages tell the story of Sammy Davis' service in Vietnam. Almost immediately some who read these pages may be inclined to think that it is an account of Sammy Davis, Jr., a Black entertainer of the period who did indeed make repeated trips to Vietnam to sing and dance and share his talents with the soldiers stationed far from home. But this Sammy Davis was a young white boy, tall and strapping with freckled face and earnest eyes, who went to Vietnam as a soldier in the Army Artillery.

Born on November 1, 1946, at Dayton, Ohio, Sammy was the oldest of four children in a loving family that was close-knit. His father had served as an Artilleryman during World War II, an admirable answer to the call of duty that was never lost on young Sammy. Following the war while raising a family, Mr. Davis worked on construction, installing crude oil cracking plants. Each plant required four to six months for completion, so during Sammy's early life the family moved often from Ohio to Illinois, California, Texas and Georgia, before at last settling in Indiana. "I was just a regular kid," Sammy recalled during one interview. "I was never in any serious trouble, and I always liked helping people."¹

There was no racial prejudice in the Davis family, as they moved around the country following the crude oil plants, they met many different people. While living in Georgia they even had neighbors who were Black. "We played with the kids," Sammy recently recalled. "Our parents taught us to be kind to everyone. Still, we were taught that Black people were different. That's not to say our parents were bad, it is just the only lifestyle they had ever known. It's what they had been taught all their lives, and they passed it on to us."

Like a dutiful big brother, Sammy always looked out for his two sisters. Then, when he was ten years old John was born, and Sammy at last had a kid brother. The two boys grew up learning to hunt and fish with their father, a sport the three of them enjoyed. Sometimes, when dad was busy working, Sammy and John hiked the woods to hunt on their own. Ringing in the elder brothers' ears were always the words of his father: "Son, don't ever leave your little brother behind." It was an admonition Sammy learned well, and one that would follow him to war.

In 1965 Sammy was finishing his senior year of high school in Indiana, while working as a cook in a bowling alley. One December day while going about his tasks he caught a quick news report and the black and white picture of President Lyndon Johnson hanging the Medal of Honor around the neck of Special Forces Captain Roger Donlon. "Because of the military people in my

family I was very aware of what the Medal of Honor was," recalls Sammy. "I thought, 'Wow! When I grow up, I'd like to be a soldier like him.'"²

"Growing up" for Sammy was not that far away. Six months later he graduated from high school and the following September he enlisted in the Army. After Basic Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Private Sammy Davis was sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. There he received training in Artillery, to follow in the footsteps of his father. After volunteering for service in Vietnam, the young soldier was given a 30 day leave to return home. His mother cried when he left, uncertain for her son's future and reluctant to see him going. His father stoically hugged him and said, "Son, go do your job."

In Vietnam Sammy was assigned to a 105-mm. Howitzer crew with Battery C, 2d Battalion, 4th Artillery, 9th Infantry Division. Like their counterparts in the regiment, the 3 young men and their gun sergeant were there to support unknown, unseen comrades--men of the Infantry who hacked their way through the dense jungles and deadly rice paddies of South Vietnam. When an Infantry patrol made contact with the enemy, back at the base camp the 105 crews received a fire mission. It was then their job to load the heavy artillery pieces, firing round after round far into the distance to devastate the enemy ranks and help spare the lives of the "grunts." The fire mission would continue until contact was broken, regardless of how long the artillerymen had to remain in the sun heaving charges of powder and heavy shells into their hot guns. Between fire missions however, there were often days at a time without a call for help, and these resulted in idle hours that could be as demoralizing as the combat actions were intense.

During the quiet days it was helpful to find a sense of humor, something to relieve the tensions of ever-present danger. Not infrequently was a group laugh achieved at the expense of Sammy Davis, the young white boy from Indiana. "Sammy Davis, Jr., could not imagine the trouble he caused me by having my name and making it famous," he recalls. The jokes and ribbing came both from white friends and Black comrades. Even at that point in his life, for Sammy Black people were different. It was the only thing he had ever been taught.

A good-natured kid, Sammy took the ribbing about his name in stride. What he did not accept well was the constant pressure and prodding of his supervisor, Sergeant James Gant. "He was the meanest Sergeant I've ever seen in my life," he said. The 27-year-old professional soldier from Lansing, Michigan, was *All-Army*. Each night he made the three men who served his gun removed the rounds from their M-16 magazines, polish the bullets, and then reload. "He would take us out at night and make the three of us sit back-to-back, blindfold us, set the time fuze and make us count the clicks to "muzzle action" on our guns. It was ridiculous, we thought. In a real fire mission if it was dark and we had to set the fuzes, we would just pull out those little bent flashlights they gave us and get the job done. What Gant did to us didn't make sense, it was just pure harassment in our minds. I believed it was because he was black and we, the other two guys and me, were White. He was just a bitter old sergeant and that's why he was picking on us."

The nature of Sergeant Gant's overbearing leadership seemed to Sammy and his two friends to be little more than the revenge of a previously oppressed Black man who at last had authority over the White boys. Those feelings did little to improve race relations for the gun crew.

On November 18, 1967, Infantry elements in the delta west of Cai Lay ran into heavy enemy resistance. Facing the Americans was a reinforced North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regiment, some 1,500 enemy. Infantry elements were pulled back to a hastily built position, Fire Base Cudgel, and Sammy Davis' Artillery battery was flown in by helicopter to provide close support. They comprised 41 men manning four 105 guns emplaced around an improvised perimeter. Immediately they went to work, lobbing shells into the distant jungle as scattered

Infantry elements tried to pull back to the perimeter. The fire mission lasted well into the evening and, when at last there came respite, the artillerymen began digging fox holes and filling sandbags. Early in the evening an American helicopter landed briefly, dispatching an Army major who advised the men of the small outpost that their chance of being hit by the enemy that night was 100 percent.

Mark Twain once said that "Heroism is not the absence of fear...but the mastery of fear." Isolated in the marshy swamps of South Vietnam's jungles, all the young soldiers were afraid. They came to master their fear in any number of ways in order to prepare to do their job. For Sammy and the two men who helped him man his gun, fear of the enemy was overcome chiefly by the realization that there was a greater entity of which to be afraid--if they faltered they knew they would quickly face the wrath of Sergeant James Gant.

Crouching in his damp foxhole, at 2 a.m. Sammy heard the nearby sound of a mortar being dropped into a tube and the unmistakable "whoosh" of its propellant then hurling it skyward. "When did we bring in mortars?" he asked one of his buddies.

"We didn't," came the reply. And then the first in a torrent of enemy shells began raining down on Fire Base Cudgel. For a full half hour, the enemy dropped charge after charge on the small outpost, preparations for a ground attack. Then it became momentarily quiet and Sammy raised his head above the sandbagged position to look out into the darkness and across a river that fronted his position, knowing well that soon the enemy would come.

"Load up for Beehive," ordered Sergeant Gant. Beehive rounds were a special artillery shell, designed for close-in fighting that turned the huge 105s into a monstrous *shotgun*. With the barrel lowered to *muzzle action*, each round spewed out 18,000 white-hot steel darts, called flechette rounds, at point-blank range. Across the river Sammy heard the sound of a whistle, then commands in English exhorting North Vietnamese soldiers to storm the firebase and kill the Americans. In the dim light he could see the shadows of hundreds of small figures creeping down to the river and preparing to cross. "I was waiting for Sergeant Gant to tell me to 'fire,' he recalls of those tense moments when instinct cried out to pull the lanyard--an act that would have prematurely launched the flechettes before the enemy was within effective range. Fear of Gant overrode fear of the massing enemy force, "I knew not to fire until he said 'fire' no matter what was happening," Sammy recounted, "and I could see the enemy all around us. They were doing mass assault waves."³ In those critical moments Sergeant Gant's hours of pushing, lecturing and training paid off. Sammy waited until the order was given and, when the enemy was almost on top of their position, he pulled the lanyard. Eighteen thousand darts steaked into the darkness, cutting down scores of enemies, and the four artillerymen began quickly reloading for the next wave.

Across the river an enemy RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade) gunner saw the muzzle flash of the big artillery gun and slowly leveled the tube containing his own explosive charge. Moments later the rocket steaked across the river, hitting the American 105's metal plate. Shards of steel pierced Sergeant Gant's chest while the explosion threw two men backward and simultaneously hurled Sammy into a nearby foxhole, unconscious.

By the time he regained consciousness in the early morning darkness Sergeant Gant and Sammy's two buddies had been pulled back for treatment. Unable to locate Sammy, the other gunners assumed he was dead. Overhead the sky was streaked by intertwined red and green tracer bullets and the roar of ongoing battle reverberated in his head. Isolated and laying far forward of the rest of the men at Fire Base Cudgel however, Sammy was not alone. Hundreds of enemy soldiers were streaming up from the river to attack the American camp. Believing there was nothing in front of them but enemy, gunners behind Sammy unleashed another flechette round

even as he was climbing out of the foxholes. Dozens of white-hot darts peppered his legs and thighs, and only his flak jacket saved him from being mortally wounded. One dart struck his back below the armor plating however, damaging one kidney and causing excruciating pain.

As the enemy massed for yet another assault, Sammy rose to his feet and turned the big gun by himself. In the darkness he scooped up handfuls of loose powder, single-handedly loading the big gun behind another beehive round. As the enemy assaulted again, he pulled the lanyard, the brilliant flash alerting the men behind him that he was still alive, enemy soldiers in front of him falling in death. In the darkness he continued his one man stand, loading and then setting the big gun to muzzle action; it was a process he literally could do blindfolded. When he could fire no more, he picked up his M-16 rifle and rained nearly 200 well-polished rounds at the encroaching human assault waves. Though in the early days the M-16 had caused the death of countless young Marines by frequently jamming, on this night the spotlessly clean rifle with its polished bullets hammered ceaselessly until all 12 of Sammy's magazines were expended.

Suddenly, in the distance across the river he heard a voice calling out, "Don't shoot, I'm a G.I." Light was beginning to pale the night skies as Sammy looked into the distance where a badly wounded soldier waved his booney hat while crying out for help. "Somebody's got to go get him," Sammy thought to himself. "Then in the back of his mind he heard the voice of his father, 'Son, never leave your little brother.'"

Unable to swim and still under fire, Sammy took one of the air mattresses that had been flown in to provide beds and paddled his way across the river. Ducking the enemy, he cautiously made his way beyond the river where he found three Infantrymen, two black and one white, huddled in a hastily dug foxhole. The white soldier looked dead and Sammy thought, "This guy is dead and he's gonna get us all killed. And then I thought 'no!' It was like when we were always in the woods back home and dad would say, 'You don't leave your little brother.'"

Badly wounded and physically exhausted, "I asked the man above to give me the strength to carry all three of my brothers at the same time."⁴ With great effort the strapping kid from Indiana half-carried, half-dragged the dead body of Jim Dyster, the white infantryman, while leading the two wounded Black soldiers back to the river where he had hidden the air mattress. Under the covering fire of his comrades on the far shore he first floated Dyster's body across the river, then returned for the other two men, Gwendell Holloway and Billy Ray Crawford. His mission accomplished, he was then helped to the basecamp where he found Sergeant Gant lying on his back in a pool of mud, the gaping wound in his chest crudely but effectively bandaged.

The gruff sergeant couldn't speak with his lips, but his eyes spoke volumes. He feebly raised his hand and motioned Sammy to him. "Sergeant Gant held up his hand and I grabbed hold of his hand and I could look right down into his soul...that's what it felt like," Sammy said in a trembling voice in a 1993 interview. "Sergeant Gant was 100% military, he kicked our butts every step of the way and he trained us what to do. That man was responsible for saving a lot of lives.

"Up to that point I didn't talk to Black people--Black was different. That night changed my whole outlook. I just laid there holding his hand and looking into his eyes. Then it came over me...the answer was there...He's people just like me."⁵ In that moment Sammy at last realized that all of the pushing, all of those silly things that Sergeant Gant had pushed him to do, stemmed not from prejudice but from love and concern. "Sergeant Gant shared with us the things that he knew was going to help us to survive. And when I looked down into his eyes, I knew he didn't hate me...that he loved me! You've gotta love somebody a whole lot to pick on 'em and teach them things."⁶

During that morning helicopters came in to evacuate the wounded and then, on the final chopper the dead. Jim Dyster's body was loaded with the dead while medics treated Sammy's multiple wounds. Of the 41 Artillerymen who had been lifted into Fire Base Cudgel the previous morning, only twelve were still standing.

As that last helicopter lifted off with the bodies of dead American soldiers, the medic aboard noticed an air bubble forming on Jim Dyster's bare chest. He pulled out his stethoscope and found a faint heartbeat. The "dead" Infantryman Sammy Davis had risked his own life to bring back across that river would years later find Sammy, and the two would become close friends--in fact, brothers. One of Sammy's most emotional moments would one day be to hold in his arms, the grandchild of the man who owed his life to him.

Sammy was evacuated the following day, his wounds patched up, but the damage to his kidney from the flechette round sent him into toxic shock. The press of incoming casualties overloaded the hospital in Saigon and Sammy, running a fever of 107 degrees wasn't expected to live. He was placed on a gurney and set in the hallway to make room for less wounded men who might be saved.

In a nearby bed lay the broken body of Gwendell Holloway, one of the two Black Infantrymen Sammy had crossed the river to help. "What's with him?" he asked a passing nurse. Advised that Sammy wasn't expected to live Holloway asked, "What can be done for him?"

Nothing really, the nurse advised. They had pumped as much blood as they could into the dying hero, but there was no more blood available. "Give him mine," Holloway ordered. It wasn't a request, Sammy recalls that Gwendell Holloway threatened to shoot up the hospital if they didn't give him a transfusion. Holloway was wheeled into the hallway next to his dying comrade where the nurse hooked up an arm-to-arm direct transfusion, as the red blood of a black-skinned Infantryman gave life to a white Artilleryman. Indeed, the blood of a Black man at last flowed through the veins of Sammy Davis, not the singer but the soldier.

On November 19, 1968, a year-and-a-day after his heroic actions at Fire Base Cudgel, Sergeant Sammy Lee Davis was summoned to the White House. There President Lyndon Johnson hung the Medal of Honor around his neck, recognizing him for refusing to *leave a brother behind*. It was, perhaps, the most viewed Medal of Honor presentation in history. Though only a brief part of the news on that date, in 1994 a movie hit American theaters that featured the Medal of Honor being awarded to a fictional character. In that scene the head of Tom Hanks was superimposed on the body of Sammy Davis in the footage shot at the White House 26 years earlier. Sammy L. Davis was, indeed, the *Original Forrest Gump*.

In the 1970s Sammy recalls with a laugh, he was attending a Medal of Honor function in Florida when he learned that the recipients were staying in the same hotel as Sammy Davis, Jr., the entertainer. While sharing a beer in the lounge that night, he met some of the singer/dancer's bodyguards and told them he had always wished to one day meet Sammy Davis, whose name had caused him so much derision in Vietnam. A call was placed and one of the bodyguards told Sammy, "Go up to room 212."

"I walked up to Room 212 and knocked on the door," he told me. "All of a sudden the door opened, and this little black guy jumped out and tackled me. Looking into my eyes he told me, 'I've always wanted to meet you. You know, I've taken a lot of kidding about having your name.'"

Though Sammy Davis' debilitating wounds from that awful night in Vietnam rendered him a 100% disabled veteran, he remains one of his brothers' best friends. He has testified before Congress to highlight the medical problems brought about by Agent Orange and spoken out repeatedly on behalf of our Missing in Action and Prisoners of War from the Vietnam conflict.

Though often struggling with lingering pain, he travels to attend veterans' gatherings across America, and is a frequent and popular speaker in scores of elementary, middle, and high schools every year.

His message is always one of intense patriotism, hope, and service. After meeting Jim Dyster in the 1980s, the man whose life Sammy had saved introduced the brave soldier during a gathering of veterans in his hometown of Salinas, Kansas. "When Sammy looked across the river that night," Dyster began, "when the flare went up, he saw a Black man waving for help. But Sammy didn't say, 'Somebody go get him.' He said, 'I have to go get him...my brother is over there, and I have to go get him.'"⁷

¹ "Medal of Honor," CBS News & World Report, ©1993 Log Cabin Videos

² "Medal of Honor-Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty," ©2006 Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation

³ *ibid*

⁴ CBS News & World Report, *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ "Medal of Honor-Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty,"

⁷ CBS News & World Report, *ibid*

Defining the Role of the Sexes

Evolution of a Husband

In the Summer of 1969, I arrived at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, to begin Basic Training as part of the process of becoming a U.S. Army soldier. I wasn't worried about going to Vietnam; I had enlisted and even requested the Army's Non-Commissioned Officer's Candidate School that virtually assured I would be sent to Vietnam upon completion of the 6-month school. For the previous four years, even while finishing high school, I had worked in the macho world of highway construction. Though I was small I knew I was tough--after all, I hailed from the state of Montana of which it was jokingly said "The men are men and the women are too." Still, I began my training with some fear and trepidation. The drill sergeants were tough, loud, vulgar, and certainly intimidating.

Twenty weeks later I was a Corporal, a non-commissioned officer like the men who had pushed me to the limits during the initial phase of my training. During the subsequent NCO course, though my Tac Sergeants proved to be as tough and demanding as my Basic Training Drill Sergeants, I no longer feared them. Among the NCOs-in-training in my class, our mantra was, "He may be bad, but Tac Schultze puts his pants on every morning the same way we do." In fact, through my training I learned that fear, while natural, is an often-irrational behavior, and that true courage is the ability to rise above your fear.

In fact, during the nearly one year I spent at Fort Leonard Wood before leaving for Vietnam there were only two things that I was afraid of. I feared and tried to avoid snakes, many of them poisonous, that were common during field exercises. I also feared the potential encounter of a female officer in uniform to whom I would be required to render a salute. I can now admit with considerable embarrassment and well-deserved shame that, when walking about the post whenever I saw a female in uniform I would dart into a building or across the street to avoid that unpleasant obligation. I was a "mountain man" from Montana, well initiated into the macho world of the Army combat soldier, who resented the intrusion into my world of the "weaker sex."

Five years later I finally welcomed a woman into my own world when I met Pam Clark at a church function. The relationship that developed, much like the relationship Pam described with her Black girlfriend in an earlier chapter, was the collision of two worlds. I was 24 years old, had served two tours in Vietnam, was self-confident and quite comfortable in my masculinity, and approached the subject of men and women as a *traditionalist*; which is a polite way of saying I was a male chauvinist. Pam on the other hand was 17 years old, quiet and shy, sheltered and impressionable; a real *Southern Belle*. She looked up to and admired me. She believed that I knew and could do anything and wanted to find fulfillment by trying to make me happy.

Our marriage the following year set the stage for what might truly have been a Ward and June Cleaver lifestyle, an American dream quite in line with the popular "Leave it to Beaver" television show that had helped mold both of our attitudes towards marriage. I worked for a living and Pam took care of the home. I handled the finances while Pam depended upon me for even her spending money. Pam offered advice occasionally, but I made the decisions. Two years later when the first of our four children were born, "Papa did the hurting (discipline) and Momma did the healing." Pam only once brought up the idea of looking for a job for herself. After my vehement "a woman's place is in the home" speech, she never brought up the subject again.

Frankly, this was a lifestyle we both could have lived comfortably with for the rest of our lives. Ours was a family based upon the values and roles we had grown up to understand from our parents, despite the fact that in both of our early lives the marriages of our parents had ended in

divorce. We built a home based upon traditional roles of men and women in American society based upon gender, not individual ability and/or potential that were reinforced by both church teachings and Hollywood portrayal of the *ideal* American family.

Slowly I began to learn that my wife, despite "being a woman", was far more versatile than I had appraised her to be. In particular, I remember our first-year hunting together, a "manly" sport that is almost prerequisite to calling yourself a Montanan. I had always admired my own stepmother for her ability to go hunting and fishing with her husband and her five sons and three stepsons. Despite being a woman, on these forays she was "just one of the guys." I doubted Pam's ability to be much of a hunter. As a teenager, she had once come home in tears after running over a small mouse that crossed the road in front of her car.

Seven months after we had settled into our new Montana home I bundled my feminine young wife up in long underwear, layers of jeans and shirts, orange vest and armed her with a bulky old World War II Army surplus M-1 rifle.* I had taught her a little about shooting, as well as the nuances of hunting including advising her if she saw a deer to go for a shoulder shot. The lungs provided a large target and such a shot would kill within minutes. We tramped the woods in snow and sub-zero temperatures for hours and Pam managed to keep up with me without complaint. Returning to our car as darkness fell, she looked at me and said, "I sure wish I could have shot something."

"I thought you didn't want to shoot *Bambi*," I chided in a sarcastic and all-too-chauvinistic tone of voice.

"Well," she replied, "I knew how much you wanted me to go hunting with you, so I just prayed and asked God to help me enjoy it." Suddenly, I felt like an awful heel.

There was no venison on the table that first year, but the following year we saw a small buck on our first day out. Pam started to raise the rifle to her shoulder when I admonished, "Let it go, that deer is a good 350 yards out." Even I would not risk a shot at that distance.

"I can hit it," Pam whispered back as she pulled the trigger. I was still shaking my head when her rifle cracked, and the deer dropped like a rock. Walking up to it still stunned at Pam's success I remarked, "You hit it in the head!"

"Of course," she replied. "That was where I was aiming. I wanted to kill it quick--I didn't want it to suffer."

Two years after Pam and I were married we purchased our first home, a comfortable three-bedroom house ten miles out in the country with a fenced yard and ample room to raise a family. We also welcomed the birth of our first child. My job as a Correctional Officer at Montana State Prison offered us a modest but stable income that allowed us to purchase a new car, modern appliances, and to begin planning eighteen-years ahead for our daughter's college education. When I came home from work each evening Pam greeted me at the door (in a dress), dinner was on the table, and our infant daughter was eagerly awaiting my attention. We were well on our way towards becoming the traditional American family we had been subtly programmed to emulate. Slowly however, I began to realize I was no *Ward Cleaver*. Rather, I had become *Archie Bunker*.

Perhaps my redemption was ultimately found in Pam's and my desire to not only build our own *American Dream*, but to do something meaningful for others. We were both ventriloquists and, aware that there was little for children in our hometown of Deer Lodge (population 3,000) to do, we began putting on a monthly program for kids at a local church. In doing for others we found our own personal fulfillment. Two years later we sold our house, purchased an old school bus

* When proofreading this chapter, Pam further pointed out the extent of my own personal chauvinistic attitude early in our marriage when she remarked, "That (hunting trip) was the first time you ever let me wear pants."

which we remodeled into crude but comfortable living quarters, and "hit the road". For the next eight years we traveled from church to church as evangelists, entertaining others with puppets, ventriloquism, magic, clowning, and other talents through which we could communicate a spiritual message. Our young daughter and then a son, became part of a family troupe billed as the share Family.

That new calling demanded that I rely more and more on Pam not only as a wife, but as a partner. She excelled and, in her own right while still remaining a faithful and traditional wife, began expanding her personal dreams. As her self-confidence grew, she began to realize that she was capable of far more than I had expected of her. Eight years later when that phase of our lives passed and we settled down once again to a more traditional home life, during which we welcomed two more children into our growing family, we both took jobs. As managers of multi-family housing units (apartments) in Denver, Colorado, and later in Pueblo, I not only found myself working with Pam, but for her. In several of these assignments she was the manager and I was the maintenance man who took orders from the woman in charge. It was quite a leap from the sexist attitudes I had held only a decade before, or the limitations I had placed on the role of my young wife. It also proved to be a teamwork effort that worked for us, and we excelled at a team.

Ultimately, I was to find that the more I empowered my wife to pursue her own dreams and goals, and to develop to her own personal potential, she became my "greatest asset." (If that sounds condescending, I can honestly say that I hope Pam can say the same about me.) I recall, for instance, a 1998 long distance phone call I made to Medal of Honor recipient Admiral Eugene Fluckey. His wife Margaret answered the phone and relayed my name across the room to her husband. "Who?" I could hear Admiral Fluckey ask in the background.

"Doug Sterner," Margaret Fluckey responded again.

"Who's that?" I could hear the Admiral ask his wife.

"Oh, you know," Margaret finally responded, "Pam's husband."

Twenty-Five years after we were married and settled down to start a *traditional American family with a comfortable house with all the appliances and the white picket fence*, both Pam and I became non-traditional college students. As she has throughout our marriage, Pam deferred to me and I graduated quickly with a 2-year degree in computers. Pam, whose personal confidence in the prospects for educational success was shaken by an average performance in high school three decades earlier, stuck it out to not only graduate with honors two years after me, but to achieve academic honors that had never before been accomplished at Pueblo Community College.

Three years later after the prompting of her Community College instructors who had seen in Pam a potential, she had never seen in herself, she graduated magna cum laude from Colorado State University-Pueblo with a Baccalaureate Degree. At the time of graduation, she had been inducted into two prestigious national honor societies, and held the unique distinction of seeing one of her college papers transformed into needed legislation that was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President.

Those who knew Pam when we were first married and would see her today might well be tempted to respond with the phrase "You've come a long way, Baby." It was a phrase widely echoed throughout the 60s revolution to illustrate the acceleration of women's rights in that period of history. Perhaps, however, it is a phrase that should more be more appropriately applied to her husband.

Doug Sterner

Remember the Ladies



Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams (March 31, 1776)

"I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands.

"Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams (April 14, 1776)

"We have been told that our struggle has loosened the bonds of government everywhere; that children and apprentices were disobedient; that schools and colleges were grown turbulent; that Indians slighted their guardians, and negroes grew insolent to their masters. But your letter was the first intimation that another tribe, more numerous and powerful than all the rest, were grown discontented."

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams (May 7, 1776)

"I cannot say that I think you are very generous to the ladies; for, whilst you are proclaiming peace and good-will to men, emancipating all nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives.

"But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken; and, notwithstanding all your wise laws and maxims, we have it in our power, not only to free ourselves, but to subdue our masters, and without violence, throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet."

There can be little doubt that the *American Dream* was born at Plymouth Harbor, Massachusetts, in December 1620 when the *Pilgrims* arrived aboard the *Mayflower*. For the 101 sea-weary refugees seeking freedom from repression in England, and the right to build a new life in a free society, the vast expanse of the American continent promised unlimited opportunity.

Though in fact Jamestown, Virginia, had been settled some 13 years earlier, Plymouth Rock became the first truly American community. The adventurers who left England to establish Jamestown had been strictly male. Historian Dr. Alf J. Mapp Jr. believes that in 1607 "...it was thought that women had no place in the grim and often grisly business of subduing a continent."¹ Despite the harsh living conditions in the New World, the men of Jamestown soon recognized a need for what had become known as the "weaker sex" in traditional English society. One year after the founding of Jamestown, Thomas Forrest's wife arrived with her maid, Anne Burras. They were probably the first non-native women to make their homes in the New World.

Ten years later in 1619, the Virginia Company came to believe that without further efforts to build a co-ed community, Jamestown might not long continue to flourish. In response, 90 volunteer "spinsters" were shipped to the New World from England. All were free to marry the lonely adventurers at Jamestown, but only after her would-be husband paid a requisite 120 pounds of tobacco in order to defray the cost of his *mail order bride*.

In contrast, the 18 women who numbered among the 102 Pilgrims who settled at Plymouth Rock in 1620, came to the New World with their husbands and children as contiguous families. Their sojourn to a new life in the *Land of Opportunity* was much like the journey their great-great granddaughters would make centuries later as they crossed the vast plains of the American west in covered wagons.

As any study of the rights and roles of women in world history will quickly reveal, out of sheer necessity when times are tough tradition bows to the need for help. During such crisis, women have been not only allowed, but encouraged to step outside what would normally be considered an appropriate role. Such was the situation early in the colonization of what would become the United States of America.

Women arriving in the American colonies did find freedoms and rights not accorded them in Britain where, until 1851 a woman could not even be the legal guardian of her own children and could not retain her own property after marriage. While an unmarried woman (spinster) or widow could own property, enter into a contract, sue or be sued, under the common law of England when she married, both she and all she possessed came under her husband's control.

As early as 1619 with regard to the Jamestown settlement, the Virginia Assembly petitioned that in addition to the "male children...and of all others begotten in Virginia," land grants be issued to women as well because "...in a new plantation it is not known whether man or woman be more necessary." Similar new rights were extended at Plymouth Rock where women had the right to buy, own and sell property. A widow could not be legally written out of her husband's will, and she was guaranteed a full third of the family's property upon his death.

This, and many other rights and privileges enjoyed by women in the New World should not be misinterpreted to indicate that in the settlement of the United States, the cause of women's rights had taken a leap forward. The Reverend John Robinson, a leader among the original Pilgrims believed what while they were equal under God, women's roles were defined by nature and scripture as subservient to men. Quoting Verse he referred to women as "weaker vessels" and taught women to "be subject to their husbands." Husbands were admonished to discipline their wives like they did their children, though there did exist laws against causing her injury.

¹ Mapp, Alf Jr.. The Virginia Experiment: 1607-1781

A century-and-a-half later the initial colonization crisis was behind, and women were expected to return to traditional roles within society. The American woman was expected to be quiet, lady-like and chaste, and content to manage the home while her husband built a nation. In the northern colonies a proper wife was a dignified socialite in the shadow of her husband's career as a lawyer, merchant, builder, businessman, etc. In the South where the man was lord of his plantation, wife and daughters were expected to exemplify femininity--soft, pretty, pampered, and protected. Only among the poor working class could one find a woman with a career--usually as a seamstress or hostess at an inn.

In June 1776 Thomas Jefferson penned the words "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Quite obviously however, the 56 men who subsequently signed their names at the bottom of the Declaration that began with that phrase, saw the word "men" literally and not figuratively. It applied only to white men; men of color were still seen as inferior. Women were still deemed the "weaker vessel." Quite obviously John Adams, one of the 5 men assigned by the Continental Congress to draft and refine a Declaration of Independence, had failed to heed the admonition from his own wife on March 31, 1776, that: "If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies (in the formation of a new government), we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

The "rebellion" of which Abigail Adams spoke was in fact, forestalled by the much larger rebellion that became the American Revolution. During that 4-year period of crisis, as throughout history, a male-oriented society welcomed the needed help of women, Blacks, Indians, mercenaries, and just about anyone else who could contribute. During the war Mrs. Mary Ludwig Hays became one of our country's first female combat heroes. While not expected to serve in combat, women commonly served as water bearers, as *Molly Pitchers* carrying water to sate the thirst of men who fired cannons and occasionally to cool the hot cannons themselves. When Mrs. Hays husband was wounded, she bravely stepped into a man's combat role, continuing to fire the cannon.

While Mary Hays is perhaps the best known of the women heroes of the American Revolution, her own action was preceded more than a year by the actions of Margaret Cochran Corbin. Mrs. Corbin was living with her husband John at Fort Mifflin, New York, when the post was attacked by British and Hessian troops on November 16, 1776. Margaret assisted her husband in operating a cannon and, when he was killed, continued to load and fire the gun alone until she was herself severely wounded. Shrapnel wounds to her chest, shoulder and jaw left her with permanent disabilities, including the loss of the use of one arm. In 1779 the Continental Congress granted her "half the pay and allowances of a soldier in service," making her the first American woman to receive a pension from the U.S. Government as a disabled soldier.

Following the successful American Revolution, the all-male leadership of the new United States established a Constitution, enhanced it with the Bill of Rights to specifically detail the liberties and rights afforded to Americans, while ignoring any specific provisions for the rights of either ethnic minorities or women. For the next two centuries the issue of Women's rights and the rights of minority races would be inexorably entwined.

At the turn of the century President John Adams and his wife Abigail became the first to inhabit the Presidential home in the new capital of Washington, D.C. For her admonition 24 years earlier to "remember the ladies," First Lady Adams is often considered to be America's first feminist, identified as such by comments in her two letters of 1776. A more detailed study of her

life fails to uncover any overt activism for women's rights, and the title "feminist" seems unrealistic. Abigail Adams was an Abolitionist who also believed in equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls. She capably tended to the Adams estate as "head of house" with authority during her husband's long absences to tend the affairs of state. Webster defines *feminism* as:

1: the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes

2: organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests

In light of the first precept Abigail Adams was certainly a feminist. When measured against the second, she certainly was not. Historians may long continue the debate as to the personality of our second First Lady. What is not debatable is the prophetic nature of her May 7, 1776, reply to her husband's negative response to her earlier "remember the ladies" letter when she noted:

"We (women) have it in our power, not only to free ourselves, but to subdue our masters (men), and without violence, throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet."

The revolution Abigail Adams warned might come lasted more than a century, throughout the 1800s and well into the twentieth century. It ended with a partial victory in 1920 with the words "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." In the process of achieving that partial victory, American women proved themselves to be as determined, astute, and resourceful as any *enemy* the male-dominated United States of America was ever to face.

Among these resourceful women was Anne Royall, often considered to be our nation's first female journalist. Royall established her fame and made no small number of enemies while publishing her own newspaper titled *Paul Pry* out of the kitchen in her Washington, D.C. home. In addition to exposing corruption and fraud in the Capitol, Royall editorialized against two major issues: Slavery, and flogging in the Navy.

One widely repeated story from Royall's journalistic career was the refusal of the President of the United States to grant her an interview--because of her gender. In one of those ironies that make history fascinating, the man who refused her interview request was President John Quincy Adams, the son of Abigail Adams. Undaunted, Royall reportedly learned of the President's daily habit of bathing nude in the Potomac River in the early morning. Royall sought out the location of his morning bath, located the President's clothing neatly folded on the bank, and sat down on them. She refused to move until the President found himself in so uncomfortable and compromising a situation, he at last consented to be interviewed by a woman.

At the mid-point of the 19th Century the activism of American women who were disaffected by the glaring inequities between White men as opposed to both Blacks and women morphed from an inconvenient nuisance to an unavoidable confrontation. An innocent-enough tea party among five New York women on the afternoon of July 13, 1848, might well be remembered as the "*Boston Tea Party of Women's Liberation*." Though the five women who, in the course of conversation rued the restrictions imposed upon American women was not unlike thousands of similar tea parties over the 75 years since the American Revolution, on this date the participants at last decided to act. Under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the small group of ladies planned a convention for July 19 and 20 at the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls and published a small announcement about it in the *Seneca County Courier*.

On the dates of the convention nearly 300 interested persons, including 40 men, gathered to consider a *Declaration of Sentiments* Stanton had written in much the same fashion, and verbiage as the U.S. Declaration of Independence. That Declaration of Independence is more a list of grievances against the rule of King George than a declaration, and so too was the Declaration of Sentiments. Where the Declaration of Independence listed 27 grievances however, Stanton listed only 15 grievances against a male-dominated American society and political system.

Following debate on these grievances, all but the point of allowing women to vote were approved and ratified by 68 women and 32 men. Among the men who acknowledged the National injustice against women was the noted Black orator Frederick Douglass whose "North Star" newspaper published below its masthead the statement, "*Right is of no sex, truth is of no color, God is the Father of us all--and all are brethren.*" When the more traditional preachers, press, and politicians began to ridicule the Seneca Falls Convention, Douglass wrote in his newspaper, "A discussion of the rights of animals would be regarded with far more complacency by many of what are called the wise and the good of our land, than would be a discussion of the rights of woman."

Over the next decade the issues of Slavery and Suffrage, both based upon personal prejudices, became the burning issues that stirred our nation. Both were vividly illustrated on June 23, 1855, when a 19-year old Black woman killed her owner, Robert Newsome, while resisting his sexual advances. That young slave, pregnant with her second child, had endured nearly 5 years of rape by her slave-master. Tried for murder under Missouri vs. Celia it was ruled that a Black slave was property without the right of self-defense, even against her master's acts of rape. Celia was executed by hanging on December 18, 1855.

Slavery, however, became the issue at the fore-front of the American conscience, and the issue of women's rights and the calls for equity from the Seneca Falls and subsequent conventions wound up almost out-of-sight, out-of-mind. Even so, from 1848 until the start of the Civil War, women began making subtle progress in their march towards equality in America.

Victorian values of virtue, modesty, and chastity among women had long defined acceptable women's attire as being long and often cumbersome dresses. In 1849 Elizabeth Smith Miller attempted to provide active women with a more comfortable article of clothing that consisted of long baggy pants from waist to ankle that, when combined with a knee-length skirt afforded more comfortable mobility while preserving modesty. The practical pants certainly made riding a bicycle much easier. Popularized by Amelia Bloomer, the trend was ridiculed by traditionalist who saw this as a woman's attempt to dress more like men. While *Bloomers* never did achieve a wide acceptance in 1850s society, they marked a growing trend in the women's movement towards a new freedom.

In 1848 Elizabeth Blackwell was enrolled at Geneva Medical College of New York, though her acceptance was the result of a fluke. School administrators did not want to risk rejecting a woman applicant, so they asked the medical students if they wanted to approve the application. The students thought that a rival school had submitted the application as a joke and voted to admit Blackwell. Graduating first in her class of 1849, Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman in the United States to earn a medical degree, though she was subsequently barred from practicing in most hospitals. Two years later a group of Quaker physicians and clergy established the world's first medical school for women at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania. In 1855 the University of Iowa became the first state institution of higher learning to admit women. That same year a young woman named Mary Edwards Walker also graduated from medical school, the only woman in her class from Syracuse Medical College. Within a decade the medical skills of many

of these women were greatly needed as our nation's struggle with the issue of slavery became a Civil War.

American women, both in the Union and the Confederacy, bore many of the burdens of the war between the states. Ladies Aid Societies did everything from knitting socks for soldiers to conducting drives to stockpile needed medical supplies. In hospitals as well as near the battlefields, civilian nurses were in much demand. Among the most famous was 30-year old Clarissa Harlowe Barton. Better known in history as Clara Barton, following the First Battle of Bull Run in April 1861, as a civilian nurse she put together an agency to collect and distribute supplies to wounded soldiers. Under a special dispensation from General William Hammond she was even authorized to ride in army ambulances to treat soldier's en route from battlefield to the hospital. By the summer of 1862 her admirable work resulted in granting her authorized permission to bring supplies and nursing skills not only onto the battlefield, but even to travel behind the lines to minister to wounded men. By 1864 she was appointed by General Benjamin Butler to the title of "lady in charge" for all front-line hospitals for the Army of the James.²

In addition to civilian nurses like Clara Barton, women on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line also served in uniform in combat roles. As had done a few women during the American Revolution, these women combatants served however while disguised as men and under assumed identities. Both the Union and the Confederate Armies forbade the enlistment of women into military service, but it is estimated that as many as 400 women donned male garb and assumed masculine names in order to enlist as soldiers. Among these was Sarah Emma Edmonds who served as a male nurse and also as a daring spy under the name Franklin Thompson. She was later the only woman ever admitted to membership in the Civil War Veterans' organization, the Grand Army of the Republic.

There can be little doubt however, that the most colorful of the women veterans of the Civil War was Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, the 1855 graduate of Syracuse Medical College. Serving first as a nurse and later as a civilian contract surgeon after the Army refused to enlist her, Dr. Walker performed healing deeds both in hospitals early in the war, and later on the fields of battle during some of the fiercest fighting of the war.

Following two years of volunteer service as a nurse, in September 1863 she was appointed assistant surgeon in the Army of the Cumberland, a position normally filled by a (male) commissioned medical officer. Dr. Walker fashioned for herself a modified officer's uniform with yellow trouser stripe and a green surgeon's sash, thereafter, appearing for all practical purposes as an Army officer. Her one fashion concession to her gender was an unsightly straw hat topped off with a colorful ostrich feather.

Dr. Walker was later appointed as assistant surgeon of the 52nd Ohio Infantry and according to credible accounts, occasionally performed services as a spy behind Confederate lines. On April 10, 1864, while serving near the Georgia-Tennessee border she was captured in full uniform by soldiers of the Confederate Army. After more than five months as a Prisoner of War she was liberated in an exchange of prisoners on August 12. Her repatriation provided one of her proudest moments; for the rest of her life Dr. Walker would frequently recall the day she was traded man-for-man for a Confederate officer.

While many historical accounts refer to Dr. Mary Walker as having been nominated for the Medal of Honor, the subsequent award of that Medal was actually more of a slight than a compliment. Following the war and her own admirable and even valorous performance of duty,

² Clara Barton's Civil War experiences as a civilian in support of wounded soldiers laid a foundation for her life that propelled her on to additional efforts. In 1881 Clara Barton founded the American chapter of the Red Cross.

Dr. Walker requested to be commissioned as a U.S. Army major. Not only would such an act have been unprecedented, it was illegal. By statute, no woman was allowed to be enlisted in any branch of U.S. Military service, much less commissioned as an officer. In hopes of pacifying the valiant woman *veteran*, President Andrew Johnson opted to award Dr. Walker the Medal of Honor under a citation that read:

"Whereas it appears from official reports that Dr. Mary E. Walker, a graduate of medicine, "has rendered valuable service to the Government and her efforts have been earnest and untiring in a variety of ways," and that she was assigned to duty and served as an assistant surgeon in charge of female prisoners at Louisville, Ky., upon the recommendation of Major Generals Sherman and Thomas, and faithfully served as contract surgeon in the service of the United States, and has devoted herself with much patriotic zeal to the sick and wounded soldiers, both in the field and hospitals, to the detriment of her own health, and has also endured hardships as a prisoner of war four months in a Southern prison while acting as contract surgeon; and

"Whereas by reason of her not being a commissioned officer in the military service, a brevet or honorary rank cannot, under existing laws, be conferred upon her; and

"Whereas in the opinion of the President an honorable recognition of her services and sufferings should be made:

"It is ordered, that a testimonial thereof shall be hereby made and given to the said Dr. Mary E. Walker, and that the usual medal of honor for meritorious services be given her."



Before her Civil War service Dr. Walker had always been something of an eccentric, and a woman ahead of her time who refused to be "boxed into" a male-dominated society. Beyond her precedent-setting graduation from medical school, as an ardent advocate in the Suffrage movement she objected to traditional women's garb and embraced Bloomers. When she married in 1856, she retained her maiden name, a practice first born the previous year when Lucy Stone became the first-known woman to retain her maiden name. (Thereafter, women who did so became known as "Lucy Stoners".)

Following her Civil War service Dr. Walker continued her advocacy for women's rights, dressing in a man's suit complete with top-hat and gloves and adorned with her Medal of Honor. The only concession to her gender was a red rose tucked into her vest. Arrested on more than one occasion for "impersonating a man," at one trial she defended herself with the reminder that she had the right to "dress as I please in a free America whose tented fields I have served for four years in the cause of human freedom."

At the turn of the century when the Medal of Honor was re-designed and mailed out to recipients of the earlier version, those recipients were requested to return their original Civil War medals. Most of them, including Dr. Walker, refused to return their originals, which held great sentimental value.

In 1917 an Army Board of Generals was tasked with reviewing all awards of the Medal of Honor, based upon reports some had been frivolously awarded. More than 800 medals had been granted to the members of one Civil War regiment as incentive to remain on duty for three days after their enlistment expired during the same period as the Gettysburg battle. (None of these *volunteers* saw combat but were held in reserve.) A total of 911 Medals of Honor were revoked by the Board, including 905 deemed unwarranted. Among the remaining six revoked medals was Dr. Mary Walker's award. She and five civilian scouts that included *Buffalo Bill* Cody were instructed to return their medals. As a military award, it had been decided that the Medal of Honor was not authorized to civilian volunteers.

Thereafter Dr. Walker dressed only in black, proclaiming she had been widowed by the rejection of the country she had served. She further refused to return her medals, either the original or the updated replacement, and wore both of them daily during two-years of unsuccessful visits to the Capitol to lobby to have her award reinstated. During one of those visits she fell on the Capitol steps, sustaining injuries from which she never recovered. She died at age 86 on February 21, 1919.

Not until 1977, nearly half-a-century after her death, did Congress act to restore her Medal of Honor. In U.S. military history she remains to this day, the only woman ever awarded our country's highest military honor.

The Civil War did at last settle the issue of slavery in America. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified on December 6, 1865, specified that "Neither slavery or involuntary servitude...shall exist within the United States." That Amendment did not however, solve the problems of inequities in both rights or opportunities for ethnic minorities or for women.

The 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, defined citizenship as "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof." This second of the *Reconstruction Amendments* established the rights of every American citizen to due process of law and to equal protection under the law. It was this "Equal Protection" clause that became the basis of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court Case that integrated America's school and helped to launch the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

In 1870 the third *Reconstruction Amendment* was ratified as the 15th Amendment addressed the right of Blacks and other ethnic minorities to vote. That Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition or servitude." Conspicuous by its absence was any reference to the right of Americans to vote regardless of gender.

Throughout the Reconstruction and into the Industrial Revolution, American women encouraged by pre-Civil War successes, fought for equal rights in America with only limited success. One primary change was the welcoming of women into the industrial work force, the opportunity at last to work like a man. Most of these jobs however were not the positions that offered a meaningful career; they were low-paid, unskilled assembly-line or sweat-shop positions. Any woman attempting to step beyond those boundaries was promptly ushered back into a woman's "proper role in American society."

In 1869 Myra Bradwell applied for admission to the Illinois State Bar citing State Statute authorizing admittance of any "any adult of good character and with sufficient training to be admitted." Rejected on the basis of gender, when she sued in Illinois for proper admittance she was again denied. The court noted that:

- 1. Women should not be allowed to practice the law.**
- 2. Bradwell's admission would open the flood gates and many more women would want to follow in her example.**
- 3. Brutal cases would not be appropriate for a woman to handle.**
- 4. Admitting women would have a negative impact on the administration office.**

Undeterred, Bradwell appealed the Illinois decision to the U.S. Supreme court. In an 8-1 decision in 1873, the Supreme Court upheld the Illinois ruling in *Bradwell v. Illinois*, affirming the right of the state to exclude women from law practice. In concurring with the majority opinion Justice Bradley wrote: "*The paramount destiny and mission of women are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the law of the Creator.*"³

If in fact there existed any measure of equality for American women in the latter half of the 19th century it was on the frontier in the American West. There, due the sheer demand of the terrain and associated dangers, it was impractical to confine women to the traditional domestic role of wife and mother. Only strong women could survive the rugged wagon train odyssey into this untamed geographical area, where she would be expected to work with the men, endure the associated hardships of life on the frontier, and perhaps even take up a rifle to defend her home and family.

While in general the men of the frontier deferred to women with such Eastern courtesies as a "tip of the hat," and while the cowboy code demanded every effort to shelter and protect the "fairer sex", women were generally not viewed as the "weaker sex." Quickly men learned that the same lady who donned dress and bonnet on Sunday to take the family to a rural church, could return home to dress in pants and work the farm from sun-up to sun-down the rest of the week. As had the first Pilgrim women, and as had the daring women who served in America's wars, in the wild west women again demonstrated that when they were needed and allowed to do so, they could rise to any demand and be equal to their male counterparts. Hence such joking references as the aforementioned quotation about Montana being the place where the "men are men and the women are too." I've heard the same said of Idaho, Wyoming, the Dakotas, and even Colorado.

Perhaps this attitude accounts for the fact that as early as 1869 women were allowed to vote in Wyoming Territory, and the following year women were allowed to vote in the Territory of Utah. It would take fifty years and passage of the 19th Amendment to extend that right to most of the remaining women across America. Given an opportunity in the West, women demonstrated they were not only strong and capable to the challenge of settling the new land, but that they were capable leaders. Four years before the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, Jeannette Rankin of Montana became the first woman ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. On January 5, 1925, a Wyoming woman became our first woman governor when Nellie T. Ross was elected to finish the term of her deceased husband.

The 72-year period from the Seneca Falls Convention until ratification of the 19th Amendment on August 18, 1920, is often referred to as the *First Wave of Feminism in America*. The success of the Suffrage Movement was evident in the wording of that Amendment; it was the first time the word "sex" appeared in any of our Nation's official documents. The Amendment itself reads simply: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." But for the word "sex" that replaced the

³ Myra Bradwell was ultimately successful after nearly two decades, and was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1890 and two years later received her license to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court.

words "race, color, or previous condition or servitude," it was identical to the 15th Amendment ratified fifty years earlier.

However, even as the abolition of slavery and passage of the Reconstruction Amendments failed to guarantee the civil rights of all Americans regardless of race for more than a century, passage of the 19th Amendment while a step forward, fell far short of the goals outlined at the Seneca Falls Convention. Both issues would resurface in the turbulent 60s and as the two inequities in a free society had been linked together historically, they would be re-defined nearly simultaneously by a new generation. As to the rights of ethnic minorities, the Civil Rights movement would address the shortcomings of the earlier Abolitionist movement. For women there would arise a second rebellion, often called the *Second Wave of Feminism* in America.

In the midst of the civil unrest in the South following integration of schools and calls for equal rights and opportunities for Black Americans, President John F. Kennedy addressed our national problem in a radio address on June 11, 1963. He noted, among other things, that:

It ought to be possible for American consumers of any color to receive equal service in places of public accommodation, such as hotels and restaurants and theaters and retail stores, without being forced to resort to demonstrations in the street, and it ought to be possible for American citizens of any color to register to vote in a free election without interference or fear of reprisal.

It ought to be possible, in short, for every American to enjoy the privileges of being American without regard to his race or his color. In short, every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated, as one would wish his children to be treated. But this is not the case.

The Negro baby born in America today, regardless of the section of the Nation in which he is born, has about one-half as much chance of completing a high school as a white baby born in the same place on the same day, one-third as much chance of completing college, one-third as much chance of becoming a professional man, twice as much chance of becoming unemployed, about one-seventh as much chance of earning \$10,000 a year, a life expectancy which is 7 years shorter, and the prospects of earning only half as much.

This is not a sectional issue. Difficulties over segregation and discrimination exist in every city, in every State of the Union, producing in many cities a rising tide of discontent that threatens the public safety. Nor is this a partisan issue. In a time of domestic crisis men of good will and generosity should be able to unite regardless of party or politics. This is not even a legal or legislative issue alone. It is better to settle these matters in the courts than on the streets, and new laws are needed at every level, but law alone cannot make men see right.

We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution.

The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated. If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best public school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who will represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place

When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was introduced in the United States Congress, it was the most sweeping effort in history to complete the work of the American Civil War. Despite its noble ideals of American equality, it faced considerable opposition, especially among Southern Democrats. After hearings in the House Judiciary Committee, the bill was reported out of committee in November 1963 and referred to the House Rules Committee. Virginia Democrat

Howard W. Smith, who served as Chairman, gave every indication of keeping the sweeping Civil Rights Bill bottled up indefinitely. In 1957 Smith had responded to similar legislation with the comment, "The Southern people have never accepted the colored race as a race of people who had equal intelligence...as the white people of the South."

Within the month President John Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas and President Lyndon Johnson, who had long served in the U.S. House before becoming Vice President under Kennedy, personally put pressure on Congress to move the bill forward. Under pressure of the House's "twenty-one-day rule," Smith was forced to send the Civil Rights Bill to the floor for a vote.

Two days before that historic vote Congressman Smith rose to offer amendment to the wording of Title VII granting equal opportunity in employment regardless "of such individual's race, color, religion, or national origin." Smith offered to include the word "sex" among the protected classes, evoking immediate laughter in the chambers and an interesting and humorous discussion thereafter. Later the media would refer to that day as "Ladies Day in the House of Representatives."

History is divided on the motivation behind Congressman Smith's actions, of which no clear answer was ever forthcoming from the man himself. Some historians give Smith the benefit of the doubt, suggesting that his well-documented support of women's rights despite his opposition to integration and Civil Rights for Blacks, motivated him to include the word "sex" out of a sincere desire to include women among the classes of American citizens afforded new protections under the bill. Other historians, including many of Smith's political colleagues, saw the move as a shrewd, final attempt to scuttle the Civil Rights Act. These argue that by including "sex" in the language, Smith was offering an amendment that would raise considerable ridicule--which it did--and thereby make the bill unattractive to the members of Congress. Whatever his motivation, when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 290 to 130, the "ladies were remembered" at last in the U.S. Congress. Seven months later after passing the Senate by a vote of 73 to 27, President Johnson signed it into law on July 2, 1964.

Three years before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 set forth that all Americans regardless of race or gender were entitled to equal opportunity in employment, a 14-year old Chicago girl who was enamored with American entry into the space race wrote to NASA asking how she might become an astronaut. The curt reply she received advised that "Girls are not being recruited by the nation's space program."

"It had never crossed my mind up until that point that there might be doors closed to me simply because I was a girl," she later said of that experience. Though the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was intended to open those and other doors, not until 1977 was a woman admitted to the male-dominated NASA program beyond jobs behind the scenes. That first woman astronaut was not the Chicago girl who had been rebuffed in a 1961 letter. Hillary Rodham left behind her dreams of flying into space to pursue other career goals.

Young women graduating from high schools and colleges in the 1960s found themselves empowered by new laws that granted them increased opportunities and refused to be limited by traditional roles in American society. In a generation that was militantly vocal for Civil Rights and in opposition to the war in Vietnam, young women took up an anthem subsequently echoed in Helen Reddy's 1972 hit that began: *"I am woman, hear me roar, in numbers too big to ignore, and I know too much to go back an' pretend. 'Cause I've heard it all before, and I've been down there on the floor, no one's ever gonna keep me down again."*

The rebellion of a new generation of American women throughout the Defining Generation was more than a battle against prejudice and inequity--it was the struggle against tradition and roles established not only in culture but perceived to be reinforced scripture. Thus, these young women and their older leadership were often portrayed as godless insurrectionists bent on destroying the fabric of the American family. While many of these women were sincere, even loyal church-going young ladies, their cause was not always helped by the more militant and extreme among them.

In 1968 some of the more radical of the Women's Liberationists staged a demonstration during the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey. They smuggled in a banner reading women's liberation and sat in the front row of the balcony, unfurling it even as Miss America made her farewell speech. They shouted, "Freedom for Women," and "No More Miss America" while releasing stink bombs before security could hustle them out.

During that Miss America demonstration, women outside the hall had been encouraged to bring bras and girdles to discard into a large trash can. Such restrictive garments represented the repression many women felt and the discarding of these was much like the centuries earlier move from long dresses to short skirts and Bloomers. There is no evidence that women removed these articles of clothing during the demonstration; they were encouraged to bring them from home in a symbolic gesture. There is further no record of a single bra or girdle being ceremoniously burned, but the incident gave rise to a perception, believed to this day, that the feminists of the 1960s demonstrated against repression by removing and burning their bras.

The burning of draft cards during demonstrations against the Vietnam War was a common form of protest in the 1960s. The practice was looked upon with great concern and disdain not only by an older generation who had answered the call of duty in World War II, but by many patriotic young men and women still in school. By tying the women's movement to the radical anti-war movement and linking bra-burning and draft-card burning, it was easy to discredit a woman's movement that had many valid points. Despite the fact that there exists no credible evidence of any bra-burning crusades in the 60s, the fabrication of such acts became a means of making the women's movement look radically un-American. One Illinois state legislator, Thomas Hanahan of rural McHenry, once referred to women of this era as "braless, brainless broads." In most cases, he was wrong on all counts.

In 1972 an Equal Rights Amendment (E.R.A.) to the Constitution passed the U.S. Congress and was remanded to the various states for the needed 3/4th plurality required for ratification. By 1980 thirty-five states ratified and Illinois remained the only major industrial state not among the supporters. Pressure from proponents and opponents of the E.R.A. concentrated heavily on applying political pressure in Chicago. At a large rally, female E.R.A. opponents led by Phyllis Schlafly passed out home-baked bread to Illinois legislators *symbolizing the wifely services they contended were threatened by the amendment*. Meanwhile, supporters applied their own brand of pressure.

Lois Anne Rosen of Chicago collared her Robert Krska, who represented her Illinois District, in the corridor and demanded: "How can you be an American and be against equality?" In a weak attempt at humor Krska mumbled, "Maybe we shouldn't have given you (women) the vote," and then slipped away through the back hallways.⁴

Fifty years after the turbulent 60s there still is no Equal Rights Amendment to guarantee that: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." The United States remains one of the very few democracies in the

⁴ Time Magazine, "ERA Marches on to Another Loss," May. 26, 1980

world that has never elected a woman to its highest office (president or prime minister). Even so, centuries of tradition regarding the role of women in American society were rejected and redefined in the brief decade from mid-1960 to mid-1970, the period now called the *Second Wave of American Feminism*. When unleashed, it became a Tidal Wave for long needed change.

Rosie The Riveter



In time of danger and not before
Women were added to the corps
With the danger over and all well righted
War is forgotten, and the women slighted.

The interesting commonality of the 60s Revolution is the fact that in general, the leadership for movement that questioned traditional values of the older generation, came from that same older generation. The army that arose spontaneously to march in the streets, demonstrate on college campuses, shout loudly in city squares, and fight a battle for change came from the youth. The army of baby-boomers in rebellion against "old ways" rallied under the leadership of older men and women of the "Greatest Generation" like the forward-thinking President John Kennedy and the dynamic Dr. Martin Luther King. Even in the dramatic and sometimes violent protest against the war in Vietnam, draft-dodgers and anti-war activists were led and inspired by the older heroes of World War II. In similar fashion, both the leadership and the example for young women who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s came from members of the older generation.

In many ways an *armistice* was reached in the gender war following ratification of the 19th Amendment granting American women the right to vote. Historically, the so-called *First Wave of Feminism in America* ended with that change in our Constitution.

Throughout the "Roaring Twenties" that followed, young women experienced and flaunted a new sense of freedom from traditional and strongly Victorian values of the past. *Flappers*, as this new generation of American women became known, openly smoked cigarettes, drank hard liquor, wore excessive makeup, danced provocatively, and dated socially (as opposed to matrimonially). Corsets were discarded, dress hems rose to reveal bare legs below the knees, and necklines assumed a modest yet newly provocative "V" shape. Flappers also popularized a close-cropped, short hair style rejected by more traditional men and women.

Virtue, as well as fashion, succumbed to the hedonistic excess of the Roaring Twenties. Traditionally, sexual activity was the "duty" of a wife and the "right" of a man. For centuries feminine virtue had been prized and feminine promiscuity abhorred, despite the contradictory fact that male prowess was frequently admired and envied. During the *Roaring Twenties*, sexually liberated young women exploded many of the old myths about a woman's right to enjoy sex. While intercourse remained taboo among even the most liberal young girls of the decade, primarily due to the risk of pregnancy, "petting parties" were both popular and acceptable.

The *Roaring Twenties* ended with a crash--the sudden collapse of the Stock Market on October 29, 1929. That event was to usher in a decade dominated by the Great Depression, a period of unemployment, hardship, and devastating loss. In that great crisis our nation, as do most civilizations during turbulent times, went through a period of spiritual revival. It is a fact of life that in times of crisis when all other sources of hope seem to have vanished, prayer remains the only alternative and people turn to God. Many Americans of the 1930s ultimately began to see their tragedy as God's punishment on American society for the erosion of morality during the *Roaring Twenties*.

While one might be inclined to believe that the acceptance of women into the work force would have increased during such a depression, out of the sheer need for a two-income household, the reverse tended to prevail. Women who had previously held salaried jobs were encouraged to leave the workforce, and any who refused to do so were looked upon as self-serving. In the Depression Era, a working woman as viewed as selfishly keeping for herself a job that should properly be held by a man who needed to support his family. In 1936, more than 80% of Americans believed that women should not work if their husbands had a job and laws were proposed that would prohibit married women from working. In addition, both women and men agreed that

married women should give up their jobs if their husbands wanted them to.⁵ In all, some 26 individual states passed Depression Era laws restricting the employment of married women.

It was during this period that many of the young girls came of age who would ultimately launch and lead a *Second Wave of Feminism in America* beginning in the 1960s. Bettye Naomi Goldstein witnessed the *Roaring Twenties* as a young girl and survived the Great Depression during her teen years. In 1963 under her married name Betty Friedan, she authored The Feminine Mystique in which she portrayed the traditional roles of homemaker/mother/wife as stifling and oppressive. Her bestselling novel is often considered the "shot-across-the-bow" that launched a second women's revolution.

Before that "shot" was heard however, the United States was confronted with a new and far-more-real war when, on December 7, 1941, Japanese bombs fell on Pearl Harbor in the Territory of Hawaii. It was a tragedy that plunged our nation into a world war that we were vastly unprepared to fight, and that would require the cooperation of all of our people, male and female, to win.

In 1939 the United States' military ranked 17th in the world and was vastly unprepared for war; our army numbered only about 175,000 men. With prospects of war looming, a 1940 resumption of a military draft swelled those ranks to 1,400,000 men by the opening of hostilities. It was a number far below the more than 16 million men and women ultimately needed to fight and win that war. During a decade when our nation's population numbered some 140 million men, women, and children, nearly than one-in-eight Americans would be called to active service in the various armed forces. That demand paved the way for expanded roles for women in military, which we will examine in a subsequent chapter.

During the Depression Era a working woman was seen as supplanting a man who desperately needed a job to support his family. One decade later however, a non-working woman was sometimes viewed as unpatriotically shirking her duty, thereby forcing a man to do the work he might otherwise be freed up from in order to fight a war. Though in previous wars and crisis, during which the gender roles became blurred out of necessity, women were welcomed into non-traditional roles, during World War II role-reversals were unprecedented. Women doing a "man's work" became not only desirable, but a patriotic duty.

Women served during that war in any number of positions, including nearly a half-million who served in or with the Armed Forces. Certainly the number of women who worked in clerical, supply, and other more traditional roles whether as civilians or military women, made significant contributions to the war effort, far beyond the fact that they freed up male citizens previously thus employed to fight in the combat theater. But the striking, and ultimately the most revolutionary expansion of roles for working women came in the physically demanding and dirty "men's world" of defense industry production.

Prior to World War II such factory work was deemed inappropriate for women and, in fact and in general, women were deemed incapable of such work. In 1940 only 28% of American women were employed in wage-earning jobs, and most of those were mundane positions requiring little education or physical stamina. Only 11% of the working women served in factories, and factory supervisors concluded that fewer than a 1/3 of factory jobs were suitable for the "weaker sex." Six months after Pearl Harbor, with the need for an increased production that would ultimately call for more than 300,000 aircraft alone, factory supervisors revised their estimate of woman-capable positions to some 85% of the war production jobs. Simultaneously, as recruiting

⁵ Gluck, Sherna Berger. *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change*. Twayne Publishers, Boston, MA: 1987.

drives and the Selective Service sought to fill the ranks of the military with combat soldiers, and as War Bond Drives worked to fill the national coffers with the dollars needed to fund the war, similar campaigns were launched to recruit women to build tanks, aircraft, and machineguns, as well as to produce the needed massive quantities of bullets, bombs, and other munitions. Even in the gritty world of shipbuilding, which had never before welcomed a woman's hand, more than 10% of the World War II production of some 1,500 new warships was developed under the sweaty hand of a woman.

In all, from 1942 until 1945, more than 6 million women were added to the American work force. One of those was Geraldine Doyle, a 17-year old girl who went to work pressing metal in a Michigan factory in 1942. A photograph taken of her during the one-week she held that job later became the basis of a poster designed by J. Howard Miller for a Westinghouse War Production campaign to recruit women. In that now classic poster, her arm is flexed, and the caption reads "We Can Do It!" Ultimately that poster would become historically tied to "Rosie the Riveter," though in 1942 that character who came to symbolize the contribution of American working women in the war effort had not yet been identified.

Rosie was specifically identified in the 1942 song written by Redd Evans and John Jacob Loeb. The lyrics gave a new glimpse of the American woman in support of the war effort:

**All the day long, Whether rain or shine,
She's a part of the assembly line.
She's making history, Working for victory,
Rosie the Riveter.
Keeps a sharp lookout for sabotage,
Sitting up there on the fuselage.
That little girl will do more than a male will do.**

By early 1943 the war effort had brought more than two million women into the work force but more than twice that number were needed. The lack of volunteers is understandable; for decades, in fact for centuries, women had been briskly turned away from the working world. Married women, and especially those with children, had been taught their place was in the home. Thus, was mounted an intensive *re-education campaign* to let American women know that working, at least for now, was not only appropriate but necessary.

This was a period when there was nothing that represented American values more than a Norman Rockwell painting, thus the May 29, 1934, edition of *The Saturday Evening Post* attributed such Americana to Rosie with a Rockwell portrait on its cover. The new American woman was portrayed in coveralls, her face and muscular arms smudged with dirt as she cradles a rivet gun in her lap. Virtually every major magazine joined the Office of War Information and War Manpower Commission in a continuing blitz featuring women at work, many of them prominently displaying Rockwell and J. Howard Miller's poster. It was one of the war's most effective campaigns, albeit one with unintended consequences that would resurface two decades later.

By the time World War II ended, 6 million women who might otherwise never have considered outside-the-home employment brought the number of working American women 18 million. The working experience left these women not only with a sense of accomplishment at contributing in a meaningful way to victory in both Europe and the Pacific, but with the further realization that a woman could in fact, succeed and excel in a man's world of work. Furthermore, since many of them were mothers who had flocked to the factories, Rosie's proved that an American woman could do what society previously believed was unworkable, the simultaneous fulfillment of the roles of both mother and working woman.

In 1945 the return and discharge of millions of men from the armed forces generated the demand for new jobs. *Rosie the Riveter* and her California cousin *Wendy the Welder* were no longer needed in the factories, and these women were expected to demurely give up their positions in deference to the returning men. Though some refused to do so, most bowed the societal pressure to return to the kitchen of their modest home with its white picket fence and quiet street, to raise children while their husband embarked on a career to enable him to achieve the American Dream. Indeed, many were content to do so, preferring a traditional domestic lifestyle. But for many others, even as they dutifully resumed the *proper role* of wife and mother, there remained the lingering memory of that period in history when, for the briefest of time, they had found a meaningful role outside the boundaries of traditional womanhood.

Perhaps however, the most remarkable post-war role the iconic *Rosies* served was to provide a new generation of women an example of a strong and capable womanhood to follow. During the war women of the Greatest Generation rose to the challenge, did what they had to do, and proved themselves vastly capable and visibly successful. Even in so-doing, however, their experience had not been totally without traditional prejudice. During the war those women who worked in the factories to do a man's job, rarely received a man's wages. Typically, the average man was paid about \$55 per week for wartime factory production work, a Rosie performing the same job received only slightly more than \$30 per week.



Furthermore, even during the war while women had been not only encouraged but eagerly recruited into the work force, there remained limits on what they could do. Certainly, they proved they could operate a lathe, drive and smash rivets, weld, fly and ferry aircraft from one location to another, and other traditional male jobs. Such prowess aside, they generally remained relegated to "worker bee" tasks. Supervisory roles remained largely male-dominated, a subliminal message that even the working woman needed to have a male authority figure to guide her. That reluctance to elevate women into upper management positions would, in the years that followed, become known as a "glass ceiling." It was a barrier waiting to be shattered.

Dr. Marguerite Guzman Bouvard

I worked toward a Ph.D. rather than a "Mrs." long before the women's movement, and I have both my mother and grandmother to thank. They came from more traditional societies, yet circumstances propelled them into situations that required flexibility, courage and creativity -- and they expected as much from me.

My mother grew up in a privileged environment in Trieste, Italy. Her family owned a brewery and had a whole retinue of servants, yet she wanted to do more than become a wife. She hungered for an education to become an engineer, but women at the time were not allowed to attend the university.

Fortunately, she had natural intelligence and great artistic talent. Even more fortunately, the family's cook taught her how to sew like a professional. As a child, she began designing and making clothes for her dolls, not suspecting how useful this would be in her troubled future.

She married when she was only 19, as was the custom. When World War II broke out, my father fled to the United States, to New York City, and my mother soon followed with me and my sister.

Since my father was an unreliable and intermittent presence, my mother -- who didn't speak English when she arrived in New York -- worked two jobs to support us and to afford our dingy apartment in what is now Spanish Harlem. She became a costume designer for Columbia Pictures and taught at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Although we had little money, she kept buying me books -- not just children's fare, but substantial books on astronomy I barely understood and that I took with me when I accompanied her to her Saturday job.

She also took me to the public library and to museums. I stared at the exhibit of an Egyptian mummy at the Museum of Natural History, my first introduction to millennia, and fell in love with a whirling sunflower by Van Gogh at the Met.

Once she took me to Barnard College, a visit I will never forget. I couldn't have been more than 6 years old and felt that I was just a bit higher than the knees of all the young women rushing by. "That's where you will be going," she told me with her firm smile.

In 1946, when I was 9 years old, my mother won the Chicago Tribune Fashion Design contest. That meant a very good job offer and a move to the suburbs of Chicago. My sister and I spent a year in a Catholic boarding school while my mother settled into her work and found a house.

When we moved in, I was heady with freedom from the rules at school and with green expanses to explore. My new life seemed magical. One morning I was out on the front lawn when



a taxi pulled up and Nana stepped out, tall, straight-backed, just as fresh as if she had come from the next town instead of from Italy.

Nana carried herself like royalty and claimed space when women were supposed to stay at home, like my friend's mothers who played cards and did nothing all day. She entered the new landscape as if she had lived there all her life. She spoke German, Italian, Slovene and French. She learned English very quickly and acquired friends in what she considered "the right circles." In a period of raw prejudice against foreigners, I saw her as a conquering heroine.

My grandmother lived through two world wars, losing her husband in World War I, and, during World War II, experiencing the brutal German and then Yugoslav occupations of Trieste. She spoke not of the hunger and deprivation of those times but of her triumphs.

She mimicked the German officer trying to requisition her apartment on Via Cavana, barking his questions in a threatening voice and then replying with great dignity and in perfect German that the officer was at the wrong address. She recalled dumping her garbage in front of German headquarters in the wee hours of the morning.

She looked after me while my mother worked long hours and swept me into her life through her stories, a terrain that soon became mine. It seemed at times as if my more interesting life took place in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while my friends huddled around lime sodas in the booths at Walgreens. That life would surface in my second career as a poet and non-fiction writer.

Like my mother, Nana supported my various passions and applauded my independent streak. She was the storyteller of the family. My mother was the practical one, repairing cement stairs and mowing the lawn, things men did at the time while other mothers were playing golf. I knew that I wanted a life like hers.

Neither of these women had to work too hard to encourage me in my studies. I did well in high school, although that didn't make me very popular. I started dating when I was a junior. Once when we were driving, my mother, pointed toward a building. "That's an orphanage. Women who had babies when they were too young and unmarried bring them there." I got the message.

Both my mother and grandmother supported my wish to go to college at a time when young women who did so saw it as a way of meeting the right man. I attended Northwestern University and majored in political science, though I experienced tremendous peer and cultural pressure to get that Mrs. degree.

In my junior and senior years, I became engaged twice -- only to break off both engagements. My first fiancé became angry when the political science department nominated me for a Woodrow Wilson Scholarship. "I don't want to live with a damn Madame Curie," he growled. That ended it for me.

The following year, I fell in love with another young man whom I thought would be more open. When we began to discuss our future, he told me point blank, "Why go to graduate school when you have me?"

My mother helped me come to a decision, arriving at my dormitory one day with a package. I opened it, dismayed. "Dish towels!" "Yes dear," she said with a beatific smile. "For when you get married."

That sent me right down to earth. I ended the relationship with a conflicted heart.

My mother persuaded me to apply to the doctoral program at Harvard, though I was drawn to the University of California with its warm climate. By the time I visited Harvard's political science department as part of the application process, I had had enough sexist tirades and difficulties from a few of my college professors and was very much on guard. In fact, I was downright surly.

"You're prejudiced against women," I muttered. "Indeed, we are," the department chairman retorted with a smile of satisfaction. But he added, "Send us a copy of one of your research papers."

Out of contrariness I mailed him a one of my art histories papers on the paintings of Giotto. I was accepted into the program, and, in the fall of 1958, I left for Cambridge, Mass., swearing that I would never, ever get married. I was 21. Always struggling to make ends meet, my mother paid for my tuition.

I was an anomaly at Harvard, one of four women in a huge department and thus never invited to the informal social gatherings of professors and students. The man who checked book bags at the exit of the library would invariably comment with a sigh, "You'll never get married if you study so hard." Some of my unmarried classmates wanted to date me, even one who was married and whose wife was supporting him while she worked as a secretary. There were too many times that I felt under siege.

One of my professors, a highly renowned scholar, told me that he had lost my research paper after I turned down one of his many advances. I got his wife's telephone number from the department secretary and called her. "William somehow forgot to return my paper, could you please remind him." It worked like a charm.

Taking my own path and bucking the times turned out to be a lonely business. I became friends with two women in my department, a young woman from India and an older woman from Austria. We never socialized with our male peers nor were we included in the informal gatherings they had with professors.

My friends' living arrangements included their meals. I was renting an attic room in a rambling Cambridge house owned by a professor, not an unusual arrangement. I had a small hot plate I could use for my morning coffee and went to the grocery store every day to buy a few things for lunch and dinner. Sometimes I was able to go out to a restaurant for dinner, wishing I had some company.

One evening, as I walked down a rainy Brattle Street toward my room, I heard someone make a comment in French about my legs. I turned around and replied in French. We chatted and went out for coffee. He found it perfectly normal that I should be working towards a doctorate. In Paris, his friends' fiancés were studying law and one was a physicist. We became close friends, a friendship that blossomed into a deep love. Despite my ranting against marriage, we married a year later.

We had a very short honeymoon so I could return to my studies, and my husband to his work at the computation lab. He found time to type my master's thesis, commenting on the number of "moreovers" and "however's" that peppered the text. And when I went in for my oral examinations, he stood by the doorway where the four men shooting questions at me would see that I was not alone.

When I finally received my Ph.D. in 1965, the first-time women were allowed in graduation ceremonies at Harvard rather than at Radcliffe, I was pregnant. I looked as if I had a beach ball under my academic gown. Both my mother and my husband were in the audience clapping when I picked up my diploma.

Because ultrasounds were not yet part of prenatal care, I didn't know I was carrying a girl. But I always feel proud that four women broke down the barriers to higher education at such a male dominated institution: my grandmother, my mother, myself and my daughter.

Linda G. Alvarado



“Whether we’re called Hispanos or Mexicanos or Puertorriqueños, Cubanos, or Latinos, we are a family connected to a community of very talented people from very different backgrounds who are doing amazing things that our parents did not have the opportunity to do. What I still hope for and long for is the day when people will truly be judged not based on where they came from, and their gender, but really on their ability. That is a dream that we can't let go. America is a country of immigrants and our success is built not on everybody being alike, but on our diversity.”

Linda G. Alvarado

"Empieza pequeño, pero piensa muy grande." This was the philosophy by which Lilly Martinez and her husband Luther raised their family of six children in a small but comfortable Albuquerque, New Mexico home. That mantra, which translates "start small but think big" would ultimately be validated by the one child in the family which society might have deemed the least likely of the sextet to build and head a multi-million dollar construction company and even purchase a professional sports team.

"Small" certainly echoed the simple pleasures the Martinez family enjoyed. Their adobe home, built by Luther's own hand, didn't even feature running water; in the winter a wood stove provided the only heat. In addition to the domestic demands of six children, Lilly took in loads of laundry from others in the neighborhood to supplement the modest income of Luther's job with the Atomic Energy Commission. Though the absence of indoor plumbing forced her to haul buckets of water from a nearby drainage ditch, Lilly Martinez never complained. "My mother had a great attitude about work," recalls Lilly's only daughter Linda. "She had a strong work ethic." It was an observation not lost on any of the Martinez children, but which became especially meaningful to Linda.

By contemporary standards the Martinez family was pretty much like the vast majority of traditional American families in the 1950s. Dad was the breadwinner, mom the domestic partner who cared for the home and supplemented the family budget with a modest income from washing and ironing for others. Linda recalls that "Mom worked so we wouldn't have to." The primary responsibility of the five adolescent boys and their single sister was to attend school and get good grades. Towards that end they were expected to echo the same work ethic they saw in their parents. "There were high expectations in school, that not only would you bring home an "A", but you would tell them what you had learned," Linda remembers.

Along with the work expected of each family member: dad's income-producing job, mom's domestic duties, and the kid's attention to study, the Martinez family still made time for recreational diversions. Conspicuous among these was the family's love of baseball. On the professional level baseball had yielded unprecedented opportunities for Hispanic athletes to complete, succeed, and become role models. On a simpler level, Luther played for a local team and while the children were younger, a typical family outing was an afternoon at the ball field to cheer for dad. As the children grew older, they too began playing baseball. Luther and Lilly found through sports activities the means of teaching their children the value of competition. Decades later while recalling her success in the business world Linda recalled, "The competitive environment with my brothers taught me about teamwork and the importance of taking risks. You can never get to second base if you keep your foot safely on first. I also realized that even if you strike out, you still get another turn at bat."¹

Despite a simple lifestyle, the Martinez boys and sole daughter were all encouraged to dream big. In contrast to a 1950s societal attitude that a girl was to find her fulfillment in life in the domestic roles of wife and mother, a gender prejudice that was perhaps even more acute in a Hispanic culture that praised machismo, Luther and Lilly refused to narrow the focus of their daughter's dreams for the future. She was expected to achieve no less than her brothers, she played ball with the boys, and her father even allowed her to sate her mechanical interests by tinkering with the family automobile.

In high school Linda ran track, played soccer, became captain of her soft ball team, lettering in the latter as well as in volleyball and basketball. It was quite achievement, especially in basketball for a girl who stood only 5'5" tall. More importantly however, she applied the work

ethic she had learned from her mother to her academic studies and graduated from Sandia High School with an academic scholarship.

After graduation, Linda Martinez enrolled at Pomona College in Claremont, California, to pursue a degree in economics. Though that choice of study was not uncommon among many of the young girls of her generation entering college in the 1960s, the work-study position for which she subsequently applied certainly was not a traditional role for a woman, especially for a diminutive one like Linda Martinez. For the young girl from New Mexico who had grown up in a house full of boys it was not the act of a feminist activist, or a rebellion against traditional stereotypes. Rather, her decision was based quite simply the desire to work at a job she enjoyed rather than being forced into a position that held no personal appeal to her. Thus, she applied for a job as a landscaper.

At the time there were two job offerings posted on the college bulletin board, one for kitchen service and the other to work as a landscape assistant at the new botanical gardens. "I knew I didn't want to do food service and I thought, 'Well you know, working outside might be a good thing,' because my little brother and I had this lawn mowing service growing up--which we were very bad at probably--but the neighbors were very kind to us and paid us anyway. So, I went to apply for the job and they said, 'What are you doing here?' and I said 'Well, I came to apply for the job.' They said, 'No, you don't understand. Girls work food service. Boys do landscaping.'

"So, they sent me back for counseling. But I came back the next day and I said, 'I really would like to apply for the job,' and they said, 'What are you doing here?' Well, this guy finally told me, 'Okay, come back tomorrow.' And I think two things: he thought either I would quit because I wouldn't be able to do the job, or perhaps he thought he could make me quit."²

Whatever the motivation of the man who interviewed Linda Martinez for her first job outside home, he was wrong on both counts. Linda loved working outdoors and felt quite at home in a male-dominated environment that mirrored her youth. Hard work didn't concern her, rather it fed the ethic she had learned from her parents. When she graduated from Pomona, she knew she was happiest when she could dress in jeans, work outside in the sunshine, and enjoy the accomplishment of a physically demanding job.

Returning to New Mexico however, Linda soon learned that in the early '70s there were few such positions for a woman. She got as close as she could by taking various jobs in the construction industry. Most of her duties were on-site support roles, somewhat more suitable for a lady, but vastly removed from where Linda wanted to be. From behind the glass windows of the site offices she could watch ground being turned, girders being raised majestically and eventually, where there had once been nothing, she saw the emergence of a magnificent building. "When a super structure went up, it was to me a great sense of the creative process, that ended up with this structure of great permanence and beauty," she told *American Dreams* in 2003.³

In the mid '70s the world of construction remained one of the great bastions of male dominance in industry, but Linda's hard work provided expanded areas of responsibility as she transitioned from calculator to hard hat. It was not always a welcome advancement; many of the men who spent their days in the truly-masculine realm of building imposing structures resented the intrusion into their world of the petite woman with a ready smile and a "can do!" attitude towards life in general and construction in particular. Occasionally some of the men gave vent to their dissatisfaction towards the lady in a hard hat in actions that now might quickly bring a company a law suit, but that back then were seen as the "occupational hazards" of a woman trying to enter a man's world. "The restrooms were quite an experience," she recalled for the Albuquerque

Tribune. "I'd find drawings there of myself, in various situations of undress...But always wearing my hard hat."⁴

During those early years of Linda's work in the construction industry she observed and learned most aspects of the business, advancing to the title "Project Engineer". While she loved the work outside the office, she never forgot the importance of the work behind a construction project and began taking additional classes. Her immediate interest in computers as a business tool, and subsequent classes on how to make them work for her, she now credits as being a major part of her subsequent business success. By 1967 she felt she was ready to establish her own construction business.

"When I entered the business, I didn't start out to prove a point," she said in a 2007 interview. "I just became enamored with constructing buildings."⁵ The fact that she had also seen from the inside the markups that resulted in substantial profits for a business owner as opposed to the daily salary of an employee also motivated her to seek her own niche. She drafted a business plan and set out to build her own construction company. It would not be an easy transition.

"Although Hispanics have always been on construction sites, we were viewed as laborers and craftsmen, not as company owners. And if women were on construction sites at all, it was as secretaries in the job-site trailers," Linda remembered. She found herself confronted both by the "brick wall" that had long excluded ethnic minorities from meaningful roles in business, and the "glass ceiling" that prevented women from advancement. Refusing to be limited by stereotypes or traditional barriers she pressed forward with the philosophy "It's important not how other people see us, but how we perceive ourselves in achieving our goals."

Her positive attitude and outlook aside, even starting small was a difficult task for a young woman who was thinking big. "I had this great little business plan, and had this blue suit, and went to several banks and was rejected by all of them...six banks," she told *American Dreams*.⁶ In the end Luther and Lilly mortgaged their house for \$2,500 to help their daughter launch her business and Alvarado Construction was incorporated in 1976. That act placed upon Linda a new sense of responsibility to succeed. Hanging in the balance was not only her own dreams, but the very security of her parents. Her work ethic did not need the extra incentive; her drive to not only succeed but to be a leader had been ingrained in her personality as a young girl.

With a practical wisdom she started small: simple paving jobs, erecting bus stops, curbs and gutters, while "At night I dreamed of building high-rises."⁷ Her dreams were in sharp contrast to reality; there remained few women in the field of construction (only 1% of the employees in the field were women) and no women were employed even at the mid-levels of the business, much less as the owner. As a practical matter she began signing her initials, rather than her name, on job proposals because she did not want them to be ignored because of her gender. "Because there can be so much harassment in this business, I had to hold on to a mental state," she told *Hispanic Trends* in a 2003 cover story. "I had to strongly believe that because something had not been done before, it was no reason that it couldn't be done at all. In life you'll meet people who embrace your dreams, and those who will try to stop you. You have to let the discouraging things roll off and stay focused."⁸

"Being an optimist by nature, this gave me some sense of personal mission to show that women could succeed in this field. You have to smile, because what people are looking for when (a contractor walks) in the room is somebody six-foot-five and burley. And in reality, I'm five foot five."⁹

While Linda focused on her job and built her dreams, others were focusing on her. In 1978 she was asked to sit on the Board of Norwest Bank. Here, it was more her youth than either her ethnicity or her gender that made the move surprising. At the time she was only 27 years old.

Alvarado Construction prospered and grew under its owner and in the early 1980s Linda, her husband, and the couple's three children moved to Denver. It was in Denver that at last her dreams of major construction projects was realized, perhaps far beyond what she or her parents could have ever hoped for. Today, Alvarado Construction has hundreds of employees and fulfills construction contracts in worth millions of dollars each year. Among the brick and mortar tributes to Linda's dreams are the Denver International Airport, the Colorado Convention Center, and even Invesco Field at Mile High Stadium where the Denver *Broncos* play their home games. In a most appropriate irony, whereas her own participation in sports taught Linda Alvarado to "step up to the plate" and be a competitor in the business world, realizing her dreams returned her to the world of sports. If the story of Linda Alvarado ended on that note it would still be an inspiring story and a textbook example for other women, Hispanics, in fact for all Americans regardless of race or gender to wish to emulate. For Linda Alvarado however, the dream does not end there.

While expanding Alvarado Construction in Denver, Linda was building a strip mall when she approached Taco Bell Restaurants about becoming an anchor tenant. When the construction was finished, she sold the shopping center but retained ownership of the restaurant noting later, "I learned a valuable lesson: She who controls the land controls the deal."¹⁰

With that small start in the fast-food industry, Linda launched a second company, Palo Alto, Inc. which now numbers more than 150 Taco Bell, Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken franchises. Linda serves as president of the company while her husband Robert serves as CEO and chairman of the highly successful Palo Alto endeavor.

As was the case fifteen years earlier in New Mexico when Norwest bank recognized in Linda an entrepreneur and savvy bossiness mind, in the early 1990s her success was being quietly observed by Denver business leaders. In 1991 major league baseball began an expansion and initiated a proposal for interested cities to bid for one of two new teams. It was an opportunity the city of Denver was eager to engage; for decades local sports fans had proven an uncommon loyalty to their Denver *Broncos*, even during their losing years. So too, the city and in fact entire state of Colorado, was proud and supportive of its professional basketball team, the *Nuggets*. Prospects of at last bringing professional baseball to Denver attracted serious interest from the Governor's office to the penthouses of the city's most successful entrepreneurs.

Progress in the effort was monitored by people across the state from boardrooms to barrios, with the intense hope that professional baseball might soon come to the Rocky Mountains. Six of the city's most successful businessmen united to prepare an impressive proposal for the \$95 million franchise while further bolstering the effort with an unprecedented move. They eagerly sought to recruit Denver's most successful businesswoman, Linda Alvarado.

It was an opportunity she could not resist, partially because of her childhood interest in baseball. "I was attracted to baseball ownership as a sport that I enjoyed," she told *Enterprising Women*. " It is also significant to mention that I was also drawn to this sport because of the great number of outstanding Latino players. Baseball is truly a sport in which Hispanics excel."¹¹ In fact, in joining that team Linda Alvarado became the first Hispanic, male or female, to become owner of a professional sports franchise. She was not the first woman to be so involved, other women had held the title co-owner as the result of their marriage or familial relationship to a male owner. But when Linda Alvarado invested her own money to purchase the Colorado *Rockies*, she

did become the first women to ever claim an ownership stake in a professional team by virtue of the money she had earned herself.

As a true entrepreneur however, Linda's decision to invest her hard-earned money to bring professional baseball to Colorado was also a shrewd business decision. "As a business owner, there is also great value in business development opportunities and marketing initiatives through ties with professional sports. For example, current and prospective clients have the opportunity to sit on the front row of the dugout or take batting practice with the team. It is priceless and unparalleled experience, and one that my competitors cannot replicate. Baseball tickets and sports memorabilia are also used as incentives for my employees and their families."¹²

Linda has received numerous awards and accolades for her personal achievement. She is recipient of the 2001 *Horatio Alger Award*, was twice named "National Business Woman of the Year" by the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and has been identified as one of the 10 Most Influential Women in Denver and one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics (of either gender) in America. She sits on the Boards of several Fortune 500 companies.

Of her success in shattering the "glass ceiling" in the sports world, she says, "I had not anticipated the national and international news this 'first' would generate. It was viewed as a significant breakthrough and created great feelings of pride for women and Hispanics in this non-traditional role."¹³

Her achievements are indeed amazing, perhaps more so because her status as the woman who broke down barriers and paved the way for future generations was not a role she had dreamed or attempted to cast for herself. She became such simply in her own pursuit to follow her own dreams, unencumbered by stereotype or traditions that had limited young women and Hispanics for generations. She admits today that, because her mother did the traditional housework in order to free up her children to concentrate on an education, this is one area in which she has not achieved. To Robert Alvarado has fallen the equally non-traditional role (for men) of supervising that area of responsibility.

Indeed, her non-traditional achievements aside, in the things that matter most Linda Alvarado remains a traditionalist very much. She is a dedicated wife, the mother of three, and gives prominence to her spiritual side, ascribing much of her success to her faith and principles. When asked her definition of the American Dream by the publication of the same title, she responded, "I think the American Dream is a genderless and race less dream. It is a changing vision and a changing dream as well. It is looking forward. It is saying, at least in my own case, that there will be a balance between the spiritual side as well as the business and intellectual side."¹⁴

She is also a woman who looks beyond her own success or her responsibilities today as a role model for others. The Colorado Women's Hall of Fame into which she has been inducted notes that when Linda was designated as a *Sara Lee Front Runner*, she donated her \$25,000 honorarium to the International Women's Forum for scholarships for women. In that single act she returned ten-fold the "bridge money" from her parents that launched her own career more than a decade earlier.

Linda also enjoys sharing her success with the young. At the *Rockies* home opener, she treated nearly 150 inner-city kids do a day at the ballpark, as well as a guided tour of the stadium by one of the team's owners. That practice continues, both at *Coors Field* and on Alvarado Construction work sites. "I want them to see themselves maybe being owner of a major league team one day," she says. "Unless you try, you never know how much you can achieve. I hope other Hispanics look at me and think 'If this little skinny Hispanic girl was able to do it, then so can I.'"¹⁵

All of the many such inspirational field trips Linda extends to interested young boys and girls each year inevitably conclude in her office. There she points to her own executive chair with both a challenge and the beginning words for a new dream, "Someday you'll sit there!"

¹ "Ahead of Her Time," www.workingwomen.com, March 2007

² "Linda Alvarado," http://latino.si.edu/virtualgallery/OJOS/bios/PDF_bios/Linda%20Alvarado%20Quotes.pdf

³ "Linda Alvarado," *American Dreams*, www.usdreams.com/Alvarado6869.html (March 24, 2003)

⁴ Albuquerque Tribune, September 30, 2002, p. 5

⁵ "Ahead of Her Time," www.workingwomen.com, March 2007

⁶ "Linda Alvarado," *American Dreams*, www.usdreams.com/Alvarado6869.html (March 24, 2003)

⁷ Denver Post, June 25, 1996, p. E4

⁸ "Leading Ladies," *Hispanic Trends*, Spring 2003

⁹ "Linda Alvarado," *American Dreams*, www.usdreams.com/Alvarado6869.html (March 24, 2003)

¹⁰ Albuquerque Tribune, September 30, 2002, p. 5

¹¹ Framan, Judie, "Take me out to the Ball Game," *Enterprising Women*

¹² *ibid*

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ "Linda Alvarado," *American Dreams*, www.usdreams.com/Alvarado6869.html (March 24, 2003)

¹⁵ "Leading Ladies," *Hispanic Trends*, Spring 2003

Karen Irene Offutt



"I remember feeling like I should be out there fighting. I really wished that they would have let us, even though I guess there are some problems about women and men fighting. I felt guilty about that."

"I got married and the husband I married, he wouldn't let me talk about Vietnam. He hated it because he had graduated from USC and he had orders for Vietnam, [but] he had a friend change them. I made him feel chicken and cowardly."

Karen Offutt

By Scott Baron*

On 20 January 1970, Army Specialist Fifth Class Karen Irene Offutt, a twenty-year-old farm girl from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, was off-duty in her quarters at the Medford BEQ off Vo Tanh Street, Saigon, when she smelled smoke. After alerting the other women on her floor, she observed where the fire was coming from:

"We were on the second floor of an old hotel. Across the alleyway were a series of Vietnamese shanties, made of beer cans and thatch roofs. A bamboo-type awning extended across all the houses. That awning was on fire, and [Vietnamese] were running around trying to salvage their things. I ran down and pulled some women and children out. I was barefoot and burned my feet. I don't remember much. Eventually, the fire department showed up."

Offutt doesn't feel she did anything especially heroic and remembers with more clarity that she wrote home about the incident, and her mother organized churches and neighbors to collect clothes and send them to Vietnam for the children. Offutt was surprised when she was called to MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam) and informed that the Hamlet Chief had written a letter commending her for saving numerous lives, and that she was to be awarded the Soldier's Medal. Then, on 24 January, officials told Offutt that women were not awarded Soldier's Medals; instead, Offutt was presented with a Certificate of Achievement for Heroic Action. "I wasn't really upset at not getting it [the Soldier's Medal] because I did what anybody should have done anyway."¹

Karen Irene Offutt was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, on October 26, 1949, the daughter between two sons. Her older brother died at a young age, and her younger brother suffered from poor health. They were extremely poor and moved around a lot, trying to find a good climate for her brother's health. She attended Quartz Hill High School, near Lancaster, California, where she was an outgoing and popular student. She was student body vice president, ran track, and belonged to many clubs. She graduated in June 1967 at the age of seventeen.

She entered the California Hospital School of Nursing in Los Angeles, but quit in her second semester, feeling "academically overwhelmed." She had planned to enlist after nursing school, but one day in June 1968 she passed the recruitment trailer at the employment office and, on an impulse, enlisted.

"I'd always been super patriotic, always had chills from [hearing] the 'Star Spangled Banner.' My uncle had served in the Army, but not my father, and my brother wouldn't be accepted with asthma, so I guess I wanted to represent the family."

Offutt enlisted in the Army and chose training as a stenographer with the promise of assignment to Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, after basic training. She reported to Fort McClellan, Alabama, in July 1968. "It was like a women's prison. I'd never been cursed at before. And it was hot!"

After completing basic training, Offutt received orders to report for communications training at Fort Benning, Georgia. "I was really surprised because the recruiter had made promises. If you gave your word, that was it."

She went to her sergeant to tell her she'd received the wrong orders. "I was told to write my congressman," she remembered. "I left, but then returned. I don't know who my congressman is," she informed her sergeant.

"Then write the president," she was told.

* Reprinted, by permission from James E. Wise, Jr. and Scott Baron, *Women at War: Iraqi, Afghanistan and Other Conflicts*, (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, © 2006).

"So, I did! I sent a long letter to President Johnson," recalls Offutt.

A week before her transfer to Fort Benning, she was called to the dayroom.

There was a call for her from the Pentagon. They advised her that President Johnson had read her letter and had directed them to be sure she was sent to Fort Benjamin Harrison. For her remaining time at Fort McClellan, she caught "every crappy detail." "My sergeant asked me, 'Why did you do it?' I said, 'You told me to.' 'Yes,' came the reply, 'but I didn't mean it.' I was scared, because I knew that all eyes were on me, and I had better do well."

Offutt reported to Fort Benjamin Harrison in September 1968 for sixteen weeks of training as a stenographer; she graduated second in her class with the ability to take 140 words per minute dictation. She was selected for duty at the Pentagon.

"I was stationed at Fort Meyers, where the Old Guard is quartered. I would see coffins pass my quarters every day, en route to Arlington, but I never connected them with Vietnam. I was a kid."

By 1968 protests against the war were becoming more common and even young Soldiers insulated on military bases were starting to question American involvement. "I was working in logistics at the Pentagon, and it seemed everyone was protesting, and I wanted to find out the truth. There was no way to know until I went. I knew many high-ranking officers, and I bugged them until I got assigned [to Vietnam]."

Offutt flew into Bien Hoa, Vietnam, on July 19, 1969, the only female on the plane. She was surprised to hear cheers as they deplaned and was warmed by the welcome. Later, she learned that the men were cheering because their arrival meant others were going home. She was supposed to be assigned to Saigon, but instead was placed on a bus and taken to the WAC detachment at Long Binh.

"We were mortared that first night. It was the worst night of my life, and I wondered if I'd make it out."

Making it out of Long Binh proved almost as tricky. The Unit at Long Binh seemed reluctant to send Offutt to her duty station in Saigon. "They had me filling in, doing odd jobs, and I didn't even have fatigues, and felt out of place. I finally called MACV headquarters, and a sergeant major showed up from Saigon. They didn't want to release me, and I was afraid he'd leave without me. He must have seen it in my eyes because he yelled at me to get my gear and get in the car. That's how I got to Saigon."

Offutt was quartered at the Bedford BEQ, on the outskirts of Tan Son Nhut, where like most, she worked six-and-a-half days a week, twelve to fifteen hours a day, and volunteered her free time at a Catholic orphanage. Her quarters were fronted by a high chain-link fence, complete with grenade catcher, and guarded by ARVN soldiers; however, she never felt safe.

"I never felt protected. There were rocket attacks, they blew up jeeps, we were shot at by snipers while on the roof on New Year's Eve. I never felt safe ... we were told they would booby-trap the children!"

Offutt worked first in logistics for generals under Gen. Creighton Abrams, dealing with matters as diverse as air strikes, relations with Vietnamese generals, and day-to-day correspondence. She remembers that life was regimented in Long Binh, but that in Saigon, "you were more on your own."²

Following the award of her Certificate of Achievement on January 24 Offutt finished her tour of duty, and returned stateside in June 1970, a few weeks earlier than planned in order to be present for surgery her mother was having. Offutt was temporarily assigned to Fort MacArthur, California, and was honorably discharged as a Specialist Fifth Class on September 16, 1970.

While at Fort MacArthur, Offutt met a man whom she married after they had dated for three weeks. The marriage ended sixteen years later in divorce, leaving her with three children. Of her marriage, she'll only say "I wasn't thinking when I got back."

Coming home was a difficult transition for Offutt. Outgoing before the war, she became reclusive and more private afterward. "I cried the whole way back. America didn't seem normal when I got back. Everyone seemed worried over inconsequential matters ... foo-foo crap Vietnam really affected my life. It's been very difficult afterwards. Holidays are difficult. Anniversary dates of in-country events are difficult. I didn't believe it before; I do now."

Offutt later returned to school and earned her RN in 1984. Offutt also became active in veteran's affairs. She testified in Congressional hearings regarding the effects of Agent Orange, because her three children suffer from cancer, epilepsy, and ADHD, which she traces to her exposure to Agent Orange. Offutt also networked with other Vietnam vets via the Internet, and as skeptical veterans learned her story, they lobbied on her behalf

On April 7, 2001, at Medard Park, east of Tampa, Florida, Karen Offutt was finally presented the Soldier's Medal she had earned thirty-one years earlier in Vietnam. A guest speaker at The Moving Wall, she was presented the medal in a surprise ceremony by a representative of Congressman Mike Bilirakis (R-Fla) The official citation reads:

(Then) Specialist Five, United States Army for heroism not involving actual conflict with an armed enemy: Specialist Karen I. Offutt, Women's Army Corps, United States Army, assigned to Headquarters Military Assistance Command Vietnam, J47, distinguished herself by heroic action on 24 January 1970 while in an off-duty status.

Observing a fire in Vietnamese dwellings near her quarters, she hurried to the scene to provide assistance. Without regard for her personal safety and in great danger of serious injury or death from smoke, flames, and falling debris, she assisted in rescuing several adults and children from the burning structures. Without protective clothing or shoes, she repeatedly entered the buildings to lead children that had reentered their homes to safety. She continued to assist the Vietnamese residents in removing personal property and livestock, although danger increased until fire-fighting equipment and personnel arrived. Specialist Five Offutt's heroic action reflects great credit on herself, the United States Army, and the United States mission in Vietnam.

Time has not softened the memories of her Vietnam experience for Offutt. She continues to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders. "People keep saying 'Why don't you forget Vietnam?' I don't think I'll forget Vietnam because it changed my trust in people...it isolated and changed me. The babies I took care of, babies with their legs blown off and shrapnel wounds. I felt so helpless and the guilt of having seen what I had...I'd like to forget about it, but I think about it every day."

¹ Steinman, Ron. *Women in Vietnam: The Oral History*. New York: TV Books LLC, 2000, p. 254

² *ibid*

Women in Military Service



"I think that women should have the opportunity to serve where they are trained, where they are qualified, and perform as citizens of the United States in national security."

"I wanted to be when I grew up was - in charge."

Brigadier General Wilma Vaught (USAF, Ret.)

The U.S. Army's "Soldier's Medal" while low in precedence, ranking after the Silver Star, Legion of Merit and even the Distinguished Flying Cross, is one of the most respected military medals. Awarded for "heroism by those serving with the Army in any capacity that involves the voluntary risk of life under conditions other than those of conflict with an opposing armed force," it has been presented with less frequency than any other Army medal with the sole exception of the Medal of Honor. The refusal of an Army commander to award Karen Offutt the Soldier's Medal in 1970 because "we don't award them to women" is both tragic and telling.

Despite the fact that during the Vietnam War the U.S. Military became "color blind" and was perhaps the leader in equal opportunity regardless of race, it remained one of the most resistant sub-sets of American culture in terms of equality for women. That gender bias was not only a traditional one based upon flawed stereotyping of women who wanted to serve their nation, it was based in statute. Even as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law granting equal opportunity in employment and prohibiting discriminatory actions against "...any individual on the basis of his race, color, religion, sex, or national origin," under United States Law:¹

- No more than 2% of the total military force could be comprised of women
- Women afforded officers commissions could comprise no more than 10% of the total number of women in the Armed Forces.
- A cap was placed on the promotion of women above paygrade O-3 (Captain in the Army, Lieutenant in the Navy).
- No woman serving as director of the WACs, WAVEs, or WAFs was allowed promotion above paygrade O-5 (Lieutenant Colonel in the Army and Commander in the Navy). Women Marines were allowed nothing higher than the temporary paygrade O-6 (Colonel). Women of all services were specifically barred from promotion to General Officer.
- By policy, women were precluded from having command authority over men.
- Women were specifically barred from serving aboard Navy vessels except for certain hospital ships and specified transports and were further prohibited from duty in combat aircraft engaged in combat missions.
- Women were precluded from participation in campus ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) programs, as well as from appointments to the Army, Navy or Air Force Academies.
- Women were denied spousal benefits for their husbands unless the husband depended on his wife for more than 50 percent of his support.
- The services were authorized to automatically discharge any woman, married or single, who became pregnant. This provision extended to a military woman who became a parent by either adoption or by marriage to a man who had a minor child/stepchild that resided in the family home at least 30 days a year.

The concept of women serving in the military, even in combat, was a nearly two-century-old practice that was still seeking proper recognition and official sanction in the 1960s. The evolution of women in military service from a sheltered auxiliary to full military status made limited strides during the Vietnam War era, but the impact of those strides would not reach fruition until after the war was over.

As noted earlier, the history of American women in combat can at the least be traced back to one of the first major battles of the American Revolution on November 16, 1776. Margaret Cochran Corbin was not a soldier, nor was she a woman who had assumed the garb and name of a man in order to serve as did many women of her day and the wars of the century that followed. Rather she was the wife of a soldier who, when he fell mortally wounded, single-handedly continued to fire her cannon until she was wounded and captured. In the parlance of later generations, she was not a soldier but an auxiliary to the military, despite the fact that she fought as well and "bled as red" as did those men with whom she served.

Also as previously noted in this treatise, women served valiantly both in the hospitals and on the battlefields of the Civil War, some disguised as men, some as spies, but most in support roles as civilian nurses. It was the latter that paved the way for expanding opportunities in the United States military. During the Spanish-American war (1898) the Army contracted with civilian women to serve as nurses to soldiers both at home and abroad. Annie Wheeler, daughter of General *Fighting Joe* Wheeler, accompanied her father who in the Civil War became legendary as a Confederate Cavalry officer, to Cuba where he commanded U.S. Army forces in their battles with the Spanish. Civil War heroine Clara Barton put Annie in charge of a newly organized hospital where her work with sick and wounded soldiers earned her the title "Angel of Santiago." The way she and others like her in that brief war served with a distinction that endeared them to the fighting soldiers paved the way for other women to follow.

The value of nurses to sick or wounded men of the military was validated by those women who had served as civilian contract nurses during the Spanish-American War, and gave ample reason in 1901 to at last officially welcome women into the Army with establishment of the Army Nurse Corps. Seven years later the Navy enlisted 20 women into its own Nurse Corps and, by the time the United States entered World War I nearly 5,000 women were on active duty in the Army. When the United States began calling up men for service in Europe in 1917, women were also actively recruited for volunteer service. Though most of the more than 21,000 Army nurses who served during that war were assigned to state-side hospitals or hospital ships on the seas, 10,000 served in England or at front-line hospitals in France.

Though these women were not assigned to combat roles they certainly faced the dangers of the combat zone. On August 17, 1917, six months before soldiers of the A.E.F. (American Expeditionary Force) began facing their first major, sustained combat, German aircraft bombed British Casualty Clearing Station No. 61 in France. U.S. Army Reserve Nurse Beatrice MacDonald tended the wounded despite the deadly enemy attack until she was herself wounded. A comrade, Reserve Nurse Helen Grace McClelland "cared for her when wounded, (and) stopped the hemorrhage from her wounds under fire caused by bombs from German aero planes." That quote is from the Award of the Distinguished Service Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor, to McClelland. A DSC was also awarded to Beatrice MacDonald and the two became the first of four nurses to receive that high honor in World War I. The other two nurses so decorated for actions the following year were Army Reserve Nurse Isabelle Stambaugh and Red Cross Nurse Miss Jane Jeffery. Both were wounded by enemy fire. Lenah Sutcliff Higbee was awarded the Navy's second highest medal the Navy Cross "for distinguished service in the line of her profession and unusual and conspicuous devotion to duty as superintendent of the Navy Nurse Corps." During World War II when the *U.S.S. Higbee* was commissioned, it became the first American warship named in honor of a woman.

More than 250 Army nurses died on active duty during World War I and 19 members of the Navy Nurse Corps also paid the supreme sacrifice. Not all of the deaths were combat related,

however. Most of the Navy Nurse Corps' casualties came during the Influenza Epidemic of 1918 - 1919. Navy Reserve Nurses Edna Place, Marie Louise Hidell, and Lilian M. Murphy were posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for courageously performing their duties to treat influenza-stricken soldiers until the disease also claimed their lives.

One vastly overlooked role played by women in World War I was the job of the so-called "Hello Girls" who were the first American women ever recruited for non-medical service in the Army. In 1917 General John J. Pershing, commander of the A.E.F., advertised in American newspaper for bi-lingual women to apply for service as Army switchboard operators. More than 7,000 women volunteered and 450 of them were selected and received military and Signal Corps training. They trained in basic military radio procedures at Camp Franklin, Maryland (now Fort Meade). After training, the women purchased their Army regulation uniforms complete with "U.S." crests, Signal Corps crests, and "dog tags." Arm patches designating positions were issued. In the spring of 1918 when the first thirty-three operators deployed to Europe, they were issued gas masks and steel helmets.²

After the Armistice and upon their return to the United States, these women applied for their honorable discharges. Because all Army regulations were worded in the "male" gender, they were denied veterans status. The Army considered them civilians working on a contract basis for the Army. This perplexed the women because they had been required to wear regulation uniforms, they were sworn into service and had to follow all Army regulations. The Chief Telephone Operator, Grace Banker, even received the Distinguished Service Medal from Congress. Even so, in a move typical of the slight so often forced upon women who had served in time of war only to be subsequently overlooked, when those who had served applied for their honorable discharges, the "Hello Girls" were denied veterans status.*

In addition to the more than 21,000 Army and Navy nurses and the 450 "Hello Girls", some 13,000 civilian women worked for the military in clerical and other support positions during World War I. Their contribution did not go completely unnoticed, and American society felt something of a debt to women for how they had acquitted themselves. Many historians believe the successful passage in 1921 of the 19th Amendment extending voting rights to women was in no small part successful because of women who proved their importance during the war.

In the peaceful interim between the world wars (1919 - 1941) the Nurse Corps remained an integral part of the American military, albeit greatly reduced in size. During that interim, in 1920, the Army formally recognized their nurses as Commissioned Officers, though the Navy did not follow suit until World War II. By early 1941 there were fewer than 7,000 women in the Army Nurse Corps and fewer than 500 in the Navy Nurse Corps, but with prospects for war looming, recruitment began to swell their ranks. When Japanese bombs and torpedoes rained down on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, there eighty-two nurses serving at the three hospitals in Hawaii, numbering them among the first veterans of that war. Another 105 nurses were serving in the Philippine Islands and at Guam.

Two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor the American outpost at Guam was forced to surrender to the Japanese. The five Navy nurses assigned to that station became Prisoners of War and were held by the Japanese until repatriation in August 1942. For the nurses in the Philippines conditions became far worse. Though valiant efforts were made to evacuate the nurses before

* For years afterwards legislation was introduced into Congress to remedy this slight, but the bills were always buried in committee. It took one of the operators, Mearle Eagan Anderson, over fifty years of persistence to secure legislation to award the operators veteran's status. In 1978 President Jimmy Carter signed a bill giving the "Hello Girls" their deserved recognition as the first U.S. Army veterans in history.

Bataan and then Corregidor fell, 67 Army nurses and 11 Navy Nurses were captured and forced to survive the war in Japanese prison camps. In Europe Lieutenant Reba Whittle became a German POW when the airplane on which she was serving in an air evacuation mission was shot down in September 1944.

Army Nurses received 1,619 medals, citations, and commendations during the war, reflecting the courage and dedication of all who served. Sixteen medals were awarded posthumously to nurses who died as a result of enemy fire. These included the 6 nurses who died at Anzio, 6 who died when the Hospital Ship Comfort was attacked by a Japanese suicide plane, and 4 flight nurses. Thirteen other flight nurses died in weather-related crashes while on duty. Overall, 201 nurses died while serving in the Army during the war.³ The Navy Nurse Corps also suffered its share of casualties while earning numerous combat and meritorious service awards.

In all, beyond the 6 million civilian "Rosies" who worked in military production factories, nearly half-a-million women served inside the Army, Army Air Force, Navy and Marines during the war. While 75,000 of them served inside the two Nurse Corps' (60,000 Army and 14,000 Navy), six times that number served in clerical, supply, transportation and even flight roles as members of the military forces.

During World War I, as early as 1917, Britain established a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps to enlist women for military service. Their duties were separated into four fields of endeavor: cooking, clerical, mechanical, and miscellaneous. Following the war women continued to serve in the armed forces of England, a pattern adopted by the United States in controversial legislation finally signed by President Roosevelt on May 15, 1941.

Early in 1941 Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts met with General George C. Marshall, the Army's Chief of Staff, and informed him that she intended to introduce a bill to establish an Army women's corps, separate and distinct from the existing Army Nurse Corps. Rogers believed the women's corps should be a part of the Army so that women would receive equal pay, pension, and disability benefits, in contrast to those who had served in the previous war but been denied veterans status or benefits. The opposition perhaps is best seen in the comments of one Congressman who noted, "Who will then do the cooking, the washing, the mending, the humble homey tasks to which every woman has devoted herself; who will nurture the children?"

A compromise version of Rogers' bill finally passed the House by a vote of 249 to 86, and on May 14, 1941, passed the Senate 38 to 27. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was established the following day when the President signed the bill. The successful legislation however, fell far short of what Congresswoman Rogers had envisioned. The women's service was not a part of the Army, but auxiliary thereto. Officers in the WAAC were noted by grade, First Grade Officer, Second Grade Officer, etc. Pay and benefits for those who volunteered fell far short of that offered to male counterparts in the Army.

Air power was destined to play a critical role during World War II and on September 14, 1942, General Henry Arnold approved a program to recruit, train, and utilize women as pilots to ferry aircraft in non-combat theaters in order to free up male pilots for combat missions. Under the direction of Jacqueline *Jackie* Cochran, who had pitched just such an idea to the First Lady three years earlier, the Army Air Force established the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD) to teach women to fly. Simultaneous the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) was born under the leadership of Nancy H. Love, to perform such duties. Despite the shortcomings in terms of advancing the role of women in military, the two programs were a quantum leap demonstrating a new confidence in women to master the skills needed to pilot large bomber airplanes.

Not to be outdone by the Army, albeit with much the same opposition from those who resisted the move to bring women into the military, in the summer of 1942 the Navy established its own female force, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). The title alone left little illusion that the move was nothing more than a temporary measure to meet the demands of the current war however, and in general it was assumed that the WAVES would be disbanded when the war ended. With that in mind and with tongue in cheek, some of them took to defining the acronym for their organization "Women are Very Essential Sometimes."

Unlike the Army's WAAC and WFTD/WAFS however, Navy WAVES were not an auxiliary to the Navy, but were accepted directly into service. They served and were treated for the most part, as their male counterparts in the U.S. Naval Reserve. Such progressive an attitude aside, prejudice lingered in the Navy which still relegated Black men to menial tasks in the galley. Not until 1944 were Black women accepted into the WAVES. Conversely however, though Black women were welcomed into the Army's auxiliaries from their creation, they were assigned to segregated all-Black units. It was, perhaps, the only place in early WWII military where men and women served on a comparable bases, although not in a positive manner.*

Women served in support roles in the U.S. Marine Corps in World War I and the value of their service was not lost on the Marine Corps Commandant who, in February 1943, began welcoming women into the Marine Corps. Under the leadership of Major Ruth Cheney Streeter, a 47-year old mother of four, women of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR), so named because the Marine Corps Commandant refused to use a catchy acronym like WAFS or WAVES, began wearing the legendary and coveted Eagle, Globe and Anchor.

In 1943 evolution of women into the Armed Forces and the debate over their roles finally resulted in a minor victory for women of the WAAC. Both the term and role "Auxiliary" were dropped, and those who were serving in the WAAC were invited to enlist as members of the Army's new Women's Army Corps. The majority of them did. The one setback was the 1943 merging of the WFTD and WAFS into the new Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) as a para-military organization under the Civil Service. By the time legislation was introduced in 1944 to militarize the WASPs, the need for pilots had lessened and the WASPs were disbanded.

Speaking to the valiant women who had served at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, on December 7, 1944, General Arnold stated: "The WASP have completed their mission. Their job has been successful. But as is usual in war, the cost has been heavy. Thirty-eight WASP have died while helping their country move toward the moment of final victory. The Air Forces will long remember their service and their final sacrifice."

Much like the "Hello Girls" of a generation that had served in the previous war, the WASPs were classified as members of the Civil Service, not the Army Air Force, and were denied veterans status. Not until 1977 did Congress finally recognize them as members of the military force that won World War II, granting them status as veterans and authorizing them the World War II Victory Medal. That legislative victory was achieved in no small part, thanks to the efforts of Bruce Arnold, son of the WWII Army Air Force commander who had bid them thanks for their service back in 1944.

During World War II some 150,000 women served in the WAAC or WACs; 100,000 in the Navy's WAVES, more than 1,000 in the WASPS and its predecessors, and nearly 20,000 in the MCWR. The jobs they performed were generally moderately traditional though their duties often put them into harm's way and many paid for their service with their lives. Through it all they

* Not to be forgotten are the women who, beginning in 1942, were accepted into service with the U.S. Coast Guard. They were called SPARs, an acronym for the Coast Guard Mottom "Semper Paratus - Always Ready".

proved they could serve an important role in military service. Their credo might well have been best echoed in a poster painted for the WAVES by Howard Baer. The annotation reads: "Of she's a Navy WAVE, then a woman's task may be anything that a man's task may be, and it's a pretty good bet that she will handle it efficiently."

While the future of the WACs, WAVES and MCWR looked uncertain amid cutbacks when World War II ended, their service had not gone unnoticed. On July 26, 1948, President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981 proclaiming that "that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin." Although the President's action that ended racial segregation in the military forces did not mention "sex" or "gender", one month earlier he signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act opening the door for them to find careers not as auxiliaries, but as full-fledged, sworn in members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and newly created Air Force.

Though the door opened for women to serve in the Armed Forces in 1948, it opened only slightly. In 1949 legislation prohibited women with dependent children from service, promotion was capped, women were barred from combat roles and forbidden to command their male counterparts.

During the Korean War (1950-1953) nearly 125,000 women served in the military including members of the Nurse Corps, WAC and WAVES. Seventeen died while on active duty, most in accidents or air crashes. During the Vietnam War 7,000 women in uniform served in-country. Eight died in service including one by hostile fire. Along the way they earned Distinguished Service Medals, Legion of Merits, Air Medals, Bronze Stars and Purple Hearts. As non-combatants however, none since World War I received the Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, or Silver Star.* Furthermore, in the words of one male commander, "women are not awarded the Soldier's Medal."

Slowly, in the midst of the Vietnam War, things began to change. In 1967 the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was modified by Public Law 90-130, eliminating the 2% ceiling on the number of women who could serve in the military. At the same time the cap on promotions above paygrade O-3 were removed and women further were granted eligibility to hold Flag/General Officer rank. In 1967 the U.S. Air Force opened its ROTC program to women, to be followed by Army ROTC opportunities in 1971. Also, in 1971 the Air Force began a policy to allow pregnant women to request a waiver of the automatic discharge rule, and opened the door for women with dependent children to enlist.

In 1972 Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, opened Navy ROTC to women, suspended restrictions on a woman's right to succeed to command in the United States, authorized Naval Officers to be selected for the War College, and expanded the occupational fields available for service, including the opportunity for women to serve at sea aboard the *U.S.S. Sanctuary*. In 1973 the Navy allowed women to serve on aviation duty in non-combat aircraft, a policy shift that was adopted by the Army the following year, and by the U.S. Air Force in 1977.

In 1973 the U.S. Coast Guard began enlisting women for regular active duty and two years later invited them to enroll in the Coast Guard Academy. Under Public Law 94-106, in 1976 the remaining service academies (Army, Navy and Air Force) were opened to women. By 1980 Enlisted Women became eligible for many at-sea, shipboard assignments. In a span of only 13

* During World War II Virginia Hall, a member of the Office of Strategic Services, became and remains the only woman since World War I to receive the Distinguished Service Cross, awarded for her courageous and dangerous services in espionage.

years from 1967 to 1980, the available roles for women in military service at last moved forward in a major way.

Among the heady events for military women during that period was an historic action on June 11, 1970. On that date a star was pinned to the uniform of Colonel Anna Mae Hays, Chief of the Army Nurse Corps, as she became the first woman general in any branch of service in history. Moments later Elizabeth P. Hoisington, Director of the Women's Army Corps, was also promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. Within a year the Director of Air Force Women, Jeanne M. Holm, became the Air Force's first woman general officer. In 1972 Alene B. Duerk, Chief of the Navy Nurse Corps, received a spot promotion to Rear Admiral (Lower Half). In 1978 Margaret Brewer became the Marine Corps' first woman general.

Some of these women who ascended to leadership were members of The Greatest Generation, having served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. But among the ranks of women in uniform was a new generation of leaders, women of the Defining Generation, and they too would make history.

¹ Women's Research & Education Institute, 3300 Fairfax Drive, Suite 218, Arlington, VA 22201

² "Hello Girls," United States Army Signal Center, Fort Gordon, GA,
<http://www.gordon.army.mil/OCOS/Museum/hlogrl.asp>

³ The Army Nurse Corps, Army Medical Department

Lieutenant General Carol Mutter



"Women in Military have come a long way in my 31 years. We still have more progress to make, but it won't and shouldn't all happen overnight! Sometimes when we walk up to that door of opportunity and find it's locked, we may be tempted to blast it open. I've learned to be careful--by blasting it down, we could destroy what we're trying to get on the other side."

*Lieutenant General Carol Mutter
USMC (Retired)*

It would seem there was nothing in the early life of Carol Ann Schneider to indicate that one day she would become a United States Marine, much less one of the highest-ranking woman General Officer in any branch of U.S. Military Service. Born in Greeley, Colorado, in 1945 and raised on a small farm outside the rural community of Eaton, she describes her family as "lower-middle class...at best." Her parents were sharecroppers--they didn't even own the farm on which they labored long and hard. The focus of their efforts were their two children, Carol and her brother, whom Mr. and Mrs. Schneider planned for and hoped would one day go to college.

Both children grew up working hard beside their parents. "We both helped out on the farm: hoeing weeds in the bean crop, following behind the sugar beet harvester and picking up beets it missed, etc.," Carol recalls. "We certainly learned the value of a dollar and the necessity of hard work."

In the small rural school where she began her preparations for college Carol approached her studies with the same work ethic she had learned in the fields. She enjoyed learning and her educational process was a pleasant one. "Mrs. Frank was my Junior High math teacher," she says fondly, "and I loved math. She had two children just a few years older than we were, and I remember clearly one day she said that all children should be locked in a closet when they turn 13 and shouldn't be let out until they turn 20. In today's context it sounds a bit scary, but back then it was funny and conveyed how difficult, even back then, she thought it was to raise kids through their teenage years." Mrs. Frank became one of Carol's early role models, working not only as a mother to raise her own children but as a teacher to impart knowledge to the children of other families. With another male teacher in the school, she was Carol's class co-sponsor and worked with her all the way through high school.

If, in fact, there was any indication that Carol Ann Schneider would one day shatter a "glass ceiling" she was not even yet aware existed for women, it was rooted in her simple approach to life--do what you enjoy and be good at it. Her interests beyond school included 4-H where she had projects that were both garden and livestock (steers). She was also a member of the Girl Scouts. Church was also very important in the Schneider family, all of these contributing to the values she learned and used as the foundation for her life. "They are also values consistent with the values of the Marine Corps," she is now quick to point out.

Because Women's Liberation had not yet become a movement to break down barriers based on gender, Carol was not then, nor would she become later, an activist. Rather, the young girl's one desire was to find a role in life that she enjoyed, involving tasks at which she was capable, and then to do her best in that role. Slowly, as that role developed, it became what she often now tells audiences "Is truly an *Only in America* story."

When Carol graduated from high school in 1963 in a class that numbered only 42 Seniors, "Most young women thought their options were limited to secretary, teacher or nurse," she recalls. "I went to college to become a teacher." Majoring in Mathematics Education at the University of Northern Colorado, she envisioned herself in a traditional woman's role, following in the footsteps of her early mentor Mrs. Frank and standing in front of a classroom full of children to impart to them the education they would need to find their own success in life. During her Junior year however, she chanced to meet a Marine Recruiter on campus, a woman Marine, and her curiosity was piqued.

When Carol volunteered to attend the Marine Corps' Woman Officer Candidate Course (WOCC) during the summer break in 1966 it was not intended to be a change of course in her life. In a sense that military schooling was more of a proving ground, *summer camp for girls* with a military twist. "It was just a summer commitment, I received pay and got to see the Nation's

Capital." Unlike male counterparts who were subject to the draft at that time and had to enlist and commit to three or more years of active duty for such military training, women were invited to Quantico, Virginia, to "test the waters" of military service, after which they were free to return to school, civilian jobs, or other pursuits. This is in fact, just one more example of the gender-based approach to military service in the mid-1960s that was soon to become revolutionized in the United States.

The fact that the Marine Corps WOCC was a *boot camp* without a long-range military commitment should not be misconstrued to indicate that the course was easy. Upon arriving Carol's first thought was, "What have I gotten myself into?" Furthermore, this was the U.S. Marines where young men training for combat duty in Vietnam were quick to point out, "The Marines are part of the Department of the Navy...the men's department!" Years later when asked why she had chosen the Marines over the Army, Navy or Air Force, Carol replied simply, "They're the best!"

At that time the growing war in Vietnam was demanding more and more young men for combat duty, and manpower needs at home and in other support roles were being increasingly filled with women volunteers. The 1966 WOC class was one of the largest ever and it was the first time the class was increased from two to three platoons. "They ran out of my size tennis shoes," Carol recalls, "so I had to wear my white flats for marching the first couple of weeks."

No doubt at that time there were many *real* Marines...meaning men...who would have found the sight both comical and a validation of their own prejudice. After all, these were *only* women. Some of the young ladies in her group did wash out, unable to make the grade even in an all-woman training class. Others, their curiosity sated, would return home to school, civilian jobs, or domestic roles. A few did go on to subsequently become Marines but even then, it was be under special conditions. If while serving they became pregnant or married a man with children under the age of 18, they would be forced to resign. If they stayed in the Corps and succeeded in making it a career, by law they could advance no higher than O-6, Colonel. In fact, the Marine Corps had only one female Colonel, the Director of Women Marines.

Carol was among those who successfully finished the course, and then she returned to finish her Senior year of college as a student teacher. It was an adjustment after even just a brief summer in uniform. "I was initially surprised when I began student teaching after my summer at OCS when the students did not all stand at attention when I walked into the room," she recalls. Her summer stint as a woman Marine had proven to be a role she enjoyed and now she believed Marine Corps service was something she would be good at. When she graduated with a baccalaureate degree, she was commissioned an officer of Marines, prompting her male college advisor to remark, "What a waste!"

Even as Carol was being commissioned as a Marine Corps Second Lieutenant after completing the Women's Officer's Basic Course in 1967, the U.S. Military began its most sweeping changes since the end of World War II. That year the 2% cap on women in military (Marine Corps policy was 1%) was lifted, as was the prohibition against women ascending beyond the rank of Colonel. "A lot of the evolutionary changes regarding women's roles in the military happened at the same time similar changes were happening in our society," she points out. "The military reflected that, and, in some cases, led that."

Becoming a General Officer, however, was the furthest thing from Second Lieutenant Schneider's* life at that time, even in the face of new opportunity for women. "At that time if anyone would have said that I'd still be in the Marine Corps 30 years later, let alone that I'd be a

* Actually, as the result of her first marriage, Carol's surname was Wiescamp until her marriage ten years later to Major Jim Mutter.

Three-Star General, I'd have said they were crazy." Her plan was simply to fulfill a three-year commitment, then return to civilian life and a teaching career. Indeed, perhaps, the most incredible careers are those that are unplanned and that simply evolve out of opportunity, dedication, and hard work.

Lieutenant Schneider's first assignment was to the data processing installations at Quantico, Virginia, and at Camp Pendleton, California. There was nothing precedent setting in that, this was a job that could be performed by either a man or a woman Marine and, in fact, it was an integrated work place. The fact that a female officer filled that job slot did free up some other young (male) lieutenant to perhaps serve in Vietnam during a period when the military philosophy was that women soldiers, sailors and Marines were "left in the rear with the gear." That disparity aside, the Marine Corps (and other branches of service) were light years ahead of the private sector. In the military service men and women received equal pay for what was equal rank. Fact is, nonetheless, the salary benefits being equal, most women had to work harder than male counterparts to succeed. Furthermore, they were hindered in opportunity because of limitations on the types of jobs they could be assigned to.

"Very early in my career I did feel that as a female Lieutenant I had to prove myself more than a male Lieutenant did," she says. "The Marine Corps is small, and your own community is even smaller. It doesn't take long to earn a reputation (for good or ill) that precedes you wherever you go. I always felt that if I acted like I belonged there; I would be treated like I belonged. That turned out to be true."

On June 11, 1970, Army Colonel Anna May Hays made history when she received the star of a Brigadier General, the first woman in history to become a General Officer. The other branches soon followed suit although it would be yet eight years before Colonel Margaret Brewer would become the first woman Marine Corps Brigadier General. While this was exciting news for women in uniform, even then Carol did not envision rising to such rank nor had she yet made a decision to make a career out of being a Marine. "I just kept enjoying what I was doing, feeling it was worthwhile, and getting promoted, so I stayed," she explains.

In 1971 First Lieutenant Schneider returned to Quantico as one of two Platoon Commanders and as an instructor for Woman Officer Candidate and Woman Officer Basic Courses. It was a platform from which an activist might have been tempted to become aligned with the burgeoning women's liberation movement in American society, urging incoming new women Marines to active efforts to expand their roles. Lieutenant Schneider, however, was no activist. She was, instead, an example. Her only cause was mission oriented--to do her job as a Marine, to do it well, and to contribute to the team.

"I was very much aware that I was training women who, although not likely to deploy to Vietnam, were going to have jobs in the Marine Corps that provided essential support to those who would deploy," she explains. "For example, we had women in Air Traffic Control at the time who could be stationed at training bases helping to train pilots who would deploy. We also had women in supply who would be responsible for processing requisitions and getting supplies to those in the front lines. There are other similar examples. There are no unimportant jobs in the Marine Corps and, in time of war, none that aren't related in some way to support of the war effort. It is still true today!"

The job was serious business with far-reaching implications, critical in time of war. Lieutenant Schneider approached her responsibilities, not as a woman training woman, but as a Marine training other Marines. She failed to see the humor one day when, as a prank, someone stole the sign in front of the women's barracks. Because the classes alternated, that sign was hung

on simple hooks that allowed it to be easily changed, depending on which class was in session. It also made theft a quick and relatively easy task.

A day or two later the Company Commander in the nearby (male) Basic School was touring the students' quarters when he found the missing sign. That officer happened to be married to Carol's comrade, the Platoon Commander for the other group of women in training. He called and asked the two women officers how they wanted to handle the incident. They requested that the offending male students be ordered to report to their office with the pilfered sign. "They did so and acted rather nonchalant about it," Carol remembers. "They swaggered in as though this was all a big joke."

As senior Platoon Commander, it was Lieutenant Schneider's responsibility to address the problem and the two young men's cocky attitude. She met their gaze, not woman to man but Marine to Marine and ordered them to stand at attention. Their smirks quickly vanished as, "I proceeded to 'explain' to them that they were now Marine Corps officers and no longer in college; 'fraternity pranks' were inappropriate if they wanted to be leaders of Marines." It may well have been one of the best lessons they ever received on the subject of leadership. Though their infraction could have brought charges, the two women Platoon Commanders pursued the matter no further. "I felt the chewing out was adequate for the 'crime'," says Carol.

Hard work and a positive attitude paid off for Lieutenant Schneider. In reviewing her career decades later Marine General Charles C. Krulak, then climbing a fast-track career to become the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1995, remembered both her and her work ethic well. "Let me tell you about (Carol Mutter)," he told the Indianapolis *Star* in 2003. "She is extremely bright, articulate, works very hard. She understands that light bulbs were invented so you can work at night. She would do windows. No task was beneath her, and she was a very straight shooter. When she made up her mind, she was determined."¹

She completed her assignment at WOC/WOBC in 1973 as a Captain of Marines. Her new duty took her back to Camp Pendleton to serve in the Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity where she found that as a woman Marine she was not only welcomed, she was loved. Colonel James *Jim* Mutter, one of Carol's co-workers, found that he not only enjoyed sharing in her professional life but that he wanted to be part of her personal life. Ultimately as a fellow officer, sometimes a mentor, and always a loving husband, he would become important to both.

Teamwork is the key to success in any aspect of life and perhaps more so in the military. No person can achieve great things alone --success demands a team effort for the common good. Carol noted as much in her observations of women's roles in military when she said, "I feel that having women and others from differing backgrounds and perspectives involved in the planning and execution of any military mission is a distinct advantage. The result is that more ideas and options are presented and considered--the final result is much better than it would be otherwise." Perhaps nowhere would that mantra become more validated than in her relationship with Jim Mutter. The two were married in the Base Chapel at Camp Pendleton in May 1977.

Combining marriage and career presented some unique challenges of its own, far beyond the potential for an inter-marriage rivalry between two promising now Majors of Marines. With great foresight they asked the serious question "What if?" before they ever said, "I do."

"I'm always saying what a 'win-win' person Carol is," remarks Jim Mutter. "she is always looking for the best solution for all concerned. I told her while dating that I genuinely appreciated her beauty, but that I was absolutely overwhelmed by her demeanor, approach to problem solving, and by her brain." With a practical approach they addressed the tough questions before them, Carol noting:

- On Career: "We decided at the time that since (Jim) had 4 more years than I did (14 at the time), his career would take precedence over mine until he had 20 years and could retire. Then, if I was still on active duty, my career would take precedence until I could retire."
- On Separation: "We also decided that we could accept a one-year separation. It was not unusual at the time for Marines to have one year overseas unaccompanied tours. Longer than a year, we'd have to discuss when it came up, because we felt our marriage was important enough that the Marine Corps wouldn't necessarily take precedence."
- On the Future: "After we both had 20 years, we'd look at both our careers and do what was best at the time."

To state that Colonel James Mutter played a critical role in the unprecedented military success of Lieutenant General Carol Mutter is to take nothing away from the young woman herself. Rank is "merit-based" and the bright, hardworking young Marine from Colorado achieved her place in Leatherneck history based upon her own personality, values, and dedication to the mission. Humbly she asks the rhetorical question: "So, how did I make it *to the top*, against all odds? The bottom line is great support from family, friends and other Marines. My husband, also a Marine, was my best mentor."

Jim's help was often in simple but practical matters, occasionally providing male insights that helped Captain Mutter adapt to her role in a community that was macho, masculine, and 95% male. He pointed out for instance, that when she spoke during meetings her voice sounded soft, as if she lacked confidence. In fact, even many male leaders have to learn what the military calls "command voice." Captain Mutter learned it well. The two also collaborated for the good of both marriage and career. Planning 18 months in advance they worked together with *monitors* at Marine Corps Headquarters who issued transfer orders to proactively seek out assignments that would fit in with both their future as Marine officers and their desire to spend their lives together.

In 1988 the "What If?" question the Mutters had not thought to ask a decade earlier as they planned their marriage and careers suddenly arose. It was a scenario they could not have imagined or predicted; Jim's son by a previous marriage was stricken with Leukemia. Now a Marine Corps Colonel, Jim Mutter requested a "humanitarian transfer" in order to be closer to their son who lived in Albuquerque. The Marines found Colonel Jim Mutter a job at the U.S. Space Command in Colorado Springs, Colorado, but there was no position open for his wife, now Lieutenant Colonel Carol Mutter, a veteran of 21 years of service and leadership. With a "family-comes-first" value judgment she prepared to retire from her promising career when, at the last moment, a position was found for her at the same duty station.

At the Space Command Colonel Carol Mutter joined the J-3 (Operations) Directorate, becoming the first woman to gain qualification as a Space Director. When Colonel Jim Mutter was slated for a more visible staff command than that held by his wife, he went to the J-3 Admiral and requested that the two Colonel Mutters' positions be reversed so that Colonel Carol Mutter would have "more visibility." If seen as a self-deprecating action it was not; it was simply practical and more importantly it was the right thing to do. "I had to be the one to make a point of asking for her to have the more visible assignments because in those days, the male always got first choice," he explains. Carol Mutter's continuing rise in the Corps not only benefited the Mutter future, it was good for the Marine Corps and scores of young women who might follow in her footsteps and benefit from her example.

The Admiral consented and, "As we were both equally qualified, this was accomplished and served my career well," says Carol.

When the two now-Senior Colonels were transferred to the III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) on Okinawa, Japan, in 1990, Colonel Jim Mutter had climbed about as high as he could in Marine Corps Leadership. Because he was in Air Command and Control, with a financial management advanced degree, there was little chance he would get a "star." His seniority in rank over his wife however, slated him to become Comptroller of a more senior organization than the one for which his wife was also slated to serve as Comptroller. He told Carol, "You need to go to (the more senior organization) and get the higher visibility. You have a chance to make General and I don't." Again, his boss, this time the senior financial manager at Headquarters Marine Corps, consented and the results would prove historic for all branches of U.S. Military, and of great value to Jim's beloved Corps. Again, it was the right thing to do.

Colonel Jim Mutter still had a couple of months remaining in his assignment at Okinawa when, in 1991 his wife was reassigned. He took leave long enough to return with her Marine Headquarters in Washington, D.C., where General Al Gray, Commandant of the Marine Corps, pinned the gleaming silver star of a Brigadier General on her uniform. He was assisted by General Carol Mutter's proud mother while, watching from the sidelines was her equally proud husband.

Carol Mutter admits, "I had mixed feelings when my promotion to General meant I would outrank my husband. But when we discussed it, he made it absolutely clear that this was not a problem for him, so I shouldn't let it be a problem for me."

"I was excited about her success and wanted to help her however I could," Jim is quick to point out. "At one point I heard a couple of Colonels talking and one complained that 'She got my star' when she was selected for Brigadier General. I said to them, 'Gentlemen, she was *deep selected*. There were nine other Colonels, any one of which got your star. You weren't good enough to be *deep selected*.'"

Colonel Jim Mutter then returned to Okinawa to finish his assignment while his wife, Brigadier General Carol Mutter, went on to Quantico as Deputy Marine Corps Systems Command. When his assignment there was fulfilled, he rejoined his wife and, in 1993 with 30 years of dedicated service to the United States of America, he retired from the Corps. His service to his wife however, continued.

While serving as a Brigadier General at Quantico, Carol was slated to become a deputy Installations and Logistics officer at Headquarters, Marine Corps. Throughout her life she had dutifully accepted every task that was assigned to her, performing it to the best of her ability and placing mission before self and career. She felt however, that this new post was not the right assignment for her or her abilities. Jim discussed her feelings about the matter and advised his wife to at least visit with the Commandant and provide him her own insight, "After all," he reminded her, "he's the one who makes decisions on General Officer assignments."

"I requested an appointment with the Commandant and discussed my thoughts and concerns," she recalls. "When he asked me what job I thought I should have I told him 'The Third Force Service Support Group.' This would be a ground-breaking assignment for women in military, and the Marine Corps would be the first to make it happen. I explained my qualifications for the job, and, after a few days, the Commandant told me I had the job." When she returned to Okinawa in June 1992 to Command the Third Force Service Support Group, III MEF, she became the first woman general/flag officer in history to command a major deployable tactical command. One year later upon returning to Washington, D.C., Marine Corps Commandant General Carl Mundy pinned a second star on Carol Mutter, again with the proud assistance of her mother, as she became the

Marine Corps' first woman Major General and the senior woman in all branches of U.S. Military Service.

Major General Carol Mutter achieved such success, not because she sought it and directed her career in a manner compatible with lofty goals. She says, "I've never thought of myself as a pioneer. I always tried to do my job and do it to the best of my abilities. I focused on accomplishing the mission, rather than my career. I think the word 'ambition' has negative connotations for both men and women. Ambition can simply being concerned about one's own career to the exclusion of everything else, including doing the best you can at your job. In the military we distinguish between 'careerism', which is self-centered (and what I equate to 'ambition') and 'career planning', which are the normal steps one takes in ensuring you are prepared for the next step in your career path. For us, the two responsibilities we have are to accomplish the mission and take care of our people. Taking care of ourselves and our careers is far behind these two main goals."

For Major General Carol Mutter, success came neither by accident or by design...it was the naturally evolving product of being a good Marine and doing her job well. In 1996 on the parade field at Quantico, Virginia, with her mother and husband present once again, Commandant of the Marine Corps General Charles Krulak pinned a third star on Carol Mutter. "He made it a point to tell me I was NOT selected because I was a female, but because I was the best Marine for the job--Deputy Chief of Staff (now called Deputy Commandant) of the Marine Corps for Manpower and Reserve Affairs--the largest Headquarters, Marine Corps staff agency."

On that date Carol Mutter, once a simple but hardworking girl who grew up on a farm in rural Colorado with dreams of someday being a teacher, became the first woman from any branch of U.S. military service in history to become a Lieutenant General in our Military Forces. She retired from the Marine Corps on January 1, 1999, after 31 years of service and remains at this writing, the only woman ever to achieve the military's second-highest rank.

General Mutter has joined Linda Alvarez in the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame and received numerous military and civilian awards including, in 2005, the Secretary of Defense Award for Outstanding Leadership. Success, however, is its own greatest reward, bestowed for hard work and dedication.

"While I was, of course, honored to be the first woman in the Marine Corps to reach the rank of three-star general," she tells young people today, "my joy in that promotion came from what it allowed me to do for Marines and their families. There will continue to be firsts. The more complete integration of women into the services and into all specialties is an ongoing process. If nothing else, we can count on the fact that there will continue to be change.

"There are still challenges, but women today are holding their own, and then some, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and around the world."

¹ Gelarden, R. Joseph, "Breaking Barriers," *The Indianapolis Star*, March 20, 2003, p E01

In the process of *simply doing their job*, and doing it well, women in uniform slowly overcame prejudice to prove their worth. Lieutenant General Mutter notes, "Women have always felt compelled to do their part, to serve in whatever way they could. It had nothing to do with wanting equality, but everything to do with being equal to the task."

On December 20, 1989, U.S. Forces launched *Operation Just Cause*, a military action to restore order in Panama and depose and capture Manuel Noriega. Though women were still prohibited from combat roles, expanding opportunities did allow them to serve in expanded positions that could place them in proximity to combat. On that day Captain Linda L. Bray, U.S. Army, commanded the 123-member 988th Military Police Company that arrived in theater from Fort Benning, Georgia. Ordered to capture a kennel housing Panamanian Defense Force guard dogs, she monitored the progress of a 30-soldier MP force as they surrounded an enemy compound. When the Panamanian force refused to surrender, she ordered her men to fire warning shots. When the enemy responded with return fire, directed at her people, Captain Bray ordered discretionary combat fire to defend themselves while preventing nearby innocents from being hit. By the time she arrived by jeep to personally command her forces, most of the enemy had fled, though she was subject to occasional sniper fire as she directed the securing of the area. On that day, Captain Bray became the first woman in history to command soldiers in a combat action.

Little more than a year later, on January 16, 1991, American Forces again went to war, this time against the army of Saddam Hussein. More than 40,000 military women were deployed, many of them manning guns as Military Police and other supportive but non-combat Military Occupational Specialties. Others flew in combat support aircraft and not always in the back...many of them were pilots. During that brief and decisively victorious war 16 women died and two suffered as Prisoners of War.

In 1994 the Department of Defense rescinded the "risk rule," a standard to determine in which combat support roles a woman could serve. The intent was to prevent women from *direct combat*, in keeping with long-standing military tradition, but had become so broad as to limit what aircraft a woman could pilot, on which ships she might serve, or what units she might command. The intent, to allow women to serve in or close to the combat theater in important positions but to spare them from duties that might lead to combat death or capture, was already stained with the blood of women who had died in service. While this DOD action still reserved such combat assignments as Infantry, Artillery, etc. for men only, it did greatly expand where and how women could serve.

Nearly a decade later American forces returned to the Persian Gulf to again confront Saddam Hussein and his tyrannical empire. On March 20, 2003, U.S. and Allied combat forces crossed the border into Iraq to engage the enemy. Behind them in their march on Baghdad rolled convoys of supply trucks, many of them driven by armored and armed young women soldiers serving in combat support roles. On March 23 one such convoy of the 507th Maintenance Company took a wrong turn, was surrounded by enemy fighters, and engaged. Two young women soldiers made history that day. Specialist Lori Ann Piestewa crashed her truck into a pole and was mortally wounded by enemy fire, becoming the first woman casualty in the Global War on Terrorism. Specialist Shoshana Nyree Johnson survived the firefight although suffering bullet wounds to both ankles, become the first Black female soldier in American history to suffer as a Prisoner of War. Twenty days later she and six of her comrades were found and rescued by U.S. Marines.

Not to be forgotten from the battle of that date was the fate Private First-Class Jessica Lynch who also survived the battle although injured. On April 1 she weakly greeted a joint force of U.S. Marines, Navy Seals, Army Rangers, Air Force Pararescue Jumpers, and Delta Force with the simple statement, "I'm a soldier too."

These young women who have proved they were equal to the task and given us women in uniform to respect and admire owe much to those that went before them, from the Molly Pitchers to the civilian contract nurses, Vietnam Veterans like Karen Offutt and peacetime achievers like Lieutenant General Carol Mutter.

As I have watched the news over recent years, as young women in uniform acquit themselves well on the field of battle, it has been with a mixture of both pride and consternation. I've come a long way since 1969 when I would duck into a building to avoid saluting a woman in uniform, but I'm still somewhat "Old Fashioned." In all honesty, the concept of women in combat remains alien to my own thinking--I won't challenge those who support it, nor will you find me speaking out against it. I simply leave it to the evolution of our society to determine when and where women will find their own roles.

Early in 2006 as part of my work to preserve the history of our heroes, I began establishing a digital database of military heroes who had received some of our nation's highest awards for valor. As I slowly typed the citations for awards of the Silver Star, the military's third-highest award for valor, I ran across the name of Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester. On March 20, 2005, two years to-the-day after American combat forces invaded Iraq, she became the first woman since World War II to receive the Silver Star, and the first in history to receive it for valor in a direct combat action. Slowly, with my reservations about women in combat still coloring my thoughts, I entered the words of her citation on my computer:



"For exceptionally valorous achievement during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Sergeant Leigh Hester's heroic actions during combat operations in Iraq contributed to the overwhelming success of the Multinational Corps-Iraq mission. While serving as the Team Leader for Raven 42B in the 617th Military Police Company, Sergeant Hester led her soldiers on a counterattack of anti-Iraq forces (AIF) who were ambushing a convoy with heavy AK-47 assault rifle fire, RPK machine gun fire, and rocket propelled grenades. Sergeant Hester maneuvered her team through the kill zone into a flanking position where she assaulted a trench line with grenades and M-203 rounds. She then cleared two trenches with her squad leader where she engaged and eliminated three AIF with her M-4 rifle. Her actions saved the lives of numerous convoy members. Sergeant Hester's bravery is in keeping with the finest traditions of military heroism and reflects distinct credit upon herself, the 503d Military Police Battalion (Airborne), the 18th Military Police Brigade, and the United States Army.

When I had finished typing the citation, I re-read the words on the screen, still unsure how I felt about women in combat. Then, under my breath I caught myself muttering, "Damn, now there's an NCO I would be proud to follow anywhere!"

Doug Sterner

Defining Human Rights

My Brother's Keeper

While I've never been much of a hobbyist--perhaps more for lack of time than lack of interest, one thing I have always enjoyed is collecting quotations. Over the years I have compiled thousands, categorizing them and sharing them with others. Despite the large size of my collection, I face little difficulty answering that common question, "What is your favorite quote?" Attributed to "Anonymous" it says simply:

"You may be one person in the world, but to one person you may be the world!"

I was raised the oldest child in a family of four children, a community of tens of thousands, and a world of billions. As a teenager I had pimples, long skinny legs, and long straight, ashen-blond hair. I always felt very plain in my appearance and was only an average student. I was very shy although I did enjoy talking to people, especially small children, one on one. I would never have stood out even in a small group and grew up feeling personally rather inconsequential in the grander scheme of life.

After me was a sister, Melody, and a brother, Robert. My youngest brother Derrick was a "special" child; he was born mentally retarded. As I grew, I watched him struggle to do even the simple things I took for granted. He didn't walk until he was three years old and uttered his first words shortly after that. They were: "Jesus loves me," which he said in a singsong kind of voice because we played the song often on our record player. As we grew up with Derrick however, as a family we never really noticed how different he was, though unfortunately other people not only noticed he was different, but for some reason received joy from pointing out his differences. They would imitate the way he spoke and acted. Derrick never seemed to notice how mean spirited some people could be. He always smiled and talked to everyone, "Hi, how are you?"

As the oldest child I worked with Derrick trying to teach him things he needed to know, and in caring for him first found my own personal importance in life. I noticed that he really liked my ventriloquist dummy, Danny. Whenever Danny would talk to Derrick, he paid more attention to the lesson. It was because of his reaction to Danny that mom encouraged me to volunteer to do ventriloquism at Derrick's school. In those days mentally retarded children didn't go to public schools; they went to private schools especially suited to their unique needs.

In Derrick's school I used Danny to teach good manners. Danny would sneeze and then I would remind him he should have covered his mouth. Danny became so alive to Derrick that soon he was blaming Danny for things he had done. One of my quote's notes: "If you have one child, you're a parent, two or more kids, you're a referee." Whenever one of us other older kids would get in trouble, we could blame one of our siblings. Derrick was the youngest and so when asked why he colored the television screen with crayons (he wanted his black and white television to be in color too), Derrick simply said, "Danny did it."

I felt especially responsible for Derrick. Whenever I would take him to the park or neighborhood swimming pool, I would stand up to anyone who made fun of him. Though I was a little shy and insecure around groups of people, I was always somewhat opinionated and never had a problem standing up for the underdog.

On one occasion Melody and Robert took Derrick to a local creek. Soon they were running home crying, "Derrick's been kidnapped." A couple of older kids told them that they could not return home with Derrick until they came back with a small ransom. Mom and I went to the creek where a couple of boys were standing with my brother. Mom started to grab one of them and I looked at the other boy and was a little intimidated by his size. But he was "threatening" my brother, so I took a deep breath to steady my nerves and went after him. It was amazing that while

I was always afraid to fight someone who was bullying me, I seemed to find the courage needed when someone I loved was in trouble. The boys scattered and we took Derrick home, smiling as usual; he never seemed to know that there was a problem.

When I met and fell in love with Doug in 1974, he literally forced me out of my shell. Doug is one of those rare individuals who only seems happy when he is doing something for others--to an extreme! When I first met him, he was working 100 miles away from my home in Missoula, Montana, and I only saw him on weekends. On those weekends however, Doug had commitments he intended to continue. Saturdays and Sundays, he took his guitar and visited several local nursing homes to sing and preach. If I wanted to date him I had only one option--to fit into that schedule and accompany him. I wasn't much of a singer, but I would often bring my new ventriloquist dummy, Otis, and walk around talking to the residents there. As long as I had Otis, I could talk to anyone. The residents would thank Doug for coming and also for bringing his *daughter*. He was 24 and I was 17, and the age difference was noticeable--though I didn't think it was to that extent.

Previously Doug wrote about our early efforts one Saturday each month to put together and present a program for children at a local church in Deer Lodge, Montana, after we were married. While we were doing those early programs, Doug insisted I perform a ventriloquist skit each month. I was still shy and insecure around groups of people, so Otis did most of the talking. When he was talking, I didn't feel that people were looking at me. The strangest thing is that since I began doing ventriloquism at the age of 12, I never really saw it as a talent. I guess I thought that if it was something I could do, it couldn't be that great. In time I found myself rather comfortable performing with Otis in front of a crowd and soon had as big of a part in the dialogue as Otis had!

This led to the birth of the Share Family and our evangelistic work for 8 years. We lived in a bus that Doug converted into a home; I called it our *Ghetto Winnebago*. Our oldest child, Jennifer, started traveling with us at the age of 18 months and our oldest son, William, was born while we were on the road. Six days a week we would hold family crusades in churches, subsisting on donations from those in attendance.

In 1984 with two growing children, we at last settled down in Denver, Colorado, where we found employment as a manager and maintenance couple in a 32-unit apartment community. At first, we thought that we would only settle down for a year in order to regroup and then start traveling again. Approximately a year later we learned I was pregnant again. With the upcoming birth of our third child, Douglas, going back on the road wasn't really an option so we directed our efforts towards our new career as apartment managers.

As managers Doug and I received a small but comfortable salary and, more importantly, our rent and utilities were provided by our employer. We had a comfortable life and security that many of the people from whom I collected rent every month did not have. Sometimes my heart broke as I watched them struggle through financially difficult times and, I must confess, I was pretty much a "soft touch" for their excuses. I worked with them over time as much as my limited authority allowed when they got behind in rent. More than once I would go to the store to buy groceries or other needs, then have one of the maintenance men deliver them anonymously. Ironically, our concern for our residents helped them to survive tough times and succeed, and as a result the properties we managed experienced low turnover rates and high occupancy. We quickly gained a reputation for finding ways to "turn around" a struggling apartment complex.

That success led to larger properties, this time HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) subsidized properties--often referred to as "public housing" or "the projects." In contrast to our earlier communities, most of the residents in the HUD properties were not hard working but poor people--most subsisted on Welfare and had done so all their lives. Though both

Doug and I had been raised in poor families, both split by divorce and where Welfare benefits and subsidies had got the family through some lean years, it was hard to adjust to a society where Welfare was a way of life. In these apartment communities many of our residents believed it was the Government's responsibility to take care of them. For Doug and me it was a challenge not to become piously self-righteous and tell those residents to "Pull themselves up by their bootstraps" and improve their lives.

In 1990 our company sent us from Denver to a large but struggling HUD property in Pueblo, 100 miles to the south. While I was not happy to move to Pueblo, the manager's unit there would provide us with an extra bedroom which was greatly needed since we had recently welcomed our fourth child, Tiffany, into the family.

As our hearts broke for the young boys and girls whose homes we managed, most of them without a father living in the home, we again began to reach out. Doug started a Cub Scout pack with the help of a couple of friends. He insisted that every boy that joined would immediately have a uniform, regardless of whether or not his mother could afford it, so that each boy would have a sense of belonging. Our company, recognizing the importance of what we were doing, established a special petty cash fund to help with that effort.

Doug bought all of the boys a pocketknife and taught them how to use it safely. Sometimes his boss chided him, "We're trying to get weapons out of the projects, and then you go and give them to every kid in the place." Later he even enrolled all of his boys in a Hunter Safety Course, teaching them to shoot. Every one of his scouts earned their Colorado Hunter Safety Course certificate.

Drawing on his military background Doug also taught the kids how to build a rope bridge, a teambuilding project they all took pride in. But ever one to go to the extreme, within a few months he was also teaching them how to tie a rope around their waist, a Swiss Seat. He taught them rappelling, starting them on a 12' plywood incline, but soon thereafter the adults would gather in the parking lot to watch their children rappelling from the second story roofs of the apartment buildings.

At the same time, I organized a club for the girls. After examining several programs, I finally settled on the curriculum from the "Learning for Life" extension of the Boy Scout program. I taught the girls traditional *women's* skills; cooking, sewing, crocheting, many of which attracted the attention of adult women in our community, and soon the girls and their mothers were engaged in projects together. At the same time the girls became interested in the exciting things the boys were doing, and Doug eagerly welcomed them to join in. At age 6 our youngest daughter, along with her friends, was rappelling from second-story rooftops and even from 50' cliffs at the nearby Pueblo reservoir.

Doug and I have always believed that giving to others is a critical part of growing and maturing in life. With that philosophy in mind we taught our scouts and clubbers, boys and girls who themselves had very little, how to find ways to give back and to serve others. One year on Thanksgiving we asked our company to purchase 30 turkeys and approached the various vendors who did business with us to donate other food supplies. The day before Thanksgiving we assembled our kids to work throughout the day and all night long in shifts, preparing hundreds of Thanksgiving Day dinners to meet the entire apartment community. The next day when the adult residents came into our community room for dinner, the children waited the tables, served the food, and later did the dishes.

As an added feature, one week before Thanksgiving we got our local newspaper to announce that free Thanksgiving Day dinners would be delivered to all elderly and other Pueblo

shut-ins upon request. When calls came in, we logged the names and addresses, creating a city-wide map for deliveries. In the kitchen the boys and girls packaged meals to go and, throughout the morning several police cars pulled up to load the back seat with the prepared dinners. Several of our children made their first ride in a police car while helping a uniformed officer deliver dinner to a needy person. One resident jokingly noted, "We've got kids all over the place, lots of noise, and cops all over the place--and there hasn't even been a shooting!"

It was a long 24-hour period that literally wore the kids out, but their broad smiles and loud laughter told us it was a positive experience and a valuable learning lesson for them. They learned the joy of helping, of reaching out to others, and their eyes glowed with pride and a deep sense of self-satisfaction. That night many of them saw their own faces on TV news broadcasts, not as kids from the projects who had got into trouble, but as a community of young boys and girls who achieved something noble.

We really came to love the boys and girls in our apartment community, most of whom never knew what it was to have a father-figure or loose change to buy an ice cream cone. In May of 1991 Doug learned that he could rent the carnival rides at our City Park for a private party for a modest amount. During regular hours the rides cost a modest 25 cents, but at that time a single mother with two children received \$386 per month in Welfare benefits, one third of which was paid for rent and utilities. Even with \$300 - \$400 per month in food stamps, there was little left over for recreation and the 25-cent rides could be prohibitive.

Doug convinced our property owners to fund a community day at the park and for me it was personally fulfilling to watch the happy, smiling faces of those poor children as they rode attraction after attraction without having to pay a fee or wait in a line. Thinking of the many other poor children in Pueblo, that night I asked Doug, "What would happen if we tried to rent the park for a whole day, and made it free to all the children of Pueblo?" Doug encouraged me to look into it, promising we'd find the money somehow.

The next day I was at the City Park office as Jodi Lane, the recreation director, placed a call to Tony Langoni, director of the City Park complex. "I've got this crazy lady in my office," she told him, "that wants to rent the City Park Rides for a whole day and then open it up to all the kids in Pueblo."

"What a wonderful idea," Tony responded. "Send her in to see me." After a brief introduction during which Pam laid out her idea Tony said, "Why don't you rent the zoo for the day as well and make it free too." Pam replied that we couldn't afford that. "Then go out and get some of the businesses to help you," he advised. Suddenly our scope was expanded far beyond what we had ever expected. The day we selected for that first free, family day at the park was July 4, 1992.

On that day more than 7,000 people showed up to enjoy the zoo, the carnival rides, balloons, face painting, and more, all at a price they could afford. The only thing that cost money were the hot dogs and cokes; each was priced at a dime. We even managed to get a local charter company to donate three busses that throughout the day, ran a city-wide route to transport families without transportation. In fact for those very families we had rented, at a deep discount, two limousines to make trip after trip around the road that skirted the facility; for the first time in their young lives, kids from families too poor to own a car got to briefly ride in a limousine. I'll never forget the smiling face of one small boy who leaned out the back window of the big, black luxury car to call out to passers-by, "Pardon me, do you have any Grey Poupon?"

The success of that first event demanded a sequel and as Doug and I "went back to the drawing board" we sought for a way to fill the one void missing from the first event--a patriotic

emphasis. Soon we learned that Pueblo was the hometown of four living recipients of the Medal of Honor, at the time more than any city in America.* We invited all four of them, now living in other cities around the nation, to return for a reunion in Pueblo to speak to and inspire our kids. On July 4, 1993, they and four of their fellow recipients joined us in City Park for another day of free rides and activities, sharing their words of inspiration in a moving patriotic assembly. In honor of their return and Pueblo's unique distinction, Doug referred to Pueblo as America's "Home of Heroes" and even obtained a recognition as such from Congress. It was to become something far larger than we could have ever dreamed...after all, we were just two rather ordinary people who dreamed of doing something special for our city.

Meanwhile, in our second event Doug had again gone overboard as he was always inclined to do, and despite the generosity of local businesses he over-extended our personal finances and we spent the next two years trying to pay off bills. In 1994 we had a smaller, lower keyed "Family Fun shine Day" while planning to return in 1995 bigger and better than ever.

On April 19, 1995, we watched the television in horror as the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City suffered the bomb blast that killed 168 Americans and injured 853. As we watched the dedicated service of the rescue workers, we realized we were witnessing the acts of a new generation of heroes. At the time we had scheduled 18 Medal of Honor recipients to join us for another patriotic day at the park and, in the weeks that followed we sent out an invitation to the heroes of Oklahoma City to join them. They came, representing police, fire, EMTs, FEMA, and chaplains. Many were quickly recognizable by our local children who had watched on TV as EMT Lieutenant Tammy Eardman lifted the frail body of the child of former congressional candidate Dan Webber from the arms of a police officer, or as Police Chaplain Jack Poe did his best to provide words of faith and comfort in the aftermath of that tragedy.

Pueblo opened its heart and welcomed heroes, young and old, in honor of their service. On Independence Day that year the flag was raised from half-staff in Oklahoma City for the first time since the tragedy. The city's Police Chief Sam Gonzales, who had directed the rescue effort, missed that event--he was in Pueblo, Colorado, with sixteen fellow rescue workers as they were honored by America's greatest war heroes. Through it all, an emotional 3-day celebration of service, sacrifice, and valor, it was the young of Pueblo who benefited the most.

In 1996 we scaled back our Independence Day at the Park somewhat in order to accommodate a visit by sixteen Medal of Honor recipients during the school year. In one day, they spoke patriotic words of service and duty to 30,000 Pueblo youths during 53 assemblies county-wide that involved hundreds of civic leaders and citizens of our community. Entertainer Wayne Newton accepted our invitation to speak, flying in at his own expense and humbly deferring to the Medal of Honor recipients in his most captivating speech. He is and remains one of those truly patriotic Americans Doug and I admire most.

Bob Rawlings, publisher of our local paper and an intense patriot and World War II veteran simultaneously initiated efforts to erect a memorial to Pueblo's four Medal of Honor recipients at our newly constructed Convention Center. In 1997 an indoor display featuring the uniforms of our local heroes, adorned with the Medal of Honor, was unveiled. Two years later large signs were erected on Interstate 25 at the north and south approaches to our city, proudly proclaiming "Pueblo - Home of Heroes." In 2000 The Congressional Medal of Honor Society held their annual convention in our small town, bringing most of those living heroes to speak to our children. At that event Mr. Rawlings' dream was unveiled, becoming one of only four National Medal of Honor Memorials.

* In 1993 there were only 204 living recipients of our Nation's highest military award.

For the young girl who only four decades earlier had felt insecure and inconsequential in the master plan of life it was a heady moment. I had been privileged to do many things, touch many lives in a positive manner, and even had fulfilled a substantial role in renaming our city and reinforcing an already admirable sense of patriotism and service in our community. Surprised in how far I had come it was nevertheless an easy matter for me to look back with self-satisfaction and say, "I've done my part. Now maybe I can get on with a *normal* life." Little did I know that larger challenges lay only five years into the future.

On September 28, 2005, Doug and I watched with great interest, news reports of a growing storm in the Gulf of Mexico that seemed headed on a collision course with the city of New Orleans. Looking grim, Doug remarked, "I've got a nasty feeling about this. I'm afraid we could be looking at the greatest natural disaster that has ever hit our country." While the eternal optimist--show him a cloud and he'll find the rainbow--Doug has always had an uncanny and usually accurate foreboding of trouble.

The following night Doug sat up all night, glued to the television while I at last became tired and went to bed. On the morning of September 29, I awoke to good news. "Thank God, I was wrong," Doug exclaimed. Katrina hit New Orleans pretty bad, but they survived. In the early morning we watched a newsman reporting from the French Quarter where the streets were wet but not flooded, while he took shelter beneath an umbrella. We both breathed a premature collective sigh of relief.

Before noon the levies were breached and torrents of seawater flooded the city, killing hundreds, stranding thousands under desperate circumstances, and wiping out homes to leave tens of thousands homeless, penniless, and with no hope for the future. Doug and I watched helplessly for hours, mesmerized by the tragic images on the television screen and wracked by the frustration of knowing we should do something to help while confronting the reality that there was nothing we could do. For two days I couldn't get Doug off the couch--he simply sat there dozing off from time to time but always coming back to watch the unfolding tragedy. Looking into his eyes I saw that for the first time since 1972 he was suffering from "flashbacks," reliving a time when in a foreign land he had watched in sadness as innocent people were robbed of all they possessed by the war in Vietnam. Reverting to his days in the Army he said, "Damn it! Somebody needs to step up and show some leadership. This is unprecedented, there is no S.O.P. (military jargon for Standard Operating Procedures). It's time for somebody to throw out the book, cut through the red tape, improvise, and do what needs to be done for those poor people."

On Wednesday, the last day of August and two days after the storm hit, we watched as huddled masses waved in vain for help as they lay stranded on a bridge. The scenes from New Orleans certainly did not look like the United States--they looked even worse in fact, than the scenes of many third world countries. Our hearts, as did those of millions of compassionate Americans, yearned to help. The television said, "Send money," but we didn't have any money. So, it seemed that like so many other Americans, there was nothing we could do.

At last that night I convinced Doug to come to bed, but it was a futile effort to get him to rest. Finally irritated by his constant tossing and turning I growled, "Go ahead and get up and go get your FOX (TV) fix!"

"Honey," he said, "I've got an idea!"

"Oh no, here we go again," I thought silently, all too accustomed to Doug's ideas.

"Pam," he continued in the darkness of our bedroom, "there are hundreds of vacant homes here in Pueblo. A lot of them have been up for rent for months. Let's go out and raise the money

to rent some of them for six months, and then offer them free of charge to some of the families down there. I think we could easily raise enough to bring 20 families to Pueblo."

There it was and I swallowed hard. Doug has never done anything in moderation. I said, "There's already a lot of our own people in Pueblo who are poor and can't find a job because of the high unemployment rate. If you go bringing in 20 more families who need jobs, the folks here are going to run you out of town on a rail." Then, realizing that this was an argument that would not deter him I resorted to my collection of quotations, not to discourage him but to at least bring him back to reality. "You know," I continued, "Mother Theresa once said, 'If you can't feed a hundred starving people, then feed just one.' Why don't you just concentrate on helping one family and do it totally. Try and give them everything they need and make a difference for just one!"

Estimating that rent for a modest but nice home would run about \$600 a month, Doug was up at the crack of dawn and making phone calls. Within two hours he had raised enough pledges to cover three months' rent with prospects for more. Then he was off to the offices of our local newspaper where, due to our previous efforts, we had good friends. I can't help but believe that Chieftain Promotions Manager Paulette Stuart, who listened intently and then invited Jane Rawlings, daughter and assistant to the Publisher in to hear Doug plan to help one family, didn't realize even then what they were getting into. Like me they had come to love Doug and believe in him, even while recognizing and having experienced his tendency to excess. That irritating idiosyncrasy aside, we all believed in his dream and went to work to make it happen.

While Doug was in his meeting at the *Chieftain* I was on the telephone, doing my own part to make this happen. I called the local phone company to request donated telephone service for a family from New Orleans for six months. *Qwest* quickly volunteered to donate a cell phone with unlimited service... "At a time like this with families scattered we don't want them to worry about overages. Furthermore, if you relocate more than one family, we'll donate up to six phones, each for six months." A call to Comcast, our cable TV provider resulted in the same, not only the promise of free cable TV and Internet service for six months, but a willingness to extend that to up to six households if we brought in more than one family." When I contacted Pueblo Disposal, a smaller company that served the trash removal need of our citizens, they not only excitedly joined us by offering 6 months of free service, but again voluntarily offered to do so for up to 6 people if we brought in additional families. This time it wasn't Doug's impulsive "big ideas" but the good heart of our local businesses that were pushing us ever closer to a bigger job than we anticipated.

On Friday morning, just four days after the storm, the headline in the *Pueblo Chieftain* read "Anarchy in New Orleans" and beneath it ran a photo of four young black men carrying a woman who had fainted at the Super Dome. To the side was a companion article stating: "Officials use parking lot autopsies to deal with the dead--Refrigerated trucks serve as makeshift morgues along Mississippi coast." At the bottom of the front page was another article headlined: "Locals offer home to flood refugees" with a sub-title noting "Doug Sterner wants cities to each provide housing rent-free for a Gulf Coast refugee family for six months."

As early as 6 a.m. our phone started ringing, and it literally did not stop for the next three days. Most of the phone calls were basically the same, "I want to help but I don't have any money to give. I do have a couch/bed/dresser in my basement I'd like to give however, if it will help." Others offered to donate food, clothing, toys, and more. Local medical clinics offered services and non-prescription medical supplies, grocery stores bagged and donated food for the cause. We had already selected and agreed to pay rent for one house, a large four bedroom dwelling that belonged to Doug's friend Delbert Schmeling (you'll meet Delbert in a later chapter), but the concept had taken hold and we were suddenly inundated with calls to say, "I have a home up for rent that I'm

willing to donate, rent-free for six months, to a family displaced by the Hurricane." Phil Malouff, the City Attorney for neighboring La Junta and a personal friend called to say, "We've got two homes furnished and ready to go, rent free for six months. You bring us two families and when they get here their cupboards will be stocked with groceries, each will get a \$500 check to cover incidentals, and a local businessman has even offered to give each family a car." The package further included a waiting job for the head of household.

On Saturday the evacuation efforts began in Louisiana as tens of thousands of desperate and homeless victims began the trek to the Astro Dome in Houston. In Pueblo, Colorado, America's Home of Heroes, eager young teens were going in multiple directions to clean and make ready more than a half-dozen homes or apartments. Volunteer drivers made repeated trips to our small garage to load beds, sofa's, TVs, and more to furnish the dwellings. Other teams sorted through donated foods, stocking cupboards of now-empty units that would soon give hope to a family that had lost everything. At the desk in the bedroom Doug has converted to an office in our home, he ran the entire operation that included hundreds of volunteers with military efficiency. His first message to all new volunteers however was always the same, based upon the lesson he had often learned the hard way: *No good deed goes unpunished!*

"Don't do this if you want to be the *good guy*," he would announce with firm conviction. "Nobody has ever done anything like this before, which means we're going to screw up some things--make mistakes. Today's hero is tomorrow's scapegoat and when the immediate crisis blows over those mistakes will be magnified, and that is what people will remember you for. There is only one good reason to do this, because our brothers and sisters need our help. That must be your only motivation."

The unbelievable generosity of Pueblo's citizens soon filled our garage to the rafters, spilling out into the driveway. Navigating our living room was like running an obstacle course, and at all hour's young people pulled in to load up a truck to prepare a home, even while more donations poured in. We needed a larger, centralized warehouse, and I went to work on that project. A large building at the nearby State Fairgrounds was offered, and soon we were stockpiling goods there by the truckload. While it was fairly simple to stock homes with furniture and groceries, without knowing the family makeup of any potential families coming in, there was no way to plan for clothing or other specialized needs. To address the problem, I converted the warehouse into not only a place of storage but into a large supermarket containing virtually anything you could find in the national chains except for a cash register. Julie Kuhl, a friend from church, volunteered to organize and operate it. Over the following month she put in hundreds of hours from early morning to late evening. It was my plan that when families arrived, they would be shown to the store at the Fairgrounds where, both then and in the weeks that followed, they could come and freely shop for the things that they needed. Doug called it K-mart, for Katrina Mart, and even designed a sign to that effect that looked quite similar to that of its namesake.

Days later when the first families arrived in Pueblo they were met and greeted at our church by a support team including volunteer health professionals, teachers, social workers, and others. Among those who greeting the first caravan from Louisiana was our County Sheriff, Dan Corsentino, a personal friend. Watching the effort, he came over to congratulate us and advise that if we needed anything to let him know. Fifteen minutes later, thinking of the bundles of donated clothes that needed to be sorted, cleaned, and prepared for the Katrina Store I walked back to him. "Dan," I said, "I've thought of something. We've got all these clothes, and maybe half of them really aren't in a shape to give to others. Furthermore, they all need to be laundered and folded. Is there any chance you could have your inmates do that?"

"Done!" Dan said firmly. From that day forward, every morning a work crew of minimum-security inmates arrived at the Katrina Mart to pick up piles of clothes, linens, towels, and other cloth goods. By van they transported these to the county jail where volunteer inmates sorted out the trash and discarded it, laundered the rest, and returned it to us in the evening for placement on shelves or to be hung on hangers.

Seven days after the hurricane hit the Gulf Coast, in Pueblo, Colorado, and surrounding small towns there were more than a dozen homes and apartments ready for occupancy, each for from 6 to 12 months during which all rent, and utilities were donated. The real problem became locating and arranging for a family to inhabit them. In a call to one government shelter Doug was told, "We're not releasing any refugees at this time."

"What are they? Are they refugees or prisoners?" Doug exploded. In Pueblo the volunteers, city leaders, media, and others were becoming anxious. Though only little more than a week had passed since the disaster struck, homes were ready and in place within days. Those who had worked so hard around the clock saw the homeless living in parking lots, shelters, and the Astro Dome on television newscasts and wondered why they weren't flocking north to build new lives in the homes we had worked so hard to prepare. Our good intentions were nearly derailed by bureaucratic policies and red tape.

Like the good NCO Doug had been before decades before, he began to cut through that red tape to improvise. "Nothing good has ever been accomplished by one person alone," he has always said. Now he began building a network of partners, former Special Forces Vietnam Veteran Robert Noe and his wife Kathy in Louisiana began providing leads. His many friends in media, covering the events on scene, began tipping him to needs. He joined forces with *Angel Flights*, a group of volunteer pilots and through the Internet meet Todd Clevenger, a Denver businessman who was poised to drive to Louisiana and return with caravans of people needing help. At one point he even sent Andee Ames, a young lady from our church and a critical team leader, along with Reverend Keith Colvin of Pueblo West and head of the Pueblo N.A.A.C.P. to work in the Astro Dome in Houston. Though they were wearing official passes, in one interesting incident the two were almost arrested.

On Wednesday evening, September 7, the first caravan arrived from Louisiana after a 24-hour trip under the guidance of Todd Clevenger. En route two families were greeted in La Junta and taken to their new homes by Phil Malouff, then the convoy drove on to Pueblo. The group was fed at our church and then six families were escorted to their new homes while Television reporters captured images of tired but smiling faces. Todd then continued on to Denver with nearly as many additional families who were at last "going home." A final family arrived that evening from Houston, brought in on an *Angel Flight*. The huge new house that awaited brought tears to their eyes, but their joy was tempered by the fact that their 16-year-old daughter was missing and unaccounted for since the disaster. Two days later to me fell the exciting opportunity to drive to their house and tell them we had found her in Dallas, and that she would be arriving within two days.

The news reports of that first success immediately overwhelmed us with renewed offers, especially in nearby Colorado Springs where Pueblo's example became a model for others. Homes continued to be offered in Pueblo, surrounding cities, and as far away as New Mexico, Wyoming, Utah and Kansas. The Noes, as well as volunteers in the shelters we coordinated with in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, were able to bring in families needing homes, take them online, and allow them to watch the news reports coming out of Pueblo. For people who had nothing, and for whom the

offers extended in Pueblo seemed too good to be true, those video reports provided hope and reassurance and the effort continued to mount.

Caught up in the moment, Doug continued to approach the growing program with his typical naïve enthusiasm. One day he told me, "A psychologist from ***** just called. They have a home for six, furnished and rent-free for a year. It even comes with a car for which the insurance will also be paid for a year."

The city was a nearby community with something of a reputation for racial prejudice, perhaps largely unjust but it was known to number a considerable number of White Supremacist in or near the city. "Did you tell him that their family will probably be Black?" I asked.

"Hell no," Doug exploded. "If I have to tell them what color the person is who needs their help, I don't even want to work with them."

At last I convinced Doug that prudence dictated that he, at least for the sake of the family being relocated, pass on that information. The good doctor replied, "We figured that--in fact we hoped they would be Black. Our church stands ready to support them any way we can. Our city is changing, getting better, and we really believe that *adopting* a Katrina family will further help us change." It did indeed turn out to be a positive experience for all involved.

Such matters were not the least of Doug's impractical and pragmatic activities, and more than once I had to rise to his defense. "I hope Doug is getting FEMA numbers on all these people before he brings them in," one government official told me on the phone one day.

"Oh yes, he is," I lied while remembering what Doug had said in his own defense: "What would have happened in the story Jesus once told of the Samaritan, finding a man broken and bloody along the road when he fell among thieves had first said, 'Do you have a FEMA number? I can't help you if you don't.'"

Sal Pace, District Director for our Congressman, got caught up in the program and became one of our greatest allies. "John (the Congressman), told our whole staff to get behind you and cover your backside," he said. "You guys do your work and we'll do the paperwork." It was just one more expansion of an incredible network of volunteers. By Friday, September 9, while relief efforts in the Gulf continued to be tied up in bureaucratic red tape, more than a dozen families displaced by the disaster were now living in Pueblo, and at least that many in nearby towns. Their homes were clean and comfortable, they had telephones and television, their children were in school, and their future was secure for the next 6 to 12 months. On that day Congressman John Salazar personally came to Pueblo, greeting half-a-dozen of these families that had traveled north together for their first reunion over lunch courtesy of Pueblo Community College where Doug worked as an instructor. (During the relief effort John Eberwein, one of his fellow instructors, did double-duty to cover his classes and allow him to devote all his time and attention to the work of helping needy families.)

That day marked our youngest daughter's 16th birthday, normally a milestone and important moment in a young girl's life. Tiffany stoically accepted the fact that on this birthday there would be no celebration for her--mom and dad had more important work to do--in fact, Tiffany herself had to rush back to man the Katrina Mart. Doug was hoarse from working nearly 24-hours a day for nearly a week, and could hardly speak, though he did acknowledge Tiffany and announced that it was her birthday. Congressman Salazar stepped forward to lead the group in a birthday song that, though it was her only birthday present on that day, became one of her most memorable ones.

By the end of the month we had relocated 17 families in Pueblo, three shy of Doug's original dream. Partnering with others however, we were ultimately involved in relocating more

than 120 families in and around Pueblo and, indirectly, aided in finding homes for nearly 1,500 families throughout Colorado and nearby states. But knowing when to quit is equally as important as knowing when to start, and helping people does not mean subsequently micro-managing their lives. Human nature prompts us to sometimes change from being helpers to becoming nuisances. Our mission had been to give people with no hope new options. Given new opportunities, the time came towards the end of the month when we knew it was time to back off and give our adopted families the chance to make their own decisions, for the first time since the hurricane, and start rebuilding their lives.

POSADA, a local relief agency that had been doing this work locally for decades before Katrina, and who would continue it long after that tragedy was supplanted by future cases of human suffering, were the professionals. From day-one they had been our salvation, offering us both assistance and advice, partnering with us in every way that they could. Albeit with some sadness, the Home of Heroes Katrina Relocation Program was dismantled and we tried to return to what little normalcy remained for us at home. It was hard, but it was the right thing to do.

I would never have dreamed that one day I would participate in, or even that I was remotely capable of being a part of a program so wonderful as were those dark days in September 2005. The one thing that Doug and I agree on totally is that those weeks when we became part of a brotherhood far beyond our community were the defining weeks of our lives. Indeed afterward, there came those who found and highlighted our mistakes, but we were content to realize that we had done our best. We were also humbled and amazed by the team of volunteers from our own and surrounding communities that rose to the challenge of doing the impossible. From day one they had all wanted to help. Our own small part had consisted primarily of showing them how.

Perhaps nothing better illustrates the success of that month than yet another of those quotes from my collection. Margaret Mead once reminded us: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Pam Sterner

Who Is My Brother?

In 1974 singer/songwriter Harry Chapin released an album containing a song originally penned by his wife and titled "Cat's in the Cradle." The lyrics reflected a common sentiment among the young that their parents had become too preoccupied with making a living to build a life. It was a surprising and perhaps unfair, but valid indictment of men and women of the Greatest Generation who's one desire was that their children would have everything they did not.

Certainly, it is a noble dream for any mother and father to wish for their children a more prosperous life than they had in their own youth. This was acutely true among the men and women who gave birth to the Baby Boom. These were men and women who had suffered through the Great Depression only to come of age in a world at war where they themselves, by virtue of the demands of service, saw the carefree years of their youth supplanted by the ugly realities of war. In the post-war economic and technological boom, it was quite understandable that these men and women would want a better life for their own children.

Sadly however, "*enough*" was never enough, either in terms of money or conveniences. The drive to succeed and "keep up with the Joneses" spurred a generation of hard-working fathers who wanted to give their children everything. Rather than gratefully accept such sacrifice, these young eschewed the long hours and work-a-holic lifestyle that denied them quality time with mom and especially, dad. Chapin's hit song illustrates this well from the standpoint of one such fathers:

"A child arrived just the other day,
(He) came into the world in the usual way.
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay,
He learned to walk while I was away."
"My son turned 10 just the other day,
(He) Said 'Thanks for the ball now, c'mon let's play.'
'Will you teach me to throw?' I said, 'Not today. I've got a lot to do.'
He said, 'That's Okay.'"¹

The prosperous "Happy Days" of the 1950s provided the young men and women of the Baby Boom with a carefree lifestyle that fulfilled all but a sense of purpose. Middle- and Upper-Class young, having never known want and need, failed to appreciate the privilege they enjoyed or to understand the underlying history that motivated their parents to prioritize material possessions. Growing civil unrest in the South and inner cities in the latter part of the 1950s vividly illustrated to these teens of a new generation the plight of the American poor and, whether out of compassion or out of a sense of guilt, many found the sense of purpose they had sought for in the challenge of addressing economic inequities in America. Young men and women he had everything found it easy to forsake their own privilege in a desire to help those who had nothing. For them however, the real challenge was in finding a way to address those inequities--a vehicle through which to effect change and "share the wealth." Their zeal and idealism were not always welcome however, especially at a time when our nation was involved in a cold war of ideology wherein any form of socialism was quickly branded "Communism".

Reverend Jesse Jackson, an early leader for social change under Dr. Martin Luther King in promoting programs for the poor said, "Never look down on a person unless you are helping him up." In that, he speaks to two issues; he warns against prejudice and stereotyping the less fortunate, and advocates for assistance to the needy. It is a call to a life process we call "Humanitarianism," defined as "an informal ideology of practice, whereby people practice humane treatment and

provide assistance to others; it is the doctrine that people's duty is to promote human welfare."² That informal ideology resounded in the young of the Defining Generation, and motivated them to unprecedented activism, both at home and abroad.

Such benevolence is not, however, universally approved of or admired. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), the German philosopher whose writings were broadly read and accepted in American society, eschewed programs of social welfare. He largely saw "charity" as a means whereby the weak and poor took advantage of the strong and the rich, thereby remaining unmotivated to set to the work of improving their own lives. A common refrain during the first half of the Twentieth Century was the statement, "Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps." While the origins of that quote are unknown, it became widely popular after it was published in James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922 and continues to be widely used to this day.

The compassion, concern for community, and cultural co-operation that flourished among the young of the Defining Generation was not unique to them. Humanitarianism speaks of a moral obligation, rooted in Scripture, and thus was an important part of American Society when the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock. It was just this sense of community that enabled them to pull together and survive, and even that survival became possible only because of the kindness and concern of their neighbors, the Native Americans. In those early days survival of even the weakest was critical to the success of the whole, demanding that they pull together, help each other out as necessary, and share together in their success. The early Pilgrims shared a strong sense of family and community, a belief that "I am my brother's keeper." It was essential to their survival, critical to the common good. When the first year of crisis was past, they gathered together for a communal meal, inviting their brothers of the Indian nation, to give thanks for God's graciousness and for the help of each other.

From a perspective of religious faith the moral obligation to help those in need is aptly and bluntly defined in I John 3:17 "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him." At Plymouth Rock, numbering only slightly more than 100 souls, it was easy to see every person in the community as a "brother." This was a manageable "circle of responsibility." One hundred fifty years later more than 2,000,000 souls lived in the American colonies and it became much more difficult to define to whom each American had a debt of responsibility in time of need. Biblical teachings still greatly influenced American society with its challenge toward brotherhood, but due the sheer size of the American population the question became:

"Who is my brother?"

Obviously, of course, brotherhood is first and foremost defined within the context of the contiguous family (mother, father, children, grandparents), and then broadened to include the extended family (uncles, aunts, and cousins). Historically Americans, as well as other world societies, have "pulled together" within the family to aid and assist each other for the common good. We are, however, a social species, and the term brotherhood has generally been expanded to include a social network such as church and secular fraternal organizations. In smaller communities, such as those that arose in the desolate West, entire communities became rather familial. In thinking of the frontier, one cannot escape visions of wagon trains banded together for security and the common good, or the traditional "barn raising" when an entire community turned out to help a *brother* and his family.

As our nation has grown and our people gained a sense of nationalism, brotherhood has further expanded often to theoretically include all who are Americans. By the 1860s our population had increased to more than 31 million souls and, during the Civil War of that period, we are

reminded that the conflict pitted "brother against brother," both figuratively and literally. Furthermore, during any time of war those who serve in uniform develop a keen sense of brotherhood, as aptly illustrated in the popular World War II series "Band of Brothers". During World War II that "brotherhood" numbered 16 million, a very large circle of familial responsibility.

Thus, broadly defined in history, with a mounting sense of personal responsibility to one's brothers and sisters the 60s generation was still confronted with the question as to how large that brotherhood was to whom they had a responsibility. For the first time in American history it would take on a global perspective to include all humanity, a brotherhood and sisterhood numbering 3 billion people.

While we would not in any way wish to take away from the generous heart of previous generations of Americans, from the birth of our nation in 1776 until January 20, 1961, the United States remained largely isolationistic. American society pulled together in difficult times, uniting for the common good. The nineteenth century did produce great philanthropists like John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie who gave millions to improve American society. Global needs were addressed by visionary young men and women who, like their foreign counterparts, traveled to underprivileged and *pagan* nations as missionaries, supported by the charitable contributions of churches at home. For the most part however, until the Great Depression forced state and federal programs of benevolent assistance to the poor, there existed few government programs to address our nation's most needy. Furthermore, beyond those who became foreign missionaries there was little personal concern in America for poverty, disease, and human rights abuses abroad. Essential, one did his "Christian duty" by giving to the church, when then dispatched and supported those idealists who became missionaries of doctors abroad.

Before one judges too harshly the isolationist tendencies of early America, it is important to remember that while world population was small (only about 1.5 billion before 1900), until the Twentieth Century our world was geographically a very large and expansive place. It took weeks to travel from the United States to foreign nations either to the East or to the West. From a standpoint of practicality, with the exception of neighboring Canada and Mexico, what happened in the rest of the world "was not our concern" because we remained isolated not only by philosophy but by distance. While those miles that separated us would remain static however, advances beginning with the Wright Brothers successful flight in 1903, suddenly made our world much smaller. Even then, however, Americans tended to keep to themselves, concentrate on problems at home, and look the other way when distasteful events happened elsewhere around the globe.

In 1916 Woodrow Wilson won election to a second term as President under the slogan, "He kept us out of war." The conflict that had begun two years earlier was seen by the American public as "Europe's War," certainly no concern for America. One year later American Doughboys were at last sent to France to join the battle under a new slogan, "The world must be made safe for democracy." Admirably, within 18 months American intervention turned back the tide of aggression and freed a continent.

In his April 6, 1917, speech to Congress calling for American intervention in World War I, President Wilson placed a priority upon bringing "peace and safety to all nations and (making) the world itself at last free." It was an admirable goal, reflecting a new role for the United States in world affairs and amplified by President Wilson's efforts to enroll the United States in a new League of Nations that was proposed in the Paris peace talks that ended the Great War. Wikipedia notes: "The League's goals included disarmament, preventing war through collective security, settling disputes between countries through negotiation diplomacy and improving global welfare.

The diplomatic philosophy behind the League represented a fundamental shift in thought from the preceding hundred years."³

Admirable as was the concept behind the League of Nations, for President Wilson it was a hard sell. Article X called for member nations to be prepared to deploy military forces around the world to confront any aggression. For an American public that was welcoming home 2 million men and women who had already sacrificed for the security of Europe and that mourned the loss of 100,000 of them who had paid the ultimate sacrifice, the idea of having to go back and do it all again was reprehensible. The U.S. Senate, led by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge who had long proposed a grander role for America in world affairs but who opposed the League of Nations as undermining American sovereignty, refused to ratify this new world community. Over the next two decades the United States was to become vociferously isolationistic, avoiding global conferences and treaties, restricting trade, and even capping the influx of foreign immigrants into the United States.*

In 1920 the American public in general wanted only to be left alone to enjoy the fruits of the industrial boom and a strong economy, giving way to the hedonism of the "Roaring Twenties." Still, there remained some who were forward-thinking enough to be concerned for conditions around the world. During the *Great War* Eddie Rickenbacker earned acclaim as America's Ace of Aces by killing Germans and shooting down airplanes. Witnessing the post-war poverty of his former enemy, he actively called for American aid to rebuild that nation. In 1922 he proposed his *Rickenbacker Plan for World Peace*. "I likened Germany to a tramp, out of a job, hungry, poorly clothed and desperate--practically in the gutter," he wrote in his autobiography. "Some might have said it served the German people right, but I could not feel that way...I believed that we in America should help those people realize their republican dream...It was now in our own interest to lend a hand to lift the German people to their feet again...If we did not come to Germany's aid, I could foresee some kind of dictatorship arising."⁴

Though the *Rickenbacker Plan for World Peace* received positive attention in the media, due largely to the man's celebrity, "*the public was not interested.*"⁵ A limited amount of foreign aid was in fact provided to the struggling nation, but it fell far short of what was needed to lift them above the tragedy their defeat in war had wrought. Indeed, they began looking elsewhere for a "savior."

In the closing months of the "Roaring Twenties" the bottom fell out and the United States found itself in a Great Depression, millions of Americans faring little better than the poorest citizens of third world countries. That economic collapse was universally felt at about the same time around the world. Canada was hit harder than any nation other than the United States. Great Britain's exports dropped 50% and unemployment reached more than 20%. In an Australian economy dependent upon selling its agricultural products abroad, unemployment reached 29%. In Japan, which was a growing economic power in the world, more than 3 million workers became unemployed, personal income dropped 30%, and the value of exports plummeted by 50%.

Perhaps the hardest hit was the nation of Germany, still struggling to rebound from the destruction of World War I and faced with continuing to pay war reparations. To further compound the problem, American financial aid to Germany for its rebuilding effort dried up with the collapse of our nation's banking system. In 1934 the German people finally found the savior they sought as Adolph Hitler ascended to power as Chancellor. He was indeed the dictator Eddie Rickenbacker had warned might arise and 45 years later he wrote, "I still believe that (the

* In 1921 the United States ended its previous "Open Door" policy of immigration and set annual quotas. By 1929 only 150,000 foreigners were allowed to immigrate into the United States to pursue the *American Dream*.

Rickenbacker Plan for World Peace) would have worked. It is certainly a tragic and inescapable fact that World War II, the most terrible in the history of mankind, did occur. It cost the United States alone \$600 billion to fight that war. Had we spent 2 percent of that sum in 1922 (to help Germany), we could have changed the course of history. Not only would World War II have been averted, but also its aftermath, the deplorable conditions and problems that we face today in almost every corner of the globe."⁶

The impact of the New York Stock Market crash and subsequent ripple effect around the globe clearly demonstrated that whatever happened in the United States impacted the rest of the world. Conversely, it was hard for struggling depression-era Americans to perceive that what happened in the rest of the world effected the United States. Deplorable poverty, high unemployment, and broken economies left the American populace, as well as other struggling nations, with an "every man for himself" attitude that would have grave consequences.

With world attention being focused inward Japan took advantage of the distraction to invade and occupy Manchuria in 1931. Perceived by both the United States and the League of Nations as an aggressive act of war, American diplomats wary of war gave only lip-service condemnation for the deed and the inherent weaknesses of the League of Nations rendered its condemnation inconsequential. In 1933 Japan withdrew its membership from the League.

Japanese imperialism and aggression continued into China over the years that followed, becoming increasingly violent and brutal. On December 12, 1947, Japanese aircraft made an unprovoked attack upon the U.S.S. Panay, an American gun boat on patrol in the Yangtze River to protect American merchant shipping. Three American sailors were killed, 43 sailors and 5 civilians were wounded, and the Panay was sunk. The incident created international tension, but the United States, eager to avoid war, settled for an apology and payment of an indemnity of \$2,214,007.³⁶

Exactly a year and a day after the Panay Incident, Japanese military forces marched into and took control of the Chinese capital of Nanking. For the next six weeks the invaders pillaged the city, raping and killing in a fashion that would rival the atrocities of Nazi Germany. No accurate tally of casualties is available to this day, but estimates put the death toll at somewhere between 100,000 and 300,000 Chinese, most of them civilian men, women and children. Japanese media didn't shy away from the massacre, reporting on the action in a militaristic manner that would justify it in the homeland. Reports smuggled out to free world media told of pregnant women being raped, then their bellies opened up so that the unborn fetus could be tossed into the air and caught on the point of a bayonet. It was said that Japanese soldiers beheaded so many Chinese that their arms became sore.

Reports of the genocide were published in the *New York Times*, *Reader's Digest*, *Time Magazine*, and other reputable news outlets. But the nature of the atrocities reported were so heinous and incomprehensible, most of the American public opted to believe they were untrue embellishments. Furthermore, people of the United States had little concern for what was happening in Asia. A far-more-fearsome threat loomed in Europe.

The fate of a quarter million or more Chinese savaged by Japan, millions of Soviet citizens massacred by Soviet General Secretary Josef Stalin in the Great Purge of the late 1930s, or the 6 million Jews who were murdered by Adolph Hitler and his Nazi regime during the Holocaust, bear sobering testimony to the cost of indifference to world affairs. Although in the latter example the full range of that atrocity was not revealed until 1945, there was ample evidence of the growing genocide as early as 1939. Tragically, for the general public and the politicians who controlled American policy in that decade, it was easier to go into denial or isolate the problem by asking,

"Am I my brother's keeper?" Ultimately 16 million children of that indifferent generation would pay for the isolationist views of their parents at the cost of nearly a half-million lives lost in combat.

To the credit of The Greatest Generation, not only did they confront and defeat the mass-murders that had inflicted historic levels of violence and depravity upon mankind, they learned from the mistakes of their parents. In 1947 the Marshall Plan, named for the U.S. Secretary of State, set forward programs of financial and humanitarian assistance to rebuild war-torn Europe. That aid however came with a caveat, tied to issues of human rights; recipient nations had to agree to admirable but fundamental civil rights for their people. Unwilling to make those concessions to freedom the Soviet Union opted out and we entered more than a decade of *Cold War*. Through the Marshall Plan more than \$13 billion in aid was delivered to needy countries that acquiesced to the human rights stipulation. By the time the plan had run its course, all but Germany had returned to an economic growth above their pre-war levels.

The Marshall Plan was a proactive step, in light of the lessons learned from post-World War I policy, to grow democracy and freedom by spreading prosperity. That philosophy may be best echoed in the words of General Lucius Clay. After the war ended there was concern that the extreme poverty of war-devastated Germany would drive that nation to cling to our new enemy, the Soviet Union. In defense of the Marshall Plan Clay noted, "There is no choice between being a communist on 1,500 calories a day and a believer in democracy on a thousand."

Further to the credit of lessons learned from past mistakes, even while World War II was at its zenith the United States entered into discussions with our allies for creation of a global fraternity similar to, or supplanting, the League of Nations. When the United Nations was formed to replace the earlier League that the U.S. Senate had spurned, this time the United States became not only a member, but an active participant.

In yet another irony, during the 1950s while the United States adopted a more global mission and additional programs were proposed to address world inequities, the chasm between the American middle class and those who lived in abject poverty seemed to expand. It would not be inaccurate to say that as we became more concerned on a global scale, we lost sight of the needy at home. The Roosevelt programs of the 1930s became the first major steps in government programs of financial assistance to the needy (as opposed to previous programs of social welfare as frequently a charitable program from within America's churches.) In contrast to developing social welfare programs of the 50s and 60s however, the New Deal focused primarily on providing work through Federally created job forces and stimulating the economy through public spending (salaries) on projects, rather than on welfare handouts. Unearned subsidies to American needy were often denigrated by many hard-working Americans bent on achieving success and the American Dream through the sweat of the brow. In was in this context that an earlier refrain gained new prominence, "Pulling oneself up by the bootstraps."

In his autobiography one of the great *success stories* of the Defining Generation, General Colin Powell, addressed this continuing philosophy when two decades after the turbulent 60s he served under two Presidents who had grown up under the bootstrap mentality. He noted: "Never in the two years I worked with Ronald Reagan and George Bush did I detect the slightest trace of racial prejudice in their behavior. They led a party, however, whose principal message to black Americans seemed to be lift yourself by your bootstraps. All did not have bootstraps; some did not even have boots."⁷

On January 21, 1961, our President introduced a new concept in the war on poverty, illiteracy, and human rights. For nearly two centuries our country benefited from philanthropists who gave of their wealth to build schools, libraries, orphanages, and hospitals. During that time

charities had time and again addressed the needs of people in crisis, tended to the poor, and donated funds to missionaries both at home and abroad. Humanitarian organizations like the American Red Cross provided needed goods, medicine and services around the world as well as at home.

Speaking to all of America, President John F. Kennedy told us on that day, "The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life." It was a reminder to think globally--to develop a sense of brotherhood not only locally or nationally, but globally.

Narrowing his focus to the young he continued: "Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans, born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this Nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world. Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

The President concluded with a challenge that would resonate for decades to come. It is, perhaps, that president's most-remembered phrase and became the anthem of the Defining Generation: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." It was a call to volunteerism, giving not only of our resources but giving of ourselves.

In that moment many of the young men and women of the Defining Generation at last found the vehicle to give their own lives a new sense of meaning and purpose.

¹ "Cat's in the Cradle" Lyrics, Harry Chapin

² Wikipedia

³ Ibid

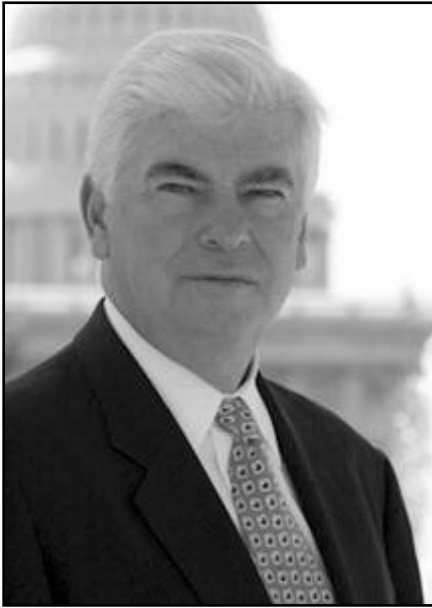
⁴ Rickenbacker, Edward V., Rickenbacker, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1967, pp252-253.

⁵ Ibid, p254

⁶ Ibid, p254

⁷ Powell, Colin L., My American Journey, Ballantine Books, New York, 1995, p. 400.

Christopher Dodd & Christopher Shays



"The Peace Corps is something of an allegory for our own lives and our own selves--how difficult it is to reconcile the calculating side of our intelligence with the part that wants to roll up its sleeves and dig a well--but what great things we can achieve when we join the two."

Senator Chris Dodd

"Peace Corps volunteers have an extraordinary opportunity to give and also an extraordinary opportunity to learn. We walk on their roads, we ride their buses, we speak their language, we drink in their bars, we shop their shops. We are American citizens who have an opportunity to give a great deal, and it is an extraordinary opportunity."

Congressman Chris Shays

Christopher J. Dodd and Christopher H. Shays sit on opposite sides of the aisle and in separate houses on Capitol Hill. Dodd, a Democrat and candidate for his party's 2008 Presidential nomination, is considered a left-of-center liberal who has served as a U.S. Senator since 1981. Shays, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, is the only Republican from the New England states to survive a sweeping shift from right to left in the 2006 election. One of the more non-partisan members of Congress, many in his party have derided him with the term RINO (Republican in Name Only) for his tendency to side on some issues with the opposition. Political affiliation aside, the two men have much in common besides their shared first name.

Born in Connecticut only slightly more than a year apart on the cusp of the "Baby Boom," both came of age during the 1960s. As young men facing the challenges of the Defining Generation, President John F. Kennedy's words about national and global responsibilities resounded strongly in both of their young minds. After graduating from college both men opted to answer that challenge by serving in the newly established Peace Corps, Dodd at age 22 during the period from 1966 to 1968 and Shays at age 23 from 1968 to 1970.

While researching for this book we found particularly interesting and refreshing, the response of Congressman Shays' office when we called for an interview. "You know," responded John Cardarelli in Congressman Shays' Press Office, "Senator Dodd also served in the Peace Corps." Seemingly innocuous on the surface, upon reflection we came to realize that Peace Corps service provides those who have accepted that challenge a sense of fraternity that transcends partisan politics or political affiliation. Indeed, proportionally, the number of members of the 110th U.S. Congress who have served in the Peace Corps vastly eclipses the ratio of legislators who have served in the military.¹

Born May 27, 1944, in Willimantic, Connecticut, Christopher Dodd was raised in a large family, the fifth of six children. It was a family dedicated to public service and concerned with both home-grown and global injustice. His father, Thomas Dodd, served as a Special Agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) in 1933-34 and then as assistant to five successive Attorney Generals. Many of his cases involved investigating and prosecuting civil liberties violations and criminal activities of the Klu Klux Klan. Following World War II, he served as one of the lead prosecutors during the Nuremberg war crimes tribunals, and was recognized for his exemplary work with award of the Medal of Freedom in 1946.

In 1952 Thomas Dodd was elected to the first of two terms as a Congressman from Connecticut, and in 1958 was elected to represent his state in the United States Senate. When President John F. Kennedy was inaugurated on January 20, 1961, by virtue of his father's position in Congress 17-year-old Christopher Dodd was privileged to be among the crowd that stood on the Capitol steps to witness that historic moment. He was personally moved by the President's challenging words to a new generation, "Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country."

After obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature from Providence College in 1966, Chris Dodd acted upon President Kennedy's challenge by joining the Peace Corps. "By the summer of 1966, I was carrying a 30-pound backpack for five miles through the mountains of the Dominican Republic, and as the sweat ran down my face, my socks dissolved inside my boots, and

¹ Since establishment of the Peace Corps, 187,000 young men and women have volunteered and been trained for service, 6 of whom currently serve in the 110th U.S. Congress. Comparably, while nearly 150 members of the 110th Congress are veterans of military service (25 times the number of legislators with Peace Corps duty), during that same period more than 15 million men and women (80 times the number of Peace Corps volunteers) have been drafted or enlisted for service in the U.S. Military.

several dozen large insects ate me alive, I remember thinking, very distinctly--'This'll make a great introduction for my speech to the National Peace Corps Association'," he recalled in 2006.¹

Remembering those days of foreign service when the 22-year-old son of a United States Senator left the security of a comfortable home in America to help strangers in a foreign land, Dodd says it was one of the two most nerve-wracking moments of his life. The second came two decades later when Dodd was himself a U.S. Senator, and it came in the same place.

"The first (most nerve-wracking moment) came in 1966, on the road to Monción, a village in the rural hills," he says. "I was a new Peace Corps volunteer, and I couldn't believe what I'd just gotten myself into. I was 22 years old, barely spoke a word of Spanish, and had no idea what I was doing. I'd been proud of my idealism; but at that moment, it felt like pure naiveté. It felt like my family was on the other side of the world. I focused on the road and thought about two years with no one to talk to and no place to call home.

"I'd never worked so hard in my life as I did the first summer in Monción. And the more I got my hands dirty, the less I worried. With the local workers, I helped finish building a library, a youth club and a maternity clinic—projects I'd never imagined undertaking. We would take breaks in the heat of the day, sitting together in the shade and speaking mostly in gestures and stray syllables. But every day I picked up five or 10 new words of Spanish. The first thing I learned to ask for was a drink of water!

"When I could finally make my way through a conversation, I tried to answer the one question that came from almost everybody: "¿Por que viniste?" Why did you come here? What made you leave your home and your country and live with us for two years?

"I had a simple answer for them: Someone asked me to....

"I recalled standing on the East Front of the Capitol on a freezing January day in 1961, listening to President Kennedy's famous inaugural address. I understood that when he talked about a torch being passed, he was talking to me, to my entire generation. President Kennedy asked us to stand up and lead—and that's what I was trying to do. All of that probably didn't come across as clearly in my halting Spanish. But I think my friends caught the drift of it."²

Dodd's two years in the Dominican Republic left an indelible impression on his life. He came away from the experience with a new realization as to how fortunate he was to live in a prosperous country like the United States. In a sense he left his heart in Central America where he had witnessed how difficult life could be in other parts of the world. The experience left him with two key ideals that would later mark much of his work as a public servant. Dodd truly came to believe that those with privilege had an inherent obligation to reach out to others as he had helped the people of the Dominican Republic. Further, he came to a firm belief that in helping others he had enhanced his own life, and that an important factor in developing good citizens at home was a call to every young American to public service.

Chris Dodd's pride in the important work of the Peace Corps has made him not only one of its greatest proponents, but also one of its most astute historians. He likes to point out, for instance, that months before President Kennedy set forth his vision in his inaugural speech, he had alliterated the message in an impromptu speech at the University of Michigan.

While on the campaign trail in October 1960, President Kennedy arrived late at night at the University of Michigan where he was surprised to find a crowd of 10,000 students wanting to hear from him. Drawing on a speech recently written by Ted Sorensen and meant to be delivered two weeks later at the Cow Palace, candidate John F. Kennedy improvised. "How many of you (students) who are going to be doctors are willing to spend your days in Ghana?" he asked.

"Technicians or engineers, how many of you are willing to work in Foreign Service and spend your lives traveling the world?" The crowd of young responded with cheers and applause.

"I don't know exactly why the idea came to Kennedy on the steps of the Michigan Union," says Dodd, "but if any of us should ever be lucky enough to have 10,000 young men and women waiting for hours to see us outdoors in the cold, I'd hope we could come up with something as meaningful. President Kennedy didn't have an organization for this idea, he didn't have funding-- he didn't even have a name for it! But this is exactly where we trace our (Peace Corps) origin, before bureaucracy, before executive orders, all the way back to the spontaneous and nameless need."³

John Kennedy reiterated his challenge to a young America again, this time as planned, in San Francisco. Noting the humble beginnings of the organization, Dodd likes to point out with a laugh that this came at a venue called the "Cow Palace." The noble concept quickly embraced by the young however, was not so eagerly welcomed by the older. Vice President Richard Nixon, running against Kennedy in the Presidential election called the Peace Corps a "haven for draft-dodgers." Even President Eisenhower scoffed, calling it "a juvenile experiment." Kennedy won the election, set forth his vision at inauguration, and the Peace Corps was born.

During that period when the Defining Generation came of age the United States was involved in two wars. In Vietnam there was the war of bullets, during which one of Chris' friends, a Marine, lost his life at Khe Sanh in the defense of freedom. The other was a war of ideology...the *Cold War* around the globe, in which Chris shared his life to spread freedom.

President Kennedy had spoken to that new kind of warfare, and ideological struggle against Communism in a battle for hearts and minds in the world in his "Cow Palace" speech, noting:

"I want to turn now to the problems of our foreign policy staff overseas. Many Americans have marveled at the selfless example of Dr. Tom Dooley in Laos. Many have shuddered at the examples in "The Ugly American." Both examples may be found in great numbers in our oversea missions. But most of our personnel are somewhere in between, most could be doing a better job, and most must do a better job if we are to survive the modern techniques of conquest.

"For on the other side of the globe, diplomats skilled in the languages and customs of the nation to whom they are accredited - teachers, doctors, technicians and experts desperately needed in a dozen fields by underdeveloped nations - are pouring forth from Moscow to advance the cause of world communism.

"The Lenin Institute for Political Warfare exports each year hundreds of agents to disrupt free institutions in the uncommitted world. A friend of mine visiting the Soviet Union last year met a young Russian couple studying Swahili and African customs at the Moscow Institute of Languages. They were not language teachers - he was a sanitation engineer and she was a nurse. And they were being prepared to live among African nations as missionaries for communism.

"Already Asia has more of these Soviet than American technicians - and Africa may by this time. Russian diplomats are the first to arrive, the first to offer aid, the only ones represented by key officials at diplomatic receptions. They know the country, they speak the language - and in Guinea, Ghana, Laos, and all over the globe, they are working fast and effectively. Missiles and arms cannot stop them - neither can American dollars. They can only be countered by Americans equally skilled and equally dedicated - and if I am elected, I ask you to help me find those Americans."

Christopher Dodd notes, "In sending muscle and know-how to the Third World, in fighting to lift up the destitute, in a thousand painful acts, the Peace Corps was also doing America's work. Our reputation thrives when the world sees our ideals not just in ink but incarnate in the young man or woman with dirty hands who is working in the sun beside you."⁴

Following his Peace Corps service and upon returning home, Christopher Dodd voluntarily offered himself to that other conflict. Through he never served in Vietnam, Dodd enlisted in the National Guard in 1969 and later served in the U.S. Army Reserves. He was honorably discharged in 1975.

Decades later in the aftermath of the horrible attack on America on September 11, 2001, Senator Dodd said, "In all the controversies of the last five years, all the vagaries of strategy and tactics and plan and counter plan, there's one policy that guarantees success: sending our best young men and women into the world to make America known.

"You can only hate America if you don't know America."⁵

At the time of that statement Christopher Dodd was the United States Senator from Connecticut. First elected in 1981, he is the only person from that state to follow his father into the Senate, the youngest Connecticut man ever elected to the Senate, and the only Connecticut Senator popularly elected to five consecutive terms. He has used his role to promote not only Peace Corps friendly legislation, but to challenge all Americans to service.

When he launched his bid for the 2008 Presidential election, he introduced an "American Community Initiative" that would make public service mandatory for all Americans. "People want to be asked (to help)," he explained his new Kennedy-esque idea. "They love to be asked. If you ask people to do things, to become a part of something like this, you'd be amazed at the response. People in a time of crisis do it almost voluntarily. But if you can begin early enough in schools, with the leaned experience of doing this, it becomes contagious in a way."

In fact, the second most-nerve-wracking moment in the life of Christopher Dodd was what cemented the great value of service, not only for those served, but for those who volunteer.

"Twenty years after I arrived in Monción as a volunteer," he says, "I went back as a U.S. Senator. I was truly scared--not as a young man in a new country, but as an older man in a familiar one. Would I be a stranger again? Would anyone remember me?"

"I was overjoyed when they did. My old friends still knew me by name--and I had reason to think that I'd made as deep a mark on their lives as they'd made on mine. We sat and talked about the years that had brought us back together, in sight of the library we'd built with our own hands."⁶

"In the years since, as a Senator and a returned volunteer, I've come to understand that nothing has shaped my life as powerfully as that Peace Corps experience. It taught me that working side-by-side toward a common goal has an enormous power to bridge differences of background, culture, and language."⁷

Even as Christopher Dodd was departing for two years of service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Caribbean, 21-year old Connecticut native Christopher Shays, one-year Dodd's junior, was completing his own education while recalling President Kennedy's challenge. Born October 18, 1945, in Stamford, Connecticut, Shays would grow up the youngest of four boys in Bud and Peggy Shay's home in Darien.

While still in grade school Chris became enamored reading about great American public servants: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Henry Clay, and Abraham Lincoln. Their examples so inspired him that early in his life he determined he wanted to spend his own life in public service. By the time he was a Junior at Darien High School his sights were zeroed in on a political career in public office, although he shied away from running for student government at that time. "I was afraid I would lose and that I would be embarrassed," he says.

A member of the Church of Christ, Scientist, following graduation he enrolled in Principia, a private Christian Scientist school in Elsah, Illinois. The year was 1964 and the war in Vietnam had not yet become an American issue. Shays registered as a Conscientious Objector and began his educational pursuit to prepare for a lifetime of individual service.

After graduating with his bachelor's degree in 1968, Shays returned home to Connecticut with his high school sweetheart Betsi DeRaimes who had also graduated with him at Principia. Betsi wanted to become a teacher and would, in fact do just that, spending 27 years in Connecticut classrooms ranging from 1st through 10th grade to teach social studies and liberal arts. The two were married that summer but, before setting out to fulfill their career goals, they answered another call to service that would ultimately empower and inspire those later efforts.

It would probably be accurate to say that Chris and Betsi honeymooned in Tahiti. Certainly, that sounds glamorous on the face of it. The fact is, shortly after Chris and Besti said "I do" they jumped into their little black Volkswagen and drove to Washington, D.C. to say, "I will." Arriving in the Nation's Capital they filled out applications to become volunteers in the 7-year-old Peace Corps. "Everything about the Peace Corps seemed wonderful to us," Betsi said in a 2001 speech at her alma matter; "the opportunity to make a difference, to live and work in another country, to have a great adventure. Those two years provided some of the best Love stories of our lives."⁸

While the idea of young newly-weds spending two years in Tahiti sounds at once both privileged and exotic, Chris and Betsi didn't go there for romance...they went there to work. Tahiti is part of French Polynesia, a scattering of small islands in the South Pacific that are primarily heavily jungled rain forests. The larger island of Tahiti itself is a popular tourist destination with developed urban areas, but Chris and Betsi were sent to bring American assistance to the more out-of-the-way places. They had two assignments, one on a remote island and the other in a small town where they worked in the poorest performing school in the country.

"You get these debates as Peace Corps volunteers, what are you doing here," Chris says. "You are teaching in their schools, you are healing their wounds, you are helping them build their roads, you are helping farmers know what to farm, you are helping fishermen fish better...I felt fairly convinced what we were doing as teachers in particular was to...help young people grow and learn, but you are also trying to identify the jewels that could get ignored in an education system that doesn't know how to pick out the jewels, the future leaders of countries.

"I became fairly convinced that as the population of these countries grow, they just gravitate to their urban areas. They can't live their old ways. We are not westernizing them; we are urbanizing them. We are helping someone learn a trade, if you are a teacher, so that they can be a bookkeeper or someone who can contribute in an urban life and be able to support themselves and their families."⁹

While Chris and Betsi's work was largely with children and the underprivileged adults in remote areas of Fiji, they further voluntarily engaged in a project their American experience gave them unique insights to handle. The wives of Fiji's King and Prime Minister headed a cooperative of some 10,000 local women who worked to improve their families by making and selling handicrafts to visiting tourists. Thanks to the insight and efforts of the Shays, these women were

able to modify their program to the point that the price of their handmade items quadrupled. It would have made an American entrepreneur proud but Chris Shay's noted, "they felt a little guilty at first so I said, 'If you were middlemen, I'd feel guilty, but this (profit) all goes back to the women in the network.' We were just bringing basic marketing skill that every American knows."

The Shays returned home to Connecticut in 1970 inspired by their experience to face an uncertain future. "When it was time to come home, I think we expected everything to fall into place easily; jobs, a place to live, a family," she says. "Instead the story looked more like this: a recession, no jobs, no income, no place to live, and some unexpected heartache. Not exactly the story we were expecting." No doubt it was those years living among the poor of Fiji that gave them both hope and inspiration. While Betsi began her teaching career, Chris entered politics.

In 1975 Chris was elected to the State Legislature. As he had fought to reform life during his Peace Corps service, he now fought to reform injustice at home. While speaking out against judicial corruption he became something of a local hero when he refused to sit down in an anti-corruption trial and was sentenced to jail for contempt of court. His notoriety from that personal stand propelled him into the United States House of Representatives to serve Connecticut's 4th Congressional District in 1987. He has been reelected to that seat ten times.

"I don't say this with any reluctance," he once told a Congressional hearing. "Most of the growing I have done in my life I attribute to the 2 years that I was in the Peace Corps, an amazing time in which I did a great deal of growing as a human being. I think I am a better person today because of my experience. I think I am a better public servant today because of the experience that I had in the Peace Corps.

After teaching for 27 years, in 1998 Betsi joined her husband in Washington, D.C. where she returned to the Peace Corps as director of the Coverdell World Wise School Program and then later as director of the Corps' Domestic Programs. In her 2001 address at Principia she shared the story of a similar Peace Corps couple she had known. It illustrates well that while serving others, we often become the beneficiaries of new insights. She said:

"A husband-wife team from Chicago had been given a very remote assignment in a very traditional mountain village of Papua, New Guinea. These seemingly simple villagers had built the couple a bamboo house on stilts, planted a huge garden, and strewn flower petals on the path, welcoming them to their new home.

"One evening, during a story-telling session, the couple pulled out some photographs they had brought from home. One of them was of two obviously homeless men in front of a sleek office building in Chicago. In the words of the Peace Corps volunteer: "Crowding around the photograph for a good stare, the villagers could not comprehend how the men became homeless, or why the passersby in the photo were so indifferent. They bombarded me with questions, and I did my best to make sense of the two ragged beggars in the midst of such glittering skyscrapers.

"I read from their questions and solemn mood that they had made an important observation — these two men must not lack only food and shelter, but also a general sense of affection and purpose in their community.

"Early the next morning, we were startled to hear a sharp rap at the door. 'After you left last night, all of us men on the village council had a very big meeting. For a long, long time we discussed the two men in your picture. We have reached a conclusion and have a proposal for you. Please contact those two men as well as

your government. Ask the government if they will fly those two men to My-ma-fu, just like they did for you. We have marked two spots of land where we will build houses for those two men, just like we built for you. Our men will build the houses, and the women will plant the gardens to feed them."¹⁰

¹ Dodd, Senator Christopher J., National Peace Corps Association's Capitol Hill Lunch, September 14, 2006

² Dodd, Senator Christopher J., "The Heart of Peace Corps is in the villages, not in Washington"

³ Dodd, Senator Christopher J., National Peace Corps Association's Capitol Hill Lunch, September 14, 2006

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Dodd, Senator Christopher J., "The Heart of Peace Corps is in the villages, not in Washington"

⁸ Shays, Besti, Upper School Graduation Talk, Principia College, June 2, 2001

⁹ Shays, Christopher, Testimony before the Committee on International Relations, March 18, 1998.

¹⁰ Shays, Besti, *ibid*

Christopher Dodd is the only member of the U.S. Senate who is an RPCV (Returned Peace Corps Volunteer). Four of Christopher Shay's colleagues in the House of Representatives also served in the Peace Corps, as has one of our nation's current 50 governors.¹ In 2006 when the Peace Corps celebrated its 45th Anniversary, Senator Christopher Dodd said, "All of us, without exception, are deeply grateful for the experience. Many of us consider serving in Congress to be an extension of serving in the Peace Corps...making people's lives better."

Each of these four additional RPCVs who now serve in Congress were asked to reflect on that period of their lives ranging from 1964 to 1972 when they left the comforts of the American Dream at home to serve on behalf of others. Here is what they wrote, in their own words, for this anthology of our generation.

CONGRESSMAN SAM FARR

Born July 4, 1941, Sam Farr is a Democrat who represents California's 17th District. At age 23 he joined the Peace Corps and served in Columbia from 1964 to 1966.



Like so many of my fellow Peace Corps volunteers, I was moved when JFK challenged Americans to serve, and I knew I wanted to respond to that challenge. I served for two years in a very poor barrio on the hillsides of Medellin, Colombia. My job was to help the barrio establish priorities for infrastructure development, a fancy way of saying I helped them decide what they needed--not what officials thought they needed--and then helped them petition their government to get it.

I was a biology major, so I didn't know any of this stuff. I had to learn about it as I went. I quickly learned that there's a process you must follow when helping people: listen to what they want, help them do something that is successful, then use that momentum to complete more projects. You have to build, start simple.

The community decided to start with a soccer field, so we built a soccer field. Of course, I didn't know the first thing about soccer. But my job was to give them confidence, to give them a success story. Here was this crazy gringo telling them to get together on a Saturday morning, bring a pick and shovel, whatever they could find. But it worked, it was that first step.

So, we moved onto a small schoolhouse. Every brick was made by hand, using native soil and a little cement. We had to make hundreds of those. Next, it was sewer lines for their homes. City engineers would survey them, but the people had to dig the ditches and help lay the pipe. We did a lot of those things; we got this momentum going. It was exciting to see the people empowering themselves.

The most lasting lesson I learned was about the culture of poverty. It's made up of three components: no access to education, no access to health care, and no access to a safe place to sleep. Once you have access to all three, you have a chance to break out of poverty. What we were trying to do was break that culture. And in the process, I learned about my culture. Being a minority in another land, it opened my eyes to poverty in America. To this day, that's what motivates me to be in politics, to eliminate the root causes of poverty.

It was a wonderful part of my life, but also a painful one. My mother died from cancer while I was in the Peace Corps. My father visited Colombia soon after she died, later returning

¹ Former Ohio Governor Robert Taft, II, also served in the Peace Corps as a teacher in Tanzania from 1963 - 1965.

with my sisters. While we were out horseback riding, my younger sister was thrown and hit her head. Getting her to a hospital was difficult, they had to float her in a dugout canoe. Doctors thought she just had a concussion, but she really had a hematoma. The doctors told my father that she was seriously injured, and they had no way to help her. The American embassy flew a neurosurgeon in, but my sister died on the operating table.

We flew home with the body, but I decided the only thing I could do was go back to my barrio. I remember flying back to Colombia and looking down at the countryside, thinking: "You goddamned Third World country. If it wasn't for you, my sister wouldn't have died." But the other side of my brain asked: "Why did you join the Peace Corps? It was to help these people find health care, to help them improve their lives." It just hit me, that was what it's all about. My sister's death reinforced my desire to eliminate poverty.

My wife says to me that I'm still a Peace Corps volunteer, I've just changed my barrio. And I think there's a lot of truth to that. That sums it up.

Congressman Sam Farr

CONGRESSMAN MIKE HONDA

Born June 27, 1941, Mike Honda is a Democrat who represents California's 15th District. A Japanese American, his family was uprooted from their Walnut Grove, California, home in 1942 and placed in a World War II internment camp. After graduating from high school and before pursuing a college degree, at 24 he became a Peace Corps Volunteer to El Salvador from 1965 to 1967.



In 1965, I was inspired by President John F. Kennedy's call for volunteer service. I was drawn to the idea that I was only one person but could nonetheless play an active role in addressing global challenges and form bonds with people throughout the world. It was an exciting time to come into adulthood, as we Americans learned to view ourselves, not only in the context of our communities and our nation, but as global citizens.

I fondly remember my time as a volunteer in El Salvador. The experience meant much to me personally and professionally, sparking a lifelong desire to serve in the public sector. I served in the Peace Corps in El Salvador as a "community developer," part of an "educational brigade." The brigade was composed of a team of workers - a team leader, an agronomist, a home economist, and me, the only Peace Corps volunteer. The project was to build critical infrastructure for villages in rural areas. With the community, we built schools, clinics, roads, agricultural projects and credit unions. I have since returned to El Salvador twice and visited some of the projects that still stand and are still being utilized by the community.

To me, it was not only the projects themselves that were significant, but the people who were involved and the process through which the local population was empowered to complete these projects in spite of their isolation and lack of wealth. The cooperative process created a deep sense of community that endured long after our brigade moved on.

As the communities were transformed by the experience, so was I. I learned a great deal about who I was, my relationship to the world, and to the community that was shaping and growing with me. I returned with a passion for teaching, and quickly put the skills I developed, including fluency in Spanish, to use in Santa Clara County schools. Most importantly, I returned to the

United States with a deeper understanding of humanity and a personal commitment to speak on behalf of the marginalized and powerless. I am proud to say that these invaluable lessons continue to inform my decisions as a Member of Congress on a daily basis.

The Peace Corps mission is more vital than ever. Empowering communities in the developing world and building cross-cultural relationships remain critically important today. Our country desperately needs Peace Corps volunteers to demonstrate the best of our values to the world and develop relationships in the name of friendship and peace. While the global threats facing our country have changed since the creation of the Peace Corps, its fundamental insight again holds true in this generation – that America must engage the world with more than military power alone. I am honored to be a part of this socially transformative and empowering tradition.

Congressman Mike Honda

CONGRESSMAN THOMAS PETRI

Born Thomas Evert on May 28, 1940, the Republican Congressman from Wisconsin's 6th Congressional District lost his father, a combat casualty of World War II, and his surname was changed after his mother remarried. After graduating from law school, he spent a year as a Peace Corps Volunteer to Somalia from 1966 to 1967. He was one of three lawyers sent by the Peace Corps to aid that small country.



In the summer of 1961 I served in Kenya with Operation Crossroads. This was an organization that was a precursor to the Peace Corps, organized by Reverend James Robinson. The program involved American kids and African college students working on projects in different African countries. Motivated by that service, when I came home, I responded to President Kennedy's call and applied, back in 1961 when the Peace Corps was created. Had I gone at that time I would have served together with Paul Tsongas (the late Democratic Senator from Massachusetts) in Ethiopia.

Instead, I entered Harvard Law School and told the Peace Corps that perhaps I could do something law related after I finished. Three years later the Peace Corps got in touch with me and sent me to Somalia to help organize their legal code.

Somalia and the United States are on opposite sides of the world, and the opposite ends of the economic spectrum, so there were lots of opportunities to learn from our differences. Among these were the differences between the British "Imperial" approach, and the American approach to working with people. England incorporated Northern Somalia into the British Empire with three people. We had 250 in our embassy relating to the Somali government.

We tended to have much more of a "We'll show you how to do it" rather than a "We'll work with you to learn from you and try to work together on things" approach. When I was in Somalia, American Peace Corps volunteers worked, from time to time, on or near American foreign aid projects, and there were constantly stories about how poorly-thought-through they were.

For example, things were provided by our taxpayers and government, built with no one really having ownership or responsibility for them, which meant that they weren't maintained. So, water wells were identified as a need in this dry country and were built and used once or twice. And then, the nomads moved on--and they would fill them in so the next group wouldn't benefit.

To upgrade the livestock in the country, the idea our aid people had was to bring in good, productive Rhode Island Red chickens, without fully realizing that Somalis let their chickens roam and survive on the land--something our chickens were not equipped to do. We did have the idea that we wouldn't just give these chickens away. We would make the Somalis bring in their scrawny chickens in exchange. The Somalis quickly discovered that our chickens were not particularly good at surviving but were very good for eating. So, they would always wait until it was time to kill a chicken, and then they would take one or more of their scrawny chickens and make an exchange for Rhode Island Reds, and then slaughter them.

It did not have a long-term impact on improving livestock in Somalia. But it certainly made a few Somali weekend festivals a little happier.

Congressman Thomas Petri

CONGRESSMAN JAMES JIM WALSH

Born June 19, 1947, the Republican Congressman from New York's 25th Congressional District, Jim Walsh is the true "Baby Boomer" among the RPCVs currently serving in Congress. At age 23 Walsh served the Peace Corps in Nepal from 1970 to 1972.

Beginning in 1970, after my graduation from Saint Bonaventure University, I worked in Nepal for two years teaching modern agricultural techniques in a country that had only just opened its doors to foreigners in 1950. Located in a valley believed to be inhabited since 900 BC, Kathmandu was a world apart from his hometown of Syracuse, N.Y.

I was immediately struck by the ancient beauty of the natural landscape and of the city itself. In the U.S., our cities are babes in the woods, dating back two centuries perhaps. In Kathmandu, there are buildings nearly 1,000 years old still in use.

Eight of the world's ten highest mountains are in Nepal and Walsh took advantage of that fact, trekking across vast stretches of the country. In the process, he became fluent in Nepalese and developed a great affinity for the Nepali people.

The warmth of the people and the richness of their culture made a lasting impression on me. It was one of the first times I had traveled outside of the place where I grew up, and I was welcomed into a way of life very different from what I was accustomed. The Nepalese were very grateful for the assistance we offered, however I gained just as much from the experience. Therein, I think, lies the success of the Peace Corps. It's one-on-one diplomacy with the U.S. benefiting from the effort as much as the nations who are being helped.

Years later, I returned to South Asia with my eldest son to share the perspective that travel can bring. My time in Nepal with the Peace Corps was very formative in terms of teaching me the rewards of public service. It meant a great deal to me to be able retrace some of those steps and revisit some of those experiences with my son.

Congressman James Walsh



GOVERNOR JIM DOYLE

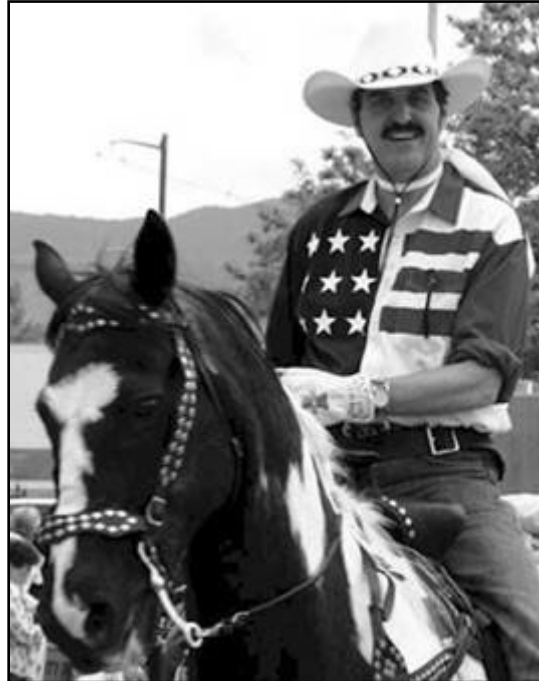
Born November 23, 1945, Wisconsin's Democrat Governor Jim Doyle responded to the challenge of service after obtaining a baccalaureate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Before pursuing his Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree from Harvard University in 1972, Jim Doyle and his wife spent two years with the Peace Corps, serving as teachers in Tunisia from 1970 to 1972.

After a ten-hour narrow-gauge railroad trip, my wife, Jessica, and I arrived in a small town next to a Tunisian oasis, where our lives changed forever. While we went full of JFK-inspired idealism to serve, we found we gained much more than we could ever repay. Learning Arabic, worrying about whether there would be enough food each day, relying on a warm and welcoming community, meeting bright students eager to learn, among so many other challenges and opportunities, taught us so much about ourselves, the world and the value of service. These are lessons we have tried to keep close to us throughout our lives.



*Governor Jim Doyle
Wisconsin*

Don Bendell



Don Bendell's Code Of The West

- Cowboys should treat women like ladies, period!
- Cowboys fight fair, and only when they have to, and when they do have to fight, they win, period!
- You know exactly where you stand with a cowboy. There are no gray areas, only black and white, but not when it comes to skin color.
- A cowboy is only as good as his word.
- A cowboy protects his family, spread, and community.
- A cowboy will fight for, and take care of orphans, widows, and those who are oppressed.
- A cowboy will go out of his way to avoid a fight and is always willing to share his grub, campfire, and water with ya.
- And Finally; A cowboy believes in his God, and he believes in America and will fight and die to protect either.

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In the Twenty-First Century Don Bendell still thinks he is a cowboy, straight out of the American West in a century gone by. The popular author/poet appears in public in cowboy hat and boots, usually wearing his trademark buckskin jacket adorned with fringed sleeves, ostentatious bangles, and oversized belt buckle. One can quickly imagine him astride his horse and driving herds of cattle south on the Chisholm Train. The fact remains, though Don does have and frequently rides his horse *Eagle* near the modest ranch he shares with his wife Shirley in the mountains near Canon City, Colorado, he jokingly notes that his ranch only boasts four head of horses, no cattle, four dogs, one cat, and six peacocks.

What makes Don a cowboy is not his garb, his ranch, or even the many Western novels he has written. Don is a cowboy by philosophy. In a twenty-first century world where politicians are jailed for bribery, where religious leaders are exposed for hypocrisy and sex crimes, and a new generation seems preoccupied with "me", Don remains a man of chivalry and service. In the parlance of another cowboy, popular in his youth, Don is "A fighter for Truth, Justice, and the American way." Fiercely patriotic, he lives ever ready to tip his hat to a lady or to stand toe to toe with a villain to rescue the damsel in distress, a child, or for that matter any other person in need. He is a "throwback" to another generation, although not as far back as one might think. He is the product of a generation when thousands of young men wore a different hat--green in color--and lived by the motto *De oppresso liber* – "To Free the Oppressed."

First Lieutenant Don Bendell arrived in Vietnam in May of 1968, a member of the elite Special Forces (Green Berets). Young, tough, and "gung-ho", he had become highly trained to kill with any number of weapons, including his bare hands. Following a year of training with the 7th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he commanded an A-Team, Lieutenant Bendell was assigned to Vietnam. He arrived there in 1968 however, not only to kill Communists, but to make war on poverty, illiteracy, and disease. Often overlooked in the military history of the Vietnam War is the fact that only about 40% of a Green Beret's job was to fight the enemy in combat. Far more time and energy were expended in building schools and hospitals, digging wells for fresh water, teaching efficient agriculture, and treating both wounds and disease in the native villages.

In April 1962, six years before Lieutenant Bendell was sent to Dak Pek, the first Special Forces troops arrived. At that time the camp was a small outpost on a hilltop near the Laotian border, carved out of triple-canopy jungle and manned by South Vietnamese soldiers. The three Americans, members of Special Forces Team A-13, were Senior Medic Richard *Doc* Gladfelter of Colorado, Junior Medic Frank Burke of New York, and Senior Communications Sergeant Hoyt Henry whose job it was to keep the isolated soldiers in contact with their base camp.

Scattered throughout the neighboring hills beyond Dak Pek's perimeter in Vietnam's Central Highlands were scores of small Montagnard villages. "Yards" as their inhabitants came to be affectionately called by the Special Forces men, were small, dark-skinned indigenous people of Vietnam's mountainous border terrain; their very name defined by the French expression *La Montagne*--"mountain." Early French involvement in Vietnam brought culture, education, and a sense of nationalism to more than twenty million typically traditional Vietnamese citizens. Larger of stature and lighter of skin, the South Vietnamese developed a prejudice against the 3 million Montagnards in the Central Highlands, certainly not unlike the prejudice that existed between Whites and Blacks in the United States. Furthermore, though the Vietnamese were a heterogeneous civilization they spoke the same language, shared the same culture, and lived relatively modern lives. The Montagnards comprised six different ethnic groups and were divided among some 30 tribes with differing dialects. Their sole desire was to live a simple lifestyle in harmony with nature.

The Vietnamese found them primitive and called them "moi"--savages--and in the 1950s drove them deeper into the jungle hills and stole the fertile lands they had farmed further inland.

In those heavily jungled hills the Montagnards found their hopes for a simple life crushed not only by prejudice, but in the early 1960s they were caught between warring factions. The "Mountain People" were innocents pressed between fanatical Viet Cong insurgents (South Vietnamese Communists) hoping to reunite their nation under Ho Chi Minh, invading Communist North Vietnamese under Ho Chi Minh, and Republic of Vietnam Soldiers of the corrupt Ngo Dinh Diem Regime that continued the fight for South Vietnam's sovereignty.

To further exacerbate an already precarious position, the hills into which the Montagnards were pushed bordered Laos; only a few miles to the west of their villages ran the main North Vietnamese route of supply from Hanoi to Communist Soldiers and insurgents in the south. Recognizing this threat President Diem fortified the region with South Vietnamese (ARVN) soldiers to interdict the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and stop the flow of supplies from what later became known as the "Ho Chi Minh Trail." To accomplish this end, with American assistance the "Strategic Hamlet Program" was initiated, an effort to bring rural peasants and Montagnards into or just outside an armed outpost. Admirable on the face of it, the program backfired; it was in fact, nothing more than a relocation program unlike many that free-living people had endured before. Further, farmers resented having to walk long distances to their field while others resented at being required to work (for the Vietnamese government) without pay to erect fortifications. ARVN patrols provided security during the day but returned to their fortified outposts at night, leaving the villages unprotected.

Caught in the middle, men and boys from outlying villages were involuntarily pressed into slavery by NVA forces in order to move tons of supplies through the mountains. Peaceful villages were robbed of their crops and herds to feed the invading army. Rape and murder were not at all uncommon and sometimes entire villages were wiped out. Because these victims were "moi" the ARVN soldiers had little concern for their safety. They were also not averse to using local men and boys as their eyes and ears in the jungle, actions often resulting in reprisals against those individuals and their families by the NVA.

In 1961 the C.I.A. devised a program to build a Civilian Irregular Defensive Group (CIDG) wherein the villagers themselves could develop a defensive force. The program was implemented by the men of the U.S. Army Special Forces who were given private checking accounts for each A-Camp, such as Dak Pek, to fund, equip, feed, and pay the CIDG strikers). The success of that program was further contingent on "winning the hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese in general and the Montagnards in particular. The latter, in reaction to the early problems of the Strategic Hamlet Program and facing often cruel treatment at the hands of the Diem Regime, was already beginning to become sympathetic to the North Vietnamese. When *Doc* Gladfelter and his two fellow Green Berets arrived at Dak Pek they came to earn the Montagnard's trust and loyalty.

"It was cold when we arrived," Gladfelter recently recalled, "and the people were living in enclosed shelters which they had to constantly warm with wood-burning fires. As a result, virtually every person in every village suffered from eye infections." Trained as medics, *Doc* Gladfelter and Frank Burke began dispensing medication and the healing process was both immediate and remarkable. "That was what won them over," he says. "The positive influence was immediate."

Repeatedly the two Green Berets made near-daily medical missions to the outlying Montagnard villages, treating not only eye infections but disease, wounds, and other maladies. "I went about my duties like a misplaced Peace Corps Volunteer," Gladfelter says. The difference

was the element of risk; the Peace Corps has a tradition of caring for its volunteers by never sending them into an area racked by military turmoil.

Escorted by CIDG troops they had trained for combat, the Green Berets faced danger every time they went outside the perimeter at Dak Pek. They were in good hands; though a peaceful people by nature the Montagnards were masterful and courageous warriors when pressed into war. "I can't prove it," Gladfelter states, "but I think the NVA tried to avoid getting into a shooting match with us. I know of instances when they were in a village when word arrived that we were coming, and they left so that we could come in and treat the people. They didn't like us, but they liked what we were doing." (In 1961 the United States was not yet at war in an active and offensive sense. The primary threat to early Special Forces and other American advisors was one of being wounded or killed while accompanying an ARVN or CIDG force on a combat patrol.)

Eventually the three Green Berets at Dak Pek welcomed the rest of Team A-13 to the mountain outpost where they organized and trained a battalion-size Montagnard defense force under the leadership of their Commanding Officer, George W. *Speedy* Gaspard. They defoliated the nearby hills establishing mutually supportive defensive positions manned by the small, dark *Mountain Men*. In the middle of it all they built housing for the team and their new friends, as well as a medical clinic and a school. Dak Pek became both a fort and a community where soldiers of the CIDG could bring their families to live inside the protection of the outpost's mined and wire-strewn perimeter. In March 1963 Team A-13 handed control of Dak Pek over to Team A-242, a new group of Green Berets. Gladfelter and his comrades bade farewell to a family of people they had lived with, indeed come to love, during a year of service. The joy of returning home was tempered by sad farewells to friendships forged with a people whose only hope was an underground bunker on a barren hilltop surrounded by barbed wire.*

The one consolation for the departing soldiers was the realization that a new team of 12 dedicated young American soldiers now served Dak Pek to *Free the Oppressed*, bind up wounds, and defend against both the prejudice of South Vietnamese soldiers and the indiscriminate and deadly attacks of the NVA. If the war lasted more than a year they knew, another team would come to Dak Pek, followed by another and then another. In their hearts they believed that America cared for the people of South Vietnam, including the Montagnards, and would stand behind them to ensure their safety as long as it took. Indeed, it would take far longer than any of them could have imagined, longer even than the six years that passed before a young Special Forces officer from Ohio rotated in as yet one more American replacement. That young man would find, as had so many before him, that his life was irrevocably changed by what he saw and learned from a simple but proud people who only wanted to live alone and in peace.

Born in Akron on January 8, 1947, Don Bendell was the youngest in a hard-working family of five. Dave Bendell was a sewing machine salesman and manager whose wife Alma also worked, as a legal secretary. Bruce, Don's brother was 9 years older than he and his only sister Bette was 11 years older; the age differential sometimes almost seemed to make Don an only *child*. "I lived and loved and 'became' the (TV) characters of the Range Rider, Roy Rogers, Zorro, Cochise, the Lone Ranger, Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy, Kit Carson, John Wayne, Jimmy Stewart, and all the old heroes. I believed the things they said."

The positive influence of those *Truly American* heroes had a lasting impression on Don, instilling in him principles of right and wrong as well as service to others. These were further reinforced by scouting, a family interest; David Bendell was a Scoutmaster and Explorer Post

* Gladfelter returned to Dak Pek for a second tour of duty as a Special Forces Captain in 1966. By that time the United States was fully, if not officially, at war with the NVA and the Viet Cong.

Advisor. "We were about scouting, camping, and church," Don remembers. He took an interest in and learned Indian fancy-dancing at a young age, started bow hunting in grade school, and "loved the wilderness, spending as much time there as possible."

In the footsteps of his uncle Roy Bendell, who had served in World War II and earned 4 Bronze Stars, as Don became a teenager, he was driven toward military service. He enlisted as a private in the Army on June 19, 1966 and volunteered both for training with the Special Forces and for service in Vietnam. After Basic and Advanced Individual Training, he served briefly as a Military Policeman at Fort Dix, New Jersey, before attending Officer's Candidate School. On June 1, 1967, he received his gold bars to become an Infantry Second Lieutenant.

Determined to put "silver wings upon his chest" he was assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, but first had to attend Jump School at Fort Benning Georgia. During Tower Week his dreams of ultimately winning not only Wings but a Green Beret were crushed. Diagnosed with double pneumonia and pleurisy, he was confined to Martin Army Hospital for 5 weeks. When he was recycled to begin Jump School once again, his buddies were already at Fort Bragg to begin the Special Forces O-Course. When Don earned his Wings and at last joined them he was weeks behind, and was only allowed to take some of the classes, though his unusual circumstances did open opportunities for him to attend some of the specialized courses (Underwater Hand-to-Hand Combat, Quick Kill Shooting, Survival Swimming, etc.) When his class graduated to receive their Green Beret with its distinctive flash (badge), Don was not a full-fledged graduate of the course. He did receive his beret but for several months he had to wear a red "candy stripe" on it. Setbacks and candy stripe aside, Don was justly proud of what he had accomplished despite adversity. Only three out of every 100 young men who volunteered for Special Forces training ever completed the course and earned the right to wear the now-legendary Green Beret.

Though still a "candy stripe" Green Beret, Don commanded an A-Team for a brief period. In April 1968 he at last received his flash and, soon thereafter, his orders. On May 31, 1968, he arrived in Vietnam to receive promotion to First Lieutenant and assignment as XO (Executive Officer) to Team A-242, Company B, 5th Special Forces Group. First Lieutenant Bendell was on his way to Dak Pek to follow in the footsteps of Gaspard, Gladfelter, and the select other few who had been privileged to serve at Vietnam's most isolated mountain outpost.

Neither the training Don had received at Fort Bragg, nor the stories of returning veterans, could have adequately prepared him for what he saw when he stepped off a helicopter near the Laotian border. By 1968 there were fortified positions on seven hills at Dak Pek, manned by a CIDG Strike Force numbering 700 men. The Montagnard soldiers lived in earthen bunkers inside the protective wire of the compound with their wives, children, and even their parents. Even the youngest children knew well that death could reach out for them at any time. Indeed, all had at one time or another been forced to race for shelter when NVA artillery rained mortars on the camp. It was for them, much like the "fire drills" children their age practiced in schools back in the United States, only far more deadly and far more frequent. Many of those families had also lost one or more members to combat actions in the jungle beyond.

Eight thousand souls were scattered among the 11 villages under the care and support of the 12 men of Team A-242, as well as thousands more living a precarious existence in outlying villages. Virtually surrounded by North Vietnamese Forces in the remote regions, it was in the parlance of the American soldiers in Vietnam, *Indian Country*--an appropriate place for a young man who was a throwback to the Old West to find himself called to service.

In addition to his title as XO Lieutenant Bendell, whom the Montagnards nicknamed "Lieutenant Cowboy," also carried the title Civil Affairs/Psychological Operations Officer. "Civil Affairs" referenced what the Army called Civic Actions Programs to win the hearts and minds of the Montagnards. A major part of that work was medical missions, MEDCAPs. Medical Civic Actions Programs had begun in the early 60s as an expansion of the Provincial Health Assistance Program under which American physicians and nurses came to Vietnam under the auspices of The Agency for International Development. A.I.D. teams however, generally operated only in the hospitals of the more modern and more secure Provincial Capitals. Deep in the jungles the needs of rural Vietnamese and Montagnards would have gone untreated if not for daring and dedicated Special Forces soldiers, as well as some Regular Army Medics and Navy Corpsmen.

"My medics, in fact all Green Beret medics--outside of medical doctors themselves-- were and remain the most highly-trained medical professionals in the military," Don recently remarked. "They literally would deliver babies, deal with tropical parasite diseases most doctors have never heard of, and treat bullet and shrapnel wounds, snake bites, a wide variety of medical needs for a large group of indigenous mercenaries and their families. They even performed dentistry." Many of these medical needs were treated in Dak Pek's simple but efficient dispensary, which even included a pharmacy. Still, there remained many needy people in outlying villages who were fearful to be seen entering the American compound by infiltrating Communists, or who simply were too old, sick, or severely wounded to come for help. So, despite the danger, help came to them.

On a regular basis the team medics, accompanied by a patrol of Montagnard Strikers, would trek through the steaming and enemy-held jungle to reach the needy. As Special Forces officers receive medical training even more detailed than that of a regular Army medic or what we know in America as EMTs, Lieutenant Bendell always accompanied the medic or assistant medic on these important MEDCAPs.

In the primitive outlying villages, the day a MEDCAP arrived was much like the circus coming to town in early America. Despite the deadly seriousness of the medics' work and the pain and suffering of the people they treated, MEDCAPs brought both hope and not infrequently, some entertaining moments. Even before the incoming squad-sized patrol emerged from the jungle village children, tipped off that the American Green Berets were coming, would race out to greet them. Seldom did they find an unprepared American with empty pockets. Within minutes the children raced home with smiling faces, their raucous laughter echoing across the village as they proudly displayed the treasures freely dispensed by a smiling G.I. For Lieutenant Bendell and his comrades such visits seemed like Christmas; a wonderful holiday in which they got to be Santa Claus. Perhaps more amazing however was that these children who had nothing, and who could be so easily pleased with simple things, so willingly shared their treasure. Older children returning with a hand-full of candy they had struggled with other children to claim for themselves, willingly shared with siblings too young to run out in the welcoming crowd. Not forgotten by them in their moment of joy either was mom and or even more importantly--Grandma.

When the patrol entered the village the small Strike Force would fan out, searching diligently for hidden Viet Cong waiting in ambush, and setting up security. In Vietnam death could come at any time and without regard for women, children and the elderly. Missions of mercy could quickly end in a rattle of machine gun fire.

Lieutenant Bendell would then find a suitable location, one that provided both shade from the scorching sun and ample room for a large crowd, and begin triaging scores of women, children,

and the elderly. (Usually the younger men were either serving at war or tending the fields. Many had been kidnapped and pressed into slavery by the Communists.)

With practiced efficiency Lieutenant Bendell would separate the sick, wounded and injured, dispatching them to his medics based upon their condition and the unique experiences of his trained healers. Some of the less serious he treated himself, though the press of the crowd and administration of the mission could be all-consuming and not infrequently, interesting to say the least. Occasionally treating people who had never seen a syringe or for that matter even a stethoscope, could demand diplomacy and ingenuity.

"I remember one humorous incident," he says, "when a grandmotherly lady complained of being shot in the buttocks by the AK-47 of a North Vietnamese soldier while she had been outside the village harvesting mountain rice. She had been lucky; the two women with her had been killed. I knew her condition was so serious I needed to take her back to Dak Pek.

"Superstitious and frightened, the old woman refused to go to the dispensary, as the wound had become severely infected. The villagers laughed uproariously when I pulled out the waistband of her atok (black skirt) to look down at her buttocks, smiled and rolled my eyes. Still, she adamantly refused to go to the dispensary and argued with me for several minutes while the whole village looked on in amusement.

"Finally, in frustration I told the interpreter to tell her if she did not go, evil spirits from the jungle would invade her body and her ass would rot and fall off. The Montagnards were indeed superstitious and the tactic worked. She at last agreed she would go to the dispensary if, and only if, I would carry her there piggy-back.

"When my medics finished their chores, we started back to Dak Pek with the cheers and laughter of the village ringing in my ears as I hoisted the old lady on my back. It was a mile-and-a-half back to the dispensary, the temperature was one hundred plus degrees, and we had to ford a swollen white-water river on the return. She refused to be carried by anyone but me and I had to force my body to the limit, and beyond. When we reached the dispensary, I delivered her to the medics and then passed out on the cot next to her. My medic wound up having to treat me--for heat exhaustion."

Would he have done it again? Silly question!

In addition to treating the villagers the medics at Dak Pek and other such camps in the Central Highlands took the time to train some of their Montagnards as medics. The need was so great there was always a crowd seeking help. "We had a sick call every day and people would come in from some of the villages, sign their name or make their mark, and would be treated by one of the medics," Don remembers. "Our medic came to dinner one night with the logbook, and we were all laughing because one of the patients signed their name "VC" (Viet Cong). I guess "Charlie" could have a sense of humor, too.

Medical missions were not however, only reactive treatment of wounds, injuries, and disease. Proactive efforts to vaccinate against disease or improve hygiene for improved health were equally important. Before arrival of the Americans, due to the heavy insect population the Montagnard people coated their bodies with dirt and bathed only once a year. It was not only a practical process but a religious rite. Once Lieutenant Bendell had convinced the natives to bathe he would have a squad of CIDG Strikers stand guard while he led the women and children to the Dak Poko River, which he had once crossed with an old woman on his back. He and his medic or assistant medic distributed bars of soap from the Red Cross and attempted to teach the people how to use it. Usually at first, the Green Berets found themselves having to wade into the water where they "bent over bare-breasted, leathery-skinned grannies to scrub their backs." Then they would

shampoo the hair of naked little Montagnard boys and girls while the villagers rolled on the riverbank with giggles and laughter.

The joys of providing repellent to ward off insects, of breaking the fever of a sick child, or a community "bubble bath" aside, the Green Berets were first and foremost soldiers. They taught people who still fought with crossbows how to shoot a rifle, mount and fire a claymore mine, and strategically set up an effective ambush. Essentially these Yard soldiers were mercenaries, hired by the United States and paid by the Green Berets to seek out the enemy and interdict their route of supply into South Vietnam. When a CIDG patrol went into the jungle to face danger they were almost always accompanied by at least one Green Beret advisor.

Though the Montagnards hated both the North and South Vietnamese, having suffered greatly at the hands of both, they appreciated, respected and indeed truly loved their Special Forces comrades. Many Green Berets were assigned at least one, and usually two (one to walk behind and one to walk in front) bodyguards. These intensely loyal men would literally take a bullet for their Green Beret. In the direst of situations, should a patrol face imminent capture, they were under orders to shoot and kill the American. Better a sudden death from a friend than a slow and agonizing death at the hands of the enemy.

Lieutenant Bendell had six such bodyguards, any one of them willing to die for him. One of them was a small guy with five sons that all served in the strike force... "I don't remember his name, but you can call him Klem in your book," he told me. "Klem means leach. The Yards gave themselves nasty names to ward off evil spirits."

On patrol one day Bendell's company of CIDG strikers walked into an ambush. The enemy, camouflaged and lying in wait with captured American Claymore mines, allowed the point element to pass before detonating the explosive charges that threw out 600 white-hot steel balls. Behind the point element walked Lieutenant Bendell, Klem in front and Klem's nephew behind to protect their Green Beret.

Klem took the full blast of the first Claymore and a burst of AK-47 fire struck him in the torso and legs, wounding him critically. Klem's nephew lost one eye and two white-hot pellets struck him, one in each of his shinbones. The two bodyguards' Green Beret Lieutenant was blasted on his back but was spared, at least for the moment, as the remainder of the Strike Force returned fire. After several minutes of fierce fighting and maneuvering, with support from Tac air and artillery, the now surrounded the NVA unit was forced to retreat. Immediately Yard medics carried the wounded Klem to a cleared area and Don called for several Dustoffs (Medical Evacuation Helicopters), then set up an IV and started mouth to mouth resuscitation while another Yard began CPR.

"I'll never forget that moment," Don says. "Klem was in a very bad way but as I worked on him, he regained consciousness for a moment. He looked me in the eyes, smiled weakly and then said, 'I see Jesus.' Then he died."

Looking around Don saw Klem's nephew, himself seriously wounded, moving about the area and carrying other wounded men to the makeshift LZ for evacuation. "Both legs were covered in blood from the painful wounds of Claymore pellets in his shinbones and one eye was shut out, but he was big and husky for a Yard and ignored his pain to do what he had to do."

Seeing the bloody socket of the young soldier's eye, Don reached up and removed from his neck the cowboy scarf he always wore and wrapped it around his body guard's head to cover the eye. Then Don lit two of his favorite cigarillos and handed one to the wounded Yard. "He got this great big smile on his face," Don recalled. "You'd have thought I had just given him the Medal

of Honor. When the chopper arrived, he waited for all the others to board first, and only boarded himself after I forced him at gun point to be evacuated."

History is replete with examples of the close relationships that develops between soldiers at war when men face deadly danger and stand back-to-back to survive as well as protect a buddy. Perhaps nowhere in history is there a more vivid example of that often-lifetime bond than the one that developed between Special Forces soldiers and the Montagnards of Vietnam. Green Berets spent many hours building camps for these people. Together they built churches and the soldiers would bring in missionaries. The Americans even hired teachers to come in and educate the children in simple but important base camp schools. "We taught the adults animal husbandry and even flew in pigs, chickens, and cows for the villagers to raise and harvest for meat, dairy and eggs," says Don.

In return the Montagnards repaid the young Americans with their love and loyalty, many laying down their lives for the men from America. Perhaps however, the most important thing these simple, tribal people gave the young men from a distant foreign land was a new sense of what was important in life. To them laughter was more important than livelihood, compassion greater than corporate wealth; loyalty and devotion were prized above all else, and these people had learned to find a small measure of simple joy under the most dreadful of circumstances.

Lieutenant Bendell was subsequently Medevaced back to the United States. Promoted to Captain and continuing his service as a Green Beret at Fort Bragg, he repeatedly requested to be sent back to Vietnam to live among his beloved Montagnards. Because he had a medical profile his requests were denied and in 1970 with his enlistment fulfilled, Don left the military. His heart had never left Vietnam.

The same year in which Don received his honorable discharge the outpost at Dak Pek was turned over to the control of ARVN Rangers, tough South Vietnamese fighters but men who despised the Montagnards. Within months the camp was overrun by the Communists. The ARVN 8th Ranger Battalion suffered 100% casualties; the death toll among the Montagnards cannot even be imagined.

By 1975 the Americans had all gone home and the North Vietnamese Army swept victoriously through the south, at last uniting the two countries under Ho Chi Minh and the Communists. Hundreds of thousands of Montagnards were murdered in reprisals and the wave of ethnic cleansing that followed. Some trekked over the mountains for sanctuary in Cambodia; where their fate proved to be no better. A few, thanks in large part to the efforts of Green Beret Veterans back home, were brought to the United States to build new lives in the land of the free.

"I loved those poor but great people and still hurt for their fate," says Don nearly forty years later. Then in his typically frank Cowboy fashion that sees only black and white--never shades of gray, he notes, "The blood of thousands of them is now on the hands of wimpy (American) war protestors, news media propagandist, and pussy politicians who once gave those people hope, and then abandoned them to die."

At home as a civilian Don faced new battles, confronted with indelible memories of Vietnam and a problem with alcohol. He beat the latter decades ago, but the memories remain to this day.

Motivated by a great uncle who, when Don was much younger had inspired him with his repertory portrayals of Abraham Lincoln, Don began to put his thoughts and philosophy on paper. "Great Uncle Roy was the Manager of the Lyceum Theater in Chicago and traveled the country performing as Abraham Lincoln and giving speeches. He had a booming deep voice, giant vocabulary, was 6'5," and very distinguished. He inspired me to become a writer, performer, and

speaker." More than one and a half million of Don's 24 published books have been sold to date. Though perhaps best known for his popular Western stories or his more recent Criminal Investigation Division series that takes place in the Global War on Terrorism, four of his earliest books were stories of Vietnam. He is contracted to write a series of novels about modern day Delta Force.

Don also found a personal outlet in the Martial Arts, ranking as a Seventh Degree Black Belt Master in four different martial arts. In 1995 he was inducted into the International Karate Hall of Fame and in 1996 was inducted into the Martial Arts Museum of America. Today he and his wife Shirley operate 2 martial arts schools where they train men, women and children not only in the disciplines of defense, but in Don's *Code of the West*: "I make all of my male students do ten knuckle push-ups if they walk through a door in front of a wife, mother, daughter, sister, or any female without holding the door open for her."

Despite the multiple vocations and interests that keep Don Bendell busy today, he, like most of his Special Forces comrades is still concerned with the post-war plight of the Montagnards. Though living Special Forces veterans of that war are small in number, they are a loud voice for human rights, monitoring world affairs and political movements that impact their former *families*. Given the opportunity, Don and many like him would gladly return to the Central Highlands, or any place else in the world to do what they could for the Montagnards.

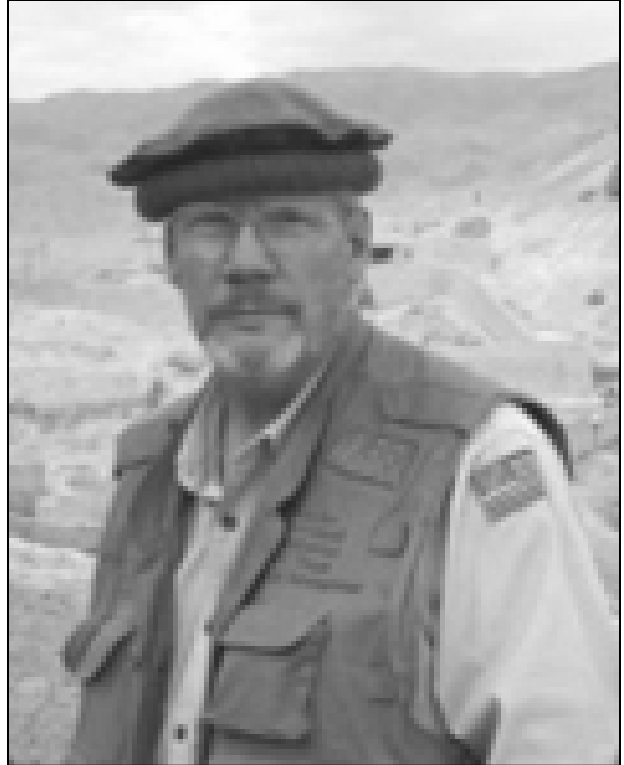


On May 31, 2007, Don did return to Fort Bragg where for him, it had all begun. He was joined there on that day by his son, Special Forces Staff Sergeant Brent Bendell, a decorated veteran of the Global War on Terrorism who had already forged brotherhoods of his own while fighting al-Qaida in Iraq and Indonesia. The occasion was a special ceremony, graduation and presentation of the coveted Green Beret to a group of volunteers from a new generation, still actively seeking to free the oppressed. In that group was one young man who stood ready to carve his own niche in the Special Forces legacy, Don's youngest son Sergeant Joshua Bendell. The two brothers now serve in the same Special Forces company.

The torch had been passed to a new generation of *Freedom Fighters* and noble cowboys.*

* When former Captain Don Bendell appeared wearing his Green Beret with his two sons, each also wearing the distinctive headgear and legendary flash, it marked only the third time that two sons had followed their father in becoming elite members of the U.S. Army Special Forces.

Sir Edward Artis



"I swear by all that is holy and dear unto me, to aid those less fortunate than I, to relieve the distress of the world and to fulfill my knightly obligations. This oath do I give of my own free and independent will, so help me God!"

*Oath Inscribed on the Tomb of a Knight of Malta
In Northwestern France, 1560 CE*

"The scariest good guy you'll ever meet," is how one powerful Afghanistan *War Lord* described Edward Artis. The 62-year-old humanitarian has traveled the world more times than he can count, often going where others fear to tread to deliver food, tents, blankets, and medical supplies to some of the world's most needy people.

If Don Bendell was a throwback to another century when cowboys gave us a tradition of good guys who lived by a code of the West, Ed Artis reaches even further into history to find his own niche in the Twenty-First Century. The *Indiana Jones meets Mother Teresa* adventurer believes he is a knight, a true crusader ordained to aid the less fortunate and to relieve the stress of the world. Knightsbridge International, the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) he co-founded with Dr. Sir James Laws in 1995 to provide humanitarian relief to people in areas often too dangerous for others has delivered tons of food to Afghanistan, medicine to Rwanda, and hospital equipment to rural clinics in terrorist-controlled jungles of the Philippine Islands. He's been shot at, threatened by border guards, detained by criminals, and even unceremoniously dumped (without papers) in the nether regions of Dagestan while on his way to Chechnya by a cantankerous Soviet officer toting an AK-47 machinegun.

"If it appears that I am somewhat foolish, I am!" he notes. "When I was younger, I knew I wanted to be something, but I didn't know what...and I still don't know what that is. I don't know what I'm going to be when I grow up! But I do know what I'm not going to be, and that's a complacent, apathetic, and sit on my ass kind of guy."

Born in Highland Park, Illinois, in 1945, Ed grew up in the San Francisco Bay area city of Concord, California. The oldest of six children, he was the kind of kid who challenge their parents, drive them crazy, invoke their worry and break their hearts.

Recalling his youth Ed describes himself as a *High Potential, Under Achiever* who found school boring and unchallenging. Fascinated by foreign-language radio broadcasts as a young boy however, he did find an expanding interest in the world beyond his native borders. At night he would lay in bed, listening to his small radio to people talking in foreign languages and trying to imagine what they were saying. But it was a black and white television news report in English in 1960 that initiated the 15-year-old boy's interest in helping unseen, foreign speaking children that set a precedent that would follow him for the next fifty years.

On May 22, 1960, an earthquake struck South America, its epicenter just 100 miles off the west coast of Chile. The largest earthquake ever instrumentally recorded, it measured 9.5 on the Monument Magnitude Scale, and wreaked unprecedented damage through Chile and across the South American continent. More than 130,000 houses were destroyed, one in every three in the earthquake zone, and nearly 2 million people were left homeless and destitute.

Years later after building a successful career, Ed would define the motivation that prompted his current world-wide humanitarian missions by noting, "How could I enjoy a comparatively luxurious American lifestyle without trying to help the world's most helpless and often the world's most hopeless?"¹ Watching news reports of the devastation in South America first kindled that feeling in Ed Artis in 1960; perhaps the first moment in his young life when he found a sense of purpose. He and Richard Bailey, a lifelong friend, teamed up going door-to-door in their neighborhood to gather clothing and other supplies for the poor people who had just lost everything in a disaster of nature. The young man with little grasp of geography, and who had no idea of how he could get the collected supplies to the disaster area thousands of miles away, approached the project as he would so many like it later in life--crossing *one bridge at a time*. He piled the clothes he had collected in his father's car and got his father to drive he and Richard to his high school, one of the few times in his young life that he went there eagerly. For his teachers and fellow

students, it provided a new insight to an otherwise-problem-student. They joined his effort, the school following Ed and Richard's example and leadership began to collect even more supplies which were soon thereafter donated to the Red Cross for transportation to South America.

If young Artis' first relief effort reflected a previously unrecognized and admirable potential, his actions little more than a year later clearly illustrate that even good people can make tragic mistakes. Ed celebrated his 17th birthday by skipping school with some of his buddies. They stole a car, broke into a liquor store for beer, then into a sporting goods store and stole some guns and then took the window out of a jewelry store for things they could sell for cash, before finding themselves in a high-speed chase with the California Highway Patrol which Ed and his friends lost. "We're lucky we weren't killed," he recalls.

Ed was confined to a Juvenile Detention facility for a period of 28 days. "I had always thought that I was tough when I was growing up," he says, "but after getting my ass beat repeatedly by some really tough guys, I began to realize I wasn't really such a tough guy after all." While acknowledging the wrongness of their son's transgressions, Ed's heartbroken parents stood by him. One of the critical moments during his confinement was the day his father came to visit and brought his twin brother, an uncle whom Ed was meeting for the first time. "There I sat in my (prisoner's) uniform of jeans and a white tee shirt, trying to face my dad and an uncle who I had never met who came to visit me in uniform--he was a First Sergeant in the Army. I was ashamed of what I had done, I was embarrassed by the grief I had caused my parents, and I was scared."

During the juvenile court proceedings that followed, Ed was made a Ward of the Court but allowed to return home under his parents' supervision and ordered to return to high school until he was old enough to go into the U.S. Army. The angry judge had offered the delinquent teen two alternatives: five years in a California Youth Authority juvenile detention facility or three years as a volunteer in the U.S. Army. The memory of his uncle in uniform was still stuck in the back of his mind, although the decision he made was based upon a much more banal reasoning. "Let's see," he thought, "five years getting beat up every day in CYA or three years in an army uniform. I did the math and quickly agreed to join the Army." It was three months before young Ed's birthday but with the court's permission his parents signed the paperwork to allow their 17-year-old to join the Army. Soon he was on his way to Fort Ord, California, to begin Basic Training.

It was the Army's decision, not Ed's, that then sent him into the medical field to become a healer rather than a hunter. "I saw myself as being an Airborne Infantryman but back then the Army didn't ask what we wanted; they gave us a bunch of tests and decided what we would be good at," he recalls. "During Basic Training Larry Allen, a buddy of mine, and I would check the bulletin board to see where we were going. One day our names appeared together for training as medics and then I was on my way to Fort Sam Houston (Texas)."

After completing the basic medical course Private Ed Artis did manage to get one of the options he requested and was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, for Airborne training. Slight of build and underweight, he almost failed to meet the weight requirements for Jump School, but with the help of a friendly Platoon Sergeant he managed to tip the scales in his favor after filling the pockets of his fatigues with sand. In August 1963 he made his requisite jumps and earned his Airborne Jump Wings. He was subsequently assigned to duty as an Airborne Medic with the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

By March 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson sent the first American combat troops into Vietnam, Ed Artis had spent two years in the Army and with one year remaining in his enlistment, wanted desperately to serve in Vietnam. But while the Vietnam War is remembered as the dominant combat action of the 1960s wherein American soldiers were sent overseas to confront

world-wide expansion of Communist ideology in the Cold War, America faced challenges in its own hemisphere. As Vice President in 1961, Johnson witnessed the danger the spread of Communism in the Caribbean posed to the United States. Even after the Cuban missile crisis was resolved in America's favor, insurgent movements in the Caribbean and in Latin America posed a real danger that new "Communist *Cubas*" could emerge.

The Dominican Republic was one such danger zone. That Latin American nation that occupies the eastern two-thirds of the Caribbean island called Hispaniola and which shares its border with Haiti, had long been a nation in turmoil. Earlier in the 20th Century U.S. Marines had thrice been sent to the Dominican Republic to restore order during what became known as the *Banana Wars*. By 1965 insurgent Communist forces threatened to turn the Dominican Republic into another Communist country in the Caribbean basin and President Johnson took action. Aware that U.S. military intervention would evoke opposition from the Organization of American States, President Johnson noted, ""When I do what I am about to do, there'll be a lot of people in this hemisphere I can't live with, but if I don't do it there'll be a lot of people in this country I can't live with." On April 28 U.S. Marines were ordered into Santo Domingo and the following day the 82d Airborne Division began operations at nearby San Isidro.

The intervention in the Dominican Republic provided Ed Artis with his first combat actions as a medic. Though that conflict is little remembered as one of the United States wars, before the United States had accomplished its mission of stabilizing the government, 8 Americans were killed and 200 were wounded. Furthermore, for Ed, it gave the young man a glimpse of life outside the United States. The people of the Dominican Republic were largely poor and subsisting with great need in a combat zone. Ed and his fellow medics felt great sadness at their plight and did what they could do to treat injuries and health needs. Often, they were confronted with strange diseases or other circumstances beyond their training but, with a positive "can-do" attitude, they learned to improvise. "I delivered by first baby in the back of an ambulance," Ed recalls with a laugh, "while reading instructions from an Army field manual.

By the time Ed returned to Fort Bragg late in 1965 the war in Vietnam was escalating and he desired more than ever to serve in that theater. Knowing that his assignment to the 82d Airborne would keep him stateside more than likely for the duration, the following spring when his 3-year active duty enlistment was up he left the Army. It was an action that cost him a \$10,000 reenlistment bonus but that didn't concern him. Ed Artis was becoming the kind of pragmatic volunteer willing to make personal sacrifice and *sneak in the back door* if the end result would accomplish the desired goal. It is a pattern that marks his efforts to this day. Little more than two years later, in 1968, he re-joined the Army and volunteered for Vietnam duty only to end up being reassigned to the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg where he served until he was eligible to reenlist yet again, this time with a guaranteed tour in Vietnam. This move also required that he waive a \$10,000 VRB (Variable Reenlistment Bonus) in order to obtain the guaranteed assignment to Vietnam.

By 1970, Sergeant Edward Artis had achieved his goal when he was assigned to the 451st Medical Detachment (OA) at Tay Ninh, Vietnam. The 541st served as the Medical Unit attached to the 187th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC). Not to be lost is the irony of that unit's designation as the "Crusaders" or the unit crest which features a shield and crossed lances, then an unknown foreshadowing of Ed's work in later years as a knight.

During *work hours*, which in Vietnam was pretty much a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week time period, Sergeant Artis' job was to treat sick, injured and wounded American soldiers. He was NCOIC (Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge) for the dispensary and his medical activities

involved treating a steady stream of normal sick call patients and other incidents and combat casualties. As an Airborne medic he and others in the 541st often flew on the helicopters of the 187th AHC, providing medical coverage for the flights as they engaged the enemy while at times pulling double duty as door gunners.

"People talk about Vietnam--the war," says Ed. "I like to talk about Vietnam--the people." Ed's heart ached for the Vietnamese and Cambodians in his area who had so little and who suffered so much. As a medic he, along with others in the 541st Medical Detachment, often spent much of their free time trying to assuage the suffering. They volunteered their help at the Provincial Hospital beyond the barbed wire of their base camp inside Tay Ninh City. When they did receive free time the American medics and even some of their officers who were medical doctors, flew from Tay Ninh to the Special Forces Camp near Snul on the border between Vietnam and Cambodia to spend a night. The following morning, they would drive or walk across the border to minister to the needs of hundreds of people in a Cambodian refugee camp, putting in a full but personally gratifying day of service to others before returning to the Special Forces camp before nightfall.

By the mid-point of Sergeant Artis' first one-year tour of duty in Vietnam he was convinced that this was where he belonged. He volunteered to extend for an additional tour of duty and was given a 30-day leave to return home. During his brief R & R back in the states he used his time to share with others the plight of the Vietnamese and to begin humanitarian drives to collect food, clothing, and other needs. He stretched his 30-day leave to 60 days, speaking wherever he could to any who would listen, in order to begin a continuing relief effort. When he returned to Vietnam it was to distribute goods arriving from friends in the United States, as well as to write home pleading for more. His program was broadcast in news stories back home with headlines such as: "Good Samaritan Sergeant" and "He Wants the Shirt off Your Back." In 1971 the young man who less than a decade earlier was a juvenile delinquent faced with jail was named one of the 5 Outstanding Young Men in California by the California Jaycees. He was the youngest recipient of that prestigious title at that time, as well as the first to be so named while serving in the military. That same year he was also nominated as One of the Ten Outstanding Young Men in America by the U.S. Jaycees.

Today Ed acknowledges that his early efforts on behalf of the Vietnamese and Cambodian people, "Is where I began my career as an international humanitarian, and for that opportunity and experience in Vietnam I will forever be grateful." It was also the proving ground for skills he would need later in life when he would have to resort to unusual and unorthodox methods of helping others. In Vietnam Ed Artis learned the ways of the black market, using it to obtain needed medical supplies. He also honed admirable skills as a Robin Hood-kind-of thief, called "scroungers" in military slang. If specific supplies were desperately needed by a Provincial hospital or a Vietnamese clinic or orphanage, and if he couldn't obtain those supplies via either black market or smugglers, Sergeant Artis would don the uniform of an Army officer and boldly sign them out of a larger U.S. Army or ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) supply depot. By that late-stage of the war, the U.S. Army was turning most of its material over to the Vietnamese leaders, many of whom in turn used those supplies to line their own pockets with cash, justifying to Ed his unconventional acts of thievery or deception to help the people who needed it most. He even "appropriated" prefabricated buildings, paying off local truck drivers to transport them to outlying villages where they could be erected for shelter, clinics, and schools. Those experiences were, he says, an, "Invaluable boot camp for learning what it takes to be a resourceful, don't-take-no-for-an-answer, big-hearted, danger-loving, swashbuckling one-man humanitarian relief force."

By 1972 most U.S. Forces returned home from Vietnam, and Sergeant Artis continued his relief efforts from afar. His advocacy for the Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees garnered considerable attention at home, and he was featured on several television talk shows. This became important in that years later it would open doors for him in the professional world of television and film. Meanwhile in 1973, because of the great work he was doing to support the Vietnamese and Cambodians the U.S. Army discharged him for the public good due his "Importance to National Safety, Health or Interest." For the next two years he continued his self-imposed mission, and then began working at his first real civilian job with the Junior Achievement program in Southern California.

In 1975 Ed watched the news to see pictures of Vietnamese being plucked from the rooftops of the American Embassy in Saigon as South Vietnam surrendered to the encroaching Communists. He was deeply saddened to see these people who had endured a decade of war buoyed by hopes of American support, suddenly abandoned and left to a tragic fate. Under the Communists there was no further hope for his aid program. For Ed Artis it was as if one poignant chapter of his life had suddenly closed and it was time to write the next.

The next *chapter* of Ed's life, written over a span of nearly two decades following the fall of Saigon, was unremarkable. Like many other Vietnam Veterans, the former soldier turned to personal goals, seeking to establish a home, career, and a future. After two years with Junior Achievement he found success in mortgage banking and real estate in Los Angeles, California, and then in the early 1980s became involved in television and film production. Still nagging at the back of his mind, however, were images of the poor people he had seen in the Dominican Republic, South Vietnam, and Cambodia. At times he felt guilty in his personal success, recalling his early feelings of shame for enjoying a comparatively luxurious lifestyle without trying to do something for the world's most helpless.

In 1992 he traveled to the Soviet Union to assist in production of a television documentary about Russia's veterans of the wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan. Among these former enemies he was quickly welcomed; he even became the first American member of the Soviet Vietnam War Veterans Association. Again, his heart ached at the plight of others. "These," he says, "were Vietnam Veterans without a V.A. (the American Veterans Administration)." So, Ed began funneling humanitarian aid into the U.S.S.R. to help these veterans of a war in which they had served in on opposing sides.

The following year Ed was back in Russia delivering aid and making new friends when he was inducted into a self-styled Order of the Knights of Malta. It was an entirely spontaneous decision with far-reaching end results. "At the time I wasn't interested," Ed says of the organization that was founded in the late 11th century when they established hospitals along the routes to and in Jerusalem during the First and Second Crusades. "Back then I thought the Knights of Malta was just another Social Club with a costume."

In fact, the Hospitallers have centuries of tradition in benevolence and service, derived from medieval knightly service. One of the modern-day Knights of Malta Ed met in Russia was Dr. James Laws, a practicing Osteopathic Cardiologist from Dayton, Ohio. This knight had come to Russia with 8 to 10 pacemakers, a defibrillator, and an EKG machine badly needed in Soviet hospitals. Ed was impressed by Dr. Laws own efforts on behalf of others, doubly-so when he saw American Army jump wings that Laws wore on his jacket. When the two men began talking, over a fist full of beers later that night, he learned that Laws had not only served with the 82d Airborne Division, but in Ed's own unit, the 3d Battalion, 325th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The two had

not met before, however. Six years older than Artis, Dr. Laws had served in that unit about two years before Artis and before the Vietnam War.

In August 1993 Dr. Laws watched as Ed Artis was knighted. Kneeling beside Sir Edward on that occasion was Yuri Alexeyev, Vice Governor at that time of the Soviet Ural Region of Russia. As the Soviet prepared to be knighted himself he told Ed, "Today you will be the first foreigner knighted in Russia. You will be my brother."

As is to be expected whenever someone steps forward and becomes a public figure, today Ed Artis has his share of detractors; small-minded and often jealous individuals who seek to find fault rather than praise achievement. Many of those make light of his title: Sir Edward Artis, and his claim to be a modern-day knight. For Artis knighthood has nothing to do with ancient ritual, or even a modern-day benevolent organization that bestows such titles. To him, knighthood is a matter of personal dedication to others. In his own mind, on that day he swore an oath and accepted a challenge that indeed transformed his thoughts and subsequent actions making him, if not a knight in shining armor, then at least a knight in a Kevlar vest. He is that, indeed!

Dr. Laws was himself enamored with Ed's stories of both his early work in Vietnam and more recently in the Soviet Union. He asked Ed to take him with him on one of his next trips. That mission as they call them today, came the following year when, immediately following the genocide in Rwanda the two men were among some of the first aid workers to reach the scene. There they delivered a hundred thousand doses of Cipro to the refugee camps to stop a cholera epidemic. After completing their mission, they returned home to plan a follow-up trip to help the people of Afghanistan, now suffering under the heavy hand of the Taliban.

Before setting out on their second mission together, and with dreams of many more to follow, the two men organized for the future. They incorporated Knightsbridge International, a charitable Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to collect and distribute aid to the needy. They also established a criterion of service that would become their mantra. "These are our rules," say Sir Edward Artis. "We're not in the God business, we don't want to change their politics or religion. It (the mission) must be high adventure and must be humanitarian, and it's got to be in an area where few would ever go. If it doesn't fit these criteria, we're not interested."² In November/December 1995 that place was Afghanistan, the first of six such relief missions--all but two of those missions coming after that country was made even more dangerous in the aftermath of events on September 11, 2001.

Before they returned to war-torn Afghanistan in 2001 however, there were other hot spots desperately needing their aid. The two men visited Kyrgyzstan in 1995 and Nicaragua in 1996, mostly to provide dental missions but also bringing collected supplies of food, clothing, and medications. 1997 found them in Chechnya and Afghanistan, and the following years there were missions to Ingushetia, Cambodia, Albania-Kosovo, Thailand, Burma, as well as two return trips to Nicaragua.

The two men's third return to Afghanistan was planned long in advance of the September 11 attack in the United States that within weeks had American forces fighting there to rout the Taliban. It was a desperate time when a stranger from America was exposed to all manner of danger, whether from Taliban terrorists or simply nervous Afghan warlords seeking to protect their turf. Still Knightsbridge came, hauling tons of rice to isolated and starving Afghan villages, purchasing blankets and tents from black marketers to distribute to families without shelter, and promising to keep returning with more as needed. Ed, Dr. Lawas, and a newer member of the Knightsbridge Team Sir Walt Ratterman would personally sit down with the various elders in each village to learn what their specific needs were, promising to obtain them and return.

The missions of Knight Bridge International (KBI) gave the two knights, by now numbering nine volunteers, both the adrenaline-filled excitement they craved, with the added bonus and focal point of their missions being to help those who were helpless. Dr. Laws and the other Knights personally funded much of their needs and Ed contributed by proffering his personal credit card to purchase supplies and fund other mission related costs when there was no money available from other sources. They also raided American storehouses filled with unwanted medical supplies that could serve a useful purpose elsewhere in the world. Ed notes that when a surgical kit is opened in an American hospital, that often only about 30% to 50% of its contents are used. The remainder, including catheters, bandages, and other useful materials is generally then discarded. As news of their great work spread, other organizations such as the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and the remedy Program at Yale University, Sharing Resources Worldwide and most recently The Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach began collecting and donating supplies for KBI to transport to areas of the world where others could not get in to or often simply feared to go.

Ed quickly points out that every item donated in the United States is personally delivered "Hand to hand, eye to eye, heart to heart." There is no overhead for KBI, no offices to pay rent and utilities for, and none of the volunteers (which occasionally welcomes one or two new faces for a specific mission) receives a salary. "The point is not only to provide lifesaving food, medicine and shelter but to do so with dignity and without disruption to existing tribal or communal ways of life," KBI points out. When distributing supplies, it is not uncommon for an arriving truck to be instantly mobbed by needy and starving people. Sir Edward demands order and follows yet another rule--"People with guns will not be served." He has seen individuals who might otherwise turn the press of the crowd into a playground for bullies hand off their weapons to others while approaching the truck for a bag of wheat or rice. Ed uses a simple punch-card to record what each family receives so that no one is overlooked. In one recent operation in Afghanistan, in addition to providing clothes, blankets and tents, KBI distributed more than 300 tons of food, enough to feed 15,000 refugees for up to four months.

Even in this admirable work Sir Edward Artis is not without his critics. His unorthodox manner of operation, such facts of life as that he takes no crap from anyone and has on occasion paid a bribe to a border guard in order to be able to take a truck of food into a needy village, has garnered his share of enemies. Others have said of his medical missions that he is simply taking the cast-off of American hospitals, useless garbage, and spreading it around the world. Indeed, no good deed goes unpunished but Sir Edward while hurt by such unfair criticism, returns again and again.

Over the last five years KBI has conducted several medical missions to the Philippine Islands. After one recent visit Bantay BATA 163 Television reported, "(These are) boxes and boxes of (surplus) medicines and medical supplies and equipment worth millions of dollars that would have been left in warehouses of United States hospitals (or sent) down to the incinerator. Thanks to Sir Edward Artis these have just found their way to small hospitals and health centers in the far-flung provincial areas of the Philippine Islands."

Noted Philippine Senator Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., "This (supplies) will give country hospitals and the poor a lot of good, high standard equipment to practice good medicine at a very low cost."

In the summer of 2004 Sir Edward was delivering additional medical supplies in the poor regions of Sulu Province in the Southern Philippines when, at age 59 he suffered a heart attack and went into cardiac arrest. He was rushed over muddy and rutted roads late at night to the Jolo Provincial Hospital where he was laid on a gurney he delivered during a previous visit. There he

died--for a full two minutes, before medical equipment from that same previous visit re-started his heart. "My life was saved by the very equipment I brought to the Philippines to help others," he told me. "Talk about karma!"

"We're not heroes, we're simply doing what's right," says Ed. There has never been a better time than right now for chivalry--for good men and women to step forward. We'll go where others don't or won't. We'd rather do something, instead of sitting on our hands and complaining about what we see going on. If you call yourself a good person, and you're not doing something to help somebody else, you're a fraud."³

Says Walt Ratterman, a member of KBI who has joined Sir Edward and Dr. Laws on many of their missions of mercy as well as mounting missions of his own now, "People need to get out of this country and open their eyes--and most people don't. This kind of work has opened my eyes.



Sir Edward Artis (L) and Dr. Sir James Laws (R) deliver supplies to needy Afghan villagers in 2001.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: In 2006 the story of Sir Edward Artis, Dr. Sir James Laws, and Sir Walt Ratterman was released in a moving documentary titled "Beyond the Call." Produced and directed by Academy Award nominated Filmmaker Adrian Belic, you can order online from <http://www.beyondthecallthemovie.com>.

¹ Helitzer, Mel & Morrie, *It's Never Too Late to Plant a Tree*, University Sports Press, Athens, Ohio, 2003, p. 189

² *Beyond the Call*, Adrian Belic, 2006

³ Helitzer, *ibid*

General Colin L. Powell



"Our struggle will not be over until every American is able to find his or her own place in our society, limited only by his or her own ability and his or her own dream."

"Once you've got something that you like, something you're good at, then do it for all it's worth. Be the very best you can be. Let nothing deter you, let nothing stand in your way, and go for it."

*General Colin L. Powell
U.S. Army (Retired)*

The American Dream is that promise of "liberty and justice for all" that assures every American both equal rights and equal opportunity. These are embodied in the notion that in this country, any person can grow up to be President. Perhaps nowhere has the validity of that mantra been better betted than in the life of the young Black man who, by the sweat of his brow and a few unexpected opportunities ascended to become the highest-ranking soldier in the United States military. He is perhaps as capable and as suited to the Presidency as any man alive today and yet, having become poised to fulfill what most might identify as the ultimate American Dream, he has thus far chosen to defer to even loftier pursuits.

Born April 5, 1937, Colin Luther Powell was caught somewhere between generations. He was only 8 years old when World War II ended, too young to be numbered among those we remember as The Greatest Generation and yet a few years too old to be labeled a "Baby Boomer." His accomplishments as a young man growing up in the 1960s, and as a veteran of the war that was a focal point of that decade make him a welcome *adoptee* for, we who came of age during that period. His own contribution to the positive changes of our time defined his own future as well as the future of our Country.

The product of humble beginnings, young Powell grew up in a modest but stable home in South Bronx. His father, Luther Theophilus Powell, and his mother Maud Ariel McKoy, were Jamaican immigrants who had met after coming separately to New York City in the 1920s. They married in 1929, both of them working in Manhattan's garment district to pay the rent on a small apartment in a largely Negro neighborhood. Hard work provided Luther Powell opportunity to succeed in his own humble career where was employed by the same garment manufacturer for 23 years, working his way from warehouseman to shipping clerk, then head of the shipping department, and then foreman. Decades later his son would emulate that work ethic and successful climbing of the vocational ladder, ascending from second lieutenant to general.

In 1931 the Powell family welcomed their first child, a daughter they named Marilyn. She would grow up to be a bright student bound for college and a 40-year teaching career. When Colin Luther was born five-and-a-half years later, it would be to mature in the shadow of his successful older sister. "She was sort of the star of the family," Colin told the Academy of American Achievement in 1998. "I was kind of the runt, the kid who was worried about a lot. Marilyn was always the good one and she did well in school, and I didn't, and there was no doubt about where she was going to go, to college.... I was always a question mark."¹

When Colin was six years old Luther and Maud decided to move across the river to the South Bronx. There, in the Hunt's Point Section, young Colin would spend most of his early life. It was a comfortable if somewhat densely populated neighborhood of multi-story rowhouses and apartments inhabited by an upwardly mobile working class. Initially a largely Jewish community, as hard work enabled families in poorer neighborhoods to afford better surroundings it became a multi-cultural setting in which Irish, Italians, Puerto Ricans, Blacks, and other ethnic minorities found a welcome. Powell points out in fact, there were no minorities in the neighborhood because it was so multi-cultural there was no majority.

Young Colin's developing personality was influenced by his parent's personal involvement in society. Of course, there was the regular Sunday morning ritual of attending services at St. Margaret's Church where, he says, "We had our own pew." Luther served as a senior warden, Maud headed the alter guild, and older sister Marilyn played the piano. Young Colin was still searching for his own niche.

Brotherly love and concern for others, however, was much more than a religious diatribe for the Powell family. Luther had a habit of inviting the man who delivered oil to their third-floor apartment inside for a cup of coffee. Whenever he was home the door was always open to provide the mailman a brief respite and a friendly conversation. While it was customary in the neighborhood to tip the garbage men at Christmas time, Luther Powell was prone to invite them inside and gather with them around the table for a drink. He was a sociable man who mingled well with strangers and to whom there were really no strangers. Decades later his son would demonstrate a similar openness and friendly nature towards others.

Though as a young man in the Army Colin Powell would complete every educational course and every advanced school in the top of his class, in reflection he is quick to note that he was not a "shining star" in the classroom as a boy. When he was passed from the third to the fourth grade at P.S. 39, he was placed in the bottom of the class. He describes that moment by noting, "Catastrophe struck the Powell family."²

In a 2000 interview with a new generation of young students he summed up his early life by noting: "I was pretty average as a kid. I wasn't particularly good at sports, and I ran a straight C average most of the time. I wasn't one of the big kids on the block, but I enjoyed my childhood growing up in New York city. It was a pretty safe place in those days, and I used to ride my bike all over the city and take the subway to go all the way downtown. I think, though, if anybody had seen me in those days, they wouldn't have thought that I was a kid who was going to be particularly successful."³ Indeed it is not always the class valedictorian or the star athlete that will once day make a resounding and positive impact on their world. Our nation is great because of the vast number of ordinary people, who when given opportunity, can accomplish extraordinary things.

The one thing that young Powell did take an interest in during his boyhood was church, not for its theological teachings but rather for its structure. "My inability to stick to anything became a source of concern to my parents, unspoken, but I knew it was there," he wrote in 1993. "I did, however, stand out in one arena. I was an excellent acolyte and sub deacon and enjoyed my ecclesiastical duties. Here was organization, tradition, hierarchy, pageantry, purpose--a world, now that I think about it, not at all unlike the Army. Maybe my 1928 prayer book was destined to be Field Manual 22-5, the Army's troop drilling bible."⁴

It was in deference to the wishes of his parents and the peer pressure of family, rather than a driving quest for knowledge, that Colin Powell applied for admission to both New York University and City College of New York (CCNY) after graduating from Morris High School in February 1954. Surprisingly he was accepted by both. He chose the latter, a public institution of higher learning where tuition was \$10 a year as opposed to NYU, a private school where tuition was seventy-five times higher. He enrolled to major in Engineering shortly before his 17th birthday and it was there at CCNY that at last Colin Powell finally found his niche.

Colin Powell's transformation from shiftless and aimless teenage boy to America's highest-ranking general began innocuously enough. In his first semester at CCNY he did fairly well with his general courses but a summer course in mechanical drawing, the first related to his chosen major, left him academically confused. He changed his major to Geology, evoking immediate concern from the family. Sister Marilyn was now married after graduating from Buffalo State Teachers College and was embarking on an admirable career that would see her spend more than 40 years in the classroom helping young boys and girls learn. In her shadow, young Colin still was motivated to succeed, but he just couldn't seem to find where or how. Returning for the fall semester at CCNY he joined the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Course) and perhaps for the first time in his young life, he knew where he belonged. Immediately the uniformity...not just the

uniform, the tradition, and the structure filled a void that appealed to his own sense of identity and need. He also learned that it was a job at which he was very good.

"There came a day when I stood in line in the drill hall to be issued olive-drab pants and jacket, brown shirt, brown tie, brown shoes, a belt with a brass buckle, and an overseas cap," he later wrote. As soon as I got home, I put the uniform on and looked in the mirror. I liked what I saw...The uniform gave me a sense of belonging, and something I had never experienced all the while I was growing up; I felt distinctive."⁵

Powell joined the ROTC drill team called the *Pershing Rifles* (PR) because it was considered the best. He says "The discipline, the structure, the camaraderie, the sense of belonging was what I craved. I became a leader almost immediately. I found a selflessness within our ranks that reminded me of the caring atmosphere within my family. Race, color, background, income meant nothing. The PRs went to the limit for each other and for the group. If this was what soldiering was all about, then maybe I wanted to be a soldier."⁶ Members of the Pershing Rifles were also distinctive in the ROTC program by their easily recognized blue shoulder chord and shining emblem.

In the summer of 1957 before returning to CCNY for his Senior Year Cadet Powell spent six weeks training at the U.S. Army post at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. It was the young man's first trip far from his native New York, and his first introduction to the South. He enjoyed the military training; marching, shooting, learning camouflage and map reading. His skills as a drill leader with the Pershing Rifles resulted in his being named acting company commander. At the end of the program the visiting cadets stood in ranks on the parade ground as various awards were presented for marksmanship, physical training, etc. Cadet Powell finished second to a cadet from Cornell for honors as the Best Cadet for the entire program. Later, while turning in his gear before returning home a white supply sergeant took him aside and said, "You want to know why you didn't get best cadet in camp?" Though disappointed, Powell had not even thought about this, but the sergeant explained, "You think these Southern ROTC instructors are going to go back to their colleges and say the best kid here was a Negro?"

It was Colin Powell's first real confrontation with racial prejudice, an experience vastly different from the melting pot community in which he had grown up. "I did not want to believe that my worth could be diminished by the color of my skin,"⁷ he notes. Driving home with two white comrades from ROTC young Powell became even more acutely aware of a problem in the country he loved. When they occasionally stopped for a break, he found that there were three restrooms marked: "Men," "Women," and "Colored."

In his final year of college, and despite a less-than-stellar academic performance that saw him graduate with a "C" average, Powell did achieve a major goal. As a Senior he became the Pershing Rifles' Company Commander with the rank of cadet colonel, the highest a cadet could achieve. He was further designated as a "Distinguished Military Graduate" which afforded the chance to enter the active duty Army with a regular, rather than a reserve commission. On June 9, 1958, he took the oath to become an Army second lieutenant. Graduation from CCNY the following day was anticlimactic, his bachelor's degree in geology "an incidental dividend."

Until graduation from college and entrance into the military Powell lived at home with his parents. Their influence on his life was poignant and positive and would subsequently be reflected in his own adult life. "My parents did not recognize their own strengths. It was nothing they ever said that taught us. It was the way they lived their lives. If the values seem correct or relevant, the children will follow the values. I had been shaped not by preaching, but by example, by moral

osmosis."⁸ That lesson provided Powell with what might singularly be defined as his mantra for successfully commanding others: Lead by Example!

Second Lieutenant Colin Powell was an infantry officer who, as he had as a Cadet in CCNY's Pershing Rifles, pushed himself personally and possessed a natural sense of leadership. He requested and completed both Airborne training, making the requisite jumps that placed silver wings on the breast of his uniform, and Army Ranger training that placed a semi-circular and highly regarded "Ranger Tab" on his shoulder. In January 1959 he was assigned as a platoon leader commanding 40 men in Company B, 2d Armored Rifle Battalion, 48th Infantry. His AO (area of responsibility) was the Fulda Gap in Germany. Late in his tour, while still a lieutenant, he served temporarily as Commanding Officer of Company D. Wherever Powell went his natural abilities propelled him into a leadership role, though he himself sometimes now humbly chalks it up to "lucky breaks."

When First Lieutenant Powell returned from Germany in January 1961 to begin a two-year tour of duty with the 5th Infantry Division at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, it was to watch a young new Senator from that very state take the oath of office to become President. John F. Kennedy, with his call to duty and service, left an indelible impression on Powell's mind. A few months earlier in Germany Powell, now age 23, had at last been old enough to vote and he cast his absentee ballot for John Kennedy. "Not much searching analysis went into my choice," he recalls. "In those days, (Kennedy) and his party seemed to hold out a little more hope for a young man of my roots."⁹

Unlike the private business sector where a young man fresh out of college can ascend to the board room of his father's business, in the military everybody starts at the bottom. It is important to a process that prizes, even demands superior leadership. While a tendency to lead may be somewhat innate the ability to lead well is learned. At Fort Devens he learned an important lesson from an unusual assignment he dubbed the "Stork Patrol."

Assigned as adjutant to the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry, Powell might well have taken pride in the fact that he was a lieutenant serving in a captain's slot. His commander was Lieutenant Colonel William C. Abernathy, a devout Southern Baptist with a clean-cut and moral approach to everything. Powell recalls the harshest word he ever heard the man utter was "golly."

One day Abernathy instructed his adjutant to set up a system of "Welcome Baby" letters. Powell's job was to insure that in the event that the wife of any man in the battalion had a baby, that the soldier would receive a congratulatory letter from the commander the following day. Furthermore, a "Welcome to the World" letter would be simultaneously addressed to the infant. In the grander scheme of daily events Powell, still somewhat skeptical of the project, slacked off for one of the only times in his career. After a sincere but profanity-free rebuke from the boss he went back to work and launched the program.

"To my surprise," Powell wrote, "once we had the system in place, we started getting positive feedback. The soldiers were impressed by Abernathy's thoughtfulness. Mothers wrote us that they appreciated being considered part of their husband's Army life. The babies were not talking yet, but I imagine, somewhere out there, a thirty-five-year-old woman is wondering how a letter making her a member of the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry, got into her baby book."¹⁰

For Powell it was a lesson in leadership that would mark his career: be faithful in the small things and attentive to the needs of your men. Good leaders don't command from a distance but reach out and touch the lives of those who follow, making them realize that each of them is important. Decades later when he was the highest-ranking man in American military two young Special Forces Soldiers from Fort Bragg knocked on the door of Quarters 6, the residence of the military's highest ranking general. They were in town and simply wanted to meet the man they

greatly admired. Powell's daughter-in-law answered the door and advised the soldiers that the family was having a birthday party. They thanked her and turned away. When she told the General, who had rung the bell he rushed out to catch them, introduced himself, and then invited them in to join in the party.¹¹

The following November as a favor to a friend Lieutenant Powell agreed to a blind date. That was how he met Alma Johnson, a pretty young Southern girl from Birmingham, Alabama. Alma worked with the Boston Guild for the Hard of Hearing and was a graduate of Fisk, the "Harvard" of traditionally black colleges and universities. It was generally assumed that *Fisk Girls* would meet and marry a young doctor graduating across the street at Meharry Medical School. Though still single, the least of her romantic inclinations was to marry someone in the Army. When Colin and Alma met however, a spark was kindled, and they spent the evening enjoying each other's company. Colin returned to base to think about the intriguing young lady he had met entirely by chance and called her the very next day to ask for a second date.

The following month Alma returned to Birmingham to spend Christmas with her parents. She arranged her return itinerary to Boston by way of New York and spent the New Year's holiday meeting Colin's family. "I was sure Alma would love my relatives," he wrote decades later, but maybe not immediately. A well-bred girl from a proper Southern family needed to be exposed gradually to nosy, fun-loving West Indians." Luther and Maud had raised their children to be largely open to everyone. Something of a soul-searching examination of the family values had been done in 1953 when Colin's sister Marilyn fell in love with Norm Bern, a White man from Buffalo. At a time when interracial marriage was frowned on in the North and deadly in the South the Powell family and the Bern family believed love could overcome all barriers and indeed Marilyn and Norm's marriage lasted and gave the Powells two grandchildren.

Following the holidays and into the Spring of 1962 Colin and Alma became inseparable, spending as much time as two people with different careers in cities nearly fifty miles apart could spend. Alma's mother was the founder of the Girl Scouts for Black girls in Birmingham and in February she came to New York for a scouting program. Colin and Alma drove down to meet her and introduce her to Colin's parents. Except for Colin's choice of a military career, it appeared that they were on track for marriage and an ordinary life in the Land of Opportunity.

In August Lieutenant Powell received word he was up for promotion to Captain and that he was going to be sent to Vietnam. He drove to Boston to break the news to Alma that he would be gone for a year. She was crushed and believed the two might be best served to end the relationship at that point. It is catchy to say that "absence makes the heart grow fonder" but in truth, absence can be brutal, especially for the wife and family of a soldier. It is often forgotten but certainly true that "they also serve who watch and wait." Waiting frightened Alma who had already been through one broken engagement and as yet had no commitment from Colin beyond the promise of weekend dating.

Powell drove back to Fort Devens, crushed. He knew he loved Alma and wanted to spend his life with her. He also had a commitment and military service is not the kind of job where you can give a 30-day notice of intent to quit. That night lying lonely in his bunk he pondered all this and, the very next day drove back to Boston to propose marriage. To his joy and relief Alma said "Yes" and the two were married on August 24th in Birmingham.

Because of the quickness of it all, and because the wedding was to be in Alabama, at first Luther and Maud felt they could not attend. Marilyn and her white husband Norm were undaunted by the growing racial violence in the South and determined to be part of the happy moment which then prompted Mr. and Mrs. Powell to change their minds. "If they lynch Norm, we all ought to be there. I might have to buy off the lynchers," was Luther Powell's reasoning.

One month later Powell said goodbye to his comrades at Fort Devens and moved with Alma to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he was to undergo specialized training for his Vietnam Service. Upon arrival at Fort Bragg the newlyweds began looking for housing they could rent in a safe, middle-class Black neighborhood. Nothing could be found, and Colin sadly prepared to send his wife home to Birmingham for the duration of his training. Fortunately, he ran into an old friend from his days in Germany, Joe Schwar, who was serving with the Army's Special Forces at Fort Bragg. Joe and his wife Pat insisted that Colin and Anna share their modest three-bedroom duplex with their three young sons. It was a gift of kindness never lost on Powell, and a personal measure of the Schwar's integrity. They received some heated retribution from neighbors abhorred by the fact that the Schwar's had brought two Black people into their *lily-white* community.

On December 23, 1962, Captain Colin Powell left Birmingham for Vietnam after driving his wife to her hometown to spend the next year living with her parents. The farewell was difficult, more so because Anna was pregnant. Powell was going to war little knowing that in his absence his wife herself was returning to a "war zone." During the race riots of the Summer of 1963 Birmingham, Alabama, became perhaps more dangerous even than Vietnam.

Twenty-five-year-old Captain Powell approached his new assignment with idealistic naiveté. "I was excited and very happy," he told the American Academy of Achievement in 1998. "I'd been selected by my government to go to a combat zone and to serve a purpose that was noble. And we were fighting communism and we were going to try to help the South Vietnamese protect themselves from communism and defend their way of life. Let them make their own choice as to how they should be governed. And so, it was a very noble undertaking and it was wrapped in the mystique of the Kennedy era."¹²

In a small outpost in the A Shaw Valley near Laos, not far from the Ho Chi Minh Trail that moved Communist troops and supplies into Vietnam, he met those people. Captain Vo Cong Hieu was Powell's counterpart, Commander of the 2d Battalion, 3d Infantry Regiment, 1st Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Division. Powell was there to advise and assist Hieu in training the battalion's 400 ARVN soldiers, including accompanying them on combat patrols. Upon arriving at the small compound cut out of dense jungle in the A Shau Valley Hieu explained to his new American Adviser in decent English, "(This is) Very important outpost.

"But why is it here?" Captain Powell asked, looking at the expanse of tropical jungle and nearby towering mountains from which the base camp would be vulnerable to enemy artillery.

"Outpost is here to protect the airfield," Hieu replied proudly as he pointed to the crude runway from which the Marine helicopter that had just delivered Powell to another world and another time began taking off.

"What's the airfield here for?" Powell asked.

"Airfield here to re-supply outpost," he responded. "The base camp at A Shau was there to protect an airstrip that was there to supply the outpost."¹³ Such reasoning perhaps marked the later *real* war when American soldiers came in great numbers, 2.7 million of them. Indeed in 1968 following the massive Communist Tet Offensive such ambiguity was evident in the American statement, "We had to destroy (the city of) Hue in order to save it." Logical or illogical, proactive

or reactive, right or wrong, American soldiers from Colin Powell to the last to come home did so for one reason, they were ordered there to serve by the country they loved.

Many of the soldiers that Captain Hieu commanded and Captain Powell trained were conscripted, lacking motivation and often basic education, but Powell noticed they "were willing, obedient, and hid their feelings behind a mask of polite submission." The Vietnamese with their simple lifestyle are an easy people to come to love. Each morning children who would not be yet kindergarten age in the United States were entrusted with a family's prized possession, a water buffalo, that they would take out into the fields and return with in the evening. Cultural differences were also different...and fascinating. When calling another Vietnamese one didn't wave them in with an upturned arm; that was how you called cattle. Rather, with arm out and palm down you beckoned another towards you like a mother gathering her young. Vietnamese men were comfortable in public displays friendship and affection; it was not uncommon to see two soldiers in uniform walking together and holding hands. It was a simple, non-sexual demonstration of friendship with no untoward connotations.

Captain Powell's task was to help Captain Hieu turn one such battalion of young Vietnamese soldiers into skilled and professional soldiers. Although in some such situations an ARVN commander with an ego resented his American counterpart there was no such rift in the 2/3 Infantry regiment and Powell remembers Hieu with fondness. "We were together about six months. He was just a wonderful, dedicated soldier--very professional," he told me during an interview for this chapter. Inevitably the two leaders became very close, building a friendship that would result in an unusual reunion decades later.

One month after arriving in Vietnam Powell joined Hieu for an inspection of their troops and then led them outside the base camp and into the jungle. Although Hieu was the commander to whom the men looked for leadership, the ARVN Captain looked to his American Advisor for wisdom and guidance. It was a relationship that worked well on that first combat mission, as well as many subsequent such forays into enemy territory. On the sixth day they found the enemy, or rather the enemy found them. Hearing gunfire and rushing forward Powell found one wounded and one dead ARVN; the enemy had fired from ambush and then melted back into the jungle.

Occasionally these patrols meandered through the jungle to break out into a Montagnard village. One day while patrolling through a village six small children gathered around the two leaders of the patrol, Captains Powell and Hieu. Someone took a picture of the smiling children with the soldiers and gave copies to both men. After leaving Vietnam Powell would often recall his first tour of combat duty by pulling out the photo taken that day and remembering his good friend. When Vietnam fell in 1975, he thought of Hieu with grave concern, knowing in all probability that the foreign officer with whom he served and forged a friendship was either dead or a prisoner of the Communists.

Late in May Powell was on yet another patrol when he heard the sound of a small observation plane and received word via radio that it was coming in with a special delivery airmail package. After locating the patrol in the tall saw grass below the pilot threw out a package tied in an easily visible yellow handkerchief. Powell ran to retrieve it, a small box of Reese's peanut butter cups with an envelope below marked "Baby Letter." He tore it open and the photograph of an infant boy fell out...it was Michael Powell...Colin was a father. For seven more months that photograph was as close as the soldier would be to his first child.

Once when asked by school kids how he got the Purple Heart medal Powell replied, "Something kind of dumb!"¹⁴ It happened on patrol in July. While moving forward towards the head of his column Powell felt his foot slip through loose soil and then the excruciating pain of a bamboo spike piercing the sole of his boot and the flesh of his right foot. Punji stakes were sharpened bamboo spears, frequently coated with human feces and hidden in small holes that were camouflaged. They were a rudimentary but common, and certainly effective booby trap favored by the NVA and the Viet Cong (VC). Powell felt embarrassed to have stepped in a punji pit and tried to limp along without letting his Vietnamese soldiers know he had been hurt. When he could bear the pain no longer, he fashioned a crutch from a branch and staggered in agony back into camp with his troops. Infection was already setting in and he was evacuated to Hue.

Following recovery Powell completed his Vietnam tour at headquarters and was rotated home in November, one month early "because we were doing so well over there." It had been an important step, he had commanded soldiers in combat and, although it had been in an advisory role to foreign allies this was a career-enhancing experience that was valuable to his resume. Furthermore, he was not only a combat leader but a wounded combat veteran. While perhaps the scar of a through-and-through punji stake wasn't as macho and impressive as say, the scar of a bullet in the shoulder, it still merited award of the Purple Heart.

Of that war in Vietnam Powell noted in his autobiography, "In spite of my misgivings, I was leaving the country still a true believer. I had experienced disappointment, not disillusionment. I remained convinced that it was right to help South Vietnam remain independent, and right to draw the line against communism anywhere in the world. The ends were justified, even if the means were flawed."¹⁵

The return to Birmingham to see his wife after months of separation, and the opportunity at to last hold his infant son for the first time, made coming home an emotional time. Ironically, 11 months earlier he had stepped off a plane in Saigon to enter a foreign land unlike any he had ever witnessed. Now, stepping of the plane in Birmingham it was again like entering a foreign land for in his brief absence America had changed drastically. En route to Birmingham and while waiting for his flight in Nashville, Tennessee, Powell watched in shock as President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas. The situation was also bad in Birmingham, a city that had been rocked by a summer of violence Powell had been unaware of while serving half-way around the world.

After a short leave to spend time with his family, Powell was assigned to Fort Benning for the Infantry Officers Advanced Course; a necessary career move for further promotion. While looking for housing in Georgia so he could bring his wife and son to live near post, one night he stopped at Bucks Barbeque to get something to eat. After being told that because he was Black, he would have to pick up his hamburger from a back window he refused and angrily drove away. "When I came home from Vietnam, having served my nation, having sworn an oath to the Constitution to serve my nation, I came home and was denied access to restaurants and refused service in hotels and motels," he recalls of those days. "If my skin was white, or if I could shine it up a little and put a hat on my head so it wasn't showing, as long as I could pretend I wasn't black, then I was free to enjoy these benefits. The fact that I was a soldier of the nation was irrelevant."¹⁶

On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act prohibiting such discrimination. That same summer Captain Colin L. Powell returned Buck's Barbeque. This time he drove up to the front, placed his order, and received his meal like any white man would have. Despite problems at home America was beginning to make progress. The same could not be said for the war in Vietnam.

As a Major, Colin Powell returned to combat duty in May 1968. It was the same year that for the first time the number of Americans topped half a million. When Powell had served there five years earlier there had been only 16,300 American soldiers in Vietnam. He left behind in America his young family: Alma, Michael, and 3-year-old daughter Linda in order to serve in a war that even he now had misgivings about...if not the rightness of the cause then at least the manner in which it was being directed.

Major Powell was initially assigned as Executive Officer of the 3d Battalion, 1st Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade of the Americal Division operating in Quang Ngai province south of Chu Lai. The position of Executive Officer is largely an administrative post, but it is an important one, for the XO serves his Battalion Commander much like the Vice President serves the President of the United States. The XO is essentially second-in-command.

While Powell was performing his duties in *the boonies* back at Division Headquarters General Charles Gettys saw a picture of one of his field officers in a story in *Army Times*. Before assignment to Vietnam Powell had been selected for the prestigious Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Missouri, where he had graduated second in a class of 1,244 other eager career officers. Realizing that he had a "rising star" in the Division, Gettys brought Major Powell into Division Headquarters and made him his G-3 (Operations and Planning), a post usually assigned to a senior lieutenant colonel. Gettys' Chief of Staff was something of a legend, Colonel Jack Lemaster Treadwell, a 49-year-old career officer who had earned the Medal of Honor during World War II.

On November 15 an element of the Americal Division located a major enemy base camp deep in the jungle and assumed control of the area. Because it had served as an enemy Headquarters for operations in the area General Gettys ordered his soldiers to clear a helicopter landing zone and flew out the following day to personally visit the site. With him was his Chief of Staff, his G-3 Officer, two other aides, and the helicopter crew. As the Command chopper tried to affect a landing in the hastily cleared and small LZ, the rotors became entangled in nearby branches and the chopper crashed 25 or more feet to the ground. Powell and one of the chopper crew quickly bolted free and raced for safety, knowing not if or when the chopper might suddenly burst in flames. Looking back at the tangled wreckage they then noticed that they were the only two who had escaped; the others remained trapped in the wreckage. While Private First-Class Bob Pyle returned to extricate the pilot and co-pilot, Powell rescued his barely-conscious general who suffered from a broken shoulder. Then he returned again, heedless of the potential for an explosion at any moment, to rescue an American hero and Medal of Honor recipient. He returned a third time to assist in the rescue of the others.

Today Powell humbly defers credit for that daring act to PFC Pyle and other soldiers who raced to the crash scene. The fact remains that he personally rescued two men and assisted in the rescue of the others, all while suffering from a fractured ankle that he had suffered in the crash. For his non-combat heroism on that day he was awarded the Soldier's Medal. While low in precedence, it is one of the Army's most respected awards. Only the Medal of Honor has been presented to fewer soldiers.

When Major Powell returned home after his second Vietnam War tour it was to temporarily hang his uniform in the closet and go back to school. The Army had selected him for a fully funded program at George Washington University to pursue a Master's Degree in business. He began classes just two months before the largest anti-war rally of the period when, in November, a half-million young people, most of them college students much like Powell himself, converged on Washington, D.C. to protest the war.

After gaining his M.B.A. at G.W.U., during which period he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, Powell returned to service in uniform at the Pentagon. The following year he was encouraged to apply for the prestigious White House Fellowship. Powell was comfortable back in uniform and working at the Pentagon and might well have declined the opportunity had he not been enthusiastically pushed toward it by others who saw his potential. He grudgingly filled out the forms, mailed in the paperwork, and went back to work to forget the matter. He was one of 130 applicants, out of more than 1,000, who were called to interview for the prestigious fellowship. He then was one of 33 national finalists, and ultimately, one of 17 selected.

For a year Colin Powell served as a White House Fellow, learning nuances of Washington political life that would become instrumental and critical in a future as yet undefined and was perhaps indeed unimaginable. By 1973 he was a two-tour decorated combat veteran, an M.B.A., a Pentagon alumnus, and a White House Fellow. He was eager to return to soldiering, to obtain the kind of command critical to further promotion and wound up in the cold and tenuous Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) of South Korea. Though during his first Vietnam tour as an Advisor he had basically commanded a battalion of ARVN soldiers, in Korea he would command his first battalion of American soldiers. Serving under Major General Henry E. *The Gunfighter* Emerson he was assigned as Battalion Commander for 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry in the Eighth Army's 2d Infantry Division.

Powell devoted an entire chapter of his autobiography to *The Gunfighter*, a fighting general of uncommon and unorthodox ability. In Korea in 1973 general was faced with demoralized soldiers, many of whom had become embittered by the downward spiral of the American effort in Vietnam and a resurgence of racism in troops who spent long days of boredom manning frigid outposts across the border from the North Koreans. To combat racism *The Gunfighter* insisted that all soldiers under his command watch the movie "Brian's Song" that detailed the true story of the friendship between two professional athletes, Gayle Sayers and Brian Piccolo, one Black and the other White. To occupy his men and give them more positive pursuits than fighting among themselves he established "combat sports." His "combat football" pitted entire platoons (40 men) against each other on the soccer field under conditions sometimes called "jungle rules" in Vietnam...meaning there were no rules. It was unorthodox, certainly not a sport where one remained injury free for long, but the troops loved it. It was macho like their leader, physically exhausting, team building, and gave everyone a sense of pride.

In the spirit of World War II legend General George S. Patton, *The Gunfighter* addressed his troops in blatantly profane motivational speeches that the men loved. With strong battalion commanders like Lieutenant Colonel Powell, all of whom admired their boss, he turned a Division that was on the verge of imploding on itself into an Army of proud, disciplined and highly motivated warriors. Powell also reinforced under General Emerson the lesson he had learned with the "stork patrol," the importance of taking an interest in the care and welfare not only of the group but of the individual soldiers under his command. Lieutenant Powell's battalion especially excelled, and members of his unit won Soldier of the Month recognition five times in a row.

Powell described his developing philosophy in leadership under *The Gunfighter* by stating, "If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception; it is a prevailing attitude." Three years later when Powell, a full Colonel, was serving with the 101st Airborne Division, General Emerson retired. He insisted that Colonel Powell command his retirement ceremony. On the day that Powell watched one of the men he most admired hang up his stars, he gave orders to a large formation on the parade ground. Before the ceremony began *The Gunfighter* had privately issued Powell some rather unusual

orders. During the ceremony, with thousands of soldiers standing before him in ranks, General Emerson gave the signal, looked straight at Powell and commanded "Now."

"Officers--and officers only," Powell ordered in obedience to Emerson's private instructions, "about face." Then he looked quizzically at his mentor.

In a booming voice his *The Gunfighter* ordered, "Officers, salute your soldiers!" Powell recalled it as a powerful moment in his own life, a true reflection of the role of a leader and exactly which members of the army deserved the most to be saluted.

In 1977 Colonel Powell returned to Washington, D.C. to serve in the Office of the Secretary of Defense during the Carter Administration. In December of 1978 he received the silver star of a Brigadier General. In just twenty years the average kid from the Bronx whose future had seemed uncertain had become *a big fish in a big pond*, an achievement he could not have imagined himself. Sadly, earlier that same year Luther Powell passed away and did not witness the heraldic moment.

Over the following decade Powell received a second and then a third silver star. He gained a reputation for excellence and for dedicated service and in December 1987 was appointed and confirmed by the U.S. Senate as National Security Advisor to President Ronald Reagan. When Reagan left office after two terms which restored a great sense of patriotism to a nation that had splintered in the 1960s, Powell was named Commander in Chief FORSCOM (Commander in Chief, Forces Command.) The following year the third consecutive Commander in Chief that Powell was privileged to personally serve, President, George H. W. Bush made history with an Executive Appointment. On October 1, 1989, Colin L. Powell became the first Black American in be confirmed by the U.S. Senate as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). It was the singularly highest position any man in military could hold; the only higher position is held by a civilian, the President who is Commander in Chief.

To say that on that day Colin Powell became the ultimate role-model to young Black men in America would be a true, but narrow view of his success. The average kid who found what he enjoyed doing and did it well became a role model to young men and women of all races, validating that no matter how big, how smart, or how talented they might be that there was unlimited opportunity for everyone in America. His confirmation as the first Black Chairman was also a striking example of how far America had progressed in just 29 years. The generals and colonels who served directly under the Chairman were Black, White, Red, Yellow and Brown, and many of them were Women. It was a tribute to a new generation of Americans.

Among the letters of congratulations Powell received after his appointment was one from a foreign but familiar name. When a picture of two soldiers, one American and one Vietnamese and six Montagnard children fell out of the envelope he recognized it instantly. Vo Cong Hieu had written to congratulate his comrade of a war now 27 distant, noting that the appointment was richly deserved. He also wrote, "I find myself in a difficult position." Chairman Powell's comrade had indeed been taken prisoner when the war ended in Vietnam, suffering 13 years of reeducation in a Communist prison. Although Hieu and his wife had been approved by the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok to come and find a new home in America, the couple had children and grandchildren, seven in all, who would have to be left behind. Powell was moved by his memories and, now in a position that provided him extensive knowledge of the political process and many powerful friends, he came to his former comrade's assistance. The entire family was approved, immigrated to America and settled in Minneapolis.

Two years later America's senior military officer was to speak in Minneapolis, and before the meeting Hieu approached. Powell recognized him immediately and the two embraced. Powell led his Vietnamese friend and now-American brother to a seat directly in front of the dais where, during his speech the Chairman introduced him to thunderous applause. When I interviewed General Powell in July 2007, he spoke excitedly of another trip to Minneapolis in the coming months that would enable him and Hieu to spend time together once again.

Chairman Powell only had one day to settle into his new office before world affairs forced him into his first confrontation--an upheaval in Panama under the dictatorial and violent rule of Manuel Noriega. In a brief but decisive military action in December known as Operation Just Cause, Powell directed a stunning American victory in Panama. It was the result of the valor and dedication of soldiers in the field. In contrast to Vietnam, victory was possible also because of lessons in leadership and policy America's highest-ranking soldier had learned there. "The lessons I absorbed from Panama confirmed all my convictions...since the days of doubt over Vietnam," he wrote. "Have a clear political objective and stick to it. Use all the force necessary, and do not apologize for going in big if that is what it takes. Decisive force ends wars quickly and in the long run saves lives."¹⁷

The victory in Panama capped a previous decade under President Reagan when Americans began gaining a new patriotic pride and appreciation for our military. Chairman Powell became an engaging figure on television as he explained the war to the public, and a leader who was greatly admired. If there was any criticism of his first performance as Chairman it came in January when he flew to Panama for a firsthand look and proudly told his troops, "Goddamn, you guys did a good job." The profanity, in contrast with his clean and gentlemanly appearance shocked some at home when they saw the evening news, but in Panama where the men on the ground were doing the dirty job of mopping up, his comment was a source of pride. The Chairman could be as down-to-earth as the man in the field and, more importantly, he was proud of what they had achieved.

In his first tour in Vietnam Lieutenant Powell observed privately that it would take a half-a-million soldiers to win that war. Five years later when the numbers reached his predicted mark it was too late...the war was already lost. Within months of the victory in Panama the Chairman was confronted with a new threat when on August 2, 1990, the Army of Iraq's Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and threatened Saudi Arabia. Within five days Chairman Powell began deploying troops to the region under Operation *Desert Shield*, designed to protect Saudi Arabia from invasion. Commanding the troops in the region was a grizzled and sometimes profane officer not unlike *The Gunfighter*, General *Stormin' Norman "The Bear" Schwarzkopf*.

In keeping with his belief in decisive force, Chairman Powell restrained public pressure to act swiftly, instead building up his forces. Where it had taken virtually eight years to marshal a half-million-man presence in Vietnam, Powell achieved exactly that in less than six months, building his decisive force around a strong coalition of allied nations under the leadership of President Bush. On January 12, 1991, Congress authorized the use of force to evict the Iraqi forces from Kuwait and five days later air war operations were launched to prepare the way for a subsequent ground action. Only forty-five days later the clearly defined goals were achieved, Kuwait was liberated, and the "Gulf War" (Operation Desert Storm) ended in resounding victory.

In 1992 William Jefferson Clinton was elected President of the United States, the first "Baby Boomer" to ascend to the Oval Office. Until his retirement in 1993, it was to be the fourth consecutive Presidential administration, two Republican and two Democrat, that he would personally serve.

For 34 years General Powell served others by serving his nation, deploying twice to help the people of South Vietnam and once to ensure the security of South Korea. As Chairman he had directed two highly successful American-led actions on behalf of the people of Panama and then of the Persian Gulf. Certainly, it was more than enough service for one lifetime, and at the time of his retirement he was an American hero, a well-respected public figure, and one of the most experienced leaders in our nation. His 1995 autobiography, My American Journey made him a best-selling author shooting to Number 1 on the New York Times Bestseller list. There was no further achievement perhaps than to seek election as our Nation's first Black President, and many in America urged him to run. Humbly he declined.

Retired General Colin Powell had spent a lifetime serving others, including the people under siege by cruel governments abroad. Reflecting on his own life and the opportunities that had allowed him to build an unbelievable American Dream, he was struck by the plight of young boys and girls at home who needed similar opportunity. It is noble to rally behind and serve people in foreign, third-world countries, but Powell knew that charity begins at home and turned his efforts to humanitarian causes at home.

In 1996 Colin and Anna Powell, now enjoying retirement after decades of service, were approached by George Romney. The Former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Nixon, former Chairman of American Motors (1954-62) and Michigan Governor (1963-69) was a man known for calls to public service. In 1970 the successful businessman and politician elucidated his beliefs by stating: "Americans have four basic ways of solving problems that are too big for individuals to handle by themselves. One is through the federal government. A second is through state governments and the local governments that the states create. The third is through the private sector - the economic sector that includes business, agriculture, and labor. The fourth method is the independent sector - the voluntary, cooperative action of free individuals and independent association. Voluntary action is the most powerful of these, because it is uniquely capable of stirring the people themselves and involving their enthusiastic energies, because it is their own - voluntary action is the people's action. As Woodrow Wilson said, 'The most powerful force on earth is the spontaneous cooperation of a free people.' Individualism makes cooperation worthwhile - but cooperation makes freedom possible."

In 1997 the Powell's attended a Summit in Philadelphia, birthplace of our nation, to address perhaps our most pressing problem in light of Secretary Romney's own call to action. As a result of that Summit "The America's Promise Alliance" was born with the eager support of President Clinton and former Presidents Ford, Carter and Bush. (Nancy Reagan represented her ill husband.) The challenge of *America's Promise* was to make American youth a national priority. It was not to be just one more in a myriad of humanitarian or charitable organizations, but an alliance of existing organizations to unite them under one "big tent" with a common goal. General Powell was selected to lead the organization and it became his primary focus.

When Powell returned to public life five years later as our Nation's first Black Secretary of State, Alma Powell became Chair of *America's Promise* and continues to serve in that capacity to this day. Her husband remains one of its most vocal and hardworking supporters; the five promises to America's youth mirroring the privileges that contributed to his success.

The declarations of that summit, signed by five American Presidents, sets forth among other things, "As each of us has the right to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, each of us has an obligation to give something back to country and community--a duty to take responsibility not just for ourselves and our families, but for one another. We owe a debt of service to fulfill the God-given promise of America, and our children." Those five promises are:

- 1) **Caring Adults:** All children need support and guidance from caring adults in their families, at schools and in their communities. These include ongoing, secure relationships with parents as well as formal and informal relationships with teachers, mentors, coaches, youth volunteers and neighbors. Caring adults are the cornerstone of a child's development — and for the other four Promises that build success both in childhood and adulthood. Parents come first. But children also need to experience the support from caring adults in all areas of their lives.
- 2) **Safe Places:** All children need to be physically and emotionally safe wherever they are — from the actual places of families, schools, neighborhoods and communities to the virtual places of media. They also need a healthy balance between structured, supervised activities and unstructured time. It's important for children to be safe. But safe places alone are not enough. It is equally important for children's development that these places engage them actively and constructively.
- 3) **A Healthy Start:** All children need and deserve healthy bodies, healthy minds and healthy habits. These result from regular health check-ups and needed treatment, good nutrition and exercise, healthy skills and knowledge, and good role models of physical and psychological health. With increased attention on such issues as upsurges in childhood obesity and juvenile diabetes, Americans have a raised awareness of the importance of a healthy start as a critical developmental resource in a child's life. Nevertheless, we are falling far short of keeping this Promise. Nine million young people today remain without health insurance. Babies born in the U.S. are less likely to survive until their first birthday than those in 27 other industrialized nations. One in 11 high school students reports attempting suicide.
- 4) **An Effective Education:** All children need the intellectual development, motivation and skills that equip them for successful work and lifelong learning. These result from having quality learning environments, challenging expectations and consistent guidance and mentoring. The number-one predictor of whether you will be successful in life is whether you graduate from high school. In today's competitive global economy, effective education is more important than ever before. Yet more than 25% of our students do not finish high school. The figure is nearly twice as high for African American and Latino students.
- 5) **Opportunities to Help Others:** All children need the chance to make a difference in their families, at schools and in their communities. Knowing how to make a difference comes from having models of caring behavior, awareness of the needs of others, a sense of personal responsibility to contribute to the larger society, and opportunities for volunteering, leadership and service. Providing young people with opportunities to make a difference through service instills not only a sense of responsibility but of possibility. Young people want to be involved in making the world a better place; however, far too many lack meaningful opportunities to contribute.

It is fitting that five such noble promises became the basis of the major efforts of Alma Powell and her husband Colin. As children the first four certainly marked their future as being bright, not because they were privileged but because they were simply offered the opportunity to grow up with loving parents, in safe communities, with good health and educational opportunities. It is further notable that throughout their lives they have exemplified the last.

The experiences of life teach us that in helping others we help ourselves. In giving of ourselves we gain. In caring for others, we demonstrate our love for our own lives. There is perhaps no greater proof of that than the average kid in the Land of Opportunity who could have grown up to be President, General Colin L. Powell, U.S. Army (Retired.)

¹ American Academy of Achievement, Interview May 23, 1998

² Powell, Colin, My American Journey, Ballantine Books, New York, 1995, p12.

³ "Meet General Colin L. Powell," Interview Transcript, Scholastic.com,
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/barrier/powellchat/transcript.htm?query=colin%20powell>

⁴ Powell, Colin, My American Journey, Ballantine Books, New York, 1995, p 20.

⁵ Powell, Colin, My American Journey, Ballantine Books, New York, 1995p 26.

⁶ Powell, Colin, My American Journey, Ballantine Books, New York, 1995p 28.

⁷ Powell, Colin, My American Journey, Ballantine Books, New York, 1995p 34.

⁸ Powell, Colin, My American Journey, Ballantine Books, New York, 1995p 37.

⁹ *ibid*, p 54.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p59

¹¹ Roth, David, Sacred Honor, Colin Powell, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1993, p 26.

¹² American Academy of Achievement, *ibid*.

¹³ Powell, Colin, My American Journey, Ballantine Books, New York, 1995, p81.

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ Powell, Colin, *ibid*, p 103.

¹⁶ American Academy of Achievement, *ibid*.

¹⁷ Powell, Colin, *ibid*, p 434.

Defining Entertainment

Life Imitating Art

Growing up in Montana where there were few Black people, I was never confronted with the kind of racial tension that was common in the South. When I enlisted in the Army, I was color-blind where race was concerned, and in Vietnam I developed a very close friendship with my assistant squad leader Specialist William Pride, who was Black. I went so far as to request that he escort my body home in the event I was killed in action.

When I returned from Vietnam, I confronted myself with the fact that I had indeed developed some racial prejudice--against Oriental people. The Army had taught me to hate and try to kill North Vietnamese and, unwittingly, though I had come to love and admire the South Vietnamese I had allowed my hatred of the enemy to color my feelings towards an entire race of people. It wasn't a hatred like the Black-White prejudices I knew still existed in the South and elsewhere at home. Rather it was a stereotyping of anyone who had olive-shaped eyes and yellow skin. I just felt that they were different; not a part of my own little world. I knew my prejudice was irrational and wrong and confronted it honestly, hoping that in time my rational mind would overcome my emotions. Slowly it did.

Pam and I raised our four children to accept and love all people, regardless of their race or their social status. Because of our roles as managers of low-income HUD housing, our kids always joked that "We had to grow up in the projects!" Many of the families in these communities were Black and, when we began managing properties in Pueblo the majority of them were Hispanic. Our white children, therefore, were actually the minority race in most circumstances of their early life.

Our oldest child, Jennifer, is a very bright young lady who showed early signs of great potential for success in many fields. At the age of 3 while we were living in our converted school-bus/motorhome and performing in churches across the country, she began performing as a clown. By age 5 she was assisting me as a capable magician's assistant and box-jumper. The latter is the trade term for a person, usually a young lady, who must remain cramped inside a very small piece of magical equipment for a long time until with a flourish of music and a puff of smoke she amazingly materializes. She was very good at it, even at a very young age, and proved to be a veteran performer; though to this day she suffers from claustrophobia from her childhood career.

When Pam and I settled down from our itinerant life of entertainment and ministry in 1984, with our two children, Jennifer adapted well. Homeschooled by Pam through the 2d grade, she adjusted to her new social environment making friends easily and earning good grades. Our son *Dutch* (William) was much more tentative. He loved living in the bus and traveling and hated school, struggling hard just to keep his grades at C-level. I sometimes remarked, "Jennifer will become successful in life for her intelligence, *Dutch* will have to succeed by his personality."

That premonition remained valid until Jennifer became a teenager and entered high school. By that time, we were managing HUD apartments in Pueblo, Colorado, where we had initiated scouting programs to help at-risk boys and girls in our communities. As Jennifer challenged our authority and expanded her individual freedoms, it sometimes seemed that while we were working hard to improve the lives of other children, we were failing in our own family. By her Junior year Jennifer was hanging out with the wrong crowd, skipping school, and Pam and I breathed a collective sigh of relief when she finished that year. "One more to go," we tried to reassure ourselves, determined to see her graduate from high school.

Pam and I responded to Jennifer's teenage rebellion in helpless frustration. She was a very good young lady, caught between competing influences: the values she had been taught as a young girl and the negative influences of her friends, most of whom were also in rebellion. During the summer of 1995 she worked for weeks to help us plan and then host a large group of Medal of Honor recipients and a delegation of Oklahoma City Rescue Workers for our city-wide Independence Day celebration. In the weeks that followed she was hanging out with friends and looking for trouble. In August she celebrated her 19th birthday and soon thereafter, with both my assistance and my prompting, got her own apartment in the community we managed. Returning for her last year of high school she enjoyed the personal freedom she craved but was not yet mature enough to properly manage. At the mid-point of her first semester she dropped out.

As her parents, Pam and I were devastated by Jennifer's continuing downward spiral. We tried to convince her to change her circle of friends, only to be met by defensive hostility. We hoped and we prayed that something would happen to turn her life around while blaming ourselves for not having done a better job as parents. Then, in December, she came to visit us one day with a broad smile and a gleam in her eye. It was obvious when she walked in the door that something had suddenly transformed her.

"Mom, dad," she announced. "I met someone, and I think I'm in love."

"Wonderful," we both announced with an enthusiasm we didn't really feel, especially in light of the fact that we knew nothing about the young man that had sparked this new outlook on life.

Then, tentatively she continued. "There's just one problem mom and dad." Pam and I imagined the worst: was he a recently released felon, was it some old man twice her age looking for his *Lolita*, was she in love with some divorcee who had several kids from his previous marriage? Based upon our daughter's recent track-record in selecting friends, it might even be all of the above.

"Mom, dad," she continued haltingly, "he's Black!"

Pam and I simultaneously released a sigh of relief that may well have shaken the pictures on the living room wall. "Is that all?" I said while Pam began probing politely to learn more about the young man.

Douglas Choi Lundin was a recent graduate of The University of Southern Colorado with a baccalaureate degree in Psychology. As a student there he had been a star athlete on the soccer team, going on after graduation to coach soccer for local children and also for a girls' high school team. He was the son of a U.S. Air Force Chaplain who had found Douglas in an orphanage in Seoul, Korea. The child of a Black soldier and a Korean lady who gave him up for adoption, he was only half Black. He was also half-Korean.

Jennifer was not really surprised at our reaction; it was what she had expected from a mother and father that had always taught her to accept people on the basis of character, not upon external appearances. She did, however, reflect her one concern when she asked, "How will I tell Grandma?" Phyllis Hawk, Pam's mother, doesn't live far from our home in Pueblo. Though not outwardly prejudice she had grown up in a different time, lived in the South, and always believed that though racial prejudice was wrong, so too was interracial marriage. For her it was a cultural matter, easily deflected by arguments about the problems the prejudice of others might cause for a black/white couple and their children. All the same, Pam had grown up knowing that it was expected that she would marry within her own race for the sake of her parent's feelings, and Jennifer realized the onus was now upon her. Pam promised our daughter that if the relationship became serious, she would break the news to Grandma herself.

Doug's ethnicity had never been a problem for us, and when at last we met him any reservations as to his character were quickly assuaged. He is a handsome man who is frequently told he looks like golf champion Tiger Woods. He was clean cut, polite, respectful, and all-American. Quickly his own personal traits began to influence our daughter and, with his help and encouragement she enrolled in a new alternative education program across the street from her former high school to return to her education. Seeing what positive influence Doug had on our daughter, we could have cared less if his skin was purple or green. For us, he was a Godsend.

The change in our daughter was also quite apparent to Grandma, who knew only that Jennifer had a new boyfriend who was motivating her in a positive manner. By early Spring the following year the relationship was obviously becoming more serious and Grandma was becoming increasingly curious about the boyfriend who had captured Jennifer's heart and turned her life around. Doug advised Jennifer that he wanted to take Grandma Hawk out to dinner on Mother's Day, prompting Pam to face what we had known for months must be done. With great reservation she drove to Grandma Hawk's house to break the news.

"Mom," Pam began when they were seated in the living room, "You know this new boyfriend of Jennifer's.... Well, they are starting to get pretty serious. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if they decided to get married one of these days."

"That's wonderful," Grandma Hawk replied with enthusiasm.

"Well mom," Pam continued haltingly, "There's one thing that Jennifer thinks might be a problem for you...."

"Oh no!" came the gasping response. "Don't tell me he's black!"

"Well mom--he's only half-black. He's also half-Korean."

Suddenly Grandma threw her head back in a loud laugh and announced, "You know, all these months I've been praying that God would send along the right guy to be a positive influence on Jenny and help her turn her life around. I guess I just forgot to tell God what color I wanted." Soon thereafter the happy couple treated Grandma to dinner, Doug giving her roses. It was a day Grandma Hawk still remembers with great fondness.

The following month after day and night classes Jennifer had completed a year's worth of study and academic work in six months. She graduated in cap and gown with the rest of her original high school class in Pueblo Central's Class of 1996. It was a proud moment for Pam and I, second only to what occurred over two days in August four years later.

In August 2000, at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, I was joined by a friend, Medal of Honor recipient Desmond Doss, as the two of us pinned the gold bars of a Second Lieutenant on Douglas Lundin. Moments earlier, with tears in his eyes, retired Air Force Colonel John Lundin had administered the oath to his adopted son. The following day in a ceremony on a beach of the Gulf Coast Chaplain Lundin pronounced Jennifer Sterner and Second Lieutenant Douglas Lundin to be husband and wife.

Exactly nine months later Dante Choi Lundin, our first grandchild was born. Every grandmother and grandfather are prejudiced...we all think our grandkids are the cutest in the world. Few can match Pam's and my two grandchildren, which now includes Dante's sister Skye. Their half-white, quarter-black, quarter-Korean ethnic mix is a combination that draws ooohs and aaaahs wherever they go. (Once, during the winter when Pam took our grandson to a local mall, passers-by even stopped to comment on what a *beautiful tan* her infant grandson had for that time of year.)

Recalling the day in 1995 when our daughter came home with news that she was in love but "there is just one problem," I can't help but flash back in time to a movie I saw in my own teen years that had addressed social attitudes in America towards interracial marriage. Perhaps it prepared me for that day. Events decades later were certainly one of those examples wherein life came to imitate art.

Doug Sterner

Troubled Waters

It is sometimes reported in history that upon meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe during the American Civil War, President Lincoln greeted her with the words, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war!" In fact, there is no evidence that indeed the President uttered that line. Nevertheless the rumor of that thought that has endured for more than a century does in fact illustrate the validity of another common quotation, "The pen is mightier than the sword," or the simple precept that the things which entertain us may also motivate us.

Throughout the history of the human race talented people have been highly prized for their talents with word, pen, and music that can provide diversion from the tragedies of society, or even from the mundane existence of daily life. Entertainment is a critical part of our development as individuals and as societies. From the early scribes who penned the history of ancient civilizations to the performers of P.T. Barnum's early circuses, men, women, and children have found fascination, humor and diversion in entertainment.

While the primary function of entertainment is just that...diversion from everyday life...there is a history wherein entertainment has often served as a call to activism. The pen of Thomas Paine incited patriotic calls for revolution in 1775 and, during the darkest early year of the American Revolutionary War, sustained the populace with stirring accounts of freedom fighters. The oratorical skills of Frederick Douglass addressed the wrongness of slavery and Harriet Beecher Stowe's now-famous novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin" certainly fanned flames of passion that erupted in a Civil War to abolish slavery. Newspapers flourished in the late 19th century, not simply as a means of reading to stay abreast of current events, but as a form of entertainment. Embellishments of competing newspapers in the late 1800s with headlines that would rival today's tabloids resulted in what we have come to know as *Yellow Journalism*. In 1898 American society hung on every story printed about events in Cuba, including outlandish tales of the nation's Spanish rulers cannibalizing the local populace, much like later generations would be fascinated with the story of Hannibal Lecter. Such entertaining stories made taking our nation to war with Spain a much more acceptable task.

To be fair however, historically activist entertainment has usually been a very minor part of the entertainment industry. Logging camp stories of legendary heroes or scary boogymen were designed only to break the boredom of lonely nights. Dime store novels of Wild West cowboys, while often based upon true characters, were written with usually fun but fictitious story lines to captivate the attention of young boys. Romance novels gave young girls the perfect love to hope for, and married women the idyllic romance they wished they could have found.

Every generation has developed and welcomed its own genre of entertainment, usually pushing the boundaries of acceptability. During medieval periods when court jesters, the *standup comedians* of the era, failed to draw appropriate laughter or crossed the boundaries of appropriateness (like insulting the Royal Family), punishment could be swift and deadly. Not so in later years as entertainment continued to evolve and as artisans pushed the envelope. It is also generally true that as each generation developed its own brand of entertainment, at least for the last century it was frowned upon by an older generation that asked rhetorically, "What's this younger generation coming to."

There can be little doubt that young people coming of age in the *Roaring Twenties* shocked and dismayed their own parents, perhaps no less than their grandchildren growing up in the 1960s shocked and dismayed the children of those same Flappers who grew up during a heady time of

fun and frolic. But the carefree world of that period came to an abrupt halt when our nation was plunged into the deep tragedy of the Great Depression in 1929. Over the next decade the one diversion from pain, poverty and hunger was the Saturdays on which a child could scrounge a nickel and enjoy a comedic hour on the big screen of the local theater.

If the comedy of Charlie Chaplain, the Three Stooges, the Little Rascals, and others helped a generation of children born in the 1920s forget momentarily the pain of the 1930s, when those same children came of age it was to face a world at war. Art came to imitate life, or perhaps define it, as the United States Government reached out to Radio City and Hollywood to bolster the war effort. So pervasive was its influence that even today one can seldom hear a big band tune without subliminally being carried back to World War II. Those who today rue an activist Hollywood industry might do well to recall those years from 1941 to 1945 when such activism by American movie stars played a critical role in saving our world.

Among the first of these movies which often combined entertainment with a message was the early 7-part series directed primarily by Frank Capra and titled "Why We Fight." The true intent of these films is nowhere more evident than the closing lines containing the quotation of Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, "The victory of the democracies can only be complete with utter defeat of the war machines of Germany and Japan." The patriotic fervor aroused by such heroic soldiers on film as Henry Fonda, Robert Montgomery, and others including John Wayne who became perhaps the all-time epitome of the American soldier, sailor and Marine, fanned flames of passion and inspired young men and women to volunteer for service. Other actors like Robert Montgomery, Jason Robards, and even Lee Powell who had inspired a late depression-era crowd as the Lone Ranger, chose to serve in uniform.

So thoroughly was the movie entertainment business intertwined with the military effort to save our world, the U.S. Army Air Forces leased the California studios of Hal Roach. Known ubiquitously as "Fort Roach," more than 400 films were produced in a joint Army/Hollywood program of entertainment, inspiration, training, and indeed propaganda. Many of the actors were themselves reserve members of the military like Ronald Reagan and Alan Ladd. Army Air Force reservist Clark Gable even flew in heavy bombers over Europe to film for an Air Force recruiting film titled "Combat America."

That the entertainment industry became critical to the successful prosecution of World War II is undeniable. The patriotism of Tinsel Town was untarnished by those in its population whose political leanings were socialistic; after all, during those critical years the Soviet Union was a tenuous but necessary ally. That physical war, however, was followed by the Cold War in which we found our nation competing in an arms race with Russia. The McCarthy hearings of the early '50s that singled out the *Hollywood Ten* and others sent a cold chill through the entertainment industry. For the next ten years an actor or actress pushing the envelope, whether in film or even in a private conversation, faced swift retribution nearly as deadly as the fate of a not-so-funny medieval court jester.

War movies remained popular in the 1950s as the Greatest Generation justly recalled and celebrated their achievements in the World War. Unlike most such movies produced during the war when the heroic man in uniform was often the "unknown but patriotic farm boy from Kansas" young men in the audience could identify with, these new war stories often true stories, not necessarily intended to motivate volunteerism, but to remember real people and real events. These were enjoyable films without the pressure of a personal call to service. Some, like 1959's *Operation Petticoat* even presented war with a humorous twist, as did the popular early TV war programs like *Sergeant Bilko* and the early 1960's *McHale's Navy*.

Increasingly also, that new medium of television boomed in those post-war decades. Young boys and girls of the Defining Generation thrilled every Saturday morning to the inspiring, All-American stories of The Lone Ranger, Superman, and the pleasant singing and positive messages of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. Sunday evenings were filled with tunes reminiscent of World War II on Lawrence Welk, and the Wonderful World of Walt Disney. Monday through Friday television's evening *Family Hour* literally defined the word "family" according to the American Dream. "Leave it to Beaver," "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet," and "Father Knows Best" taught us how we were supposed to live as Americans. Though plotlines changed the underlying theme was always the same. In the ideal American home dad worked hard for a living while mom did the domestic chores in her well-equipped modern kitchen, and the kids studied in school to ensure their own success. Everything revolved around family, mom emerging from the kitchen each evening in dress and high heels to welcome dad home, while the kids sat dutifully at the table finishing their homework. In a sense, some might argue, these shows became a propaganda genre in their own right, defining success based upon material gain and traditional familial roles. Some might even recall those "Happy Days" by noting that for a time, entertainment lost its *edginess*.

By the mid-50s however, a storm was "brewing in paradise" as children of the Defining Generation entered their teens and began asking pointed questions, often to receive answers they found less than direct. Their first steps of rebellion were probably first noted as they redefined the music of their own era, flocking to listen to Rock and Roll while mom and dad shook their heads in dismay. Furthermore, it often seemed that the more mom and dad objected, the more it only added fuel to the fire and inspired the young to further test the boundaries of what the older generation believed appropriate.

By the early 1960s a 35-year-old comedian named Lenny Bruce (Leonard Alfred Schneider) began drawing a following among older teens with his more than edgy and utterly profane, push-the-envelope brand of stand-up comedy. His repeated use of the "F-word" would today be considered commonplace in comedy, but in 1960 it was utter blasphemy. On October 4, 1961, after using a slang term for a person engaged in fellatio during a performance in San Francisco, he was arrested and charged with obscenity. He was subsequently acquitted in a jury trial and his over-the-top act appealed to young people in rebellion while further inciting close scrutiny persecution by older "guardians of morality," often leading to additional arrests for obscenity. Undercover detectives were known to regularly gather evidence while posing as members of his audience, and the vulgar comedian become something of a folk hero and martyr to many college-age and recently liberated teens, even more so when he was at last found guilty of obscenity on November 4, 1964. He was sentenced to four months in a work program but died on December 21, 1964, while free pending appeal. In 1970 his conviction was overturned by the New York Court of Appeals.

"Liberation" in the '60s came to mean much more than granting Civil Rights to all or freeing women from traditional roles. It also came to symbolize a growing openness about old values and taboo subjects like sex. The research work of William Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, which began in 1957, took sex out of the darkness and plastered previously untouchable subjects in the pages of leading American publications. College frat boys proudly displayed issues of "Playboy Magazine," which began publication in 1953, openly on the desks in their dorm rooms. A symbol of their new freedom and perhaps also a symbol of status, their actions were in stark contrast to those of their fathers who kept "Playboy" hidden out of sight in a tool drawer in the garage.

In 1963 Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique told young women that the act of sex whether with a partner or self-fulfilled, was not necessarily an evil thing, and that it could in fact,

be as pleasurable for a woman as well as it was for a man. Coupled with availability of the "Pill," a far more convenient and certainly surer form of contraception than a *Roaring Twenties'* Coke purge, as well as a growing hippie movement that preached free love and open sexuality, it became a period of sexual revolution. Art soon began to imitate life as Hollywood responded with films that included the same language that had resulted in Lenny Bruce's arrest, and partial nudity became increasingly common on the big screen. The change was so swift and so dramatic that in 1966, in response to growing complaints about profanity and violence, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) established an "SMA" (Suggested for Mature Audiences) label for movies of a more adult nature. Within two years it was obvious that this simple designation was inadequate, and on November 1, 1968, MPAA established a new movie rating code similar to how we know it today (G-General, M-Mature, R-Restricted, and X). The rating was voluntary, but most producers quickly complied, especially as they learned that an "M" or "R" rating assured them a larger and more eager audience.

No examination of the evolution of entertainment in the '60s would be complete without a view of the role music came to play in society in general, and particularly for a new generation. When the Beatles came to America in 1963 with their long hair, the older generation collectively groaned in great despair. Within two years however, the Beatles with songs about "Yellow Submarines" and "I Want to Hold Your Hand" seemed mild in comparison to a drugged-out Janis Joplin singing "Whoa, I need a man to love me," activist Joan Baez addressing Civil Rights abuse while singing "Birmingham Sunday," and Bob Dylan composing and singing songs to protest the war in Vietnam.

That entertainment evolved and pushed-the-envelope during the sixties, building to the climactic 3-day concert outside Woodstock, New York, in August 1969 that marked the apex of the new counterculture of the period, is an inescapable fact. Over a decade the entertainment industry experienced perhaps its most dramatic change in world history, breaking all laws of nature, decency, and morality. It set a pace that continues to this day as a new generation seeks to shock and dismay their own parents, many of whom participated in the wild weekend that was Woodstock or who wished they had. With those changes have come not only acceptance of pornography but elevation of its participants to celebrity status, a lust for more blood and violence on the big screen, and any number of associated societal problems.

In light of the Pandora's Box the Defining Generation released decades ago, it might be easy to focus only on that which was negative and blame ourselves for the problems of a new generation. But they would have defined their own culture of entertainment, even had we not sought as a generation to define ourselves and our time so liberally. Accepting the good with the bad, it must also be remembered that as entertainment breached tradition and social custom, in its activism it also began to address serious issues in American society that had long been ignored.

Furthermore, not to be forgotten from that period are other more positive reflections of our thoughts and our time: songs of peace and love, ballads of hope, and the search for the Dawning of the Age of Aquarius. One of the most popular songs of our era, holding the Number One spot on the charts for six weeks in 1970, was Simon and Garfunkel reminding us:

"When you're weary, feeling small,
"When tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all;
"I'm on your side. when times get rough
"And friends just can't be found,
"Like a bridge over troubled water
"I will lay me down."

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner



"*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* is about truth and hypocrisy in the most wonderful country in the world. Given the times we live in, and the conditions of this country and the world, the essential story is still extremely timely. We need to look inward at ourselves to see who we are as Americans at our core. Are we who we say we are? Do we live the lives we dream about? This story is a delicate balance of comedy and drama on a search for personal truth. What a wonderful opportunity to rediscover and take a fresh look at this iconic work."

*Kenny Leon, Director
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner
2008 Broadway Version*

In 1955 a 14-year old Black teen left Chicago with a cousin to spend the summer at his great-uncle Moses Wright's home in the Mississippi Delta town of Money. Before leaving home Emmett Louis "Bobo" Till's mother warned him of the danger race relations in the South could pose and advised him to "mind your manners." While certainly there was also racial prejudice and violence in Chicago where Till grew up, the Deep South was an especially dangerous place for a Black kid unacquainted with local custom and conditions.

On August 24, three days after Till arrived, he went with several of his friends to visit the local store operated by Roy and Carolyn Bryant, a white couple who operated the market that catered to local sharecroppers. All of the children that came that day were Black, all were under 16 years of age, and most of them had been picking cotton all day and were hot, sweaty, and eager for ice cream. They left the store in a jovial mood, laughing and joking among themselves like typical kids of any race.

Exactly what set in motion a tragic series of events was later subject of dispute, but it was generally agreed that during that departure 14-year-old "Bobo" whistled teasingly at Mrs. Bryant, who was working the store alone that day while her husband was out of town. She stood up, stormed to her car and raced away. The kids thought perhaps she was going home to get a gun and ran away in fear. Wheeler Parker, Jr., who was among the kids that day and who was Till's cousin, later said "Bobo's actions were innocuous. "He loved pranks, he loved fun, he loved jokes ... in Mississippi, people didn't think the same jokes were funny."¹

By the time Roy Brant returned two days later that joke had become the talk of the town. Shortly after midnight on August 27 Bryant and his half-brother, J.W. Milam, kidnapped Emmett Till from his great-uncle's house. After savagely beating the young boy they weighted his dead body with a fan and dropped him into the Tallahatchie River near Glendora. They immediately became suspects when Till's body was discovered, and were charged with murder two days later. The two men defended themselves by claiming the recovered body was not Till...that the boy had returned home to Chicago and the body found in the river must be someone else. The fact that the teen had been so brutalized that he was unrecognizable might have lent credence to their argument, save for a ring on the dead boy's finger that identified him.

Till was buried in a simple pine box in Mississippi but his mother Mamie Till insisted that the body be brought back to Chicago for burial. When she at last saw the brutalized body of her son she asked that the casket be left open for viewing before burial, and allowed photographers to take pictures of what two White men had done to her Black son for simply whistling at a White woman. On September 26 a Mississippi jury of 12 White men acquitted both Bryant and Milam of the murder of Emmett Till after little more than an hour of deliberation. That act outraged a nation, Black and White, almost as much as the murder.

The tragedy that befell Emmett Till galvanized a growing Civil Rights movement that was only a few years from exploding on the American conscience. His was not the only such case to illustrate a racist philosophy that saw something of blasphemy in any but the most cursory contact between a White woman and a Black man. Well into the 1960s other Black men were beaten, castrated, and even murdered for simply looking at a White woman. It was a part of the culture of *Southern Gentlemen* in protecting the innocence and virtue of their White women.

The problem was not limited to the South; it was symptomatic of perhaps a more subtle but equally abhorrent view of interracial mingling that was a national issue. Until 1948, 30 of our Nation's 48 states virtually made it illegal for a White citizen to marry a Black person, or in many cases, other ethnic minority. These were called "anti-miscegenation laws." In the South, other efforts to "protect white women from Black men" were blatantly evident in Jim Crow laws similar

to one in Alabama that specified "No person or corporation shall require any white female nurse to nurse in wards or rooms in hospitals, either public or private, in which Negro men are placed."

This, then, was the climate of thought in a large part of America when the movie "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" was released. Director Stanley Kramer's biting comedy in which Joanna "Joey" Drayton, a young white woman played by Katharine Houghton comes home to tell her parents she has fallen in love with a Black man, Dr. John Wade Prentice played by Sidney Poitier, opened in 1967 amid serious questions about how it would be received in America.

Kramer was already viewed among movie critics and in Hollywood circles as a filmmaker who was inclined towards "message films," having already directed *Inherit the Wind* (1960) and *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961). Though those movies had limited success there was a general disdain in most entertainment circles for cinematic treatment of controversial or painful issues like the teaching of evolution or the prosecution of war crimes in the earlier war. In fact, the concept for "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" initially didn't address interracial marriage in the United States at all but in Africa. Kramer later recalled that the idea for the film came one evening while he was on an evening walk in Beverly Hills with friend and writer William Rose. Rose shared a story, mostly a comedy, about a white South African man who was very liberal and whose daughter falls in love with a Black man. "Geez, we out to set the story here in this country, in this background...I thought to myself," Kramer later noted. "What a sorry sight to see a front-line liberal come face to face with all his principles right in his own house."²

That the film would garner a box-office audience despite its potentially controversial theme was virtually assured by the key roles of two of America's most-loved actors. Even before he had money, or a script Kramer approached two legendary performers for the project. As the tale of two young people in love, one Black and one White unfolded, it was impossible to hate anyone in the story. One could readily appreciate the moving and supportive actions of Joey's mother Christina Drayton, played with sincere emotion by Katharine Houghton's aunt Katharine Hepburn. Joey's father Matt Drayton, a successful San Francisco newspaper publisher who proudly identifies himself as a "Liberal" and who subsequently has to wrestle with the emotional issues of his only daughter falling in love with a Black man became poignantly reasonable thanks to one of the greatest performances of Spencer Tracy. The emotion evoked in audiences by "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" was further heightened by the fact that it was Tracy and Hepburn's last movie together. Tracy died ten days after filming ended.

Casting the role of the Black man that would become the focus of the story line was one of Kramer's most astute and successful decisions. After confirming Tracy and Hepburn he approached Sidney Poitier, a handsome 40-year-old star who had already endeared himself to American audiences. From 1950 to 1967 Poitier had starred in more than two dozen movies and in "unusually-meaty" roles for a Black actor. His performance in 1958's *The Defiant Ones* netted him a nomination for an Academy Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role, the first Academy nomination for a Black actor for a competitive Academy Award. Five years later he became the first Black actor to win that award, this time for his moving performance in *Lilies of the Field*.

When the film opened it was generally widely praised, both for its all-star "dream cast" and for its delicate but poignant treatment of a divisive issue in America. Generally, those who found fault with the movie did so based upon Kramer's development of the character of Dr. John Wade Prentice, brought to life on film by Poitier. The object of the Black/White controversy was a renowned doctor and humanitarian who is working with the World Health Organization to assist people abroad in underdeveloped nations. Further, his educational credentials are impeccable, he is vocally eloquent, and in one scene after using the phone in Matt Drayton's study to make a long

distance call to his parents Dr. Prentice even leaves money in a tray to reimburse the cost of the call. In yet another scene Joey divulges that the two have not engaged in pre-marital sex... Dr. Prentice wouldn't. Another scene evokes empathy from the audience when Joey explains to her mother that her fiancé lost of his first wife and a son in a train wreck eight years earlier.

The simple fact that Tracy and Hepburn brought this story to the big screen was enough to overcome the resistance of even the more conservative in America. Watching the film on screen a mother and father who might otherwise have resisted the concept of an interracial marriage are apt to find themselves saying, "Gee, if my daughter came home with someone who looked like Sidney Poitier and had those kind of credentials, I wouldn't care if he was green!" Towards that end some critics accused the movie of being too sugar-coated... "too perfect."

On the other hand, Kramer pointed out that he and screenplay writer William Rose purposely created Dr. Prentice as *idealistically perfect* so that the only possible objection to him marrying Joey would be either his race or the whirlwind nature of their romance.³ In that effort they were certainly successful. Furthermore, they set out to illustrate that prejudice and objections to interracial marriage were not a White-only matter. The most stinging objections to the marriage of Joey and Dr. Prentice come from the Drayton family's Black housekeeper and cook Matilda "Tillie" Binks, played by Isabel Sanford. More like a family member than an employee, Tillie loves Joey and reacts to the arrival of Dr. Prentice with an "All hell's dun broke loose now" warning. Later while watching the family agonize over their daughter's situation she remarks, "Civil Rights is one thing but this here's something else!" The solitary use of the "N" word is an epithet thrown at Dr. Prentice by Tillie who also privately tells him early on, "I don't like to see a member of my own race getting above himself."

The character at the center of the premise around which the plot revolved was, of course, the young daughter of Matt and Christina Drayton, Joey Drayton played by Katharine Houghton. In both the movie and in "real life" she was the only "baby boomer" with a major role and her character fell victim to perhaps the movie's most glaring error. Young women of our generation, especially those from middle and upper-class homes like the Drayton family, were generally college-educated, articulate, capable and possessed opinions of their own. Joey Drayton's character, however, was crafted in the traditional mold of a simple-minded woman enamored with love. Houghton told CNN's Larry King, "I was politically liberal, and may still be. But I thought it was terrible that my character never had anything to say for herself of a political nature."⁴

Houghton recalled that screenplay writer Bill Rose wrote a scene involving dialogue between Joey and her father, "And I got to say wonderful, wonderful things, all the things that I had been dying to say through the whole film."⁵ Kramer shot the scene but it was left on the cutting room floor. When questioned about it he told her, "Your character becomes too intelligent. And it's important that you are a symbol of youth and loveliness and hope and so on. And for you to be too articulate is going to be...."⁶

While the decision was one that bother's Houghton to this day, she did portray well the character Kramer crafted her to be and, immersed in her youthful idealism is a certain demonstration that she didn't even recognize that skin color was a barrier. It was exactly what her parents had always taught her and what she had come to believe. Conversely, Dr. Prentice was astute enough to understand that their racial difference might be a problem to others, including his own parents (as well as Joey's), while in fact it was not for himself or for Joey.

Houghton herself, in reflecting on the message of the film, doesn't believe that the movie impacted the Civil Rights movement to any major degree. She told Larry King, "I think that anybody who's ever been involved in an interracial marriage of any sort, or even a gay relationship,

any kind of relationship that's not approved of, that movie became metaphor for those kinds of situations...It was a breakthrough in that regard. But I think it was a movie mainly for white people."⁷

Certainly, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* in and of itself was insufficient to change the bigoted opinions of anyone opposed to Civil Rights for Black people. In fact, the overtly racially prejudiced probably refused to watch the movie on principle. But the movie did speak to a number of different segments of its audience.

Joey Drayton's idyllic acceptance of her fiancée's love, never seeing his ethnicity or contemplating the problems of an interracial marriage, did illustrate the danger of taking naïve approach to those of us who were then young and developing our own opinions. It said that interracial marriage is okay but cautioned that such actions may meet opposition from some of the most unanticipated sources. Further, the lovable and insightful characters of Joey's parents illustrated that questions about interracial marriage were not necessarily reflective of prejudice but rather could also come from concern and even custom. While it is appropriate to hate bigotry and prejudice, such character weaknesses could be found in otherwise very good and lovable people.

The opposition of Dr. Prentice's Black parents most likely gave few Black men and women of the older generation cause to rethink their own personal prejudices, but it did serve to point out that racial prejudice can be a problem for both Black and White people. In that, perhaps, is the most effective message older White Americans learned about their own feelings. It was a lesson that may have caused some older White members of the audience who may have felt uncomfortable at the concept of interracial marriage to say to themselves, "Gee, I never thought that *the other side* would feel the same way I do." Soon they found themselves personally identifying with people of color.

One of the most poignant lines in the movie is spoken during a conversation with Dr. Prentice (Sidney Poitier) and his father Mr. Prentice (Foy Glenn). The elder is a retired postman, a hard-working but middle-class Black man who invested his time and efforts, sacrificing with his wife to give the couple's only child an education that would open doors of opportunity. After explaining that this (proposed marriage to a White girl) is the first time the father has ever had cause to be ashamed of his son Poitier responds, "You are 30 years older than I am. You and your whole lousy generation believe that the way it was for you is the way it's got to be. You've got to get off my back. You think of yourself as a colored man--I think of myself as a man."

This further illustrated the widening gap between the generations, visible in so many ways during the '60s and put a positive spin on it. To the older generation it said, "Your lack of comfort with an interracial society is understandable...it is what you have been taught and all that you have never known. While that feeling may be understandable, do not judge the young who are growing up in a new day, questioning old traditions, and thinking in revolutionary but more appropriate manners."

While dealing with such issues the movie remained a true comedy and any lessons learned were gained as those who watched it identified with characters and situations. The basic plot evolved from the idea of a liberal man being forced to confront a test of his beliefs. At the time there were many in both the older and the younger generation who believed themselves liberated from racial prejudice. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* forced them to laugh at the potential of having to deal with their beliefs in a potentially real situation. It also forced them to question just how strongly they believed in a raceless society.

Spencer Tracy certainly turned in one of his greatest performances as he agonized with his character's life-long belief that all people should be judged by their character and not the color of

their skin. His daughter's naiveté about race is laid at the doorstep of his core beliefs... "This is how you raised your daughter." The audience is drawn to him throughout his performance, struggling with his own turmoil, and hoping to see him prove himself true to what he has always believed.

From the beginning of the project itself Tracy's health was a problem to the extent that Stanley Kramer was unable to even purchase completion insurance for the film. He and Hepburn placed their salaries into an escrow account as collateral in the event that Tracy died before shooting on the film could be completed. The 67-year-old actor lacked energy but worked hard, doing most of the filming in the morning. The film closes with Tracy, as Matt Drayton, giving a passionate address encapsulating the problems and the feelings of all the characters, tying them together into a powerful "sermon" that was not in the least "preachy." His message to the young is his admonition to Dr. John Prentice who had earlier indicated that without the blessing of Joey's parents their marriage would be off. "Where John made his mistake," Matt Drayton says powerfully, "was attaching so much importance to what (Joey's) mother and I think... what matters is what you think." It was a lesson to parents and an affirmation to the young.

Perhaps the most life-altering impact of the movie was not the effect it had on audiences, though it remained a memorable experience, but the impact it had on Hollywood. In the face of skepticism at the potential for "message movies" by people in the field and specifically by Columbia Studios that grudgingly released *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, the response validated Kramer's genre. Grossing \$25 million, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* became Columbia Studios' highest-grossing theatrical feature to date. The picture was nominated for ten Academy Awards, earning the award for Writing Original Screenplay. Katherine Hepburn received the Oscar for Best Actress. The movie sparked a new train of thought in Hollywood, not only could "message movies" address societal problems, when properly done they could be successful on the financial level as well.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner marked the last pairing of Tracy and Hepburn. During Spencer Tracy's powerful oratory in the Drayton Family sitting room at the movie's end Katharine Hepburn listens to her on-screen husband with loving admiration and tearful eyes. They were not the tears of an actress playing a powerful role... they were real. Hepburn knew that Spencer Tracy was dying and that this would be their final picture together. Ten days later she was at his bedside him when he died. His last performance lives as a telling tribute to ab America that loved him, respected him, and was not undergoing great change.

¹ Wikipedia

² Spoto, Donald, *Stanley Kramer: Filmmaker*, 1978

³ Wikipedia

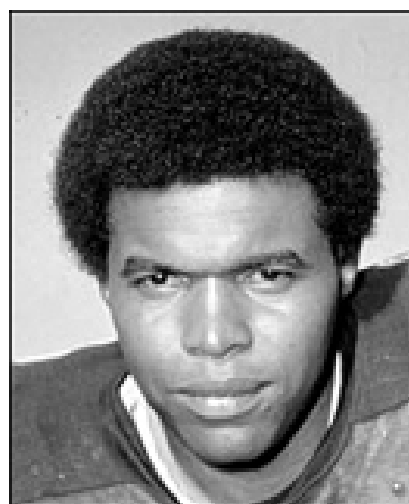
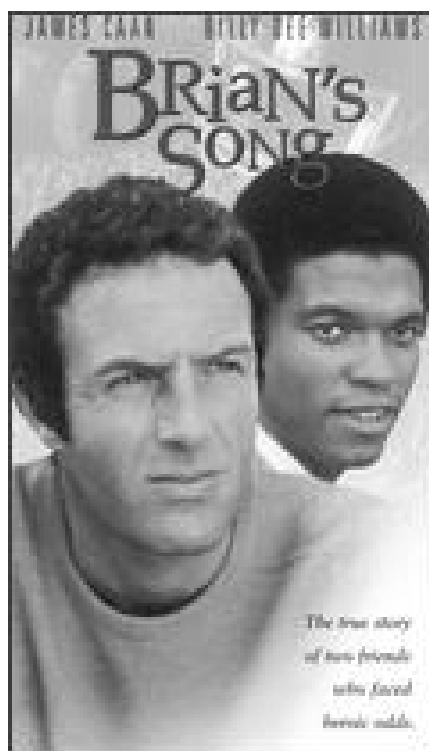
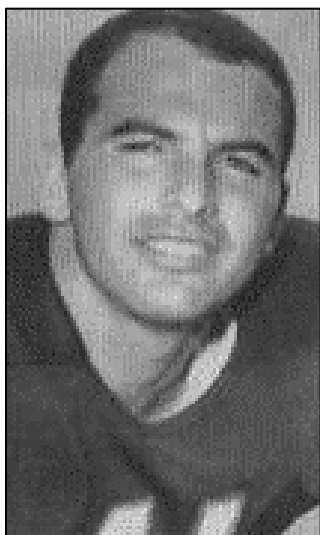
⁴ CNN *Larry King Live*, "Interview with Katharine Houghton," June 19, 2003

⁵ CNN *Larry King Live*, *ibid*

⁶ CNN *Larry King Live*, *ibid*

⁷ CNN *Larry King Live*, *ibid*

Brian's Song



"Brian's Song came out at a time when America was going through a very difficult period. There was a lot of tension and a lot of racial tension as well. Brian's Song came along, and it was a good time for America to stop and take a deep breath. These were professional athletes who were at the top of their performance and they didn't let race stand in the way. In fact, their differences and their friendship became a badge of honor. The message that it gave us in Korea, and how it particularly affected us in the Army was that it was a way of showing us that whether we were black, white, Hispanic or Korean, the only thing that counts is how we get along together. We have to look beyond our differences and build on our strengths."

General Colin L. Powell

If in fact "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" had a minimal impact on race relations, the 1971 made-for-TV movie "Brian's Song" certainly did. Unlike the earlier "message movie" that was built around the issue of interracial marriage, the underlying story of "Brian's Song" was not so much about race as it was about friendship. Quite simply, it was the story of two professional football players Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo, and how they alternately became a "Bridge over Troubled Waters" each for the other. It was a movie you could not watch without tears, no matter how cynical or tough you were. It most likely would have had the same impact if both characters had been Black or if both had been White. The message was not contrived, it evolved naturally out of the two men's story.

The impact of the movie on race relations is referenced by General Colin Powell who spoke of it in his 1995 autobiography. Powell was serving as a Battalion Commander in Korea in 1973, a period during which the military was experiencing a resurgence of post-Vietnam War racism within the ranks. His Division Commander, Major General Henry E. Emerson, was a fan of the movie and repeatedly showed it within his command. By his own count Powell himself watched it at least six times during his one-year tour in Korea. After showing the film to a group of soldiers at the post theater the movie would be followed by a period of discussion. Under General Emerson both watching the movie and then discussing it was mandatory.

Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo were very different men, which was obvious from the opening scene of the movie. "Pic," as the latter was affectionately called, was talkative, extroverted, and easy going. Sayers was quiet, introverted, and serious. Sayers was virtually assured a starting spot on the Bears roster and was the fourth overall pick in the 1965 Draft on November 28, 1964. Piccolo, the nation's leading college rusher that year, was not even among the 280 college players drafted. Coach George Halas, who had signed Dick Butkus in the third overall draft pick and then Sayers immediately, thereafter, signed Piccolo as a free agent; he would have to fight for a spot on the team. Sayers was a natural athlete who made the starting lineup of the 1965 *Bears* roster based on raw talent; Piccolo survived the cuts and made the "practice squad" on sheer heart and determination.

What the two young men had in common was that both of them were young (23-years-old with only five months between them), healthy, and determined to build successful careers in professional football. *Brian's Song* opens with the two of them meeting for the first time in the Spring of 1965 at the *Bears* training camp. In that opening scene one additional difference is obvious, Gale Sayers was Black, and Brian Piccolo was White. Perhaps the single most poignant fact of the movie is that fifteen minutes into the story of their lives, it is easy to forget that difference. Therein lay the true impact of *Brian's Song* on the American psyche.

Louis Brian Piccolo was born on Halloween 1943, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the youngest of three children. His brother Joe was eight years older and brother Don two years older. His father, Joseph Piccolo, Sr., was born in Naples, Italy, and despite the German-Hungarian ancestry of his wife Irene, the Piccolo boys saw themselves as fun-loving, free-wheeling Italian boys. Joseph worked as a Greyhound bus driver and then began his own driving school in Pittsfield. Despite health problems doctors couldn't identify that caused him to hemorrhage from the nose and mouth unexpectedly, he took life with a cheerfulness and casual approach to working hard and yet taking time to enjoy life. Every winter he closed his business and took the family to Fort Lauderdale, Florida for a couple months and, after a few years of doing so and noting his health improved while in the warmer climate, the family moved there.

Brian's young life revolved around sports: baseball, football, and basketball in that order. He and Don practiced together and played Little League Baseball together; Don was the pitcher

and Brian was the catcher. If there wasn't someone else to play with, he would go out by himself and swing a bat or throw a ball up in the air and catch it himself. "My mother was the dominant factor in my athletic career," he said. "She always wanted me to be the best. When I played Little League baseball, she used to be right behind that screen. I was the catcher, and she was right there in my right ear."¹ Brian loved all sports but from an early age his intent was always to play Professional Baseball.

When Brian began playing football at Fort Lauderdale's Central Catholic High School, he weighed 185 pounds and played offensive tackle his Freshman through Junior years. The team finished 4-6, 2-6-1 and 2-7, not necessarily a stellar performance but the team maintained high morale and high hopes. In the locker room, even after a loss, Brian was the one who remained optimistic for the next game, cheering his comrades with "war stories" from the game just lost and his unique humor drawing laughter out of the experience.

In his Senior year Brian was moved to halfback, still only 185 pounds but much of his earlier "baby fat" had been replaced by muscle and sinew. He scored the first three times he carried the ball, each on a run of more than 50 yards. For the game he averaged 10 yards per carry. Though the Central Catholic High *Raiders* finished the season with a 4-4 record, Brian's athletic accomplishments earned him a scholarship to Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he majored in Speech. Only one other college had offered him a scholarship, Wichita State. Brian chose Wake Forest and later, with the kind of humor that marked his life he noted, "Good thing too. That (choosing Wichita) would have put me in Sayers country and Kansas wasn't big enough for both of us."²

Piccolo arrived at Wake Forest to a larger-than-life buildup, not so much because he was all that impressive in high school, but because the *Demon Deacons* had a string of losing seasons that demanded a silver lining for the cloud that covered their football field. Coach Billy Hildebrand was coaching his second year and was loved for his down-home and deeply religious personality. One of his players described *Hildy* as "The sort of guy you might want your son to play for. You know how they talk about losing games and building character? Hildy was a character builder."³

Brian's Freshman year he played for the *Baby Deacons* under former Chicago Bears and Green Bay Packers running back Beattie Feathers. In 1934 Feathers had been the first NFL player to rush for over 1,000 yards in a single season and is still the NFL's single-season record holder for yards per carry (8.44 yards per attempt) also in 1934. Under Beattie the *Baby Deacons* struggled to a paltry 2-3 season record although Brian Piccolo, averaging a respectable 4.2 yards per carry, scored 5 touchdowns and 4 extra points.

The *Deacons* lost 10 games during Piccolo's Sophomore year despite "Pic's" 4.2 yard-per-carry average and a total of more than 400 rushing yards for the season. During his Junior year the *Deacons* lost eight-straight games before a stunning upset against rival South Carolina in the Wake Forest Homecoming game. Piccolo carried the ball nearly two dozen times for 140 yards, coming back from a halftime deficit of 19 to 7 to tie it late in the game. Quarterback Karl Sweetan, who was also the team's kicker, was injured in the tying score. Piccolo walked over to the coach and said, "I'll kick the damn thing (for the conversion)," and he did, eking out a 20 - 19 victory. Even with that win however, the string of four losing seasons was too much and Coach Hildebrand was released.

Piccolo returned in the Fall of 1963 to play his Senior year for former Illinois assistant Bill Tate. Rick Harvey, later a special writer for the Roanoke, Virginia, "World-News" recalled meeting "Pic" as an incoming Freshman and gives insight into his character. Harvey found himself trying to find his way around campus when, "One well-tanned, dark-haired senior player took time

out to help this lost freshman. He wasn't asked to help – he just walked over, noticing with a grin the obviously confused look on my face, and volunteered to show me around. I didn't know the guy's name at the time, but someone told me that he was Brian Piccolo, Wake's senior fullback and that I'd be hearing a lot from Pic during the football season. I did hear a lot from Pic, too, and the more I heard and saw, the more I respected the man that wore the old gold and black jersey with the number 31 across the front of it."⁴

In his Senior year Brian Piccolo exploded. Wake Forest was picked to finish dead last in the Atlantic Coast Conference not only because of their string of losing seasons and a 1-8 record the previous year, but because they had a rookie coach and the smallest team in the conference. Ultimately, they ended the season at 5 - 5, not necessarily great but an improvement over the previous year and a good start under their new coach. What did generate a lot of interest in the Wake Forest program was star running back Brian Piccolo. Local sports reports were headlined under such titles as: "Piccolo Plays Winning Tune," or "The Sweetest Music this Side of Heaven Comes from a Piccolo." Duke University coach Bill Murray fired up his team by announcing, "This year we're going to play taps on Piccolo." They didn't. Piccolo caught three passes, carried the ball for an ACC record 36 rushes gaining 115 yards, and scored all of the *Deacons'* points in a 20-7 upset...Wake Forest's first win over Duke since 1951.

Despite a 5-5 season record, for Wake Forest it had been great. Piccolo put it into perspective saying, "We beat Duke, and we beat State. They are the two top teams in the conference standings. The way I figure it, that makes us Number One."⁵ Brian Piccolo was Number One...with 1,044 yards and 111 total points scored, he led the entire nation in both.

While finishing his Senior year of college Brian and his high school sweetheart Joy Murrath decided to get married. They set the date for December 26 figuring that Christmas holidays were safely away from anything having to do with football that might pre-empt their plans. With his record season, Pic believed he might even be the Number 1 pick in the November NFL Draft. He was hurt, embarrassed, and more than angry when after 20 rounds with 14 Pro teams his name had not been called. The Nation's Number 1 college rusher was a free agent going into the 1965 football season. After the draft he did get inquiries from Baltimore, Chicago, and Cleveland, but nothing was certain.

On Christmas Day the Piccolo family and the Murrath families gathered in Atlanta, where Brian and Joy were to be married the following day, to watch Brian play in the North-South game in Miami. Pic played his heart out knowing the Pros were watching, but it seemed that when "crunch time" came the coach substituted him for a larger player. The general feeling among most NFL coaches was that despite his record, Pic was just too small and too slow for Professional Football. After the game he flew to Atlanta where he and Joy were married.

During the reception that followed a large ice sculpture sat on the buffet to cool the shrimp. It seemed out of place until word got around, Chicago *Bears* Coach George Halas had invited the newly-weds to honeymoon in Chicago. On December 29 the *Bears* called an unusual press conference...so unusual most sports writers initially thought it was to announce the retirement of the 70-year-old coach. Instead it was to announce the signing of a Free Agent named Brian Piccolo.

During his subsequent football career Joy proved to be as solid as a rock. Brian loved her and when there was a road game, he always sent her a post card. Five years later when Brian became sick it was Joy who, assuming the strong character of her husband came to comfort Pic's friends. Along the way the young couple was blessed with three daughters.

Just one daughter was what Bernice Sayers wanted when she learned that she was pregnant in late 1942. She already had an infant son, a boy named Roger, so she optimistically picked out the name Gail for his expected little sister. When the baby that was born in Wichita, Kansas, on May 30, 1943, turned out to be a boy she faced a dilemma...she hadn't even considered any names for boys. Her infant son was named Gale Eugene Sayers. Years later he would recall in his autobiography that one early picture of him looked very much like a girl, down to the pretty ribbon in his hair.

The Sayers family had deep roots in Kansas and were among the western territory's first settlers. Some in the family became quite successful and financially stable; Gale's great uncle had been the state's first Negro county lawyer. His father had not fared so well. Though that same great uncle had offered to put Roger Winfield Sayers through law school, Gale's father was more inclined to athletics than to academics. His son would follow in his footsteps.

When Gale was seven years old the farmer moved to a rural farm in Speed, Kansas. It was a large 360-acre farm owned by his grandfather who, having become ill asked his son to move there with his family. Gale and his older brother who was named Roger Winfield Sayers after his father...who Gale called Win...were only 13 months apart and became very close. In Speed they were the only Black boys in their school, in fact they were the only Black boys in the entire community, so they gravitated towards each other. Their younger brother Ronnie, five years younger than Gale was at the time just an infant. After a brief time on the farm the family returned to city life, moving to Omaha. It was there that Gale would grow up and attend classes through high school.

Roger worked various jobs that never brought in enough money to properly raise a family. He excelled as a car polisher and gained a reputation for being the best, but his income was usually only \$65 or \$75 a week. Gale remembers his mother purchasing chicken's feet...they were only fifty cents for 100 feet...which became a staple of the family diet. Gale even used his BB gun to shoot birds from time to time to fill his belly. Today, as a motivational speaker, Gale Sayers often uses the example of his hard-working but poor father to illustrate to young people the importance of getting an education.

The pressures resulted in considerable tension between Gale's parents, often as a result of drinking to drown their problems. He loves his parents, understands what they went through, and holds no bitterness. They remained together despite common periods of brief separation. In the story of his own life Gale wrote, "At the time I went through this period of growing up--my parents drinking, not enough food in the house, cockroaches over things, no heat in the winter--my parents were at each other all the time. Still, it seemed that all my friends were going through the same thing. Hell, I didn't even realize we lived in the ghetto until I moved away from the ghetto.... I learned something from that experience, something I probably couldn't have picked up outside the ghetto. I learned that if you want to make it bad enough, no matter how bad it is you can make it."⁶

Growing up in Omaha, Gale was active in city school sports leagues, competing in track, baseball, basketball and football. Football became his favorite and, though the leagues insured the safety of young boys by engaging them in flag football, there were plenty of neighborhood rough-and-tumble tackle scrimmages to toughen Gale and give him his share of bumps, bruises, and scars. When at last he played sanctioned tackle football in high school, he was a determined and tough competitor, often motivated to excel and outdo his older brother Win.

At the end of Gale's senior year Omaha's Central High School took the city title in football and took State in track. The young multi-sport athlete had contributed by taking three gold medals in track at state and set a state broad-jump record. In football Gale set the City's scoring record and

was named to the All-America high school team. He believed he might well be named the Omaha *World Herald's* Nebraska High School Athlete of the Year. When he lost out to a young athlete with a good record that was only slightly less impressive than Gale's, and considering that Gale accomplished competed in a Class A school as opposed to the winner's Class B school, he assumed that it was because he was Black and the chosen Athlete of the Year was White. "Up to that time I had never thought much about being Black," he wrote. "I had never encountered any racial discrimination, for the simple reason that I always stayed with my own people. At the end of my senior year I got my first recognition of what being a black man could mean."⁷

Gale's only interest in school had been athletics...he admits he got out of high school not having really learned anything. His talent on the gridiron however, attracted considerable attention and by the end of his Senior year he had received letters from hundreds of colleges. He signed letters of intent for 17 different schools, was courted by all and promised "the moon," and finally settled for Kansas State. At the same time, he was doing some courting of his own, proposing marriage to his high school sweetheart Linda. The two planned to marry the summer following their Freshman year; Linda had enrolled for classes at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

They did indeed marry the following summer after Gale had spent his first year of college distracted and inattentive to scholastic work. "It (marriage) was the only thing that bailed me out," he says. "I doubt that I would have finished college if I hadn't got married. Marriage helped settle me down. And my grades improved one hundred and fifty per cent."⁸

He began playing for the varsity football team his Sophomore year weighing only 170 pounds. Slowly he brought his weight up to 185 and in one game rushed for a Kansas record 27 times netting 114 yards. During the Homecoming game against Nebraska, a classic rival which was still upset that Gale had chosen Kansas over the *Cornhuskers*, he rolled up 144 yards. The team finished the year with a 6-3-1 record and Gayle Sayers finished the season with 1,125 yards making him first in the Big Eight and third in the nation. His Junior year tally of 941, when added to his earlier performance, made him the first Black player in the Big Eight to reach 2,000 yards before his Senior year. He was named Conference Back of the Year and made most of the All-America teams. His dashing style of running through the opposition netted him the nickname *The Kansas Comet*.

At the end of his 4-years as a UK *Jayhawk* Gale had rushed for 2,675 yards, caught passes for 408 yards and added 835 yards on kick returns. Already some had begun to compare his style to the legendary Red Grange and anticipated he would become an NFL legend himself. Others believed at 6' and only 200 pounds he would never endure the pounding of the much-larger NFL system. The Kansas City Chiefs were interested in their home-state *Kansas Comet* but despite their offer of more money, Sayers eventually chose to play for the Chicago *Bears*. He was drafted the following November, the 4th player selected overall.

On Christmas Day 1964 Gayle Sayers played in the North-South All-Star game, opposite a young man named Brian Piccolo. Though the two didn't really talk until they met the following Spring at the *Bears* training camp, each was aware of the others presence on the field. Brian Piccolo did not know then that Gale was by nature very quiet and hesitant to talk much. "One guy I wasn't impressed with--personality wise--was the Kansas Comet, Gale Sayers," he wrote. "What an arrogant son of a bitch. I didn't see him speak to a soul the whole week we were together."⁹

The subsequent movie that told the story of Brian Piccolo and Gale Sayers of course, did not and even need not have included all this early history of the two young men. Their differences were obvious from the opening scene, Brian was the talkative and easy-going rookie meeting his introverted and decidedly determined teammate. On screen of course it was an obvious fact that

the two men were ethnically different, but even that became quickly forgotten among their more diverse personality differences.

Both men made the final cut that year though for Piccolo, somewhat too small and too slow, it was a struggle. In fact, Pic survived the cut to be placed on the practice squad and never played a game in his 1965 rookie season. Sayers, on the other hand, exploded for an incredible 2,272 combined net yards and scored a record 22 touchdowns. His rushing total was second only to Jim Brown's more than 1,500 yards. In the second-to-the-last game of the season alone Sayers ran up a record-tying six touchdowns and 336 combined yards in a 61 - 20 annihilation of the San Francisco 49ers. Coach Halas described it as "the greatest performance I have ever seen on the football field." The *Kansas Comet* was an immediate super star and was named "NFL Rookie of the Year" in a class that included such future greats as Dick Butkus, Craig Morton, Joe Namath*, and Fred Biletnikoff, and was selected to his first Pro-Bowl appearance.

The 1996 season saw Sayers top his rookie season to lead the NFL in rushing with 1,231 yards and a record 2,440 all-purpose yards. Piccolo at last made the special team's roster, though during that season he only carried the ball three times. It was a disappointing year for Pic who, despite his usual optimistic and casual demeanor, wondered if he was wasting his time with the *Bears*. The stars on the team however, had come to admire Brian for his drive and determination. He was literally the "heart of the team." He was also ready to always help in any way he could. Dick Butkus' own star had risen, and he was a popular speaker. Brian provided much of Dick's material and reviewed all of his prepared comments. Sayers, on the other hand, remained generally to quiet to accept speaking engagements.

The 1997 season saw Piccolo at last get a solid assignment on the *Bears'* roster as a backup to Sayers. During that season Pic rushed for 317 yards averaging a respectable 4.1 yards per carry. Sayers himself had something of a set-back, turning in only 880 yards rushing and 126 receiving. But the notable event of that year was the pairing of the two in room assignments that made them the first interracial roommates in the NFL.

At the time Gale and Pic didn't really know each other well but, just prior to leaving for a road game at Birmingham, Alabama, of all places, backfield coast Ed Cody approached Sayers to pair him with Ronnie Bull, a *Bears'* running back. "Why Ronnie?" Gale asked, and Cody advised that it had been decided to room the backs together, regardless of the color of their skin. Gale knew it was an important and courageous step by the *Bears*, pairing a Black and White player in the same room and was not opposed, though he responded, "Okay, but give me Piccolo."¹⁰ Brian was never consulted on the decision, the first he knew of the room arrangement was when he entered his assigned room to find Gayle Sayers.

Perhaps too much is made of the fact that Sayers and Piccolo were the first professional football players Black and White to share a room. The real story of the two men is that they became close friends, sharing good times and helping each other through difficult times.

Coach Halas retired after the end of the '67 season and the following year got off to a bad start, the *Bears* posting a 1-4 record going into the sixth game. Sayers and Piccolo had become so close that Pic could instinctively tell when the starter needed a break. In 1967 when Sayers came off the field after a series Pic would ask him if he needed a break. If Sayers replied that he did Pic would password on to Ed Cody on the sidelines, who then passed word to Coach Halas, who in turn would tell Pic to relieve Sayers. It was the long way of doing things. In 1968 the two men knew each other so well that Pic could read the need for a "blow" in Gale's eyes, and the two simply substituted on their own with the coaches' blessing.

* Joe Namath was named the AFL Rookie of the Year

The system worked well until the ninth game of the season when, rushing against the 49ers defense, Sayers' knee buckled after a clean but crushing hit by Kermit Alexander. It might well have proven to be a career ending injury and Sayers was personally devastated. While Piccolo rose to the challenge with his best year as a pro, catching 14 passes for 291 yards and rushing 123 times for 450 yards and two touchdowns, he also devoted himself to buoying up his friend, Gayle Sayers. It was the positive attitude, the determination and patience of Brian Piccolo more than any other factor that enabled Sayers to recover and return in 1969 to rush a career high 236 times for 1,032 times.

In a summer game against the St. Louis *Cardinals* in 1970 during a kickoff, Sayers was severely injured again, this time damaging his left knee. For all intents and purposes his career was over. He only played two games in the 1970 season gaining 52 yards on the ground and, despite a valiant effort to return in 1971 he again only played two games, adding 38 yards to end his career with 4,956 rushing yards on nearly 1000 carries and 1,307 yards receiving. But long before it became evident that the *Kansas Comet* would be unable to recover from that devastating second injury, he was to face an even worse tragedy.

After the injury to Sayers in the 1968 season Piccolo moved from back-up to starter but, having cheered and helped his friend to recovery he gladly returned to a back-up position in 1969 when Sayers returned. Early in that season he began developing a cough and, following a fourth-quarter touchdown against Atlanta on November 16 he took himself out of the game because of chest pains and a persistent cough. Two days later a chest X-ray revealed a tumor in his lungs. When the malignant tumor was removed on November 28 the doctors found that the cancer had spread. Despite this, Piccolo valiantly announced he would return to play for the *Bears* and the team confirmed it two weeks after that surgery in a press conference. Brian began chemotherapy treatment but as his health continued to fail, on April 9, 1970 his left lung and left breast were surgically removed.

Late in May Gale Sayers flew to New York to attend the Professional Football Writers annual dinner where he was to receive the George S. Halas award as the most courageous player in pro football for his own stunning comeback after the first injury to his knee. It was one of those rare moments when the quiet, self-conscious star spoke more than a few words. Standing before a room of men, many of whom were the toughest football players and veterans one could gather, he told them about his friend, Brian Piccolo:

"He has the heart of a giant, that rare form of courage that allows him to kid himself and his opponent, cancer. He has the mental attitude that makes me proud to have a friend who spells out the word 'courage' twenty-four hours a day of his life. You flatter me by giving me this award, but I tell you that I accept it for Brian Piccolo. It is mine tonight, it is Brian Piccolo's tomorrow...I love Brian Piccolo, and I'd like all of you to love him too. Tonight, when you hit your knees, please ask God to love him."

There was not a dry eye in the room. Indeed, years later when the film showed across America, all who heard Gale's simple but profound tribute to a friend were moved to tears. In faraway places like Korea where tough American soldiers saw the story of those two men and heard those words, tears could not be restrained and attitudes were changed. Upon returning home to Chicago Gale and Linda went to visit Pic in the hospital. It was a brief but emotional experience and was the last time the two would speak. Brian and Joy went to Atlanta to visit their daughters,

who were living with relatives, and Sayers was admitted to the hospital for surgery on his left knee that had been injured at the start of the previous season. He was still in the hospital on June 16, 1970, when Joy called to tell him that Brian had passed away.

Gayle Sayers may well be the greatest running back in the history of football. The statistics from his 7-year career are certainly impressive enough. He played in four Pro Bowls and was named Offensive Player of the Game in four of them. When he was unanimously selected to the Professional Football Hall of Fame in 1977, the first year in which he was eligible, at age 34 he was the youngest player ever enshrined.

Perhaps however, his greatest accomplishment was the 1970 autobiography he wrote to tell the story of his friendship with Brian Piccolo. Titled "I am Third," it was the basis for the 1970 movie *Brian's Song*, starring James Caan (as Piccolo) and Billy Dee Williams (as Sayers). The immediately popular true story was released in a 2001 remake.

The strange title of Sayer's autobiography found its roots in the mantra of his college track coach Bill Easton. The phrase so stuck in Sayer's mind that, after asking Coach Easton to explain it, he created and thereafter wore a gold medallion with the words engraved on the back. Coach Easton's explanation: "The Lord is first, my friends are second, and I am Third."

Says Gale, "If you think about it, it is a good philosophy of life. I try to live by it."¹¹

¹ Morris, Jeannie, Brian Piccolo-A Short Season, Rand McNalley & Company, Chicago, 1971

² *ibid*, p 70.

³ *Ibid*, p 75.

⁴ Wake Forest Magazine, July 1970

⁵ Morris, Jeannie, *ibid*, p 85.

⁶ Sayers, Gale, I Am Third, Viking Press, 1970, p 92.

⁷ *Ibid*, p 107.

⁸ *Ibid*, p 139.

⁹ Morris, Jeannie, *ibid*, p 89.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p 130.

¹¹ Sayers, Gale, *ibid*, p 41 - 42.

All in the Family



"The program you are about to see is *All in the Family*. It seeks to throw a humorous spotlight on our frailties, prejudices, and concerns. By making them a source of laughter we hope to show, in a mature fashion, just how absurd they are."

*CBS Disclaimer Before Broadcast
"All in the Family"*

The CBS disclaimer warning television viewer about the program they were about to see quickly vanished to the sound of a flushing toilet. In fact, when the first episode of *All in the Family* aired on January 12, 1971, there was real concern that the controversial nature of the show would alienate viewers and result in a horrible backlash. Instead the irreverent stories of the Bunker Family ranked Number 1 in the Nielson Ratings from 1972 to 1976, and the show became a staple of prime-time television until the last episode aired on April 8, 1979.*

Growing up in the 1950s we all came to love and enjoy the stereotypical family shows of the period: The Nelsons (*The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* 1952-66), The Andersons (*Father Knows Best* 1954-60), The Cleavers (*Leave it to Beaver* 1957-63), and others. It was these shows that initially framed our thinking to fit the traditional *American Dream*, men were the breadwinners, moms were the bread-makers, and kids were...well just kids. Life was comfortable in middle-class families where dinner was a family focal point and where there was always plenty to eat.

Roles were clearly defined. Dad was always intelligent, insightful, hardworking and successful. Mom was emotional, comforting, a domestic super-woman who kept the house immaculate and loved to bake cookies for the kids; she always greeted her husband at the door when he came home from work adorned in a dress and high heels. As for the children, girls were shy, romantic and shallow; boys were active, explorative, and generally somewhat intelligent. The problems of daily life around which plotlines were built centered on issues that seemed insurmountable but were really quite innocuous: lost homework, a bad grade at school, unrequited love, and scrapes with friends. No attempt was made to address the burning issues of that time: The Cold War, the arms race, third-world poverty, or racial prejudice. In fact, seldom did a Black face even appear in most episodes. From a practical standpoint, such positive and inspiring programs were actually meant to be entertainment...a diversion from the problems of the real world.

On the lighter side of family TV shows was *I Love Lucy*, a comedy that ran from 1951 to 1957 that portrayed marriage in a slightly more dysfunctional manner that was harmlessly funny. So too *The Honeymooners* (1955-56) gave marriage something of a "biting edge" but again, it was in harmlessly comedic and Jackie Gleason was more fun than threatening. When Laura Petri began regularly wearing pants in *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961-66) it was a major step in breaking with social norms. For the most part those popular family shows with their clean-cut characters and simple problems were irresistible. It gave us an ideal to wish to emulate. The problem was, it was a dream world that 1950s families watched, and each member would say to themselves, "I wish our family was like that."

When *All in the Family* premiered to wide network reservation and concern in 1971 the families that watched it did react in horror...usually to exclaim, "My God, that looks like our family!"

Someone has said that the Archie and Edith Bunker were like having Ralph Cramden and Lucie Arnaz on steroids. The stereotypes were certainly embellished...or were they? Furthermore, family problems became the children themselves, perhaps the most-realistic representation of a growing population of young in rebellion in the 1960s. What made the show work beyond the fact that it was easy to identify with and find yourself depicted in it, was that despite the idiosyncrasies of the characters and their vividly evident character faults you had to love them all...including Archie Bunker himself.

* That final episode was actually followed up with spin-offs like *Maude*, *The Jeffersons*, *Archie Bunker's Place*, and *Gloria*, among others.

Archie (Carroll O'Connor) was a pretty accurate picture of many *Greatest Generation* men who had achieved the *American Dream* as they knew it, only to reveal it in a somewhat unhealthy fashion. Growing up in the depression gave Archie the desire to secure a future and, during World War II his fictional character had proudly and honorably served to defend his nation as a member of the Army Air Forces. Following the war, he worked hard in a blue-collar position as a Queens loading dock worker, buying his own simple but comfortable home in which he and his wife raised their sole daughter. His was the typical middle-class American family. He had further realized the dream of every 1950s parent of sending their children to college, an ambition dream that seemed to have backfired. Gloria came home with an education that enabled her to argue with her father, not necessarily seen as a positive.

Edith Bunker (Jean Stapleton) was the timid but poignant voice of reason, her "Ohhh Archie!" response became a trademark expression to alternately express both loving respect for her husband and frustration with his "old fashioned" ideas and prejudices. Though older and frumpier than her 1950s TV-family counterparts, she was very much the un-ambitious, somewhat uneducated domestic heartbeat of the family. In the two, both Archie and Edith reflected perhaps more realistically what the "older generation" was really like. Even though they came to represent the problems of the past however, if you were young and liberated you still had to love them...they reminded you of your own parents whom you also loved.

Gloria Bunker Stivik (Sally Struthers) was a typical liberated 60s girl, college educated and in rebellion against her father's outspoken prejudice against minorities, his opposition to women's rights, and both parent's yearning for the older, simpler days. That fond recollection was echoed in the theme song, sung by Archie and Edith at the beginning of each show:

"Those Were the Days!" Didn't need no welfare state, everybody pulled his weight...Girls were girls and men were men... People seemed to be content--fifty dollars paid the rent--freaks were in a circus tent. Hair was short and skirts were long. I don't know just what went wrong! Those Were the Days!"

To round out the family Gloria's came home from college with live-in husband Michael Stivik (Rob Reiner), a long-haired liberal college kid and seemingly naïve idealist with an activist streak that made him ready to argue any old-fashioned point with Archie. If the show fell into any sort of pitfall to appease the older generation it was that Gloria, despite her education, was still cast as something of an airhead. Even in his too-true-to-life-to-be-comfortable satire of life in the 60s, producer Norman Lear himself fell into the traditional trap of failing to portray a woman as being intellectually equal to and emotionally stable as a man.

All in the Family may well have taught us as a nation to finally laugh at ourselves, examine who we really were, and put our own thoughts and feelings under a microscope. Archie's overt prejudice against Blacks came across as a naturally evolved rather than a hate motivated aversion. Some said that Archie gave bigots a bad name...and many good but prejudiced Americans saw in Archie's own problems something of themselves and began to revise their thinking. Archie's Black neighbors the Jefferson's were referenced in early episodes but not seen until the 1973 season. As Archie himself in the years that followed made progress in getting along with the Jefferson's, even becoming quite friendly with son Lionel, it affirmed to many traditionalist of the older generation who were now questioning their own prejudice that it was "okay" to change.

Heated exchanges between Archie and Michael over race, women's liberation, politics, nuclear power, and just about any other issue of our time gave us a pretty clear view of the actual differences between the generations. It was satire in its purest form, satire being defined as:

"literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to bring about improvement."¹ Parodies mock which can be sometimes difficult to distinguish from satire, but *All in the Family* walked that fine line, never really mocking but always provoking thought through humor and thereby inspiring change.

During the show's run it was hard for most viewers to despise any of the fictional characters, whether you were politically liberal or conservative. If you were opposed to racism rather than hating Archie for his bigotry you tended more towards sympathy, realizing that his prejudice was something of an *inherited disease*. If women's rights were your "hot button" you nevertheless understood Archie's "Dingbat" nickname for Edith was a loving expression poorly put into words, partially because of his (and in general, older men's) traditional gruffness at expressing affection. Rather than being frustrated with Edith for not becoming an activist and breaking out of her domestic role you realized that this was the life she wanted. At the same time, it was clear that there was a new generation of women growing up like Gloria who wanted more.

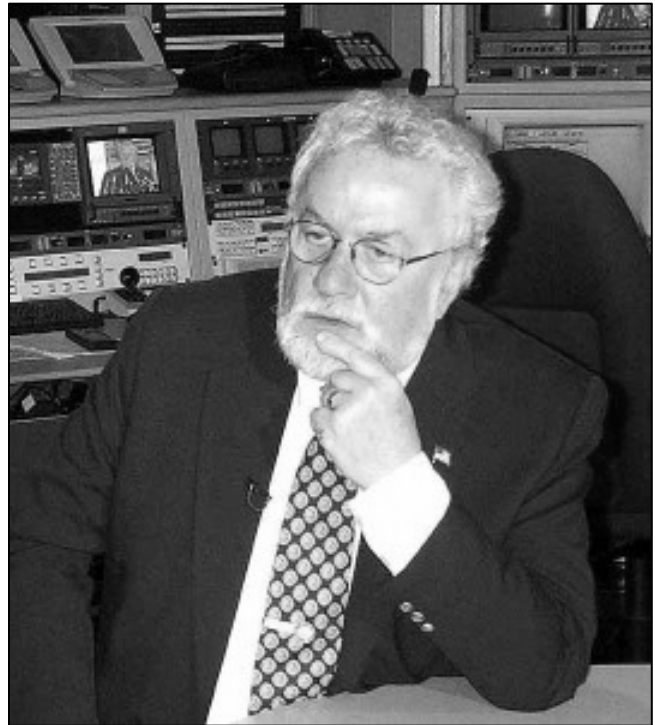
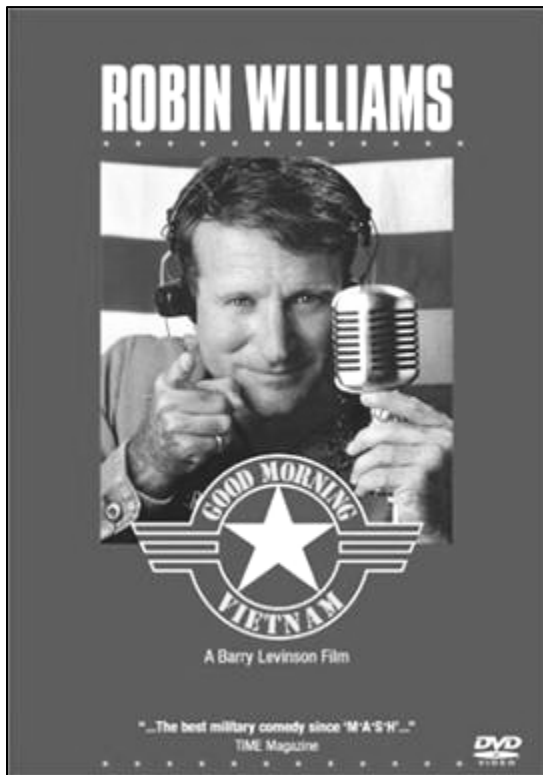
Virtually no subject was taboo and *All in the Family* became very much a forum for subjects like sex, homosexuality (Archie called them "queers"), labor unions, public welfare, and virtually any other topic that older men discussed over beer at the local bar, women talked about over tea, and younger men and women discussed amongst themselves on college campuses. "There is not a controversial '90's topic that Archie Bunker didn't address back in the '70's. He pontificated on affirmative action ('if your spics and spades want to make it in this world, let 'em hustle for it like I done.'), gun control ('all the airlines have to do to end skyjackings is arm the passengers'), tolerance of homosexuality ('England is a fag country') and liberal bias in the media ('Pinko Conkrite')."²

By the end of the first season some 60 million Americans were watching the show regularly, laughing hysterically as they saw themselves, their parents, their children, and/or their neighbors interacting in a world that looked all too real. Through its comedy serious questions were asked, attitudes were altered, and it became increasingly apparent that for all practical intents and purposes that where people are concerned the more things change the more, they stay the same. To say that entertainment was defined in a new way by *All in the Family* would be a major understatement. Our society and our families may well be the better for it.

¹ Elliott, Robert C., Satire, in: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2004

² Hieb, Sam, "All In The Family," TV Land, <http://www.tvparty.com/family.html>

Adrian Cronauer



"Having had a film made about my military escapades has led to some rewarding experiences. For example, veterans come up to me, shake my hand, and thank me for helping them get through 'Nam." I now fully realized how much Armed Forces Radio meant; it was an antidote to culture shock and homesickness. Looking back, I think we were successful because we gave our listeners what they wanted: a sound as much as possible like stations they listened to back home."

Adrian Cronauer

World War II sparked more movies than perhaps any other event in world history. During the nearly four-year period of that conflict that saw 16 million Americans mobilized to fight on five continents, war movies were cranked out by the scores each year. Most followed the same general theme: this war is just, our enemies are evil and must be stopped, and American men and women are fighting and dying for you who remain at home. They were as essential to the war effort by inspiring young men and women to enlist, by promoting rationing and war bond purchases at home, and in lifting spirits during some of our Nation's darkest hours. In the decades that followed the end of the war even more movies were cranked out to tell the stories of heroes, battles, and to render proper honor to all who had served.

The Korean War is often called *The Forgotten War*. This is certainly true in terms of war movies; only the War of 1812 and the Spanish-American War received less reproduction on the Big Screen. Only four movies of the Korean War were produced between 1954 and 1962: *Bridges at Tokyo Ri*, *Battle Hymn*, *Pork Chop Hill*, and *the Manchurian Candidate*. Perhaps part of the reason for this lack of movies was the fact that the Korean War, coming only five years after the World War, became eclipsed by the larger and more popular remembrance of those days. Further, a good number of the men who fought in Korea were the same soldiers who had fought in the earlier war.

Whatever the reason, the Korean War did get plenty of attention in 1970 with the release of the movie M*A*S*H, the irreverent comedy about Army surgeons and one prominent nurse working at a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in Korea. From a military standpoint the movie was ahead of its time. World War II had been depicted with its own share of comedy from big screen movies to the highly popular TV show *McHale's Navy*. But with the war in Vietnam a public issue and the M*A*S*H making light of military inefficiencies and failings amid human sacrifice and suffering, it was one Korean War movie not welcomed by military leadership in spite of its popularity with the public. I was still in training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, when M*A*S*H was released and we were all somewhat surprised that it was not allowed to be shown at the Post Theaters.* Of course even that was one more example of military idiocy...on every soldier's first weekend pass he headed straight for town to find a civilian theater showing what the Army didn't want us to watch.

Meanwhile, in the 1960s and '70s, Vietnam seems to be the last thing the American public wanted to watch a movie about. John Wayne's *The Green Berets*, released in 1968, was the first and perhaps only movie of that war in the pattern of the old-World War II movie. Presented with an emotionally positive story line, even with the increased anti-war sentiment that had arisen by the time of the movie's release it left many young men inspired to enlist and volunteer to become Army Green Berets. In imitable WWII fashion the movie closes with the inveterate Wayne telling a small Vietnam orphan who has just lost his Green Beret guardian, "You are what this war is about," as he walks into the sunset.

The two Vietnam War movies that followed and that were released before the war ended in 1975 was *The Losers*, more of an adventure tale of Vietnam Vet bikers returning to Southeast Asia on a rescue mission and 1974's *Hearts and Minds*, a controversial anti-war documentary. In 1978 *The Boys in Company C* and *The Deer Hunter* were released. While the latter was a well done and highly acclaimed artistic work, it was less a war movie than a tragic account of the veterans of that war. *The Boys in Company C* was blatantly anti-war and certainly not a movie any self-respecting Marine would recommend. *Apocalypse Now* was released the following year and

* The movie *Woodstock* was also banned from the Post Theaters. I finally saw it a year later, projected on a white sheet tacked to a building at LZ Nancy in Vietnam.

again portrayed the war in a sad and unrealistic light. It was followed by adventure stories tied to the war, a PTSD suffering *Rambo* fighting crooked cops in Idaho and an embittered James Braddock suffering from flashbacks and returning to Vietnam to rescue abandoned American Prisoners of War. Both were followed up with multiple sequels.

For me, 1986's *Platoon* was the first *real* movie about the Vietnam War since John Wayne's production eighteen years earlier. Having served with the 25th Infantry Division at Dau Tieng near the Michelin Rubber Plantation I found it eerily realistic. Many of my veteran friends however, especially those who served up north, found it far-fetched. The range of veterans' reactions to the movie perhaps speaks to the complicated nature and vast differences of the war. Further, *Platoon* with scenes of heavy drug use, war atrocities, and internal strife and murder, provided ample fodder to those who had opposed the war. Certainly, those things occurred during the war, but these were exceptions and not the rule. Nevertheless, it became a point of vindication for those who saw in that war reason to despise the military and to suspect the veterans who had returned from Vietnam.

At last in 1987 a Vietnam War movie was released that enabled us to look back on the war that divided our generation, indeed our nation, and laugh in the face of tragedy. *Good Morning Vietnam* told the story of Air Force disk jockey Adrian Cronauer, an uproariously funny and anti-establishment radio broadcaster in Vietnam. The film starred the immensely popular Robin Williams whose "Goooooooood Morning Vietnam" became one of the most recognized movie one-liners in history.

Adrian Cronauer was in fact, a real disk jockey for the Armed Forces Vietnam Radio (AFVN) station...and in fact, authored the story behind the script. Based loosely on his life, producers of the movie avoided having Adrian meet Robin Williams during filming. The real Cronauer is much more mainstream than the character depicted in the movie and in the process of developing the comedy they wanted Williams character to develop naturally according to his comedic talent.

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on September 8, 1938, the *real* Adrian Cronauer was the only son of a local machinist and a teacher. His introduction to television came when he was a guest on a local amateur hour at age 12. While attending high school he volunteered at a local Public Broadcasting System station and was doing broadcast announcing when he enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh. There he was instrumental in starting the campus radio station, broadcasting from it as well. In 1962 he attended American University in Washington, D.C. to major in broadcasting and was only 11 credit hours from graduation when the Selective Service board beckoned. He enlisted in the Air Force believing it posed greater opportunity than becoming an infantryman or other ground combat soldier in the Army. In the Air Force he trained for broadcasting and media operations.

After working initially in the mundane operations of cranking out "cookie-cutter" training films he was at last sent to Greece to serve with an Armed Forces Radio station. Broadcasts from these official military stations were standard around the world with a common format designed to keep soldiers deployed to strange and foreign lands somewhat in touch with home, both in terms of music and news. The programming was generally benign, heavily controlled for appropriate content, and censored. Though Adrian was not the anti-establishment, damn-the-rules renegade portrayed in the movie, he was a good airman with a naturally comedic talent and livened his broadcasts enough to elevate them above the traditional put-everyone-to-sleep military radio history. When he had one year remaining in his enlistment, he was offered the chance to return home to resume making dry training and cheesy anti-VD films, or broadcasting radio programs in either South Korea or Vietnam. He opted for the warmer climate and exotic nature of Vietnam. He

arrived in the Spring of 1965 shortly after Congress, prompted by the Gulf of Tonkin incident, authorized military force and the buildup for war in Vietnam had begun.

Recalling his tour of duty in Vietnam in light of the subsequent movie about it, Adrian tells people, "If I had done all those things they showed me doing in that movie, I'd still be sitting in Fort Leavenworth (military prison) in Kansas." The movie was meant to be entertaining, which of course it certainly was. Much of it was based upon the chronology of Adrian's military career...arriving in Vietnam from Greece at the beginning of the buildup and mirrored to a smaller degree his unique approach to radio despite the fact it was an official military broadcast.

In Vietnam he did in fact coin the "Gooooood Morning Vietnam" opening that became his trademark, though it was more practical than artistic. He explains that coming into the studio in the early mornings, still half-asleep and watching the second hand on the wall clock tick down to "air time" too quickly, the long and drawn out phrase came him a cushion to shuffle papers, grab a record, and collect his thoughts. In the program that followed he then broke from the norm to play popular songs that mirrored the "hit parade" at home, joke around, and make light of serious matters. In the midst of the war he enabled tentative young men in faraway posts to laugh. Decades later in the aftermath of the conflict his story enabled a generation divided by that war to look back and laugh once again.

Adrian Cronauer was among the earliest of the American forces to arrive in Vietnam and, as a broadcast journalist he was able to get out of the studio to interview troops in the field. It gave him a broad perspective of the conflict. "One of the reactions I got from them (the soldiers) was of frustration," he says. "They would be in hot pursuit of an enemy unit and then they would have to disengage because the unit would cross over some invisible barrier or border...(or)...they'd be sitting there receiving incoming fire, and not only were they not permitted to return the fire, but they weren't even allowed to load their weapons without permission from headquarters."¹ On the air, though with more discretion than he was later portrayed, Adrian was able to speak to those frustrations and help soldiers find comedy in the bureaucratic problems that made their job more difficult.

"Cronauer balanced innovation, imagination and enthusiasm with practicality and realism. He pushed as much as he could for reforms within the military broadcasting hierarchy, but there were times when he knew it would be senseless to push any harder. He met resistance from those who were deeply invested in military broadcast operations, from those who worked without incentive and motivation and from those who simply feared making waves."² After serving a one-year tour of duty he returned home to an honorable discharge, aware that the face of Armed Forces Radio was irrevocably changed. Incoming new disk jockeys tried to imitate him, a few even reviving his "Gooooood Morning Vietnam" greeting. Four years later when I arrived in Vietnam the AFVN icon was *Chickenman*: "Da...da...da...da...He's everywhere! He's everywhere!" From 1965 to 1966 Adrian Cronauer's popularity on the airwaves had taught the military that it was indeed true that *laughter is the best medicine*.

Adrian was then and remains today, proud of his Vietnam War service despite the problems evident from that period of time. "Vietnam was a no-win war," he says today. "When you don't have an objective to win, you've reduced the whole effort to waking up in the morning and seeing how any NVA and VC you can shoot--if you were allowed to shoot at all. It became a body-count game. But that was a political decision forced upon the troops. The troops never wanted to do that."³

After returning home Adrian built an advertising agency, managed a radio station, was program director of a television station, and a TV news anchorman. For seven years he worked in

New York City voicing television and radio commercials. He taught broadcasting at the university level and wrote a textbook on radio and TV announcing that is still used in many colleges and universities. While working in New York he also obtained a master's degree in media studies.

In the mid-1980s two of the most popular programs on television were *M*A*S*H* and *WKRP in Cincinnati*, a sit-com about broadcasters in a radio station. Adrian thought perhaps a combination of the two scenarios would provide a doubly humorous sit-com based on his own experiences as a war-time radio personality. He wrote a pilot for just such a program, but it was rejected as too timely--Vietnam was still a war people wanted to try and forget. With the help of fellow Vietnam Veteran and friend Ben Moses, the idea for *Good Morning Vietnam* was written in 1979 for the popular TV "Movie of the Week" but again was rejected. Finally, in 1982 the two men managed to sell their screenplay to a Hollywood producer and from there it eventually made its way into the hands of Robin Williams. The character of Adrian was made to order for Robin's impulsively comedic mind and the producers gave him free reign to further develop the onscreen character of Adrian Cronauer, Vietnam War disk jockey. His masterful portrayal subsequently earned him his first nomination for an Academy Award.

Robin and the *real* Adrian Cronauer met at a cast party only after all the scenes for the movie had been shot. Adrian and his wife Jeane flew to Hollywood to attend the star-studded celebration at Robin Williams' home. Though the movie would turn the disk jockey into something of a celebrity in his own right, at that time the couple were just two quite ordinary people excited to see a dream realized and enamored by their surroundings. Jeane recalls moving through the crowd with her camera trying to snap photos of her husband visiting with members of the cast. At one point she found Adrian visiting with Bruno Kirby who played the jealous, comedically-impaired Second Lieutenant Hauk and a third attendee at the party. After shifting about in efforts to get a good shot of her husband and Kirby together she finally politely asked the third man if he would mind stepping aside for a moment. He smiled, moved, she took the picture she wanted, and then Jeane turned back to the stranger to thank him.

"That's perfectly fine," he stated as he reached out to shake her hand. "Actually, it's kind of refreshing...I'm not usually asked to do that (step out of a picture). By the way, I'm Robert DeNiro."

Jeane flushes with embarrassment when she shares that story. "I can't believe I asked Robert DeNiro to step out of a picture. I asked him if I could take another and he graciously smiled as he stepped next to Adrian so I could take another."

The great success of the movie, quite different from anything before other than perhaps *M*A*S*H*, was that it was both fun and it was funny. Essentially it told the story of Vietnam Veterans more than the war. Those who had been anti-establishment and anti-military were captivated by Williams' humor and the story of an anti-establishment disk jockey who worked within and revolutionized his own area of the military establishment. Adrian Cronauer gave them a new perspective on Vietnam Veterans heretofore generally disdained and suspected.

Veterans of all wars laughed in hysteria at the one-line comebacks they recalled from their own days in service like a senior NCO barking "Don't call me 'sir!' I work for a living." Bruno Kirby's portrayal of the inexperienced and overly self-impressed Second Lieutenant Hauk reminded us of at least one "butter bar" we had served with or under. Vietnam Veterans flashed back in positive ways through the generous helping of music from our era, panoramic views of green jungle and rice paddies (although the film was actually shot in Thailand), the sound of (helicopter) rotor blades, and the sight of fresh troops marching in new uniforms across the hard tarmac of Tan Son Nhut Airport near Saigon.

It would be a grave mistake to over-analyze the movie itself. Indeed many of the movie watchdogs had a field day with factual errors such as songs being played in 1965-66 that did not come out until later dates or Pete Rose being called a rookie baseball player at the end of the film, when in fact his rookie year was 1963. The bottom line was that Adrian and Ben Moses penned the screenplay to be entertaining and make us laugh. It was effective on both counts.

What perhaps is most overlooked about the movie's success was that it opened the door for a healing process in our generation. Peacenicks and veterans, liberals and conservatives, hippies and war heroes found themselves all laughing together at what had once been a bitter memory. Other events would further that healing process along; within a year plans were being made by others for a Vietnam War Memorial to heal the wounds inflicted by that war. As one of the first "celebrities" from among our ranks, Adrian lent his time, energy and support that that and other efforts.

Meanwhile, profits from *Good Morning Vietnam* enabled Adrian to return to school to pursue a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania, where he was also a Special Projects Editor of the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*. For years he was Senior Attorney with the Washington, D.C. firm of Burch and Cronauer. More recently he put his law practice "on hold" to serve as Special Assistant to the Director of the POW/MIA Office at the Department of Defense. He remains a popular speaker and, in 1992 when he was invited to Australia for dedication of that country's Vietnam War Memorial, he returned to the airwaves for a four-hour broadcast complete with '60s era music that provided fond and moving memories to Australian Vietnam War veterans.

Today Adrian's busy schedule puts him regularly in touch with thousands of Vietnam Veterans. He's learned to overlook the disappointment many of them show upon learning that instead of meeting the Adrian Cronauer they expected from the movie, the *real* Adrian is very much like themselves. Comfortable in a suit and tie, with more degrees than a thermometer, and a record of building successful businesses, he is a husband, father, and grandfather not unlike veterans of previous generations. He is despite the erroneous stereotypes of the Vietnam vet, an example of who we are and what we can achieve if we are willing to simply laugh at ourselves.

¹ Zernich, Gordon, "Adrian Cronauer: Air Force Radio Announcer in Vietnam," *Vietnam Magazine*, February 2001

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

Defining Dissent

From Berkeley With Love

When it comes to venting anger, Doug is one of the coolest people I know. His favorite line is, "I did my fighting 35 years ago and I'm tired." In fact, in the 32 years we have been married I could count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I've seen him *lose his cool*. Sometimes it is infuriating. We've had our share of bitter battles as husband and wife and Doug is not generally inclined to hold in his anger or his side of the argument. Still, more often than not after I've laid into him with all the verbal abuse my anger over a particular disagreement can muster he just puts his hands on his hips, looks at me condescendingly and calmly say, "There, do you feel better now?" In fact, I don't--at such times his sarcastically paternal and self-righteous response has pushed me nearly to the brink of murder!

We were married in January 1975 so we were still in that early phase of learning about each other on the last day of April when television news began showing images of American helicopters plucking the last Americans along with a few hapless and helpless Vietnamese off the rooftops of the American Embassy in Saigon, South Vietnam. When not at work Doug sat fixated by the television reports, usually without saying a word but occasionally slamming his fist angrily against our couch or uttering a curse from time to time. I knew it was affecting him deeply and that he was angry. Even then, however, he didn't let his emotions get the better of him. The following day he walked calmly down to the local telegraph office to address a bitter message to the Montana Senator with whom he had repeatedly clashed over the Vietnam War. The telegraph was addressed to "Senator Mike *Ho Chi* Mansfield."

Before I met Doug, I was what might be called a "wannabe" flower child. In fact, I was in middle school when Doug went to Vietnam and was a Sophomore in high school when he came home. I didn't know a lot about the war or the hippie movement, I was just a demure young girl who loved ideas of love, beauty, and peace. I was 17 when I met Doug in 1974 and as he taught me more about what he had learned while serving in Vietnam I gained a new appreciation for America's role. I also knew that Doug was not angry with the war protestors but rather he admired them for speaking their minds. After returning from overseas and while spending a few months with his mother the spring before we met, he had become close friends with members of a hippie commune that attended his mother's church. He knew they were "peace freaks" and still respected what he considered their naïve approach to world event, they knew he had just come home from Vietnam but related to him on the basis of their common religious faith. This was all quite in contrast to the first incident where I ever saw Doug lose control.

It started innocently enough a few months after we watched Saigon's fall on television. That day I could hear him coming up the walk to our apartment after he got off work and opened the door to greet him. He gave me a hug and a kiss while in the background an old movie, I don't recall exactly what it was but I think it may have been "Barefoot in the Park," that I had been watching on television. Suddenly Doug heard a feminine voice and froze. Then, in an instant he changed into a person I had never seen before.

Instead of simply turning off the television set he went into an uncontrollable rage. One moment he was hugging me and the next he was jerking the television from the wall, cord and all, no small feat since it was a 3' high console. How I kept him from literally throwing the set through the window and out of our apartment I'll never know. Even when I finally convinced him to somewhat gently set it down it took forever to calm him down. That day I learned that there was one name that would never be uttered in our household.

Pam Sterner

When I was bussed from the holding station near Oakland, California, to catch my first flight to Vietnam our bus had wire mesh over the windows. Someone asked why. "To keep the public from throwing rocks, garbage, maybe even shit at you guys," someone told us. The following day when I walked off the airplane at Tan Son Nhut Airport in Vietnam, again we boarded busses on which the windows were covered with wire screen. "That's to keep the enemy from throwing grenades inside as we go through town," someone told me. Ironically it seemed, we had two enemies--one of them back home.

On a cold, drizzly day six months later I was at LZ Nancy near the DMZ when our commanding officer called a special meeting. We all crowded into a large tent and almost immediately the gathering took on one of the eerie "secret mission" scenes from the World War II movies I had watched as a kid. We all knew something was up as only a few days earlier my platoon leader, Lieutenant Robert M. Gribble, had been pulled out of LZ Nancy for some super-secret mission.*

When he had our attention, our C.O. announced that he was seeking volunteers to form a single squad for a very secret mission. He couldn't give us any details other than that the following day we would have to convoy north to the old Special Forces camp at Mai Loc. I was the company's perennial volunteer but on this day I balked. I wanted desperately to be part of the mission but because it sounded so grim, I didn't want to lead the squad with all the related responsibility I would have to carry. I waited until one of our Staff Sergeant's volunteered to lead and by that time I almost lost out in my bid to become his assistant squad leader. Our C.O. pointed out that I was assigned that night to serve as "bunker sergeant" so it probably wouldn't work out anyway. I told him that I could sleep during the convoy to Mai Loc the following day and literally begged to go. He relented.

Everyone was very hushed that night...even the men who had not volunteered or those who had volunteered and not been selected were quiet. If this was as dangerous as the C.O. had made it sound some of our comrades would not be coming back. Those of us who had been selected were unusually quiet.

That night while making the rounds I stopped at a bunker overlooking the river that formed part of our perimeter. The NCOs always knew the guys on that bunker listened to the radio while on duty and overlooked it as the river drowned out the sound. As I climbed the ladder to their perch, I could hear they were listening to a program out of North Vietnam. In the World War II fashion of *Tokyo Rose* we had our own *Hanoi Hanna*...in fact several of them. While I sat there, she played a song from home and when it finished, she launched into a typical propaganda diatribe.

After finishing her spiel, she played a professionally-sounding radio spot, not at all unlike the typical public service announcements you still hear every day on the radio. What made it unique was that the announcer spoke perfect English. He reminded we American soldiers in Vietnam that we were criminals, that we indiscriminately killed women and children, and that our leaders were ruthless tyrants. He encouraged us to disobey orders, proclaim that we were Conscious Objectors, lay down our guns and come home. He assured us that it wouldn't be easy, that the leaders of our evil army would try to fight us every step of the way. He closed by promising

* As in fact, our battalion's finest officer, Lieutenant Gribble was tasked with leading the Engineer units that reopened Khe Sanh and then supported activities for two months during the Lam Son 719 mission. It was a difficult job during which he did an admirable job under the most tragic of circumstances. We heard reports of his work but didn't see him again until he returned to LZ Nancy on March 29, 1971, to pack his gear and go home. He had suffered too much. That afternoon he put his M-16 in his mouth and ended his awful nightmares. To this day I maintain that he was the finest officer it was my privilege to serve under during two tours in Vietnam. (Doug)

us that there were lawyers at home who would defend us and multiple organizations that would support our decision. He closed by inviting us to write for more information on how to successfully do the right thing and lay down our arms. Forty years later I no longer remember the name or the organization, though I'll never forget the closing line: "For more information write to (name of organization), (address of organization), Berkeley, California."

It all struck a funny chord in my mind and I threw back my head and laughed out loud.

One week later our squad was back at LZ Nancy...the actual mission had proven to be anti-climactic to its buildup. Ours was the Engineer squad that led the way to re-open the Khe Sanh Valley in 1971 for the offensive called Lam Son 719. We actually experienced very little resistance or danger. That came later for those like Lieutenant Gribble who stayed in the valley for the duration...as well as for the ARVN soldiers that used Lam Son 719 as springboard for a drive into Laos. Every man in my squad was decorated for valor. Mine was an award I never felt I really earned.

The two months following that mission was the only time during my two tours of duty in Vietnam that the anti-war movement back home bothered me. Newspapers reported repeated incidences of ARVN cowardice in their drive into Laos: sensational stories of tank commanders having to lock their men inside their armored vehicles to keep them from deserting, of whole companies abandoning their artillery and fleeing, of cowardly soldiers clinging desperately to the skids of helicopters bringing in supplies to try and desert and escape the danger of doing their duty. The intent was obvious, to send a message home that "These (Vietnamese) people are too cowardly to defend their own country, so why are we sending our (American) boys over there to fight and die for them?"

While there were no doubt such incidences, I knew that they were not occurring with the frequency with which they were being reported, and that any such examples were dwarfed by the number of ARVNs who bravely went into combat to do their job and often die for their own country. I came to hate the war protestors, not for what they said about me and my American comrades, but for belittling a people I had come to love. I had witnessed many acts of heroism by ARVN soldiers and was personally aware of several instances in which an ARVN soldier risked, and sometimes gave his life to save an American. In March I finally vented my frustration by sending a letter home to the *Daily Interlake* newspaper in Kalispell, Montana. It was the only such letter I ever wrote home about the war itself.

To say that I was then, and even that I remain today somewhat "hawkish" would be an understatement. When I was a Senior in high school in 1968 my government teacher, Mr. Jerry L. Agen, assigned our class a project to write a paper about the Vietnam War that included two pages PRO and two pages CON. Mine was titled "Bullets or Bondage" and had the requisite two page argument against the war and 40 pages of reasons why I believed it was just. Mr. Agen was against the war but wrote on my paper, "Doug, while I disagree with your premise herein, what you write reflects the spirit that has made America great. Don't ever lose that!" He gave me 200 points out of a possible 50 points.

While serving in Vietnam I validated my belief in our cause. To this day I maintain that despite the errors in leadership and the controversy in Washington, D.C. that tried to rob us of victory, our cause was just. I believe to this day that going to aid that small country in Southeast Asia was the right thing to do. I only wish we had stayed to finish the job and to win.

When I came home in 1972 and was discharged at Fort Lewis, Washington, we were all told not to wear our uniforms home as we might attract undue attention. I was proud of my service and believed I had earned the right to wear that uniform home...to hell with those who didn't like

it...and did. Perhaps I was fortunate; never in my nearly three years of military service from 1969 to 1972 was I spit on and only a few isolated times was I the subject of vulgar expletives. Of course, the public was much more appreciative of soldiers in my home state of Montana. I do know that some of my comrades in other states were not so fortunate.

Three decades later I watched television as the United States was attacked once again. As one might expect the old soldier and the political hawk in me emerged in a not too subtle fashion. The following year, shortly after American forces entered Baghdad, Pam and I took our children on a week-long vacation to visit my mother in Idaho and my father in Washington. Upon learning we were coming my dad asked if I would speak at a school while I was there. The Moses Lake, Washington, high school has the uncommon distinction of numbering among its alumni two recipients of the Medal of Honor for actions in the Vietnam War. It is a school where patriotism runs deep and, following release of the 2002 documentary "Beyond the Medal of Honor" in which I appeared in several on-camera interviews and as son of a local man, I was something of a celebrity there.

On the day of my presentation I first was treated to breakfast at a local restaurant by a school administrator. My father, sitting at the table with us and knowing I tend to the "hawkish" side of the political spectrum sought to reassure me. "This town is very patriotic," he told me. "Don't worry about pulling any punches this morning when you speak." Knowing how I planned to begin my presentation I wondered then if I was about to give him a big dose of disappointment.

Hundreds of high school students were crammed into chairs before me as I walked to the front of the room in my Army uniform after being introduced. At the very back of the auditorium sat my five adult stepbrothers, every one of them equally hawkish. They had come to watch with pride the presentation by their oldest brother.

I looked across the room and then began: "I've been told that Moses Lake is a very patriotic city. But I would like to ask one question before I begin." I paused, wondering if anyone would answer the question I was about to pose with an affirmative. "Is there anyone in this room who is opposed to the war in Iraq?"

I needn't have worried...those who oppose a popular (at that time) ideal are generally not shy. One young man on the front row raised his hand. I walked over to stand in front of him while the room became quite still. "I have just two words for you, young man," I stated and then paused. You could have heard a pin drop. "Thank you!" I announced loudly. In the back my brothers slouched down in their chairs in embarrassment while I'm sure my father began to worry that I had gone liberal on him. Then I explained.

"I thank God that there are those who oppose this, or any war. I disagree with you...I believe you are wrong. I'm a 'hawk' I'll admit. The thing is, if everyone thought exactly like I do the Persian Gulf would now flow all the way to the Syrian Border, and North Korea would be the world's largest parking lot. The fact is, if everyone believed like I do our country would be prone to become the world's biggest bully."

Then, before spending the bulk of my presentation defending why I believed in the Iraq War I spoke to those students who comprised the vast majority in the room and who believed like I did. "You need to respect this young man, and any others in this room who oppose the war. I didn't say you have to agree with them, but they have earned your respect. It takes real courage to stand up for what you believe, especially when it is the minority opinion and everyone else thinks you are wrong. There is nothing more American than freedom of speech, and by showing the courage to stand up for what he believes, this young man is a model American."

Doug Sterner

The Pen and the Sword

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." Those are the words of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and the first of ten such basic principles enumerated in the Bill of Rights that Americans hold dear. Perhaps more than any other fundamental right of the citizen, the right of free speech is prized above all others. We like to think that it is a historically American principle...and it has been...except when free speech becomes the voice of dissent. During the 1960s the voice of dissent became the rumbling of a new American Revolution.

In our diverse nation it is expected that opinions will vary widely, and they do. Indeed, everyone is "entitled to their opinion," or so we would like to think. The fact is, all too often a differing opinion is fine if one keeps it to themselves. When such opinions become manifested in the public arena, and especially that opinion become the voice of dissention, even in the United States the results can be damaging. Unlike opinions which are expected to be private and innocuous, dissention is often the unified voice of a group with an opinion at odds with either an official policy or a majority opinion.

It was in fact, the voice of dissention that led 13 American colonies to declare themselves free from British rule in 1776. One of the first high profile acts of dissention to manifest itself in civil disobedience was the so-called Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773. In reaction to such civil disobedience King George began instituting various acts to quell the rise of public activism by monitoring voices of opposition, suspending due process of law, and other activities that came to be known as the Intolerable Acts. While more than two centuries later and in light of putting a positive "spin" on the American Revolution we like to think of these Acts as the repressive edicts of a tyrant, from a more aesthetic position they could be seen as a leader's actions to quell rebellion and protect the public. While that certainly was not the case in 1776, it would become the excuse for American Presidents in the two centuries that followed to establish equally intolerable acts of infringement on freedom of speech in the name of security.

Never in history has our nation had a popular war, save perhaps the Spanish-American war of 1898 that was described as a "Splendid Little War" though it too, had its peace protesters. Few events in our history have evoked more dissention than those involving armed conflict, perhaps because it is at once both very personal and tragically deadly. The successful prosecution of any war demands a consensus of the American public, which is why the age-old mantra is that "You don't just send an Army to war, you take a country to war."

The who voiced dissention against the American Revolution are conveniently remembered as "Loyalists" or "Tories." Their unfortunate lot must be remembered in context for, in 1776 the Loyalists, while comprising a minority of about 20% of the population in the 13 Colonies, were nevertheless American citizens in those colonies. The Patriots were, in fact, rebels. One such Loyalist, Samuel Seabury an Anglican clergyman of Connecticut explained the reason for his dissent by stating: "If I must be enslaved let it be by a King at least, and not by a parcel of upstart lawless Committeemen. If I must be devoured, let me be devoured by the jaws of a lion, and not gnawed to death by rats and vermin." Such was his personal opinion of the Founding Fathers.

Perhaps the only thing that marked the early revolutionaries as heroes rather than as upstart rebels was the fact that they won. Of course, in those days of war the voice of dissent, out of a sheer sense of survival, learned to muffle itself within fiercely patriotic cities.

Theoretically the right of dissent and the freedom to unite in opposition to either the policy of government or prevailing popular opinion was made abundantly possible when the Bill of Rights was ratified in 1791. Within seven years however the principles of the First Amendment would be put to the test and...at least for a time, would become victim to the very Executive Branch that was sworn to uphold it.

The first major external crisis to face our young nation came in the late 1790s. While Americans were struggling to establish and refine their definition of a democratic government, France and England were at war with each other. By 1797 French privateers, reacting to their own fears that the United States leaned more towards England in the conflict, seized more than 300 American vessels on the high seas. When American emissaries to France sought a treaty to end such actions France demanded a 10-million-dollar loan, among other things. As soon news of French aggression and extortion reached the American public, there was immediate outrage.

The illegal actions of the French and their insolent demands spurred not only fear in America but calls for immediate action by the President and the Congress. The hysteria, subsequently called *Francophobia*, failed to persuade President John Adams to declare war, though in the two-year undeclared war that followed the U.S. Navy seized 84 French ships. To sate the fears and outcry of the public over the French threat, President Adams and the Congress passed four new laws in the name of national security.

The *Alien and Sedition Acts* were four pieces of legislation designed to stop any dissent against the government. The first three: The Naturalization Act, The Alien Friends Act, and the Alien Enemies Act, were designed to protect American interests from subversive actions by foreign (more specifically, but not identified, French) immigrants, living in the United States. Of course, at that time virtually all voting American citizens in 1798 were immigrants, Native Americans (as well as other ethnic minorities) were not allowed to vote. The latter of the three acts gave the President the authority to arrest and deport, without cause, any citizen of a foreign country during time of war.

These three Alien Acts were seen as necessary to national security by the Federalist-controlled Congress but were decried by the anti-Federalists. Despite the outcry and opposition of civil libertarians, including Thomas Jefferson who had penned the Declaration of Independence, in 1798 the Alien Acts were followed by the Sedition Act. Where the first three limited the rights of aliens during this time of crisis, the Sedition Act made possible a gross violation of the American citizens' Constitutional rights to freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Through the Sedition Act an American citizen could be fined or imprisoned for obstructing the implementation of federal law or for publishing malicious or false writings against Congress, the president or the government. Among the editors and writers arrested through this Act was Benjamin Franklin Bache, grandson of Benjamin Franklin. Congressman Matthew Lyon was arrested for publishing a letter to the editor of his Vermont paper, the *Fair Haven Gazette*. That letter attacked President Adams by saying he had a "continued grasp for power...an unbounded thirst for ridiculous pomp, foolish adulation, and selfish avarice." These remarks garnered him a sentence of four months in jail and a fine of one thousand dollars. Editor Anthony Haswell was arrested for printing an advertisement to raise money for Lyon's fine. He was charged with "abetting a criminal." Lyon was jailed in October yet was reelected to the House in December.

He was freed in February after receiving enough money to pay his fine. So much for the 7-year-old First Amendment and the right of free speech.

Ultimately, no immigrants were charged under the Alien Acts. The Sedition Act, on the other hand, led to the imprisonment of some two-dozen American citizens. All American citizens who were arrested were members of the press whose only crime had been to criticize the abridgment of civil liberty under the acts or the unprecedented authority over the citizenry exercised by President Adams. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison believed that “the powers claimed under these acts by President Adams resembled those of a monarch.” Madison criticized it as an affront to the “right of freely examining public characters and measures, and of free communication among the people.” Madison’s Virginia Resolution and Jefferson’s Kentucky Resolution, written in opposition to these acts, pitted two states against the Federal Government.

The issues of the right of free speech and freedom of the press were never addressed by the Supreme Court in light of the Alien and Sedition Acts; such actions would not be undertaken by the judiciary for nearly two centuries. Rather, the debate over the issue of abridgments of these rights in the name of security was settled in the election of 1800 when Thomas Jefferson defeated John Adams. In his inaugural address, the new president confirmed the right of American citizens “to think freely and to speak and write what they think.” Jefferson also subsequently pardoned all those who had been previously charged under the Sedition Act and their fines were repaid by Congress.

Sixty years later Abraham Lincoln was elected during a time when the country was faced with divided loyalties, “fluid military and political boundaries and easy opportunities for espionage and sabotage,” as well as violent protests. President Lincoln had to somehow find a way to bring about law and order in the face of potential chaos, and to unify the nation.

To make matters worse, after the attack on Fort Sumter on April 14, 1861, while the Sixth Massachusetts Volunteers marched toward the Capitol through Baltimore, they were attacked by insurgent Confederate soldiers. President Lincoln realized he had to take immediate action to prevent additional Confederate troops from entering the city. The mayor of Baltimore ordered the destruction of all railroad bridges that connected Baltimore to the North, thus preventing access to the city by Confederate soldiers.

In the Spring of 1861, President Lincoln responded to the threat of safety against his citizens, in particular the people living in Maryland. Lincoln decided that drastic measures were needed to deal with the crisis at hand. He believed that as the chief executive he must exercise *carte blanche* when it came to arresting espionage suspects and others who were believed to be a threat to national security. In Lincoln’s mind one of the easiest ways to do this was to suspend the writ of habeas corpus. Right or wrong, it was an action that mirrored one of the Intolerable Acts of King George that had led to revolution nearly a century earlier.

A court-ordered writ of habeas corpus demands a court hearing in order to determine if a person held in custody is being lawfully detained. It is a fundamental right of all free people--the right to due process under law. By suspending the writ of habeas corpus Lincoln was able to arrest people whom he perceived to be a threat to national security, without having to have enough evidence to prove to a court that they were in fact a threat warranting arrest and imprisonment.

Article I, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution says, “The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety may require it.” During the Civil War Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ruled that only Congress had the authority to suspend habeas corpus, but President Lincoln adamantly claimed that he was the one who had the authority to do so. Since Congress would not be in session until June, several months

distant, Lincoln immediately suspended the writ of habeas corpus without their consent and then declared martial law in Maryland on April 27.

At first, Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus only applied to Maryland. Because this executive action set a precedent that the President did indeed have the authority to do this, on September 24, 1862, Lincoln moved one step further and suspended the writ of habeas corpus everywhere in the United States. He used this expansion to not only arrest those suspected of espionage, but to also arrest, imprison, and silence anyone who resisted the draft, or who was "guilty of any disloyal practice." It was under this ambiguous charge that newspaper editors in the North, opposing political leaders, and virtually anyone else who spoke against the Union or the war effort could be arrested. So much for Freedom of the Press! Once these people were arrested, Lincoln claimed that they were subject to martial law, allowing them to be tried and punished by military courts. This action removed the accused from the protection of the Constitution. So much for Due Process of Law!

Lincoln's order to suspend habeas corpus was historic in light of the U.S. Constitution, and set a precedent that enabled further actions by himself, as well as any future president. It resulted in an Act passed by Congress in March 1863 which affirmed once and for all that the President did indeed have the power to suspend habeas corpus if and when national security required such action.

Not all Northerners agreed with Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and/or other policies related to slavery, the war, the draft, or the general operation of his war-time administration. These northern dissenters became known as *copperheads*, referring to the poisonous copperhead snake. Clement Vallandigham, a Congressman and leader of the Democrats in Congress, called constantly for a negotiated end to the Civil war and reunion with the South. Despite losing his Congressional seat in the election of 1862, he continued to speak as a former legislator and high-profile political leader. His speeches railed against Lincoln's policies during the present crisis and war.

General Ambrose Burnside, the commander of the military district that included Ohio, decided to deal with the copperheads once and for all. He issued General Order No. 38 which stated, "The habit of declaring sympathies for the enemy will no longer be tolerated in this department. Persons committing such offenses will be at once arrested." General Burnside based his authority to issue this order on Lincoln's proclamation of suspending the writ of habeas corpus.

Former Congressman Clement Vallandigham spoke at an Ohio Democratic Party rally on May 1, 1863. Even though he was aware that General Burnside's men were in the audience, Vallandigham spoke against the General and against President Lincoln's handling of the current crisis, the war between the states. Former Congressman Vallandigham challenged Burnside's General Order No. 38 by saying that his right to speak was based on "General Order, No. 1, the Constitution of the United States." Vallandigham challenged Lincoln's authority by speaking against the war and against the draft.

In the wee hours of a morning shortly thereafter, while everyone in the Vallandigham family slept, soldiers broke down the door to the house, rushed upstairs, and broke two-bedroom doors in their search for the rebellious leader. Under a cloak of absolute secrecy and the dark of night they arrested him and transported him aboard a special train to another city. The authorities there locked Vallandigham up in a military barracks. The arrested former Congressman was not allowed to see a judge nor was he even formally charged with a crime. Vallandigham did subsequently learn what the charges against him were. His crime was:

“publicly expressing in violation of General Order, No. 38....sympathies for those in arms against the Government of the United States, declaring disloyal sentiments and opinions with the object and purpose of weakening the power of the Government in its effort to suppress the unlawful rebellion.”

Even after his arrest, Vallandigham continued to argue that the government was violating the Constitution and had no legal right to imprison or try him. General Burnside disagreed and found him guilty. He wanted to have the former congressman put in prison for the rest of the war. Lincoln, trying to make a bad situation go away, ordered that Vallandigham be banished to the Confederacy. The president then tried to mend fences with Democratic Party leaders by explaining that regular civilian courts were not adequate to deal with such problems during a rebellion. He said that anyone opposing the government’s cause endangered “the public safety,” therefore the solution was to suspend the writ and lock up the troublemakers until the end of the war.

Vallandigham’s friends, believing that the Judiciary branch would overturn and rectify the unconstitutional actions of the President, went to the U.S. Supreme Court asking the justices to hear the case. To their dismay the Supreme Court ruled on February 15, 1864, that it would not hear the case because it did not have the authority to review any proceedings of a martial law court. After the Civil War, in 1866, the Supreme Court finally stepped up to the plate and restored habeas corpus. They further ruled that it was illegal for military trials to be held in areas where civil courts were capable of ruling on the matter at hand.

The first major international conflict involving America was World War I. In 1917, as in 1798, foreign immigrants living in America were looked upon with fear and suspicion. This placed a lot of Americans at risk of losing their Constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties since approximately one third of all Americans were first or second-generation immigrants. Because the United States was at war with the nation of Germany, German immigrants and Americans with German sounding names were automatically suspected of being disloyal.

To fight that war, when at last war was declared on April 6, 1917, the Selective Service Act was passed on May 8. The Act dealt with the problem posed by low voluntary enlistment of males in the U.S. military. At first only men between the ages of 21 and 31 were ordered to military duty, but the Act was eventually expanded to include all male citizens between the ages of 18 through 45.

To deal with potential threats at home once the United States declared war on Germany, the Espionage Act was passed by Congress in 1918, effectively repressing American civil liberties to a greater degree than any previous Act in history. Under this Act individuals (American citizens included) could be fined “up to \$10,000 and imprisoned for 20 years for...interfering with the draft, encouraging disloyalty or even using.... abusive language about the (American) form of government.” The Act further outlawed any publication which urged “treason, insurrection, or forcible resistance to any law” from being mailed.

One of President Wilson’s purposes under this Act was to permanently silence German newspapers. Ultimately this prohibition spilled over to control the content of American newspapers as well. As had happened in 1798 and during the Civil War, once again freedom of the press was effectively outlawed in the United States of America. Forty-four U.S. newspapers lost their mailing privileges while 30 others escaped that fate only by agreeing not to write anything about the war.

Under the Espionage Act all males older than 14 who were still “natives, citizens, denizens, or subjects” of the German Empire were deemed alien enemies. Soon this term was expanded to apply to any foreign resident who dared to speak against the government, the war, or the draft; such violators were deemed undesirable by the government. The suspicion of German Americans,

who had immigrated, grown up as Americans, and raised American families, was so intense that many of them chose to change their names. People with the last name of Mueller became Miller; American citizens with the surname of Schmidt became Smith. German-named American cities and towns followed suit; Berlin, Iowa, became Lincoln, Iowa. Performances by Schubert and Bach were banned in America during this time. The trend even extended to popular food dishes; sauerkraut became known as "liberty cabbage."

On July 2, 1918, Congress voted to repeal the charter of the National German American Alliance. This organization, created in 1900, included representatives from ten states and sought to promote unity with the German people and to introduce Americans to the German culture. The only "crime" the organization and its two to three million members had committed was to call for American neutrality in the war.

Former Congressman Victor Berger, reformer Kate O'Hare, and anarchist Emma Goldman were among the more than 2,000 people who were jailed for hindering the draft. Eugene Debs was sentenced to ten years for verbally attacking the Espionage Act and for defending Kate O'Hare in a speech he gave in Ohio. Jacob Schwartz was a member of a group of Jewish anarchists who was arrested for publishing articles against American intervention in Russia after the Bolshevik government signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Police beat Schwartz so badly that he died soon after his arrest. His right to freedom of speech had been taken away forever.

Courts had no sympathy for immigrants or American citizens prosecuted under the Espionage Act. One judge addressed a jury in one of these prosecutions saying that quoting rights guaranteed by the First Amendment is no defense "where the honor and safety of the Nation is involved." John Dewey, a John Hopkins graduate and philosopher, responded, "What shall it profit us to defeat the Prussians if we Prussianize our own selves?" The editor of a banned newspaper, *Masses*, said, "They give you 90 days for quoting the Declaration of Independence, six months for quoting the Bible, and pretty soon somebody is going to get a life sentence for quoting Woodrow Wilson in the wrong context."

Immediately prior to the events at Pearl Harbor that forced our nation into a world war the American public viewed the conflict in Europe and human rights violations perpetrated by the Japanese in Asia with a strongly isolationistic anti-war mood. In 1939, nine of every ten Americans opposed United States involvement and of the 10% who believed we should take sides in the war, many believed we should unite with Germany. It was not so much a pro-Nazi attitude as it was an act of self-preservation...Germany looked invincible and American's were frightened.

During the period the anti-war voice of dissent became united in a powerful and influential manner never before seen in America. Among the leading anti-war organizations was the America First Committee. The group believed exactly what their name indicates that America came first and staying out of the brewing world war was in America's best interests. This voice of opposition numbered nearly 1 million members with some 650 chapters.

The most high-profile leader of America First was the dashing hero of *The Spirit of St. Louis*, Charles Lindbergh. Other prominent members and supporters however included World War I *Ace of Aces* Eddie Rickenbacker, Henry Ford, novelist Sinclair Lewis (whose only son was subsequently killed in World War II), Walt Disney, and even two U.S. Senators: Burton K. Wheeler, Senator Gerald P. Nye. Together they stood in opposition to President Franklin's official stance that moved us ever closer to war. As the organization's spokesman Charles Lindbergh perhaps paid the highest price for his dissent; President Roosevelt even tried to revoke his Medal of Honor. His name and reputation remain tarnished to this day by the slanted and often outright lies used by the Administration to discredit him.

The pre-war, anti-war movement became moot on December 7, 1941. Such men as Lindbergh and Rickenbacker immediately volunteered for military service, realizing that once America had been attacked, they had an obligation to defend their country. In retribution for his earlier anti-war stance, FDR essentially "black-balled" Lindbergh, though three years into the war in one of those little-known facts of history, the *Lone Eagle* actually flew combat as a civilian advisor in the Pacific and shot down one Japanese Zero.

The dastardly nature of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor demanded an immediate and forceful response. In the wake of that tragedy Americans united to rally around the war effort. In contrast however to what is commonly believed, as the war stretched into its first year and then a second, and with Gold Stars denoting a killed son or daughter appearing in the living room windows of more and more homes across America, many people began to rethink the war itself. By 1943 many at home had wearied with the war in the Pacific and though privately that it would be best to sue for peace with Japan, giving up to them control of faraway Asia and distant Pacific Islands. But such dissent remained largely, and fortunately quiet.

When American Marines conducted their first major assault (after Guadalcanal) against 4,800 Japanese, well-entrenched at Tarawa, it posed potential for a real backlash against the war. It was an incredible victory at a very high cost: 3,300 American casualties including 900 dead in just three days. Military war planners back home feared photos of the heavy casualties sustained by the Marines would extinguish the fire in the belly of the American public and force an outcry against further such assaults in the Pacific. News reports of the battle might suddenly bring the reality of war home to a public that could mentally swap the horror of Pearl Harbor for this new understanding that victory, no matter how glorious, is not earned without great sacrifice and bloodshed. Unlike the reporters of another war just a few years later, newsmen covering the battle at Tarawa voluntarily reported in only vague terms the heavy American losses and refrained from publishing inflammatory photographs. The Greatest Generation held together, in no small part thanks to a pliable and cooperative media and emotionally charged Hollywood movies, and saved our world.

Perhaps in our nation's history, never have the rights to free speech, peaceable assembly, and public (or even private) dissent become more tenuous than in the 1950s. The McCarthy hearings that were held as we entered a Cold War against Communism and Socialist ideology smothered free speech for all but the most daring or most indiscreet Americans in opposition to the majority belief...and fear. Its pitted neighbor against neighbor and was satirized in a line of a popular ditty of the time, "If your mommie is a Commie then you've gotta turn her in." Only ten years later a rebellious new generation came of age, youth who were indeed either daring or indiscreet...or perhaps both. The American right of dissent would be forever changed. Opinions vary as to whether or not this was a good thing.

The purpose of this section is not to argue the merit or fallacy, rightness or wrongness of either the Vietnam War or the anti-war protest. What is important to realize from the period is how in an unprecedented way, the voice of dissent and the collective unity of a large segment of American society in opposition to the official policy, impacted the political process by American citizens exercising the right of free speech and freedom of assembly. It erupted into a civil war, not for a specific cause as was the earlier American Civil War, but for the right to be heard and heeded.

General David Shoup



"Until you're 21 you can't vote...can't participate in this great democratic process. But you can make your vote heard. You don't have to be a vegetable 'til you're 21. You can demonstrate. Historically, demonstrations intended to bring unrealistic regimes to heel, have on balance, produced good for the exploited masses. It may be well that this technique has finally come in an exploding fashion to America and American students. It shows that you are thinking. That you're interested and want to do something to be heard. That you don't intend to sit ignorantly and idly by and watch this world panorama of confusion trot by under camouflage and not express yourselves about how you want the future to be. The future that will soon be your responsibility."

*General David Shoup, USMC
Pierce College, May 14, 1966*

It has been said that "Old men start wars and young men fight them." To the extent that foreign policies are developed by politicians and then enforced by men and women of the military this is certainly true. Historically, during every war in our history as the young at home watched former classmates returning with horrible wounds or in flag-draped coffins they have asked the tough questions "Why?" and "For what purpose?" In that, the Defining Generation was not unique. What did make the youth of the 1960s different from past generations was that their voice of dissent became so large and so active it could not be ignored.

Such dissent is not specific to the young; in every war a small minority in older generations has risen in opposition to war as well. Perhaps nowhere was this truer than during the Vietnam war, a conflict that seemed to drag on endlessly with no clear objective to be achieved. In past wars youthful anti-war activists were easily dismissed as young and naïve, the older as pacifists or anti-imperialists who were out of touch with reality. In the early days of intervention in Vietnam that approach worked well, but soon crumbled against aging voices of reason.

The term "Vietnam War protester" immediately conjures a range of stereotypical images: young, sandal-clad, long haired liberal college students; or, drugged out young hippies with flowers and peace signs painted on their faces; or, long-haired and bearded young veterans of that war wearing green military fatigues. In fact, some of the first to voice their opposition to the war were military men of the older generation, including active-duty generals who had served honorably in the World War. In the mid-50s General Matthew Ridgeway and Lieutenant General James Gavin both warned President Eisenhower of potential problems when he proposed and then initiated intervention, and both left the army with misgivings about foreign policy before the first American advisors were sent to Vietnam. They continued to argue effectively against the war thereafter, albeit with some reservation as retired generals. Military officers and especially general officers generally do their best even in retirement to remain apolitical in the public's view. One who did not was a hero and icon of the Greatest Generation. Even as Dr. Martin Luther King had served to lead America's young in their Civil Rights movement, General David Shoup, U.S.M.C. (Retired) became the experienced leader of a youthful anti-war movement.

David Shoup was born December 30, 1904, the product of humble roots and the son of a farmer in Battleground, Indiana. In 1926 he graduated from DePauw University with a degree in mathematics and an ROTC degree, the latter leading to a distinguished career in the U.S. Marine Corps. After serving as an observer with the Army on New Georgia in the Pacific at the beginning of World War II, he was assigned to the 2d Marine Division and was a key planner for the American landings on Betio Island on Tarawa Atoll. It was the second Pacific offensive of the war, after the bitter but successful landings at Guadalcanal in August 1942. Shoup himself had concerns about the amphibious assault, noting to one correspondent, "The first wave will get in okay, but if the Amtracks fail we'll either have to wade in with machine guns shooting at us, or the Amtracks will have to run a shuttle service between the beach and the end of the shelf." His words and worries were insightful. When Colonel Shoup took his Marines on the offensive on November 20, 1943, the Amtracks failed and he with his Marines waded ashore under heavy fire.

Tarawa was a huge American military success, thanks in large part to the commander who personally led for 60 hours without sleep and despite wounds to his leg. In a 76-hour fight for an island only about 1 square mile, 1,056 Americans were killed and 2,292 were wounded. Four Marines were awarded Medals of Honor for their heroism at Tarawa. Colonel David Shoup was the only one of them to survive to wear it.

Shoup received his first star in 1953 and became a Major General in 1955. On August 12, 1959, President Eisenhower nominated Shoup for the highest post a Marine could hold at that time,

Commandant of the Marine Corps. Shoup received his third star two months later and became a four-star General on January 1, 1960, when he assumed his duties as the Corps' 22nd Commandant. He was only the third Commandant of the Marine Corps to wear the Medal of Honor, and only one other recipient of our nation's highest military honor has served in that post to date.

General Shoup was a fiercely independent commander, a man of his convictions who while remaining apolitical publicly, was quick to share his mind with the Chiefs of Staff or the President himself. During the Cuban crisis of 1962 President Kennedy summoned his closest advisors, the Chiefs of Staff and top military commanders to a meeting to discuss the option of mounting an invasion of Cuba, a map of which stood on an easel at the front of the room. It is said that General Shoup walked to the map, placed a transparent acetate bearing the image of Tarawa (9 square miles in all) over it, and the disparity in size was quickly evident...Tarawa was just a speck. Shoup then proceeded to enumerate how, against 4,500 Japanese he had lost so many Marines for that small speck and questioned how many lives would be lost trying to take Cuba against which they would face a 150,000-man army. His vivid example put such a planned invasion into context with its cost, and the idea was scrapped in favor of diplomacy, which did work--saving many lives. General Shoup was never a "yes" man, and it was such open honesty that made him one of John F. Kennedy's favorite generals.

Shoup had considered the debate over America's role in Southeast Asia during the discussions of the late 1950s and came to a conclusion averse to intervention. In 1960 he carried these views into the hierarchy of the military establishment, specifically the Joint Chiefs of Staff.* As such he found himself often at odds with both his comrades and more importantly, the Presidential Administration. When Lyndon Johnson became President after the assassination of John Kennedy, his "voice of dissent" was not as respected and appreciated as it had been under Kennedy. One month later on December 31, 1963, he retired from the Marine Corps.

Buoyed by the beliefs of comrades like Gavin and Ridgeway that validated his own concerns however, General David Shoup refused to become another old soldier fading away. Concerned that his country was losing its standing in the world he broke with precedent and tradition to attack the escalation of the war in Vietnam, even before offensive ground troops were committed in 1965.

Shoup's early overt activism stemmed from the changing philosophy of the Joint Chiefs of Staff after his departure. Reflecting on the period in a 1969 article titled "The New American Militarism" for *Atlantic Monthly* he wrote: "For years up to 1964 the chiefs of the armed services, of whom the author was then one, deemed it unnecessary and unwise for U.S. forces to become involved in any ground war in Southeast Asia. In 1964 there were changes in the composition of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and in a matter of a few months the Johnson Administration, encouraged by the aggressive military, hastened into what has become the quagmire of Vietnam."

The sacrifice his voice of dissent cost him personally was immeasurable. Among the general public in those early days most men and women who had fought aggression and genocide in World War II saw the Vietnam war as an equally noble cause. Of them he wrote: "As they get older, many veterans seem to romanticize and exaggerate their own military experience and loyalties. The policies, attitudes and positions of powerful veterans' organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and AMVETS, totaling over 4 million men, frequently reflect this pugnacious and chauvinistic tendency. Their memberships generally favor

* The Chiefs of Staff included a Chairman and Chiefs from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. In 1952 the Commandant of the Marine Corps was authorized to participate in most JCS deliberations but it was not until 1978 that the top Marine Chief became a full member of the JCS.

military solutions to world problems in the pattern of their own earlier experience, and often assert that their military service and sacrifice should be repeated by the younger generation." General Shoup therefore took his case to a new generation, the young men and women who might be called to fight that war whom he noted, "Don't get their total education from the boilerplate newspapers."

From the time Shoup retired in 1964 until 1966 troop strength in Vietnam rose from 23,300 to 385,300 and the war went from the back page to front page headlines. Faced with ever increasing possibilities that they might be conscripted into service to fight in a country few of them knew much about, America's young began asking serious questions. Most felt that the answers they were receiving from Washington, D.C. were evasive, slanted, or even blatantly false. On May 14, 1966, General David Shoup (Retired) addressed many of these concerns at the 10th Annual Junior College World Affairs Day at Pierce College in Los Angeles. He spoke to their idealism, to their confusion about world affairs, and to the war in Vietnam in specific terms that immediately raised the ire of the Johnson Administration. "Remember," he reminded them, "under our form of government, civilians always have, and always will--and they should--tell the military when to begin and when to stop war."

Speaking of an older generation that supported the war while being themselves confused about its value and objective he said, "These same people that place students in the category of the confused are just as confused, always have been and always will be. They've simply suffered more years of it and have accepted it as the normal state of man. And thus, they are mistakenly surprised that young students are confused."

As to the Administration's *Domino Theory* and argument about the critical importance of preserving democracy in Vietnam he said, "You read, you're televised to, you're radioed to, you're preached to, that it is necessary that we have our armed forces fight, get killed and maimed, and kill and maim other human beings including women and children because now is the time we must stop some kind of unwanted ideology from creeping upon on this nation. The people we choose to do this to is 8,000 miles away with water in between. I believe there's a record of but two men walking on water and one of them failed."

In his most damning statement about the war, which would resurface repeatedly to both cheers by the young and scorn by the older, noted: "I don't think the whole of South East Asia, as related to the present and future safety and freedom of the people of this country, is worth the life or limb of a single American...I believe that if we had and would keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-crooked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed, exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of their own. That they design and want. That they fight and work for."

Others who would later echo similar sentiments were attacked as being anti-American. "It has somehow become unpatriotic to question our military strategy and tactics or the motives of military leaders," he told the students at Pierce College. One year before retiring while speaking as Commandant, Shoup had given the word "patriotism" his own definition, "It is said that patriotism is the love of country. I think it is the love of the things about your country that you don't want to see lost--that you want to see perpetuated--and you're willing to sacrifice to ensure it." His leading role placed the Johnson Administration at a disadvantage--how do you discredit a World War II combat veteran, a Medal of Honor Recipient who achieved 4-star rank, and who was former Commandant of the Marine Corps. Trashing the reputation of college kids was one thing, trying to discredit General David Shoup was entirely something else.

As many of America's young answered challenges like those issued by General Shoup they organized themselves like no anti-war movement prior to their time had done. In 1967 the cause was further bolstered when six veterans of the Vietnam War established an organization for other

returning anti-war veterans, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). General Shoup became something of a mentor to these soldiers who had seen the war personally and come away from it to speak their minds.

The movement slowly began gaining credibility, even among those of the older generation as the Vietnam War dragged into its eighth year and casualties topped 30,000. Early in 1968 over the Vietnamese New Year, called "Tet," the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong launched a massive offensive. Overnight they simultaneously struck at more than 100 cities including 36 provincial capitals and Saigon. More than 1,500 Americans and nearly 3,000 ARVN were killed and 15,000 wounded. Still it was a stunning military victory for United States forces which quickly routed the Communists, killing some 45,000. When questioned about that event General Shoup replied, "If I had to go through another one of these *Tet holidays winning streaks*, I didn't know where I could take it or not." Much of the American public felt the same way and the slow erosion of support for the war back home became a watershed.

On March 20, 1968, General Shoup was called to testify before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Chaired by Senator William Fulbright. A powerful Southern Democrat who had opposed the Bay of Pigs invasion under Kennedy and then the 1965 American military action in the Dominican Republic. He had begun questioning the Vietnam War as well and held a series of televised hearings beginning in 1966. That same year he also published *The Arrogance of Power*, in which he attacked the justification of the Vietnam War placing himself at odds with President Johnson, also a Southern Democrat.

Before the Committee General Shoup began by noting that he was privileged to testify "without any fear of reprisal whatsoever except being called a dissenter, a traitor, and being accused of giving aid and comfort to the enemy."

Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee assured him that he was not alone in such derision responding "You (are about to) have company!" While General Shoup, an extraordinary hero born of the Greatest Generation had indeed been called as much and worse, growing opposition in Congress to the war in Vietnam put him in good company, or perhaps it was the reverse that was true. Indeed, most members of the Committee, to some extent, shared his views.

"It is ludicrous to think that just because we lose in South Vietnam that very soon somebody is going to be crawling and knocking at the doors of Pearl Harbor," Shoup testified with candor. "As far as I know the Armed Forces objective in South Vietnam is not to defeat the Armed Forces of North Vietnam, but rather their objective is to rid this country, rid South Vietnam, of these interlopers, so-called, from the north and any others who have developed in the south...Our actions are limited to unlimited escalation in the South Vietnam area, because we have no objective as far as I know to defeat the armed forces of the enemy...North Vietnam is the aggressor and the United States is the aggressor."

Speaking to the Administration's efforts to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people he stated bluntly, "Instead of winning the minds and hearts of their people, we have rather closed their minds and broken their hearts."

Eleven days later President Johnson shocked the nation when he announced that he would not run again for the office of the President. It was said that almost immediately Senator Fulbright received a telegram which simply said, "Mission Accomplished. Shoup." With LBJ out of the way his Vice President Hubert Humphrey sought the Democratic nomination. He was challenged by Eugene McCarthy and a strong anti-war movement. Despite growing unrest however, there remained in the voting public (over age 21) enough support for the war to validate the status quo. In the end Humphrey ran against Republican nominee Richard Nixon who appealed to a "silent

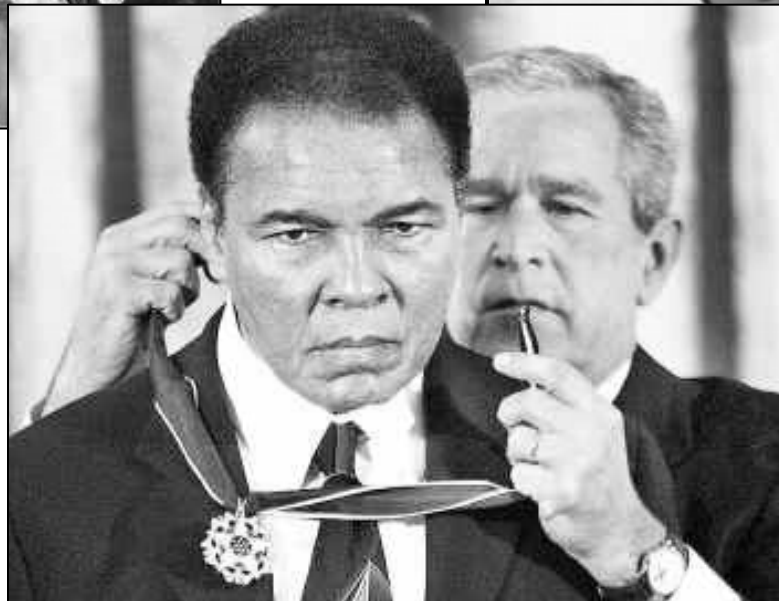
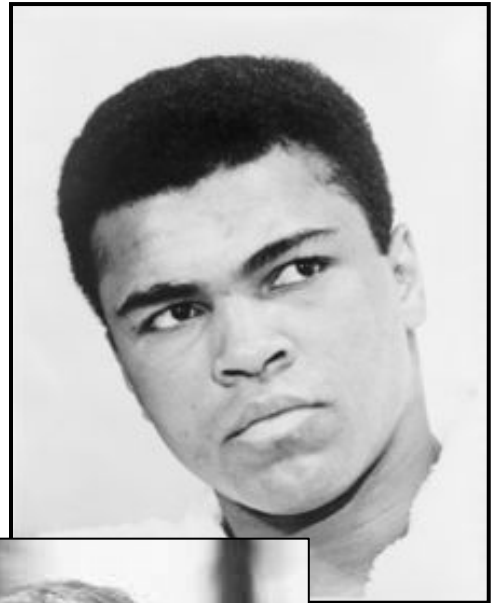
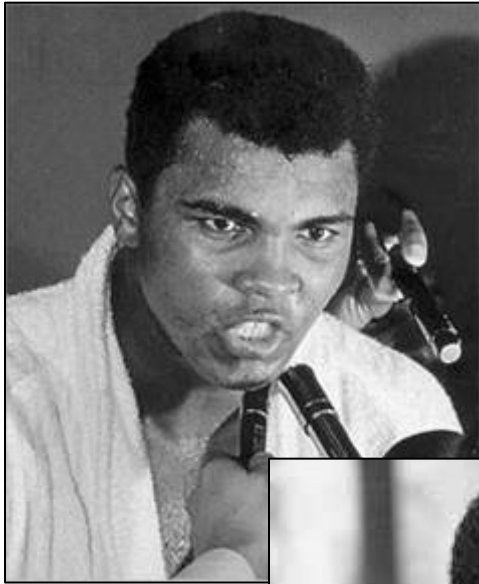
majority" of conservatives that despised the hippie movement and the anti-war demonstrations. Promising "peace with honor" he eked out a 1% popular vote majority over Humphrey and a solid 301 to 191 elector majority to become President.

President Nixon's "peace with honor" was undefined and became something of an exercise in futility. He initiated what he called "Vietnamization of the War" in which offensive operations were gradually turned over to the ARVN forces. Still, it seemed that the war dragged on and young soldiers continued to come home in coffins. In November 1969 a half-million mostly young marched on Washington, D.C. to protest the war. Meanwhile more and more returning Vietnam veterans joined the VVAW and unrest continued. When Nixon authorized American forces to cross from South Vietnam into Cambodia in 1970, despite dwindling U.S. troop strength, it was perceived as continued escalation. On May 4, 1970, just four days after Nixon announced the Cambodian incursion, an anti-war demonstration at Kent State University in Ohio resulted in a confrontation between protesters and members of the National Guard. In a melee that followed the Guardsmen opened fire killing four and wounding nine. It was a tragedy for which Nixon would forever take the blame.

As new leadership sprung up among the young and inside the VVAW General Shoup became less a spokesman and more of a quiet mentor. He remained especially close to VVAW leadership as they organized and protested in the early '70s through Congressional hearings, public demonstrations, and in the media. In 1975 after nearly all-American troops had departed Vietnam Saigon fell. At last an old soldier was able to fully retire.

General Shoup passed away on January 14, 1983, unceremoniously and with little of the news coverage and attention due a Medal of Honor recipient and former Commandant of the Marine Corps. Even today, when people talk of the anti-Vietnam War movement, Shoup is overlooked. For many veterans it is almost shameful to bring up the subject, as if tying such a man to the radical anti-war movement is somehow a sacrilege. In fact, General David Shoup was his own man, a man of strong conviction and the courage to voice those convictions. He was a leader in the minority viewpoint in opposition to much of what he had stood for all his life. He was indeed a man of great courage.

Muhammad Ali



"Champions aren't made in gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them - a desire, a dream, a vision. They have to have last-minute stamina, they have to be a little faster, they have to have the skill and the will. But the will must be stronger than the skill."

Muhammad Ali

The war in Vietnam was not the only "game in town" during the era. In 1969 there were nearly half-a-million members of the U.S. Military serving in Vietnam but more than twice that number were deployed overseas in some 119 countries, while another 1.5 million served in support roles at home. During the period from the first buildup to war in 1964 until the Vietnam War ended in 1975, slightly more than 9 million men and women served in the Armed Forces, however only slightly more than one-fourth of them ever served in Vietnam.

This meant then that being drafted was not a *sentence* to serve in combat. In fact, during the Vietnam War, two-thirds of those serving in uniform were volunteers. The other 3 million (out of 27 million draft age men) were individuals who either enlisted or who volunteered for the draft.* While it may well have seemed during those years that everyone you knew was getting drafted and sent to Vietnam, the truth was far different. In fact, slightly less than 650,000 draftees (including those who volunteered for the draft) saw duty in Vietnam.

Such facts and figures aside, 17,725 men who were conscripted to service died in that war. As such the Selective Service call-up was a *dreaded evil* and the Draft was an inequitable and somewhat arbitrary fate for young men with plans other than military service. Young women, many of whom lost brothers, husbands, friends and boyfriends blamed the Draft for their losses and railed against it. So too, any number of young men facing potential conscription also demonstrated against and tried to avoid being drafted.

It is important to distinguished between Draft protesters, Draft evaders, and Draft dodgers, a group of young who are often erroneously lumped together as a single group. Draft protesters were often the men who burned their Draft cards in public ceremonies. It is doubtful that anyone ever burned their Draft card alone in the privacy of their own home. The act itself was a voicing of dissent or a means of garnering public support and sometimes sympathy. It was an act that cause revulsion among the older generation and that was seen as inappropriate even by many who opposed the war but understood the meaning of call to duty.

Draft Dodgers on the other hand, were those who took steps to violate Selective Service laws. Like a player in the game of dodge-ball moves in order to avoid being tagged, these were young men who hid out in hippie communes or moved to places like Canada, in essence renouncing their loyalty and affiliation with the United States in order to dodge conscription. Young men already in military service were encouraged by some anti-Draft organizations to desert, which some also did. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 20,000 dodgers and deserters emigrated to Canada between 1966 and 1974. All were granted opportunity for unconditional pardon by President Jimmy Carter on January 21, 1977.

Draft evaders, on the other hand, were quite unlike the dodgers. Some avoided conscription by taking advantage of loopholes in the Selective Service laws, a perfectly legal if not sometimes arbitrary option. In 1966 actor George Hamilton was exempted from the Draft after petitioning his own Draft Board for a deferment base on hardships at home, advising them that his mother needed him to care for her. Of course, it didn't hurt his cause that at the time he was also dating the daughter of President Lyndon Johnson. And perhaps it was just such inequities in the Selective Service program that most angered the young. They were upset not so much being called to serve as they did to the fact that often the rich, the powerful, and the brightest college students escaped being called up.

Some young men sought exemption from the Draft due to special situations: sole surviving son, deferment to complete an education, and even for personal reasons such as religious

* Enlistees had more options but served 3 or more years of active duty. Men who volunteered for the draft could select their preferred branch of service and were only required to serve 2 years on active duty.

prohibitions against military service. The latter are called Conscientious Objectors and many of them did serve in non-combat roles, at least two C.O.s earning Medals of Honor, while others belonged to faiths that prohibited even these non-combat roles. One Conscientious Objector was a high-profile national figure, the World Boxing Heavyweight Champion Muhammad Ali. His request for C.O. status went unheeded, forcing him to make some serious personal decisions. The draft may be the one thing in his career Muhammad Ali never dodge. Instead he stayed home to face up to the consequences of his convictions. It cost him nearly everything but his self-respect.

Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr., was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on January 17, 1942. His father, Cassius Clay, Sr., was a billboard and sign painter and his mother helped support the family by working as a housekeeper. Louisville at the time was not only segregated but blatantly prejudiced. Young Clay recalls in his autobiography, going downtown and wondering why he never saw any Negro faces in the crowd. He also recalls thirstily crying for water outside a five-and-dime shop one day and his mother telling him that they couldn't go inside for a drink, the waitress would not serve them because they were Black. Sadly, such injustices heaped upon him, his family, and other Black people, such actions seemed almost minor in comparison to other far worse incidents. Cassius was thirteen years old in 1955 when Emmitt Till, a 15-year-old Black boy from Chicago was murdered in nearby Mississippi for allegedly whistling at a white woman. That grave and deadly injustice impressed itself deeply on young Clay's mind and evoked a desire for revenge.

Unable to get memories of what had happened to Till out of his mind, Cassius and a friend made a late-night trip to the railroad station on Louisville's west side. In his autobiography remembers vividly a billboard that towered over the site of their planned vengeance. It was the image of a white man with finger pointed seemingly directly at him and the words "Uncle Sam Wants You!" The two boys threw rocks at the sign and then placed more rocks on the tracks to inflict damage on their *enemy* before racing home. Two days later he mustered enough courage to return to the scene of the crime where work crews repaired the damage of a derailment, but what he recalls most vividly was that Uncle Sam was still pointing at him and proclaiming "I Want You."

Years later when Muhammad Ali was a boxing champion, biographers and sports writers tried to paint a less grim childhood that had formed the thinking of the man now a celebrity. Perhaps it was difficult to imagine so great a fighter coming out of poverty and the ghetto, so they sugar-coated his past. In fact, though both parents worked hard, wages were low (Mrs. Clay made \$4 a day) and Clay and his brother Rudy grew up in poverty. The boys were often hungry because there was not sufficient food for a family of four, and because there often wasn't enough money for bus fare for both boys Cassius frequently ran to school. He raced against the bus, making it a part of his daily workout routine. Even in those days he had already determined in his young mind that one day he would be the World Heavyweight Boxing Champion and looked upon the race as a training exercise for his future.

Cassius Clay, Sr., had been named for Cassius Marcellus Clay of the 19th Century, a white man also from Kentucky who was an early opponent of slavery. History has treated him well and his support for Abraham Lincoln helped propel the latter into the White House. In 1854 Clay was speaking in Illinois when someone in the crowd shouted the question, "Would you help a runaway slave?" Clay answered, "That depends on which way he was running."

In his own youth young Cassius was frequently challenged by others to achieve greatness as had his name sake. He failed to see the 19th century reformer as a great icon of Civil Rights and grew up wanting to become his own man rather than be held in comparison to an ancient white

man who had no knowledge of what life was like for a Black child. Once, when a schoolteacher brought up this personal challenge, Cassius returned to school with The Writings of Cassius M. Clay by Horace Greeley. In that compendium were the abolitionist's own words noting: "I am of the opinion that the Caucasian or white is the superior race; they have a larger and better formed brain...Historians now unite in making the Caucasian race the first in civilization through all past time." Cassius' argument silenced his teacher and may give many today who faulted him decades ago for his name change cause to understand a young man's thinking.

The incident reflects the sharp and questioning mind of a man whose intelligence is sometimes overlooked. Bettie Johnson, who knew him as a boy recalled for a 1997 article in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, "He was not a good student, school was something he did because he was supposed to." As an example of just how smart he was back then however, she noted, "I think he read a lot that wasn't assigned in school. Remember, this was in the late 1950s, before African Americans were even called 'black.' He wrote a paper on Black Muslims, and it was very upsetting to his teacher. Somehow, she felt that this paper was an affront. She was a very conforming Christian, and just the mention of separatism or of blacks being super-assertive frightened her, I think. It was so different from her conformist ideas at the time. She wasn't going to pass him, but the principal, Mr. (Atwood) Wilson and I said, 'This boy is not going to fail. Because he's going to be an outstanding boxer.' I mean, we knew that then."¹

That boxing career evolved out of one of those story-book tragedies that turn into unbelievable success stories. By 1954 young Cassius' parents had scraped together enough money to buy their twelve-year old son a bicycle. One day Cassius rode it down to Fourth and York streets for the annual convention of the Louisville Service Club; it was at this even that attending businessmen often gave out candy, ice cream, and balloons to the children. While attending the event someone stole the young boy's bicycle and he looked about for a police officer to whom he could report the crime. The first man in uniform he found was Joe Martin and Cassius approached him with tears in his eyes and anger in his heart, announcing he wanted to find and whip the culprit. Martin looked at the skinny 112-pound boy and responded, "Well, you'd better come back here and learn how to fight." Martin coached the boxing club at the Columbia Gym in the basement of the Service Club. Young Cassius took him up on the offer.

Over the next six years Clay trained under Joe Martin, a chance acquaintance who opened the door to a young boy's dream. Outside the club he was always training, running, dodging, and constantly jabbing at an invisible opponent. The *Courier-Journal* noted, "At Central High School in those days, Clay was known as the kid who drank water with garlic in it, who drank milk with raw eggs in it, who wouldn't smoke, who wouldn't drink even carbonated soda pop, who ran and shadow boxed about as often as he walked."²

His dedication paid off and three years later he had a televised fight. At the time Joe Martin hosted a local program on WAVE-TV called "Tomorrow's Champions" and the day following that fight Clay got his first attention from the local press, a short story that noted: "Cassius Clay established himself as the No. 1 contender for the light-heavyweight title in the Golden Gloves competition next January when he scored a fourth-round technical knockout over Donnie Hall in last night's WAVE-TV fight show main event."

The following year he took that title when he fought another televised bout against Charley Baker. Baker was 23-pounds heavier than Clay and had a reputation...he was known as the bully of the west side and few people would challenge him in or out of the ring. Clay defeated him in a unanimous three-round decision.

Clay's coach and his friends watched the natural fighter whip foe after foe. It didn't matter how big they were or how fast they were, Clay had heart, drive and determination. He won six Kentucky Golden Gloves, two National Golden Gloves, and two AAU titles. He had his sights on the 1960 Olympics and the young boxer won 36 consecutive bouts before Amos Johnson, a left-handed Marine defeated him in 1959. He never lost another amateur fight and made the U.S. Pan-Am team, and then lead the nine U.S. boxing titlists in the Olympic trials in San Francisco. That summer he returned home from Rome with an Olympic Gold Medal and became a local, and even a National hero.

On October 29, 1960, Clay fought his first Pro fight against Tunney Hunsaker, defeating him and earning a \$2,000 purse. From then until his 1964 bout with Sonny Liston for the Heavyweight Title he fought eighteen more times winning every fight, 15 by knockouts and his purse growing to \$56,098 for the last of these. In the meantime, as his boxing record grew, other changes in his life began to make him increasingly controversial.

In 1962 Clay registered with the Selective Service in his hometown of Louisville. After testing in which he performed poorly he was classified "1-Y"...unsuitable for military service. He later remarked, "I said 'I'm the Greatest!' not 'the smartest.' " During the period which saw much upheaval in America over racial prejudice and Civil Rights, Clay studied the Muslim faith and gravitated towards the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. He also began to call himself Cassius X. One week before his 1964 title fight, he was summoned to Coral Gables, Florida, to be re-tested by the Selective Service. When presented with a written test to complete he did so and signed his name, "Cassius X." It was the first time he had done so, and the Selective Service supervisor questioned why. Clay explained that as a member of the Nation of Islam he was joining with other members who rejected the names of their former slave masters and that the "X" became his real but unknown Black name.

When he stepped into the ring on February 25, 1964 to face World Heavyweight Champion Sonny Liston, there was no small segment in the American public eagerly waiting for the big man twice Clay's age to put the young upstart in his place. Clay had never gone into any fight without "prepping the battlefield" with considerable rhetoric, and his actions turned off some in the American public who saw him as a "loud-mouth braggart."

Most boxing fans expected that Liston's huge fists would quickly pummel the kid from Kentucky into submission the same way he had Floyd Patterson, Cleveland Williams, Albert Westphal, and Zora Folley. Instead, Clay did his own battering and at the beginning of the seventh round Liston refused to return to the ring. The world had a new Heavyweight Champion and Clay netted nearly half-a-million dollars for the win. He had come a long way from poverty and hunger in the poor part of Louisville.

Four weeks after the fight the Champ announced to the general public that he was a member of the Nation of Islam. On Friday, March 6, 1964, Malcolm X took Clay on a guided tour of the United Nations building. Malcolm X announced that Clay would be granted his "X." That night Elijah Muhammad recorded a statement over the phone to be played over the radio that Clay would be renamed Muhammad (one who is worthy of praise) Ali (fourth rightly guided caliph).³

Meanwhile, the Selective Service advised Muhammad Ali that though his second battery of tests were suspicious, and they believed he might have intentionally failed. They also advised that, suspicion aside, because his writing and spelling skills did not meet the minimum levels he would continue to be classified "1-Y." It was a decision that drew fire from some Americans including a bigoted Georgia lawyer who initiated a "Draft that Nigger Clay" campaign. It even extended into the halls of the U.S. Congress where there were calls for an investigation into Clay's

classification status. South Carolina Congressman L. Mendel Rivers stated in a public speech, "Clay's deferment is an insult to every mother's son serving in Viet Nam."

In 1965 while Ali was successfully defending his title against both Sonny Liston and then former Champ Floyd Patterson, the United States was sending combat troops to Vietnam and the buildup demanded that increased numbers be drafted. The pressure on Clay increased, even from some of his closest advisors. Any reasonable person knew that Muhammad Ali "in uniform" was too important to risk by sending him to Vietnam...he could accomplish much more for the military as a celebrity recruiting tool. Further, service would not necessarily harm his career. Elvin Presley had entered the service at the height of his singing career, wondering how the American public would welcome him home after doing his duty. His post-service career mushroomed and even as a civilian Elvis in uniform was successful with such movies as "G.I. Blues." The safe and practical thing now for Muhammad Ali, some of his friends and advisors told him, would be not to "stir the pot" and generate negative publicity, but simply to join the military. For the young man devoted to his new faith it was a soul-searching time.

In 1966 Ali was gearing up for a February 1967 bout against Ernie Terell, his 8th fight to defend his title. He was back home in Louisville when news started to buzz...the Selective Service had lowered the standards on the minimum test scores for service and 26-year-old Muhammad Ali was reclassified "1-A," fit for service and subject to the draft. When a reporter asked if the Champ would accept the draft, he still hadn't fully made up his mind and simply responded, "All I want is peace. Peace for myself and peace for the world. My religion is Islam. I am a follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. I believe in Allah. I think this is the true way to save the world. There're five hundred million Muslims all over Asia, Africa and the Middle East. I'm one of them. And proud of it."⁴

Not everyone was proud of Ali who remained the Heavyweight Boxing Champion. Former Champ Gene Tunney sent him a telegram that read, "You have disgraced your title and the American flag and the principles for which it stands. Apologize for your unpatriotic remark or you'll be barred from the ring."⁵

While the actual question of whether or not Muhammad Ali would be drafted remained unsettled, he went on in February 1967 to successfully defend his title against Terrell. Meanwhile he applied for status with the Selective Service as a Conscientious Objector based upon his Islamic beliefs. Two months later he received "Greetings from the President" ordering him to report for induction. Instead of running as Draft dodgers did, and instead of caving into pressure both inside and outside his circle, he courageously faced up to future events unsure what to do but determined to face his fate like a man.

Perhaps no man in history has been more vociferously courted by the military, more cajoled to act a particular way by his enemies, or more pushed in a direction he didn't feel was right by his friends than Muhammad Ali. In late April when he reported to the Induction Center in Houston his mother called him long distance from Louisville noting, "Do the right thing. If I were you, I would join the Army. Do you understand me, son?"⁶ Ironically, the young man believed that "doing the right thing" meant doing the very opposite that his mother advised.

Ali completed his written tests and the physical and then lined up with the other inductees, most far younger than his 27-years of age, as names were called out along with branch assignments (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines). "Cassius Clay--Army," the officer shouted. Clay remained in his place. "Cassius Clay! Will you please step forward and be inducted into the Armed Forces of the United States.?" The Champ stood silently still.

Clay's determination was met not so much by an angry military as by a determined Army. The matter was bigger than one man refusing to submit to the draft, if the Selective Service failed to induct Muhammad Ali, World Champion boxer, it would be greatly embarrassing. Earlier Ali had been offered "easy outs" such as the opportunity to serve in the National Guard as a "weekend warrior," and was repeatedly promised that as a member of the military he'd never see combat in Vietnam. For Ali it was a matter of principle and he refused to bow to bribery or pressure. Now, in a private room with a few military types, a stenographer, and even agents of the F.B.I., he was advised that he faced criminal charges and a five-year prison sentence if he continued to resist. Ali remained firm, prepared to pay the penalty for this act of civil disobedience. He was given one more chance after that serious talk and returned to the room. When his name was called, he again refused to step forward.

On that day in Houston the Champ walked virtually alone into the *ring* against the most powerful adversary of his life, the United States Government. He didn't shirk from what lay ahead of him; he stood his ground and fought his fight. To continue the analogy would require noting that he was "knocked down in the first round" but that he wasn't "out." Charges were filed against him and it took the World Boxing Authority only hours to strip him of his WBA title for a second time (they had previously stripped in as well in 1965). Nearly simultaneously the New York Boxing Commission took away his license and was followed in kind by all others in the nation. In the media and the public forum Ali was castigated relentlessly and *Chicago Sun-Times* reporter Bill Gleason noted, "In 1967 and beyond...the white race finally had a cause they could vindicate as just. Here was an avowed Black racist who said he would not fight in the war for reasons of his own. The crowd roared for the blood of Ali."

On that day when Muhammad Ali made the stand his personal convictions demanded, he knew the consequences and stood prepared to pay the price for his dissent. Two months later when his case went to trial, despite the angry mood of much of the country Ali stood by his convictions. It took the jury only 21 minutes of deliberation to find him guilty and the judge imposed the maximum sentence, \$10,000 fine and 5 years in Federal Prison.

Fortunately, Ali never went to prison and remained free pending appeal of his case. In the meantime he lost everything: his title, his livelihood, his standing with many Americans and the respect of most men in his profession. It was a horrible price to pay for what one believed. An appeals court upheld his conviction and the case was referred to the Supreme Court.

By 1970 the American public had also largely turned against the war in Vietnam, and public outrage against the greatest boxer that ever lived abated somewhat. On October 26 Ali returned to the ring in Georgia, the only of the 50 states without a boxing commission, to defeat Jerry Quarry.

In 1971 the U.S. Supreme Court reversed Ali's conviction and on March 8 he returned to New York to fight Joe Frazier in what was billed as "The Fight of the Century." It was the first loss of Ali's Professional Boxing career, decided after 15 rounds with a unanimous decision for Frazier. After a string of victories in 1973 over top-ranked heavyweight contenders Ali forced a rematch. On January 28, 1974, in Kinshasa, Zaire, Ali reclaimed his title after knocking out Frazier in the 8th round in a bout that was promoted as "The Rumble in The Jungle." British television ranked it as one of the top 100 sporting moments in history. Ten months later Ali knocked out George Forman to defend his title and successfully retained it through three bouts in 1975 before a second rematch against Frazier. He won with a 14th round Technical Knock Out during what became known as "The Thrilla in Manilla." Muhammad Ali had returned to reclaim his title and was proclaimed the Undisputed World Boxing Champion. Everyone now said what he had always said of himself, "Muhammad Ali is the greatest!"

During a career that spanned 21 years Muhammad Ali defeated almost every heavyweight boxer of his time, finishing with a record of 56 wins (37 by knockout) and 5 losses. He claimed the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship three-times and was named "Fighter of the Year" by Ring Magazine more times than any other fighter. He is an inductee into the International Boxing Hall of Fame and is one of only three boxers to be named "Sportsman of the Year" by *Sports Illustrated* in history.

In 1973, the draft ended and the U.S. converted to a military force composed only of volunteers. The Selective Service registration requirement was suspended in April 1975 and was resumed in 1980 by President Carter in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In 1982 Ali learned he was suffering from Parkinson's Disease, a degenerative condition of the central nervous system that attacks its victim's motor skills and speech. With a clear mind and an obvious disability, he continues to fight back with the same courage he demonstrated in the boxing ring and in a court room in Houston.

On November 9, 2005, Muhammad Ali was invited to the White House--a place where he was unwelcomed in the years after earning an Olympic Gold Medal for the United States and where during the Vietnam War he was considered perhaps, *Public Enemy Number One*. On that day in 2005 President George W. Bush presented him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, one of the two highest civilian awards our nation bestows on its leading citizens. The citation read simply:

One of the greatest athletes of all time, Muhammad Ali produced some of America's most lasting sports memories, from winning the Gold Medal at the 1960 Summer Olympics to carrying the Olympic torch at the 1996 Summer Olympics. As the first three-time heavyweight boxing champion of the world, he thrilled, entertained, and inspired us. His deep commitment to equal justice and peace has touched people around the world. The United States honors Muhammad Ali for his lifetime of achievement and for his principled service to mankind.

That "deep commitment to equal justice and peace" the President spoke of did not come easily...Muhammad Ali paid a great price from 1964 to 1972 but he can stand proudly today to remind us that doing what one perceives as "the right choice" has no value...it is priceless.

¹ Helm, Hunt, "Muhammad Ali-Louisville remembers the shy kid from Central High" *The Courier-Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, September 14, 1997

² *ibid*

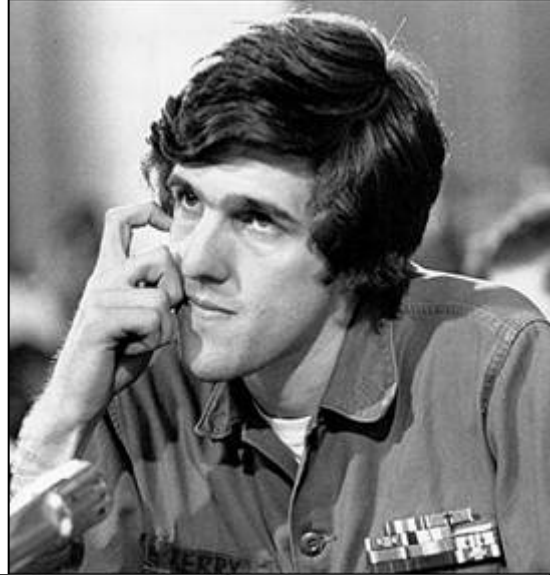
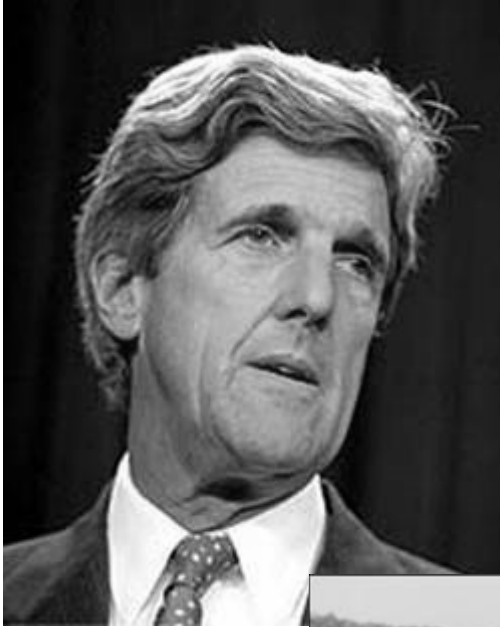
³ Wikipedia

⁴ Ali, Muhammad, *The Greatest*, Random House, New York, 1975, p 138.

⁵ *ibid*, p 143.

⁶ *ibid*, p 159.

John Forbes Kerry



One of the best-known maxims of foreign policy as related to military action is the statement, "You don't just send an army to war, you take a country to war." The fact that both the (Lyndon) Johnson Administration and the (Richard) Nixon Administrations failed to rally the American public behind the war is often seen as the cause of our failure in Southeast Asia. Towards that end those who supported the war effort often try to blame the media and the anti-war movement for the loss. It is a shortsighted view that is grossly unfair to a generation of men and women who were articulate, bright, and the best-educated youth in our history.

The reason for the failure of the Vietnam War is more appropriately better elucidated in an equally important maxim of military intervention that says, "Don't go to war without clear objectives." It was the lack of such clear objectives more than anything else that turned American youth against the war in the early days when they were asking insightful questions for which there were no honest or reasonable answers forthcoming.

Ours' was a generation that grew up under the threat of nuclear attack. With regularity we watched grainy black and white movies warning us of the evil Communists that wanted to control the world or teaching us how to survive when, not if, an attack came. I think it would be safe to say that for many of us as we matured and no such attack materialized, Communism began to be regarded much like the "boogie-man" our parents used to frighten us into good behavior. There was little opposition to the war in the early 1960s when a few advisors were sent but when President Johnson escalated the war in 1964-65, we asked questions for which we received only vague and evasive answers. The excuse the President gave to justify the war, the purported attack on American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, became itself highly suspect and American youth felt deceived and betrayed into a cause they couldn't support.

It is important to remember that the young men and women who "came of age" in the 1960s was the best-educated generation in our history as they fulfilled the dreams of their *Greatest Generation* parents of getting a college education. In the beginning the anti-war movement was generally young, middle-class college students with unprecedented interests in world affairs and inquisitive minds. They responded well to rational arguments but disdained being patronized, propagandized, or lied to. Rather than responding to their questions about the war, the Administration tried its best to discredit their voices by painting them with a broad brush as being young, naïve, and radical. As the war escalated, they were openly portrayed as Communist sympathizers and unpatriotic rebels.

As the movement grew following escalation of the war in 1965-66, so too grew the false profiling of the anti-war protesters as easy-to-disdain "long-haired, drugged-out hippies and Commies." Though the movement's ranks contained far more budding doctors, lawyers, politicians, and business leaders than hippies, this was an effective stereotype propagated by pro-war politicians, the military, and even the media. Stories of an organized demonstration never showed pictures of well-dressed, neat and articulate young men and women. What generally appeared in the papers was the minority that fit the common profile.

The Johnson Administration was especially effective in its efforts to thus discredit and thereby ignore the growing anti-war movement which included not only the young but leaders who were themselves members of the older generation. Dr. Martin Luther King became the subject of F.B.I. investigation early in the Civil Rights movement and, after he joined the anti-war crusade, he became an even bigger target. When efforts to portray him as a Communist failed the Johnson Administration tried to attack his personal character, LBJ himself calling King a "hypocrite preacher." Similar attacks were launched against such other older generation leaders by both

Presidents Johnson and then Nixon as Congresswoman Bella Abzug, Dr. Benjamin Spock, and even Senator George McGovern who in World War II had become a war hero.

By 1967 some returning veterans of the war in Vietnam, having seen it first-hand, began questioning the war. That summer six of these veterans joined together to establish "Vietnam Veterans Against the War" (VVAW) in order to lend their support of a populace at odds with the president. As the war dragged on into its eighth, ninth and tenth years and more young men returned, the organization grew. They were a difficult group of anti-war activists to discredit--they had been there.

The service of the Vietnam Veterans who opposed the war, though largely a minority of returning veterans, was difficult to discredit. Many used G.I. Bill benefits to enroll in college and pursue distinguished degrees, but a few dropped out and became part of sub-cultures that were still held in disregard. As a result the anti-war vets were painted with a stereo-type that made them generally less respectable in society: they were seen as long-haired, drug-addicted souls who had committed atrocities that turned them into psychotic civilians who showed up in military fatigues covered with medals, patches and peace signs. A small number who did indeed fit that profile, when found, made it possible to effectively validate the false assumption that this fit them all. Furthermore, because being an anti-war Vietnam veteran was a good way to evoke sympathy and other "perks" in the hippie movement, some who had never served began to portray themselves falsely as veterans. When uncovered, their deceit served to discredit them all.

Such was the stereotype in 1970 when a returning Navy Veteran became active in VVAW. The man's combat record was undeniable; he wore the Silver Star, Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts. He was a Yale Graduate and a former officer who, well-dressed and with neat appearance, didn't fit the popular profile of an anti-war activist. His intelligent oratory insured that he could not be ignored by those who preferred to highlight the "way-out-there" veterans, and his service in answer to the call of duty could not be denied. Despite the best efforts of two Presidents, John Kerry remained a voice that couldn't be overlooked and a war hero whose service could not be discredited.

John Forbes Kerry was born in the Fitzsimons Army hospital at Aurora, Colorado, on December 11, 1943. At the time his father, a test pilot for the U.S. Army Air Forces, was undergoing treatment for tuberculosis. Early in 1944 the family returned to their home state of Massachusetts. It was the traditional family home though none of the four, Mr. Richard John Kerry and Mrs. Rosemary Forbes Kerry, or children John Forbes or Margaret Peggy would spend much time there.* While the immediate Kerry family was upper-middle class, they had extended ties to some of the world's richest families. John's father Richard Kerry was the son of Austrian and Hungarian immigrants who settled in Chicago and then Boston to build a successful business three times and then lose it three times, the last prompting his father to take his own life. When Richard Kerry married Rosemary Forbes, he became part of two of the world's most affluent and powerful families.

The Forbes family of Boston, not to be confused with the famous publishing magnate of the same surname, accumulated its fortune in 19th century by trade with China and the family became an ensconced and respected icon of Boston business and social life. When Rosemary's father James Forbes married Margaret Winthrop, it marked a merger with another affluent and powerful family with roots back to Thomas Dudley who founded Massachusetts and John Winthrop, the colony's first governor.

* Another daughter, Diana was born in 1947 and a second son, Cameron was born in 1950.

Richard Kerry and Margaret Forbes met in France where the Forbes family had a large estate at Saint Briac prior to the Nazi invasion, and the two fell in love. Richard returned home to America where he hoped to become a pilot for the Army Air Corps while Rosemary remained in her native France with hopes of becoming a nurse. She escaped just ahead of the Nazis and made her way to the United States to find Richard in Alabama where he was undergoing military training. The two married in January 1941 and 11 months later Margaret was born, followed by son John Forbes two years later in Aurora.

John Kerry recalls returning to the Forbes estate called Les Essarts shortly after the liberation of France to find it in ruin. He speaks of walking through broken glass, crying openly as he held his mother's hand. The self-described "first memory of his childhood" reflected the tragedy and horror of war. From the ashes of that war-torn dream the estate was eventually rebuilt however and would become a favored summer retreat for the Kerry family throughout young John's life.

In 1950 Richard Kerry, with a Harvard law degree, took a job with the Office of the General Counsel for the Navy and one year later moved up to work in the State Department. Living in Washington, D.C. it was unavoidable that the Kerry's would develop an interest in politics that became even more exciting in 1952 when a young World War II Navy veteran from Massachusetts named John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected to the Senate and seemed poised to become a political "star."

In 1954 Richard Kerry accepted a high-level position as the U.S. Attorney for Berlin. After spending a brief time with the family in Germany, John's parents decided it best to send him back to Massachusetts to attend a boarding school. It was the first in what would become a lifetime of what some might call an "education of privilege" but it was also one that separated him, save for summers at Les Essarts, from his family. Kerry remembers, "I was always moving on and saying goodbye. It kind of had an effect on you, it steeled you, there wasn't a lot of permanence and roots. For kids, (it's) not the greatest thing."¹

One boy with whom John did establish a close friendship was Richard Pershing, grandson of famed World War I General John J. Pershing. The two met while attending the Fessenden School in Newton, Massachusetts. The two parted in 1958 when, thanks to the sponsorship of a wealthy aunt John enrolled for his high school years at St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire. Here he established a close friendship with another fellow classmate, Peter Wyeth Johnson. Both Pershing and Wyeth would be subsequently killed while serving in Vietnam.

Although not necessarily academically in the top of his high school classes, John Kerry excelled at debate--perhaps because it was something, he was so good at. In his sophomore year he founded the John Winant Society to debate current issues, a club that exists to this day. He got plenty of practice--St. Paul's student body was largely conservative and Kerry's Democratic leanings put him at odds with the popular majority on campus. When Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy, who had been the subject of much discussion around the dinner table during John's boyhood began his presidential campaign, he had an ardent supporter at St. Paul's. On November 7, 1960, the day before Kennedy was elected, John Kerry took the train from Concord to Boston to personally witness his developing hero's last campaign speech. The following day Kerry himself gave a political speech to a dissenting audience, urging the election of John Kennedy.

The similarities between John Fitzgerald Kennedy and John Forbes Kerry, far beyond their common initials and their Massachusetts roots, seemed to run deep in young Kerry's heart and mind. After graduating from St. Paul's in 1962 and while working for the U.S. Senate campaign of JFK's younger brother Edward Kennedy, he read the book chronicling JFK's World War II service PT-109 that had come out the previous year. Kennedy had grown up a child of privilege,

the son of a government official, and attended the best schools--just as had Kerry. Instead of using his family status to avoid service in World War II Kennedy volunteered for duty as commander of a small Patrol Boat (PT) and served with distinction. So too, John Kerry knew in his heart as early as 1962, would he. John Kennedy had returned home to become a prominent Massachusetts politician and then was elected to the highest office in the land. Even the possibility of following in that example was not beyond the dream of John Kerry as he began his college education at Yale. Those who watched him and knew him best had similar thoughts.

One month before entering Yale in 1962 to pursue a degree in Political Science John Kerry was invited to visit his friend Janet Auchincloss' family's estate in Rhode Island, where John Kennedy and Jacqueline Bouvier had married nine years earlier. During that visit Kerry, quite by accident, met his hero. Kerry entered the house late for a date with Janet to see a tall man standing against the wall. Kerry recalls, "This guy is standing there, he turns around and it's the president of the United States. I remember distinctly saying, 'Hi, Mr. Kennedy,' and we chatted. He said, 'Oh, what are you doing?' I said, 'I just graduated from St. Paul's. I am about to go to Yale.'"²

Kerry then remembered that his hero was a Harvard man and blushed. Kennedy however, quickly put the budding politician at ease. Calling to mind the fact that he had recently received an honorary degree from Yale the President replied, "It might be said now that I have the best of both worlds, a Harvard education and a Yale degree."³ It only served to cement the young soon-to-be college student's loyalty and hero-worship of President John F. Kennedy. Later Kennedy, whose affection for sailing was well known, even took young Kerry with him on an outing aboard the yacht.

During Kerry's sophomore year at Yale he became president of the Yale Political Union, involving himself in sweeping issues like the Civil Rights movement. In his first semester he was stunned by the death of his role model when John Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas. He was sitting in the bleachers watching a soccer game when the news was announced. Only after returning to his room and watching the black and white replays on television did he come to grips with the fact that his hero was gone. And yet, in some way, John F. Kennedy and all that he represented would never be far from the psyche of John F. Kerry.

Kerry's classmates, including Richard Pershing with whom he was reunited at Yale, were quick to see that John Kerry was destined for a large role in American politics. Issues and causes seemed to be his consuming interest, debate was a skill in which he had no equal on campus, and his eyes shone with an intensity fueled by an inner drive. When he graduated with a B.A. in 1966, it was John F. Kerry who was chosen to give the class speech at graduation. It was an issue-driven commencement address in which he intoned that America had moved from an "excess of isolationism (to) an excess of interventionism." He targeted specifically the Vietnam War, ironic since during his senior year he had joined the U.S. Navy Reserve and might be called upon to serve there. For Kerry there was no disparity between his enlistment and his opposition to what was happening in Southeast Asia. He noted, "We have not really lost the desire to serve. We question the very roots of what we are serving."⁴

One year after graduating from Yale Ensign John F. Kerry was assigned to the U.S.S. Gridley (CG-21), an escort destroyer in the Pacific Fleet. He started as Electrical Officer and performed those duties for four months and then was assigned responsibility for the decks. His unique abilities also resulted in his being assigned duties as the Public Affairs Officer. Captain James F. Kelly, the ship's executive officer who opposed Kerry's 2005 Presidential bid, recalls despite his negative feelings about the young officer's later activities, "I remember him as a serious and intelligent young ensign, seemingly mature beyond his years. The skipper and I were mightily

impressed with him in spite of his inexperience...Drafting his fitness reports was an exercise in the use of superlatives. In fact, of the thirty or so officers, I counted him in the top half dozen, no mean feat for an ensign."⁵

Early in 1968 the Gridley was deployed to the Gulf of Tonkin where it ran routine patrols and stood by to recover pilots returning from action over North Vietnam that were forced to ditch at sea. In February Kerry received stunning news; Second Lieutenant Richard Warren Pershing had been killed in action on February 17 while searching for a missing soldier after a firefight. He was subsequently buried at Arlington National Cemetery next to his famous grandfather. Being at sea, Kerry was unable to attend his best friend's funeral. In a letter home to his parents he vented his frustrations and feelings at the loss: "I am empty, bitter, angry and desperately lost with nothing but war, violence and more war around me...What a Goddamn total waste. Why? With the loss of Persh something has gone out of me."⁶

What Kerry did not know at that time but would subsequently learn was that four days before Pershing was killed his friend from St. Paul's, First Lieutenant Peter Wythe Johnson had also been killed in Vietnam while serving with the Army Special Forces. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor, for his heroism in the action that took his life.

Returning home aboard the Gridley in the spring of 1968 Kerry was promoted to Lieutenant, Junior Grade (j.g.) on June 16. He had requested to be trained to command a Fast Patrol Craft (PCF), the Navy's equivalent to the World War II PT Boats and now called "Swift Boats," and then to be assigned to duty in Vietnam. He began training on June 20 and arrived in Vietnam on November 17, 1968.

On December 2, 1968, Lieutenant (j.g.) Kerry and two other sailors went upriver from the U.S. base at Cam Ranh Bay in a small "skimmer" boat to recon for enemy guerillas. Early in the patrol they encountered a sampan and opened fire, then captured two Vietnamese who were transferred to a larger craft. The area was what was known as a "free fire" zone...in effect anything that moved on the river was considered enemy. Vietnamese thus found usually were in fact enemy, but occasionally innocent civilians might be caught out on the river past curfew and find themselves being fired on. After delivering his prisoners Kerry's boat continued up stream until, rounding a bend they encountered six sampans. Kerry and his comrades opened fire and he soon felt a burning sensation in his arm. Whether the Vietnamese returned fire or if the small wound was a result of his own or one of his two sailors' guns remains the subject of some controversy. The Purple Heart Lieutenant (j.g.) Kerry was awarded that night, the first of three, would become perhaps the most controversial.

It should be noted that military regulations authorize the Purple Heart "For wounds or death as result of an act of any opposing armed force." There is no specific regulation regarding the severity of the wound other than that it requires treatment by a medical officer, medic or corpsman. While most Purple Hearts have been awarded for grievous wounds and many were pinned to the pajamas of a man or woman recovering in a hospital, there was no shortage of what we called "band aid" Purple Hearts in Vietnam. Stories circulated of some soldiers incurring a small scrape while diving into a bunker during a mortar attack receiving the award. Many veterans disdained such "band aid" awards and, with great machismo it was not uncommon for a slightly wounded soldier to shake off an injury and choose not to report it or to see a medic. Many of those same veterans are now returning to their various branches, armed with statements by the men with whom they served and letters from Congressmen, to apply for the Purple Heart they didn't want decades

ago. In most likelihood John Kerry's first Purple Heart would not have become an issue if he had come quietly home from Vietnam and stayed out of the spotlight.

On December 6 Lieutenant (j.g.) Kerry was assigned as commander of PCF-44 operating out of An Thoi in the delta area far south of Saigon. He and his crew of five enlisted sailors began operations immediately, running patrols inland on the murky waterways that flowed into the delta from Cambodia in the northwest. These were scattered and shallow streams through thick jungle down which the North Vietnamese ferried supplies into the South, and interdicting that flow was one of the Swift Boats' primary missions. It was highly dangerous work, patrolling into unknown areas surrounded by heavy vegetation from which hidden enemies could rain machine gun fire, rockets and mortars on the light 50-foot aluminum Swift Boats. The valor of the men who performed those important jobs is reflected in awards of the Medal of Honor, Navy Cross, Silver Stars, and numerous names on *The Wall* in Washington, D.C.

On Christmas Eve Lieutenant (j.g.) Kerry and his crew went upriver in a mission he later claimed also took them into Cambodia, a neutral area that provided harbor to the enemy but that was off limits to U.S. Forces until 1970. Despite a Christmas truce PCF-44 suddenly came under mortar attack from hidden Viet Cong soldiers. While returning fire Steve Wasser, Kerry's second-in-command, watched as bullets from his M-60 machine gun cut down what appeared to be an old man tending his water buffalo and behind whom the enemy had hidden their position. The apparent death of an innocent civilian who had been caught in the crossfire of opposing forces made a profound impact on Wasser who says the memories of that moment now prevents him from enjoying Christmas. Kerry himself says he was unaware of that killing until Wasser told him about it in 2003.⁷

The Vietnam War was indeed a complicated way to fight a war. It was difficult to tell friend from foe; the Vietnamese girl who walked into the base camp each day to clean your hooch might well be pacing it off to deliver accurate coordinates to an enemy mortar team that would drop a devastating bombardment on you at night. American combat troops found themselves confronted with an Army--the North Vietnamese (NVA), an insurgency--the Viet Cong (South Vietnamese Communists), and an innocent population caught in the middle and leaning in loyalty to whichever side posed the least immediate threat to their existence. For that reason some new methods of fighting were developed: "Reconnaissance by Fire" (shooting into a potential area in hopes of killing or flushing the enemy), "Mad Minutes" (a 60-second release of all weapons on a defensive perimeter at varied times throughout the night), "Sterile Boxes" (a 1-kilometer-square grid on the map inside which there was not supposed to be friendly forces or civilians), and the similarly designed "Free Fire Zones." Some American combatants found these as necessary measures to their own survival; others found them to be serious violations of the proper way to conduct a war. Lieutenant (j.g.) John Kerry numbered among the latter.

Despite these misgivings that haunted his conscience, as a Naval officer he continued to perform his duty. It was sometimes difficult to reconcile the two, as on the night of January 20, 1969, when his boat took a sampan under fire. Exactly what happened and what the "body count" was that night, despite differing recollections of Kerry and one of his crewman, both recalled capturing a woman and then finding the body of a dead boy in the bottom of her boat, killed by American fire. Such tragic incidents, all too common under the unique situations of that war, weighted heavily on Lieutenant (j.g.) Kerry's mind.

In January Kerry's crew was transferred and he assumed command of Swift Boat No. 94 (PCF-94) which had recently been heavily engaged and the skipper wounded. On February 20 when his new boat was attacked while moving up the Bo De River, shrapnel from an enemy Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) struck Kerry in the thigh. It was a minor wound and doctors decided it better to simply suture the wound without removing the shrapnel rather than inflict further damage through surgery. He returned to duty and the shrapnel remains in his body to this day. It marked award of his second Purple Heart.

Eight days later PCF-94 was patrolling with two other Swift Boats when they came under fire. In violation of protocol Lieutenant (j.g.) Kerry directed all three boats, which were under his tactical command, to beach and pursue the enemy. It was an act some might perceive as an expression of frustration at being shot at by an enemy that hit and ran, by others as a dangerous decision that could endanger his craft and crews. The great Marine Corps icon General Chesty Puller once told a comrade that "There is only a hairline's difference between a Navy Cross and a general court-martial." Lieutenant (j.g.) Kerry was initially concerned that he might indeed be court-martialed, instead he was awarded the Silver Star--one step below the Navy Cross.

On March 13 Lieutenant (j.g.) Kerry received a third shrapnel wound for a third Purple Heart, a ticket home under Navy policy. Before his force of Swift Boats could return to base however, an exploding mine or rocket threw him against the bulkhead injuring his arm and tossing James Rassmann, a Special Forces advisor along for that mission, into the water. Kerry's subsequent actions in returning to the scene to rescue Rassmann from the water earned him a Bronze Star in addition to his other awards. After a final patrol on March 26 John Kerry came home to serve as a personal aide to Rear Admiral Walter Schleich.

On November 12, 1969, the American public was stunned when leading news magazines broke the story of the purported massacre more than a year earlier at a Vietnamese village named My Lai. Initial investigation indicated that soldiers of an Infantry company in the Americal Division had killed perhaps hundreds of women and children. For years college students had protested the war in Vietnam as criminal, railing against bombing in both the north and the south, defoliation of jungles, and policies of indiscriminate fire. Older veterans of past wars who had seen the tragedy of armed conflict understood well that war is a tragic but often necessary evil and could brush this aside as tragic but not uncommon "collateral damage" until confronted with reports of the needless killings at My Lai. As the investigation continued it became an issue that festered and grew, and the details became both frightening and shocking.

A rally in November drew 250,000 protestors to Washington, D.C. including Judy Droz, widow of a Swift Boat skipper who had covered PCF-94 on the mission that earned Kerry the silver star. Her husband Lieutenant (j.g.) Donald Droz was killed in action on April 12, 1969, only weeks after Kerry departed Vietnam. Judy spoke to the crowd while holding the couple's daughter who had only been three-months old when her father died, to state: "Too many families are suffering what I am suffering and too many children will have to suffer what my daughter will suffer."⁸

With the words of Judy Droz haunting him and seeing more and more veterans joining the anti-war crowd, John Kerry requested and received early discharge from active duty early in 1970. He had served three years and eight months including a deployment aboard the U.S.S. Gridley in the waters of the Tonkin Gulf and then four months of combat duty in the brown water rivers of South Vietnam. Now he felt he had a moral obligation to end the war through words--indeed bombs and bullets had failed to do anything but escalate the violence and casualties.

In February Kerry, now a civilian on Navy Reserve status, mounted a brief campaign for a vacant Massachusetts Third Congressional District House Seat under an anti-war platform. Ultimately, in the citizens caucus he withdrew and put his support behind anti-war Democrat Robert Drinnan who won election and later repaid Kerry with critical support to his own political ambitions. In May Kerry married his girlfriend of six years Julia Thorn, drawing attention from the *New York Times* which reported: "Miss Julia Stimson Thorne, whose ancestors helped to shape the American republic in its early days, and John Forbes Kerry, who wants to help steer it back from what he considers a wayward course, were married this afternoon at the 200-acre Thorne family estate (on Long Island)."⁹

In November Kerry gave his first speech as part of his efforts to "steer (his country) back from (its) wayward course" during a VVAW rally at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. His abilities as a speaker stood out to mark him a vital spokesman for the growing opposition in the veteran's community. From January 31 to February 2, 1971, VVAW held a series of hearings in Detroit. It was a media rather than a political event during which more than 100 Vietnam veterans testified to witnessing and even participating in atrocities in Vietnam. The mainstream media opted largely to ignore these *Winter Soldier Hearings* though the *Detroit Free Press* published every word. In light of My Lai, which was becoming more and more believable, their testimony fueled the anti-war fire.

The *Winter Soldier Hearings* remain one of the most bitterly remembered and divisive protests of the Vietnam War. Based upon the testimony of 108 veterans and a few civilians who had worked in Vietnam and, validated by reports of the My Lai Massacre, veterans of the war were painted with the same broad brush that had tainted the true image of war protesters. It came to seem as if all Vietnam vets were psychotic killers of civilians and children. In fact, some of those who testified were later discredited as not even having served in the war. Other accounts were found to be embellished or even outright false. But there was enough truth to some reports of "war crimes" to turn a segment of American society against not only the war, but against young men and women who continued to serve valiantly with dignity and honor. Returning war veterans not a part of the anti-war movement were spit on and called "baby killers."

John Kerry did not personally participate in those hearings but his role as a leader in VVAW and his subsequent Senate testimony linked him inexorably to the event. Senator Fulbright, who as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee had held continuous hearings that expanded upon the 1968 testimony of General Shoup, heard three days of testimony in April 1971. John Kerry was the first called to testify in the televised event.

Dressed in green Navy utility shirt and with the ribbons for his medals above his left breast pocket, Kerry testified from a prepared statement with the oratorical skills for which he had become already renown. Speaking for the 1,000-member VVAW he told members of the Committee, "In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam, nothing which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America...We found most (Vietnamese) people didn't even know the difference between communism and democracy. They only wanted to work in rice paddies without helicopters strafing them and bombs with napalm burning their villages and tearing their country apart."¹⁰

Recalling the hearings in Detroit two months earlier he noted: "we had an investigation at which over 150 honorably discharged and many very highly decorated veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia, not isolated incidents but crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command....They told the stories at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to

human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war, and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country."¹¹

Those few sentences came to define John Kerry more than any other words of the anti-war movement. Thousands of veterans felt then, and remain convinced today, that a former Swift Boat commander had impugned the nature of their honorable service and portrayed them all as war criminals. Those sentences may well have cost him the Presidential election of 2005. At the time however, before a generally sympathetic panel of Senators, his testimony demonstrated his keen mind and finely tuned oratorical skill. His clean-cut, All-American image on television confronted the false image many Americans had of the members of the anti-war crowd. In fact, in that moment the face of the Vietnam War protester morphed from being that of a drugged-out rebel to the face of an heroic former Naval officer. The face of John Forbes Kerry may well have become the face of the anti-war effort. Mention it today and John Kerry is often the first person to come to mind.

Following the Senate Hearings Kerry, in cooperation with VVAW, published The New Soldier, containing his Senate testimony, details from the *Winter Soldier Hearings*, and his reasons for opposing the war in Vietnam. Perhaps most striking of all his words was the statement, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

Over the next year Kerry continued his high-profile efforts to bring the war to a quick end though not without opposition. Many Vietnam Veterans were outraged at his testimony, perhaps with good reason, though the conviction of Lieutenant William Calley for the murders at My Lai on September 10, 1971, validated some of his claims. In an appearance on The Dick Cavett Show Kerry debated former Swift Boater John O'Neill who had served adjacent to Kerry in Vietnam. When asked on NBC's *Meet the Press* if he had personally committed atrocities in Vietnam, Kerry alluded only to the use of .50 caliber machine guns as an anti-personnel weapon, search and destroy missions during which villages were burned, and combat in "free fire zones."

In 1972 John Kerry became less active in VVAW and, buoyed by his high public profile, ran again for a Congressional Seat in Massachusetts. After losing that bid, he returned to school to pursue a degree in law at Boston college. When he received his Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree in 1976 the war in Vietnam had ended. After working in the Middlesex, Massachusetts District Attorney's Office he opened his own law firm in 1979. In 1982 he ran for the office of Lieutenant Governor with Michael Dukakis, winning that post. In 1984 Senator Paul Tsongas retired for health reasons and Lieutenant Governor Kerry won election to that post. There he continued his activism, becoming a leader in the issues that led to the Iran-Contra hearings of 1989.

Kerry's detractors, generally unable to discredit his distinguished service, sometimes resorted to attacking his character. Some have intoned that his anti-war activism was simply an opportunistic rally to an issue that could get him before the public. Even his friends acknowledge that John Kerry was always an opportunist. Ironically, in *The Land of Opportunity*, being an opportunist is not always seen as a good thing--especially when it defines an individual who remains as controversial thirty-five years after the war as he was during the war.

Love him or hate him, believe him or revile him, there is no doubt that John Forbes Kerry sincerely believed what he said, said it with eloquence, and accepted the consequences. If in fact there were only limited consequences in the 1970s, there can be little doubt he paid for exercising his right of free speech in 2005. In a close Presidential election Kerry lost, perhaps because of the activist opposition of former Vietnam War comrades who refused to forget or forgive.

Free speech is a fundamental of our American society, a safety-valve to force us to see both sides of every issue. When voicing a dissenting opinion however, free speech may be a costly right to exert. For John Kerry, expressing his dissent came at a very high cost.

¹ Kranish, Michael, Brian C. Mooney & Nina J. Easton, John F. Kerry-The Complete biography by the Boston Globe Reporters who Know Him Best, Public Affairs, New York, 2004, p 23.

² Ibid, p 32.

³ Ibid, p 32.

⁴ Ibid, p 54.

⁵ U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, July 2004, p 16.

⁶ Kranish, Michael, *ibid*, P 65-66

⁷ *ibid*, p 88.

⁸ *Ibid*, p 113.

⁹ *Ibid*, p 115

¹⁰ Kerry, John F., Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 22, 1971

¹¹ *ibid*

Defining the Future of Politics

An Act of Congress

It was absolutely one of the worst days of my life and I literally came home in tears. "I don't know why I let you and all those other people talk me into this. I just don't belong here!" I said none-too-kindly to Doug. Then, sobbing between tears, I tried to explain all that had happened.

It was the fall of 2003 and I, at the ripe old age of 46, had just finished new student orientation at Colorado State University-Pueblo to enroll as a Junior. It had been a miserable and totally humiliating afternoon and was an experience I'd never have willingly subjected myself to. All of the other students were young--very young. I had children of my own that were older than they were. I felt conspicuous and out of place until at last I spotted one other lady who was about my age and walked over to introduce. Then, to my increased embarrassment, I learned that she was the mother of one of the incoming students.

It also seemed that all of the other incoming students were smart, determined, and had some sense of what they wanted to do. I had never considered myself smart or academically inclined and furthermore, I had no idea where I wanted to go with all this. When, after a brief welcome the faculty advised students to go to specific rooms based on their chosen Major, I tried to slink inconspicuously into the one room reserved for the "Undecided."

"So, what Major did you decide on?" Doug interrupted to ask excitedly.

"Political Science," I announced tentatively.

Doug looked surprised. "Why did you choose that," he responded incredulously, and then after a long pause stated flatly, "You know I won't be able to help you much with that."

My heart sank even lower. Doug has always been something of a historian and more recently had spent all his time building a website about American history. I had chosen Political Science for two reasons, one--it looked like it would be interesting and, two--an education in that field might enable me to help Doug with his website. Now as Doug explained that his web efforts had nothing to do with politics, I suddenly felt alone and confronted by a future of academic work far above my abilities.

"Maybe I'll just drop out," I announced. "I never should have done this in the first place."

My late-in-life quest for a college degree came about entirely by accident. As a child I had never considered myself "smart" and struggled to get passing grades. My report cards from the period are filled with teacher's notes, generally to the effect that "Pam is a smart girl but needs to pay more attention in class." I always thought that the teachers had put "smart" in there to soften the blow.

Doug's and my work with Medal of Honor recipients to promote patriotic education in Pueblo in the 1990s ignited a new passion for history in Doug. Meanwhile, we were tiring from the demands of our jobs in the apartment industry with its problems of living on site, answering emergencies at all hours, and being on-call seven days a week. In 1997 one of our good friends, Medal of Honor Recipient Peter Lemon, had a long visit with Doug about our work. "You know, Doug," he said, "you are wasting your talents managing apartments--you should be building a museum." Within a year Doug had indeed built a model for a museum and was preparing to change the course of his life.

While Doug certainly is quite smart, he is equally impractical. In January 1998 he gave notice to our company that he was leaving to build a museum. While he began concerning himself with the structure, design, and lay-out of a \$6 million dream, as the practical one I began to worry about more important things--like how we would pay rent, feed the kids, etc. Doug is the kind who will follow a dream while believing everything is going to work out. "Don't worry Pam," he would

tell me. "We'll make it. We always have." There were no concrete plans or even vague ideas for our financial security and, while Doug could dismiss them, I could not. I was extremely worried for our future.

"Why don't you both go to college while Dad is working on this," our oldest daughter told me a week before we were scheduled to depart our managerial jobs. It was something I would never have considered--after all, I thought only smart people and rich people went to college. Jennifer explained to me that we would qualify for grants and loans that would not only pay for tuition and books but give us money that could help pay rent and groceries while we were in school. She also explained to me about scholarships, though to me the idea of ever getting any kind of scholarship was pretty hard to believe possible. Surprisingly, it didn't take much for her to convince me. The promise of at least some money coming in to keep us alive while Doug followed his dream overcame my own reservations about going back to school.

Doug wasn't such an "easy sell," he had his own big plans and didn't want classes consuming time he might otherwise spend building his museum, which was still nothing more than a big idea based on a cardboard model. I stood my ground on this one however, determined that our "kids wouldn't starve because of Doug's big dreams." Finally, and not really happy about it, Doug told me to go ahead and sign us both up for classes at Pueblo Community College (PCC). "What classes do you want to take?" I asked him. He gruffly advised me to sign him up for whatever I wanted. A few hours later I called him to advise that he was going to start school the following week to major in Computer Information Systems. I was going to be taking Business Technology classes that one day might enable me to get a medical transcription job that would allow me to work from home.

Doug's earlier antagonism aside, he quickly began to enjoy going back to school. He immersed himself in computers and excelled. Within months he gave up on building a \$6 million brick-and-mortar museum to generate a "virtual museum" online where he felt he could reach even more people. (Today his website gets 12 million hits a month.) Two years later he graduated from PCC with a 4.0 Grade Point Average. During his last semester as a student in fact, he was even hired as adjunct faculty to teach some of the classes. He still teaches there today.

On the other hand, I went much slower. While Doug was getting his degree, I went to PCC part time while taking various part-time jobs to supplement our income. I greatly enjoyed returning to school, found even that I did well, and was even inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) National Honor Society. The pursuit of my practical, job-seeking business degree was further delayed when I started taking many computer-related classes both as a matter of personal interest and because I thought it might enable me to help Doug with his website.

My college advisor was Esther Williams, a dedicated professional who also headed up the school's PTK program. She also became one of my dearest friends. As my pursuit of a 2-year degree extended into its fifth year however, she began pushing me to "cut the umbilical cord" and move on. "There's always CSU, or other 4-year colleges," she would tell me. "I know you like it here, but you can't stay at PCC forever." Of course, I could not envision myself going on to a *real* college and knew that graduating from PCC would end what had become a very pleasant experience in my life.

While Esther was preparing me practically and emotionally for graduation and further education, I tried to respect our friendship and her confidence in me by "playing along" while planning to graduate and find a good, even if low-paying, job as a transcriptionist. One day in my last semester she called me into her office and handed me a stack of papers to fill out. She advised me that every community college was allowed to recommend two people for the "All Colorado

Academic Team." The program, sponsored by *USA Today*, would then choose a select few of the finalists for the "All-USA Academic Team." Though I had surprisingly achieved a 3.8 GPA, I still didn't see myself as smart but, when Esther told me that selection also included public service criteria, I at least understood her reasoning.

I was honored even to be recommended for the team, even though I knew I didn't have a chance. I put off filling out the paperwork until the last minute and did so the day before it was due only after Esther called me and chewed me out. That evening when I came into Esther's office, she looked over the paperwork and then said, "You didn't write the essay for the scholarship they are giving to attend the university." I explained that I had no intention of going to the university when I graduated. "But if they paid your way to go you would, wouldn't you?" she asked. I grudgingly said I would, and then dutifully sat down to write while Esther patiently waited, determined not to let me off the hook. I then thanked her for her confidence, went home, and forgot all about it.

A few months later and shortly before graduation I received two letters in the mail. One said that I had been selected for the *USA Today All-America Second Team*. The other advised that I was a *Guistewhite Finalist*, though I didn't know what that meant. I called Esther to tell her of the first letter and she was immediately excited and asked me to bring in the letter. I was, she said, only the second person in the history of our school to be selected.

A short time later as Esther looked over the two letters, she suddenly erupted into a level of excitement I had never seen. "Pam," she said, "you didn't tell me about *Guistewhite* on the phone."

"Well," I responded, "I didn't even know what that meant. Is that good?"

"Good? Pam, never in the history of our school has one of our students received both. You've made history, and now you are going to the University. That is the scholarship I made you write the essay for."

My final weeks at PCC, leading up to graduation with the Class of 2003, was an exciting and heady time. I was honored at the National PTK convention at which, ironically enough I met a niece the age of my daughter who was attending from a community college in Oregon. The President of PCC presented me with an academic medal in a special ceremony for PCC faculty and students. The Lieutenant Governor even personally presented me with a plaque and resolution during ceremonies in Denver. I now had (academic) medals and certificates to hang side-by-side with the countless such items Doug hangs on his own "ego wall."

Summer, however, was a nervous time. I believed my success at PCC was a fluke. Good grades had required hard work for me, but I brushed the accomplishments aside by noting, "That was a community college. Doing well there was fairly easy. But now I'm going to have to go to a real university." In great fear and trepidation, I tried to convince myself to just go get a job and forget about a bachelor's degree. I had plenty of arguments, not the least of which was that while the *Guistewhite Scholarship* was prestigious, it only amounted to \$250 per semester. I felt pressure from PCC President Mike Davis, PTK alumni, former school friends and above all, Esther Williams, to go on and succeed and not let them down. Thus, it was I found myself in August attending an orientation that proved to be one of the most discouraging days of my life.

This time it was Doug who was adamant about school. "You can't drop out," he told me. "It will just kill Esther if you don't go on."

"Esther retired this summer," I told him. "It's not that big a deal now."

"Yes, but you are still friends and you know she and others are counting on you," he came back. Each time I tried to find an excuse to quit, Doug came back with more reasons to go on.

Finally, exhausted from crying and perhaps even somewhat enamored by Doug's own confidence in me, I reluctantly agreed to give it my best effort.

One of the first things I learned at CSU-Pueblo, after the fact that I was old enough to be most students' mother, was how different the field of Political Science could be from other fields of study. Unlike math and business where one plus one equals two, Science where two parts hydrogen and one-part oxygen equal water, or English where a double-negative equal a positive, there are few absolutes in Political Science. The sheer objective nature of the subject made it a breeding ground for controversy and some rather interesting debate, especially in view of the fact that I have always been a very conservative Republican and most of my classmates were equally liberal Democrats. It seemed further that most of the professors gloried in identifying themselves among the latter.

Slowly I gravitated towards Dr. Gayle Berardi, who seemed to be the only rational and conservative of my professors. In her presence as well as in her classes I could share my own political beliefs without drawing immediate castigation. In fact, she always respected my opinion, encouraged me in my efforts, and in 2005 nominated me to "Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities." Dr. Berardi was always careful not to reveal her own political leanings, either in a personal conversation or in front of the blackboard, but in my heart, I knew she was a conservative Republican like me, just by the way she acted. Only after graduation, and then quite by accident, did I learn that I was wrong.

In contrast was Dr. Collette Carter, arguably the loudest and meanest professor in the university system. She was left-of-liberal and proud to admit it; the first day I walked into her class I knew we would never get along. During classroom discussions if I made a comment with which she (and usually most of the class) disagreed, she would look at me and say in a condescending tone of voice, "Now Pam, how can you even say that." Fortunately, though I've always felt rather insecure, I'm also very opinionated. Rather than slinking back in my chair in embarrassment, I would stand to my feet and go toe-to-toe with my professor to validate my point, the two of us arguing back and forth while the rest of the class looked on in amusement.

Things could be even worse in what was meant to be a private conversation in Dr. Carter's office. I recall one day when I went in to see her to clarify an assignment and, as we talked, somehow the conversation turned to the subject of abortion. Her shouts could be heard all the way down the hall and I later learned that one of the other professors in an adjoining office had remarked to someone, "Oh, no, Pam's got Dr. Carter started again."

Sadly, during my senior year I heard through the grapevine that at least one student had complained about Dr. Carter's manner of instruction, and that she had been confronted by school administrators. I did notice that she tamed down considerably my last year in school and I certainly missed the "old Dr. Carter." I can honestly say today that there are few women I admire more than Dr. Collette Carter, a professor who was always at her best when she was at her worst.

After graduation Dr. Carter was a guest in our home for dinner more than once, and I learned even more about her. As a young Black woman, she grew up in the South where she witnessed the injustices of rampant and violent racism and subsequently devoted her early life to the Civil Rights movement. As a Peace Corps Volunteer to Costa Rica in the early '60s she had witnessed poverty beyond our borders. She despised hypocrisy and was totally disillusioned with the hope that the American political process would ever do anything positive. She was very hard on her students, pushing them to illiterate why they believed what they believed. I had always thought she virtually hated Republicans...well, in honesty she probably does...but the thing that

set her off so often was the one thing she despised most--ignorance. If you had a belief in something it had better be based on principles you could lay out, not on emotion or tradition.

At the end of my first year at CSU I was visiting with Dr. Carter in her office one day when she looked across her desk and told me, "Pam, I really respect you." I almost fell out of my chair and, when at last I recovered enough to respond I asked why. She told me, "Political views aren't as important as being involved with people and giving back to community." Three months later when I returned in September 2005, Doug and my attention was diverted by our work in Pueblo to relocate families displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Dr. Carter would point me out to other faculty and fellow students during this time when I was getting a lot of attention in the media for our work and say with pride, "See, I've created a monster!"

I learned a lot about the United States and our political process at CSU-Pueblo where I managed to drag my education out over three years. I like to believe I learned more than any of my classmates, not however, because of what was taught in the classroom. Rather, a simple written assignment in the fall of 2004 would propel me into a virtual show-down with the United States Congress for two years.

It all started innocently enough when our class was assigned by Dr. Carter, as a final exam, to write a "policy analysis" paper. We were to research an issue and develop a policy to address it or to examine existing policy and seek how to improve it. For weeks I struggled to determine what subject to do my own paper on. In fact, my subject was right under my own roof.

As a result of Doug's website, which lists and tells the stories of Medal of Honor recipients and other military heroes, he was constantly being inundated with emails identifying heroes he had missed and left off. Most were in fact, frauds whose tales of heroism and often official-looking citations were lies and counterfeit. As a result, he found himself confronting bogus heroes repeatedly and working closely with the F.B.I. to deal with the issue.

Special Agent Thomas Cottone, Jr., was at the time the F.B.I.'s lead agent on issues of medals fraud and, working closely with Doug had become a friend to both of us. Often, he and Doug would vent their frustration at the loopholes in Title 18 of the U.S. Code that allowed bogus heroes to escape prosecution. At that time the law allowed prosecution of individuals who physically wore medals they hadn't earned, but with few teeth, it was considered a minor infraction that few Federal Attorneys would pursue. Far more frequent were cases where imposters simply could not be prosecuted because they didn't physically wear the medals. One case I learned of was that of Michael O'Brien, an Illinois District Judge. Judge O'Brien had two actual Medals of Honor hanging prominently in his court room and published in his biographical material that he had earned both in Vietnam. Exposed when he tried to fraudulently obtain Medal of Honor license plates, he refused to resign and could not be prosecuted. He had never physically worn the medals.

On Veterans Day a newspaper in Arizona featured the inspiring story of a local hero that included tales of his heroism in the first Gulf War, Somalia, and in Iraq. The man claimed to have been involved in the combat action that had killed Saddam Hussein's two sons and then again, he had participated in the capture of Saddam himself. The front-page story featured a prominent color picture of the bogus hero holding up a picture frame filled with medals he told the reporters he had earned. Doug and Tom were furious--nothing could be done. Under the letter of the law the man was not wearing the unearned medals, he was simply holding them. At last I had found the topic for my final paper.

We students had been instructed to advise Dr. Carter in advance as to the subject matter of our paper and, quite frankly, she was not too thrilled with my choice. She asked me why I had selected that subject and I explained to her the problems the F.B.I. was experiencing with phony

war heroes. "I want to write this paper not just for a grade," I said. "I plan to use that paper to get the law changed and amend Title 18 to address the problem."

Dr. Carter just looked at me as if I was a naïve young girl who had just crawled out from under a rock in the dark ages. "Pam," she said, "don't get your hopes up. That would take an act of Congress." I turned the paper in on December 9, 2004, and got an "A." I wanted much more.

Despite my education I was, I admit, a pretty naïve and idealistic student back then, one who knew little about the "nuts and bolts" of the political process. In January, as the "token Republican" on campus (though that is certainly an over-generalization), I was asked to try and schedule Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo to speak on immigration. He accepted and during his visit I presented him with a copy of my paper on medals fraud. As Dr. Carter no doubt could have expected and perhaps would have warned me had she not wished to "rain on my parade," I never heard back from him. Still, I remained optimistic and determined.

The following month we received a call from Sal Pace, District Director for our new Congressman, John T. Salazar. In the general election of 2003 Doug and I, disgusted with the dirty political campaign of the Republican running for a seat in the vacant Colorado 3d Congressional District Seat, had made an unprecedented break with our party to support Salazar, a Democrat. The following year we had met occasionally with him, largely as a result of our Katrina relocation efforts, and become friends with Sal. Learning of my paper on medals fraud, Sal had approached his boss and now Congressman Salazar wanted to meet with us to discuss it. In March, Medal of Honor Recipient Peter Lemon, Doug, and I met with Congressman Salazar, and then began drafting the language of the proposed bill.

Following that meeting I returned excitedly to my classes at CSU-Pueblo to advise Dr. Carter, "My paper is going to be introduced as a bill in Congress."

"Great," she replied. "Who is going to carry the bill?"

"Congressman John Salazar."

"Oh no!" she gasped. "That's the kiss of death." I asked why and she answered simply, "Because he's a Democrat." At that time Republicans held the majority of both Houses.

"But," I protested, "this is a non-partisan bill."

"Pam," she said, much like a wise mother counsels an innocent daughter, "there is no such thing as a non-partisan bill."

I remained undiscouraged and chalked Dr. Carter's reaction up to her cynical and negative view of the American political process. Working with Congressman Salazar's staff we decided to call the bill the "Stolen Valor Act of 2005," naming the legislation for the acclaimed 1998 book by B.G. *Jug* Burkett and Gina Whitley that had first brought public attention to the issue of medals fraud and phony veterans. In fact, in July when John Salazar introduced H.R. 3352, the *Stolen Valor Act of 2005*, Burkett himself joined the Congressman for the press conference. Within days the bill was co-sponsored by some two dozen Democrats, a couple Republicans, and had received the endorsement of the F.B.I. Agents Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and others. I was personally thrilled and excitedly confident that my paper was going to become the basis of a new law. Boy was I in for an education!

As luck would have it, the *Stolen Valor Act* was announced in the same week the movie "Wedding Crashers" was released. During one scene in that movie the characters used bogus Purple Hearts, awarded for wound in combat, to impress and pick up girls. Introduction of the bill was seen as a knee-jerk reaction to the film...never mind that I had been working on it for six months...and garnered immediate media attention. Doug and I appeared on FOX News to promote

the bill and we quickly gained several new sponsors in Congress, but then the members took a 3-week August recess and the excitement died down quickly.

When I returned for my last year of classes in September my bill had been remanded to the House Judiciary Committee. My professors, while patting me on the back for my limited success, cautioned me against optimism by reminding me what they had taught us in class, "Congressional Committees are where proposed bills are sent to die." The struggle via mail and phone to gain more Congressional so-sponsors met limited success and things began looking bleak. We had somewhere around 70 bi-partisan co-sponsors for the bill, but Republicans comprised only about a third of the total. I felt frustrated...here I was, a loyal Republican and the person who wrote the bill, and I was being ignored by my own party simply because my bill had been introduced by a Democrat. It just didn't seem fair.

In November, for Veterans Day, Senator Kent Conrad of North Dakota introduced S 1998, the *Stolen Valor Act of 2005* in the U.S. Senate. He too was a Democrat, but my hopes were buoyed by the fact that the Senate Bill was introduced with the co-sponsorship of an almost equal number of both Democrats and Republicans. "That's not unexpected," Dr. Carter told me. "The Senate is not quite as partisan as the House. You see, members of the House are re-elected every two years, so they have to be very careful to toe the party line. Since Senators only face re-election every six years, they can be a little less partisan because there is more time between their actions and election for people to forget that they supported a cause for the other side." Again, I thought her statement was based more on her slanted view of politics. Quickly I learned she spoke the truth.

During the fall and into my spring semester while applying myself to my studies, I also worked hard to try and get my bill passed by Congress. Time and again I returned to Dr. Carter, Dr. Briardi, and Dr. Mark Gose, a new professor in our department and a former Air Force officer, for advice and assistance. Frankly, while everyone at CSU-Pueblo was proud of the fact that my paper had actually even been introduced as a bill, none really thought that it would go any further. Still they encouraged me, knowing how frustrated I was becoming and how determined I was to make it happen.

That spring I was selected to represent Colorado's 3d Congressional District at the Inaugural Model U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., during the real Congress' spring recess. It gave me an opportunity to personally take my cause to the Capitol and I went back to my professors for advice as to how best to revive my bill. "Pam," Dr. Carter told me, "there is only one chance for you to get this done. Go back to Congressman Salazar and ask him to pull his bill. If he really cares about the issue, he'll do it. Then, with all the publicity the bill has got, you should be able to find a Republican to introduce it. That is your only chance. The Republicans are not going to allow a Democrat bill out of Committee."

I have great respect for Dr. Carter and was finally beginning to see that what she had said previously was not simply a reflection of her cynicism about Congress--it was the fact of life. Still, what she proposed I do was simply wrong in my mind. The end does not justify the means. Congressman Salazar had demonstrated enough belief in my paper to introduce the bill, and I refused to turn my back on a loyal friend.

I voiced as much in a subsequent conversation with Dr. Briardi. "Good for you Pam. Do what you think is right. You can beat the system." Her words aside, I'm convinced that even then while sincerely hoping that I would beat the system, Dr. Briardi knew in her heart that I was swimming against the current in a sea of impossibility.

The following week Doug and I drove to Denver for a planning meeting with Congressman Bob Beauprez, a Republican who was now running for Governor. He recognized me from a

previous meeting and came over to visit. As I talked with him about my bill he put his arm around me like a father and cautioned me nicely, "Pam, I don't want you to get your feelings hurt, but your bill doesn't really have a chance." I asked why and he told me, "Because it was introduced by a Democrat. That may sound harsh but that's the facts of life in politics."

"Then you need to help me with this," I responded.

He said, "I am a co-sponsor."

"That's not enough," I replied firmly. "Doug and I have endorsed you, but we are here today because you want us to do more than just put our names down as supporters--you want us to go out and advocate for you. The same thing is true with my bill. I appreciate that you were one of the first co-sponsors, but now I need you to go out and advocate for my bill." He promised me that he would see what he could do and remains today one of the men in public life I admire most. He was true to his word far beyond what I could have expected.

Two weeks later and just prior to my trip to Washington, D.C., Congressman Salazar made a brief stop at our house to prep me for my upcoming trip. When we finished visiting and started talking about my bill, he told me, "You know Pam, the strangest thing happened last week. Bob Beauprez came up to me on the floor of the House and said, 'John, this *Stolen Valor* bill of yours is a good bill. If there is anything, I can do to help you on it, just let me know.' It really caught me by surprise," he added. In some small measure that afternoon I felt like I had already beaten the system.

Most of my activities in D.C. were consumed with the process we were there to learn as members of the Model House of Representatives, but I did find time to meet Senator Conrad's staff and to lobby my bill in several House and Senate offices. I returned in time for Memorial Day during which it seemed bogus heroes were coming out of the woodwork. Doug and/or I made repeated appearances on FOX News, ABC's *Good Morning America*, and scores of other broadcast shows. In the Senate we had more than 2 dozen co-sponsors, equally divided along party lines and including some of the Senate's most recognized names. In the House our list of co-sponsors was over 100, still 2/3s Democrat, but improving. Even with all the support and publicity however, it appeared my bill was going to be lost to the upcoming election.

It wasn't so much that election activities overshadowed the *Stolen Valor Act* as it remained partisan. The Chief of Staff of one Colorado Republican Congressman had earlier explained it to me this way: "In an election year, we (Republicans) simply cannot allow a Freshman Democrat in a vulnerable district get credit for passing a major piece of legislation." For the first time I learned that my bill was stymied not only by partisanship but by strategy. In the U.S. House of Representatives, a Freshman is considered vulnerable by the opposing party, and target for reclaiming a seat when he or she runs the first time for re-election. It is almost an unwritten rule in Congress that a Freshman is not going to get a major bill passed...save for perhaps an innocuous renaming of a post office or some other simple legislative matter.

Hope soared on the morning of September 8 when Doug, unable to sleep got up about 4 a.m. and went through his routine Google news search on the words "stolen valor." Moments later he was waking me up shouting, "Your bill passed the U.S. Senate last night!" I was stunned as it was totally unexpected. Senator Arlen Specter, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee had not only signed on as a co-sponsor, but he had reported the bill out of committee and it had almost immediately passed the Senate by unanimous consent. Even Congressman Salazar and his staff were stunned; they were not even aware the bill was being considered until they received Doug's 4 a.m. email announcing the bill's passage in the Senate. Little did I realize how difficult it would still be to get a similar action in the U.S. House.

My instructors at CSU-Pueblo were ecstatic...and dumbfounded. While they had taught political process for decades, none had ever personally found themselves involved in what I was now facing. I even found myself having to explain to one or two of my former instructors what the Suspension Calendar* was in the U.S. House, and how it handled legislation.

On the home front Doug and I began working around the clock, phone calls, faxes, anything we could do to muster new support in the U.S. House. The indications we began receiving were not encouraging. The Senate bill was now side-by-side with the House bill in the Judiciary Committee, and the Republican House leadership seemed unwilling to move it forward.

In late September "Army Times" printed the bill's obituary. The opening line of the story read: "In a major legislative reprieve for posers who claim to rate combat decorations they didn't earn, the House Judiciary Committee failed to take action on a Senate-approved bill outlawing medals fraud during the committee's last meeting before Congress adjourns Oct. 1."

One of the most frustrating things about the now-nearly-certain death of my bill was how close we had come to success. After passing the Senate it would have required only a few minutes of time by the Majority Leadership of the House, which virtually controls all opportunity for any bill, to place it on the Suspension Calendar and schedule it for a vote. Doug and I targeted three people in particular, Speaker of the House, the Majority Whip, and Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee--all of whom are Republicans and all of which seemed determined not to budge. While every Congressman and Congresswoman returned home in October to prepare for the November election, we did our best to resurrect the *Stolen Valor Act* from its partisan-motivated fate.

How bitterly and stubbornly partisan can politicians be? Consider that from mid-September to the end of October we worked with literally thousands of supporters to bombard the offices of House Leadership with letters and calls to move the *Stolen Valor Act* forward. CSU-Pueblo President Dr. Richard Garcia and Pueblo *Chieftain* publisher Bob Rawlings sent personal letters to all three targeted Republicans. Colorado's Governor and Lieutenant Governor, both Republicans, also sent letters to House leadership. We even placed a call to our good friend, former Colorado Congressman and well-respected Republican leader Scott McInnis and he too, contacted House leaders to push forward my bill.

Perhaps more than anything however, pure luck once again smiled on us. On Veterans Day the speaker for events in Chillicothe, Missouri, appeared wearing a Navy Cross pin and telling the audience stories of being submitted for that honor by Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North and receiving it personally from Vice President Dick Cheney. It was all bogus but since he was wearing a Navy Cross PIN and not the MEDAL, he slipped through the same loophole in Title 18 of the U.S. Code my bill was designed to close. Before that man was exposed Doug placed a call to Congressman Sam Graves, a Republican whose district included Chillicothe. Within 24 hours Congressman Graves himself called us back to advise he had personally called John Salazar to add his name to the growing list of co-sponsors. "We've got to do something about this problem," he told Doug. And he did. Within hours of the release of newspaper reports that exposed the fraud of that Veterans Day speaker Congressman Graves was making copies and distributing them among his comrades in Congress. To this day Doug and I believe that he became, in that moment, the key to our ultimate success.

* The Suspension Calendar is a part of U.S. House legislative procedure for non-controversial bills. It takes its name from the fact that these rules go to the floor with the suspension of the rules for normal procedure--such bills do not require a hearing. Suspension items are presented on the floor at the discretion of House Leadership where discussion is very limited, and where they must then garner a 2/3ds plurality of those members of Congress present for a vote.

Nearly simultaneously Doug uncovered another fraud from Veterans Day. This 400-pound man, wearing multiple high awards including the Navy Cross and Silver Star, was photographed at a Marine Corps League function in St. Louis, ironically enough a city within the Congressional District of the Majority Whip we had been targeting for a month. ABC News reported the man's fraud with a headline that read: "Phony Marine--too Fat to be Real." As the story developed further a reporter for FOX News in St. Louis called, advising Doug that they had interviewed Congressman Blunt, the Majority Whip, and he had said the *Stolen Valor* issue was important and that he would be willing to co-sponsor such a bill in the next Congress.

"Call him back," Doug advised, "and ask him why, if he is willing to co-sponsor it in the next Congress, he doesn't just move the current bill to the Suspension Calendar so Congress can vote on it when then come back next week (first week of December). It would only take five minutes for Congress to pass this bill."

On Thursday, November 30, we received a call from Senator Conrad's office. The House Judiciary Committee had contacted them to advise that they were willing to place the previously passed Senate version of the *Stolen Valor Act* on the Suspension Calendar. One week later on December 6, 2006, I anxiously watched C-Span in the day room of a Nursing Home where I was working at a temporary position, as Judiciary Chairman James Sensenbrenner spoke eloquently on behalf of my bill. He was followed by five others, two Republicans and two Democrats, all urging passage of my bill.

Two weeks later on December 20, 2006, President George W. Bush signed his name in the final act of passing the *Stolen Valor Act* into law. I was at once thrilled, stunned, exhilarated and amazed. Against all odds, refusing to bow to pressure or to surrender to the way traditional political action can become divided based on party lines, we managed somehow to succeed. Indeed, as Dr. Carter had said, it had both literally and figuratively taken an Act of Congress.

Perhaps the success of that effort in which a Freshman Congressman from the minority party accomplished what is politically unfathomable was best summed up as well in a story in "Roll Call" that said: "The most astounding part of this story perhaps is the fact that the Sterners are lifelong Republicans, and Salazar is a Democrat. But it's that partisan divide that ultimately carried the Stolen Valor Act to the finish line, according to Salazar.

"I think divided houses work so much better, because of the balance of power," Salazar said. "That's what most Americans want — both parties to get along and address the issues that work for middle America."¹

Pam Sterner

¹ Gottlieb, Tom, "An Act for Valor," *Roll Call*, December 11, 2006

All Politics is...Hereditary?

Comedian Jeff Foxworthy has built a career with his humorous definition of a subculture: "You might be a *Redneck* if...." Decades ago, an early comedian became known and loved for his humorous definition of politics. Regarding our two-party political system, he once noted, "The more you read and observe about this Politics thing, you got to admit that each party is worse than the other. The one that's out always looks the best." Imagine then, what we might have had could we have combined Jeff Foxworthy with Will Rogers:

- You might be a Republican if: "You have a business card in your wallet...have a gun in your closet...have the image of a fish on your car's bumper...hire an illegal immigrant to clean your house...live in Utah.
- You might be a Democrat if: "You have a Union Card in your wallet...have *pot* growing in your closet...have dents in your car's bumper...are related to an illegal immigrant...live in Massachusetts.

Such attempts to generalize and encapsulate the demographics of our system's two major political parties, however, is doomed to result in false conclusions, divisive attitudes, and utter failure. The bottom line is people are different! Not just *two-political-leanings* different but different on many levels. Some Democrats own guns and love to hunt, some Republicans smoke weed. Not all ethnic minorities are Democrats and not all Republicans go to church. Utah does have one Democrat in Congress and Massachusetts does have...we'll, perhaps someday!

The United States is great today because of the diversity of its population, not in spite of it. Divergent beliefs, ideas and dreams, when directed towards the common good of all, ultimately result in the greater good of all. This applies differences in ethnicity, gender, religion, and even political affiliations, but extends far further into far more personal differences.

There are few better examples of the value of differences combining for the common good than that of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, our 2nd and 3d Presidents, respectively. Vastly different in many ways and nearly always on a collision course, each with the other, they may well have been the models for Jack Lemon and Walter Matthau in the 1993 movie "Grumpy Old Men." The affection of their competition in the movie was a woman, played by Ann Margaret. The object of affection that often-pitted Adams and Jefferson against each other but that ultimately always returned them to a common grudging need each for the other was a new nation, the United States of America.

Seldom in history have two men different, accomplished so much together. John Adams was a Harvard-educated Massachusetts attorney, with a brilliant mind, unrestrained ambition, and a streak of vanity. The latter may well have been a compensation for his height, at only 5'7" tall, only three presidents in history have been shorter. When the United States was born in 1776, Adams evolved into a strong Federalist, advocating for a strong central government in America. In order of precedence he placed the rule of law over the collective will of the people.

Thomas Jefferson, an attorney who became wealthy when he inherited a large Virginia plantation was also gifted with a brilliant mind. President John F. Kennedy centuries later alluded to the great genius of the man in 1962 when he welcomed 42 recipients of the Nobel Prize to the White House with the words, "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent and of human knowledge that has ever been gathered together at the White House—with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone." At more than 6'2" only two of our Presidents were taller. A simple man who eschewed ego, Jefferson was an anti-Federalist who believed first

and foremost in Popular Sovereignty, the collective rule of the people, and secondly in the rights of individual states as opposed to a strong Federal government.

On June 7, 1776, before adjourning for nearly a month the Continental Congress addressed its ongoing debate about possible independence by assigning a committee of five men to draft a declaration should they vote to declare such independence when they returned in July. Benjamin Franklin, elder statesman of the five, became ill and thus the task of writing the initial draft should have fallen to John Adams, senior to Thomas Jefferson by 7 years. Adams, in what was an uncommon deference to another, passed to Jefferson responsibility for doing the primary draft. It is sometimes said that after arguing back and forth over the issue, Adams gritted his teeth and grudgingly stated flatly to Jefferson, "You are ten times the writer I am." While Adams is well remembered for his eloquent letters, what he spoke was indeed true. He deferred to Jefferson knowing well that the document the five were to present to Congress within weeks demanded the best--and when it came to the pen, few could match the talents of learned Thomas Jefferson.

When Congress reconvened on July 2, 1776, Thomas Jefferson's draft, after minor revision and editing by the other four members of the committee, was presented as the American Declaration of Independence. It remains today one of the greatest literary works of all time, but excellent writing alone was not enough to sway Congress to cast a vote that might result in the death of all present. While Jefferson was masterful with pen and paper, when asked to speak he was totally lost. Here however, John Adams excelled above nearly all men of his time, and most thereafter. So, it was Adams who rose to speak in behalf of Jefferson's words and, primarily because those two vastly different men relied on the different abilities each of the other, a new nation was born.

If that were all there was to the story of Adams and Jefferson, it would be enough to illustrate the importance of opposing forces uniting for a common good. But there was to be more, for the two men comfortable times and times when they were at odds. Following the American Revolution while Adams was serving a diplomatic role in England and Jefferson in France, the two had occasion to visit and established a mutual respect, if not something of a distant friendship. Due their foreign service, neither of them was present for the Constitutional Convention of 1787 where a new form of government was hotly debated. Adams however, as a Federalist favored the strong central government. Jefferson himself was livid that his young nation had forsaken his original precepts of Popular Sovereignty to establish a powerful, new Federal system.

During the Presidency of George Washington, John Adams served as Vice President and Thomas Jefferson as Secretary of State. Their differences of opinion may have made getting the two men to work together one of President Washington's greatest tasks. When he declined to run for a third term the election of 1796 primarily pitted Adams and Jefferson against each other. Adams won by 3 electoral votes to become our 2d President, Jefferson as runner up, became Vice President.*

In context of today's electoral process such an administration is hard to envision...imagine what it would have been like had George H.W. Bush been Bill Clinton's Vice President, or picture Al Gore serving as George W. Bush's Veep. The situation certainly did little to ease the animosity between Adams and Jefferson for the four years until 1800. Relationships were further strained by John Adams' penchant for pomp and circumstance, abhorred by Jefferson as being far too European and aristocratic. When trouble with France, called the Quasi-War broke out in 1798, President Adams exercised his power to push Congress to enact the Alien and Sedition Acts in the

* Until the 12th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in 1804, the President and Vice President were elected separately, the one with the most votes becoming President and the 2d place finisher named to the Vice Presidency.

name of national security. Jefferson believed these unconstitutional and an abuse of power, fighting the President as he could and ultimately defeating his reelection bid in 1800 to become our 3d President. After the inauguration President Jefferson immediately pardoned all who had been arrested under these acts.

After two terms as President a tired and aging Thomas Jefferson returned home to Monticello. In the years that followed he and Former-President Adams exchanged many great and wonderful letters. Throughout their lives they seemed to be two very different men who needed each other, if for no other reason than to have someone to fight with. The highly competitive Adams did note his unwillingness to be outdone by Jefferson, seven years his junior, by promising he would out-live the younger man.

On July 4, 1826, John Adams resignedly uttered his last words: "Thomas Jefferson survives." What he did not, indeed could not know, was that only hours earlier at Monticello, Thomas Jefferson himself had also passed away. Two very different men, regular adversaries who's one commonality was their love to build a new nation were dead, fifty years to-the-day after the historic declaration they had worked together to achieve was formally adopted.

Differences, discord, dialog and compromise have long been the key to the political process in America. When the Constitutional Convention concluded on September 17, 1787, none of the various delegates was happy--indeed, no one had got everything they wanted. Most of them understood however, that they had worked together and compromised to start a process with long-range implications.

Someone once noted, "If I'm too strict and my wife is too lenient, between the two of us our children have one good parent." It is an approach that speaks to balance--opposites leaning towards each other. Today we identify political affiliations in terms of left vs. right. If these two pull away from each other, both fall. But if they lean towards each other they meet in the middle and prop each other up. Neither has changed the direction they lean in terms of right or left, but both have leaned their separate ways to meet together for the common good.

The Democratic Party, often identified as the *Party of Big Government*, evolved ironically out of the early anti-Federalist party. It became formally established with the inauguration of Andrew Jackson in 1829 and adopted the donkey as its symbol after Jackson's opponent John Quincy Adams once referred to him as a "jackass." Over the next three decades the Democratic Party became linked to the support of slavery, quite in contrast to the leading role it would assume more than a century later in efforts to advance Civil Rights. Under Jeffersonian Democracy the party sought to involve the American people in increasing roles in government and the political process.

The Whig Party broke with Jeffersonian Democracy primarily on the issue of executive versus legislative powers, preferring legislative supremacy. Pro-business, Whigs looked beyond the people as individuals to promote the growth of business and economic gain. At odds with Democrats in their opposition to slavery, Whigs saw the successful election of two of their party members as President (William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor) in their brief three decades as a major political party.

In 1854 the Whigs metamorphosis into the Republican Party when they merged forces with Northern Democrats and Free-Soilers, primarily in opposition to slavery. In addition to actively speaking against slavery, the new party was progressive in seeking to expanding and modernizing higher education, as well as promoting individual business venture. When Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, was elected President in 1860, the two-party political system we know today was born and began its evolution.

Of course it must be noted that there have always been others, perhaps most notably Former President Theodore Roosevelt's *Bull Moose Party* (Progressive Party) in 1912 and Ross Perot's nameless independent bid for the Presidency in 1992 that led to the Reform Party being established in 1995. There are also Libertarians, Populists, Socialists, Greens, and any number of additional political parties. These have never, with the exceptions of Roosevelt and Perot, ever mounted a serious challenge to White House power, but do serve an important function of speaking to the differences of segments of America who feel disaffected by the two major parties.

Because the political process is constantly changing and evolving--Jackson certainly wouldn't recognize his Democratic Party of today and Lincoln would find much in the current Republican Party with which to take issue, the impact of the Defining Generation may have been too subtle to be much more than a blip on the radar. In fact, during those turbulent '60s the American political process underwent some major areas of change, not the least of which was a more overt freedom of expression and dissent as discussed in the last section.

Long-time Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Thomas "Tip" O'Neill once said, "All politics is local." His point was to illustrate how issues and problems back home impacted the actions of the Representatives and Senators at home. It is a long-standing principle that did not change during our generation, it was simply re-defined. In early America local meant "here in my own town or city." Early newspapers sometimes took days to reach rural and/or western towns and, by the time news arrived it was old news from far away. Improvements in communications, the telegraph and more-speedy modes of transportation, soon expanded the meaning of the word "local" to include counties, then districts, and even a whole state. When radio became broadly available in the early 1900s it was possible for people in even the smallest and most remote of American cities to get news in *real time*, and events and political concerns broadened the citizenry's scope of political concern.

More than anything else in history however, when television became available to nearly every family in America in the 1950s, the political process underwent dramatic change. As pointed out in the first chapter of this book, the ability to see the handsome and youthful John F. Kennedy as he challenged a visibly older Richard Nixon in the 1960 Presidential debates certainly marked new areas of concern for would-be politicians. In time the political process began to take on a theatrical appearance that today has left many Americans unable to differentiate between the real world of the political process and the fictionalized process that is Hollywood.

Even more important however were the images we were able to witness either as they happened or shortly thereafter on the nightly news. Images of fire trucks unleashing water hoses on a crowd of Southern Black demonstrators, women unfurling a banner at the Miss America pageant decrying gender bias and exploitation, and body bags being carried off the battlefields in Vietnam gave the Defining Generation a first-hand grasp of world problems. The issues that needed to be addressed in the political arena moved from the "hear-say" of old to the "look and see for yourself" of a more modern time.

The impact of television news was further enhanced by increased opportunities for higher education, the dream of every member of the Greatest Generation for their Baby Boom offspring. A better-educated American populace, especially among the young, coupled with poignant and vivid images of problems in American society struck a visceral chord in a new generation. Even as they outwardly chanted "Tune in, turn on, drop out" they were inexorably pushed to an unavoidable activism. Massive demonstrations, most of them either on behalf of Civil Rights or in opposition to the war in Vietnam, are striking examples of how much more greatly the young of the Defining Generation became in the political process than were their parents and grandparents.

Prior to those years of sweeping change a political leader might well have altered Tip O'Neill's famous quote to note: "All politics is hereditary." Until the days of television, it would most likely not be inaccurate to assume that children grew up to mirror the political beliefs of their parents. If dad was an iron worker, chances are he was a Union member and also a Democrat whose sons would follow him into both. If dad owned a large business chances were, he was also a Republican whose sons would inherit both dad's business and his political leanings. If dad was a poor Black man living in the South, chances were he didn't claim either party because the system at the time did everything it could to deny his voting rights--and the same would be true for his sons.

If it appears that the previous is too gender biased, it is. Generally, until women began to find their own sense of freedom and liberty in the 1960s, mom was expected to vote the way dad told her to vote. (One has to wonder however, how many women in the secrecy of the voting booth, may have purposely voted exactly opposite what they were told as the one act of personal liberty they could get away with.)

Inundated with unprecedented education and information, young people of the Defining Generation began to ask serious questions:

- "How can mom and dad want laws against *Playboy* magazine? After all, the pictures look no more improper than the picture of the lady I saw painted on the fuselage of the bomber dad flew in World War II."
- "How can mom and dad expect me to do my duty and join the Army when all I see is dead young soldiers coming home in body bags?"
- "How can my church preach about brotherly love when I see Black Americans being beaten by police and killed by the KKK?"
- "How can Congress spend billions of dollars on missiles and warheads when children in our own country go to bed hungry at night?"

The ultimate question many began to ask of themselves was, "How can I fix all these problems I am watching on television?" The young began to find their own answers, and America went through perhaps its greatest period of change.

As a final observation on politics, it could also be said that "All politics is subject to change." This is especially true as events in our lives change. First Lady Nancy Reagan broke with her own party's stand on stem cell research when her husband was afflicted with Alzheimer's. Vice President Dick Cheney was silent on gay rights in a party that generally opposed the same when it too, became a family matter.

Someone once put this tendency towards situational politics by pointing out, "A Conservative is a Liberal who has just been robbed, while a Liberal is a Conservative who has just been arrested." Indeed, all politics is subject to change and change it did when the Defining Generation came of age.

Hillary Rodham Clinton



"I have gone from a Barry Goldwater Republican to a New Democrat, but I think my underlying values have remained pretty constant; individual responsibility and community. I do not see those as being mutually inconsistent."

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton

No person either inside or outside politics better represented the conservative leanings in America in the 1960s than Arizona Senator Barry Morris Goldwater. He was an Army Air Forces veteran of World War II and one of the driving forces behind establishing the United States Air Force Academy now based at Colorado Springs. He fought bitterly what he considered the Socialism of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal program. A self-proclaimed "hawk" he was strong on defense and advocated for aggressive tactics to prevent the spread of Communism in Asia. While supporting racial integration, he was one of only four non-Southern Senators who voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on the grounds that it unconstitutionally tried to "legislate morality" and intruded on the individual rights of business owners. He crusaded against a strong and large Federal Government, labor unions, and a welfare state.

In 1964 Goldwater received the Republican nomination and challenged incumbent Democrat Lyndon Johnson for the Presidency. His campaign slogan "In your heart you know he's right" was followed by an addendum from his liberal opponents who noted "...extreme right." Viewed by many as being so extremely conservative that he was out of touch with reality, another opposition slogan said, "In your guts you know he's nuts." But Goldwater's conservative and pro-military platform resonated with an "old-fashioned" segment of the *Greatest Generation* as well as a large number of young, idealistic Republicans. Among the latter was a 16-year-old girl from Chicago named Hillary Diane Rodham, who campaigned hard for the Republican icon. Just four years later the young woman would demonstrate a complete reversal, throwing her support in 1967 behind an anti-war, socially liberal Senator named Hubert Humphrey. In the parlance of modern politics, she might have been accused of "flip-flopping" when in fact that reversal of affiliations was in fact, the natural process of learning and maturing.

Hillary Diane Rodham was born in Chicago on October 26, 1947, to a typically upper-middle-class family residing in the suburb of Park Ridge. Hugh Ellsworth Rodham, the family patriarch, was a successful Chicago businessman who had started in the New York textile industry and then moved to Chicago where he built his own drapery company. He was strongly conservative in his political leanings and remained a Republican even after his daughter's marriage to Bill Clinton when, according to Bill Clinton himself, he hoped that his son-in-law would join him in the Republican party and support a cut in the capital gains tax.¹

Hillary's mother, the former Dorothy Howell, came to Chicago from California in 1937 where she met Hugh. The two were married in 1942 and five years later Hillary was born. Mrs. Rodham never worked outside the home but devoted her life to raising her daughter and the two sons that followed; Hugh was born in 1950 and Tony four years later. In a 1993 interview with *Glamour* magazine she described her position in the family as a "classic parenting situation where the mother is the encourager and the helper, and the father brings the news from the outside world." Mrs. Rodham once quietly admitted to Rick Ricketts, one of her daughter's classmates, that she was in fact a Democrat herself. Of course, that was not what the wife of a business owner in living in Park Ridge wanted very many people to know.²

There was certainly little that was remarkable about Hillary's early life. She enjoyed sports, was involved in Brownies and Girl Scouts earning all available badges in both and enjoyed attending Church with her family. She baked chocolate cookies with mom and as "daddy's little girl" gravitated towards her father's conservative principles. She attended a public grade school and interacted well with her classmates. For the most part, living in Park Ridge sheltered her from personal contact with poverty, crime and racial prejudice in the early years. Perhaps with a good script writer the Rodham Family might well have become the Cleavers or the Andersons. They typified the post-war "Happy Days" families of weeknight television.

Throughout her childhood and into her teens Hillary was active in her local church, the Park Ridge Methodist Church where she was confirmed in 1959. Two years later she became a Freshman in the inaugural class of the new Park Ridge Maine East High School. Both church and school had significant impacts on expanding her thinking. On April 15, 1962, the church youth group joined with youth from other churches for a meeting at Chicago's Orchestra Hall. There the youth who were growing up in an idyllic world began to learn first-hand that there were serious problems beyond the limits of Park Hill. The speaker that night was Dr. Martin Luther King and Hillary later wrote: "Dr. King's speech was entitled, 'Remaining Awake Through a Revolution.' Until then, I had been dimly aware of the social revolution occurring in our country, but Dr. King's words illuminated the struggle taking place and challenged our indifference."³ After the program the teens were allowed to join a throng around the rising young preacher who would soon become an historic reformer, and Hillary recalls the brief opportunity she had that night with Dr. King as one of the great memories of her life.

That one single event was not enough to immediately turn young Hillary into a liberal with a social conscience, she remained a product of her environment which was generally quite conservative. Her youthful dream world was rattled in November 1963 when she, like millions of others, heard and then witnessed on television the murder of President John F. Kennedy. Though Kennedy was not popular in Park Ridge, he was the American President and the community mourned his loss. For Hillary it was the first inkling of how deep ran some of our nation's problems. "When you grow up in a protected suburb," she has said, "you can't imagine what's out there unless someone brings it to you."⁴

The following year as a Senior she remained quite busy. She was elected Class President, served on student council, participated on the debate team, was a member of the Honor Society, and was named a National Merit Finalist. Though too young yet to vote she became an ardent supporter of Senator Goldwater in his bid for the Presidency. Donnie Radcliffe recounts in his 1993 biography how the teachers at Maine East High pushed Hillary and her friend Ellen Press Murdoch who supported Lyndon Johnson into a campaign debate on behalf of the candidates. Instead of having the two young women argue their merits of their chosen candidates however, the two were required to reverse roles, Murdoch debating for Goldwater and Hillary for Johnson. Hillary was disinclined but the teachers admonished, "You will now go to the library and you will now read about the other side of everything you have refused to look at for your entire life."⁵ It was a lesson in learning, and in politics, that would not only eventually change her philosophies but that would also enable her to become a moderate in a political world that tended to extremes.

That Hugh and Dorothy Rodham's children would have the opportunity to go to college had never been in doubt. Though Dorothy was very much the traditional domestic mother, it was by preference and not because of social demands. She never limited her daughter to the traditional role of domestic wife and mother but encouraged Hillary to develop her own dreams. In an interview with the *Washington Post* she told a reporter, "(I was) determined that no daughter of mine was going to have to go through the agony of being afraid to say what she had on her mind. Just because she was a girl didn't mean she should be limited."⁶

After graduating high school in 1965 Hillary enrolled in Wellesley College to major in Political Science. At the time Wellesley was an all-girls liberal arts university with a reputation for being among the most prestigious places for a young woman to develop intellectually and socially. It was a rigidly controlled environment that encouraged thought, debate, and active participation without allowing for the kind of activism that was by 1965 starting to take root in public colleges and universities.

True to her early beliefs Hillary joined the campus Young Republicans and was elected President. Even however as she openly debated her conservative beliefs on a generally liberal campus, what she read and what she saw happening in America began to weigh on her mind. She was moved by such issues as racism and poverty and began to see social needs for programs such as those established by Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society." She echoed her own inner turmoil with questions like, "(Is it) possible to be a realist about social existence and at the same time struggle for justice and reform? Did you have to be either conservative status quo or idealistic? (Is) it possible to be a mental conservative and a heart liberal?"⁷

In the adult political world such an indecisive dilemma is called "waffling." In the academic world it is called questioning and learning. In the 60s it had its own unique description, it was called "searching for your own identity. Hillary found hers somewhere in the middle between competing issues, trying to balance these between intellect and emotion. In her junior year she resigned from the Young Republicans and began rallying behind both the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam War Movement. She joined with fellow students in off-campus demonstrations and marches for Civil Rights and in opposition to the war, a cause Dr. King had himself rallied behind in the last years of his life.

Biographer Radcliff notes the, "If the 1960s was a defining decade, with nothing that would come later paralleling such dramatic change, 1968 was to be the defining year in Hillary Rodham's undergraduate life."⁸ If she had any doubts about the evolutionary change in her doctrine it was reinforced sadly and dramatically on April 4, 1968, when Dr. Martin Luther King was murdered in Memphis, Tennessee, while continuing his crusade for Civil Rights. One month later in Los Angeles, Senator Robert F. Kennedy was shot and killed while campaigning for the Democratic Presidential nomination. It was obvious that the problems in America ran deep and were mired in tragedy.

In the election of that year Hillary put her initial efforts behind the Primary campaign of anti-war Democrat Eugene McCarthy, Barry Goldwater's antithesis. When Kennedy was killed and with McCarthy failing to Hubert Humphrey, a social liberal who more conservative in support of the Vietnam War, Hillary crossed over once again to campaign for liberal Republican Nelson Rockefeller. In August she went to the Republican Primary in Miami to stump for his election. When Richard Nixon got the nod and Rockefeller was tapped as his Vice-Presidential running mate, Hillary reluctantly threw her support to Hubert Humphrey. She did not vote however, much to her chagrin. Though she turned 21 only weeks before the election, Illinois election laws required registration 30 days before the election leaving her no time to register to vote herself.

To add to an already busy year in 1968, that summer Hillary got an inside look at the workings of politics in Washington, D.C. She applied for and was one of 30 applicants out of several hundred that were selected for the House Republican Conference. Throughout the month of June, she worked in that program, chaired by Congressman Melvin Laird of Wisconsin, who the following year would be appointed Secretary of Defense under Richard Nixon. After attending the Republican National Convention in early August to support Rockefeller, she returned home to Chicago at the end of the month to attend the Democratic National Convention. It proved to be three days marked by unrest, demonstrations, and violence, unlike any convention before or since. She returned to Wellesley to complete her Senior year deeply concerned by the conflicts, turmoil, injustices and murders that were tearing her country apart. It was a long way and a lifetime removed from her idyllic childhood safely ensconced in Park Ridge.

Hillary's last year at Wellesley was marked by achievement, leadership, and learning. She was to graduate with honors and served her Senior year as President of College Government and presiding officer of College Senate. Her Senior Thesis, in a strong departure from her childhood conservatism, probed the tactics of radical community organizer Saul D. Alinsky, the 94-page thesis submitted under the title "There is only the Fight." The title was abbreviated from T.S. Elliott's *East Coker*, "There is only the fight to recover what has been lost and found and lost again and again...For us, there is only the trying."

Hillary also made history as the first student ever to give a commencement address at Wellesley--a demand for the microphone by the student body in which Hillary was the popular choice among her classmates. Her rousing address prompted a standing ovation and kudos in *Life* magazine. It was a mixture of an indictment of eroding social policy, challenges to her graduating class, and a reflection of her own internal conflicts and development. She noted, "Every protest, every dissent...is unabashedly an attempt to forge an identity in this particular age... it's also a very unique American experience. It's such a great adventure. If the experiment in human living doesn't work in this country, in this age, it's not going to work anywhere."⁹

Following graduation Hillary pursued a Law Degree at Yale. During her second year she began working as a volunteer at the Yale Child Study Center where she assimilated a deep desire to help children--a passion that would follow her life and achievements to the White House. She witnessed and took on child abuse cases at the Yale-New Haven Hospital and also provided free legal advice to the city's poor.

In the Spring in 1971 she met a budding young Law student from Arkansas, William Jefferson Clinton, and the two began dating. When the semester ended, they parted briefly as she went to Washington, D.C. to work for Senator Walter Mondale's sub-committee on migrant workers, researching needs such as problems in housing, sanitation, health and education. Because much of this revolved around children, she continued to evolve as a leading advocate for America's most under-privileged children.

Hillary returned to school to pursue her education with a new interest, Bill Clinton. She returned home to Park Ridge for Christmas and the day after the holiday her young suitor joined her there to meet her parents. They returned to Yale together with a chemistry that formed a mutual attraction. When the semester ended Hillary spent her summer working for the liberal candidacy George McGovern's 1972 Presidential bid. That fall back at Yale she cast her first presidential vote for the South Dakota Democrat who lost in a landslide to Richard Nixon. The following year she received a Juris Doctor degree and began a year of post-graduate study on children and medicine at the Yale Child Study Center. Her first scholarly paper, "Children Under the Law", was published in the *Harvard Educational Review* in late 1973. Her legal work revolved largely around children's issues, however in 1974 she also served as a member of the impeachment inquiry staff to the House Committee on the Judiciary during the Watergate scandal that resulted in the resignation of Richard Nixon.

In 1975 Hillary married Bill Clinton and moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, to one of two female faculty members at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville School of Law. Her husband, who in 1974 failed in a bid for an Arkansas Congressional Seat, was elected in 1976 to the position of State Attorney General and the couple moved to the capitol at Little Rock. Hillary was hired by the Rose Law Firm and in 1979 became the first woman to be made a full partner. At the time she was also Arkansas' First Lady, Bill Clinton winning election to the Governor's seat the previous November. The following year the couple's first and only daughter, Chelsea was born.

As First Lady first of Arkansas and later of the United States, children were always a priority for Hillary Clinton. She chaired the Arkansas Educational Standards Committee from 1982 to 1992 and the Rural Health Advisory Committee in 1979 and introduced the Arkansas' Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youth to help parents work with their children in preschool preparedness and literacy. She was named Arkansas Woman of the Year in 1983 and Arkansas Mother of the Year in 1984.¹⁰

As America's First Lady following election of her husband to the Oval Office in 1992 she made health care a priority, failing to sell the program to the nation and taking personal attacks in the process, but it remains an issue she continues to fight for. She was one of the most active and activist women ever to live in the White House, drawing fierce loyalty from some and absolute derision from others. After two terms in the White House, in 2000 she successfully won election to a U.S. Senate seat from New York, the only First Lady ever to seek and win elective office.

Perhaps the term most frequently used to describe her is "divisive." That is true perhaps because she is a difficult woman to pigeonhole. The far left finds the influence of her early lessons in conservatism too far to the right, and the far right sees her as a social liberal bordering on Socialism. Perhaps the only person who truly understands who she is, is Senator Clinton herself. She knows where she started, remembers how she questioned and changed, and has ideas how she can blend the two for the sake of her country.

¹ Wikipedia

² Radcliffe, Donnie, Hillary Rodham Clinton-A First Lady for Our Time, Warner Books, New York, 1993, p 25.

³ Clinton, Hillary, Living History, Simon & Schuster, New York, p 22-23

⁴ Radcliffe, Donnie, p. 43

⁵ Radcliffe, Donnie, p 23 - 24

⁶ Radcliffe, Donnie, p 35.

⁷ Radcliffe, Donnie, p 62

⁸ Radcliffe, Donnie, p 66

⁹ Rodham, Hillary, *Commencement Address*, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, May 31, 1969

¹⁰ Wikipedia

Condoleezza Rice



"It is often said that diversity is one of our nation's greatest strengths, but too rarely do we take the time to think what that means. I believe the answer is very simple. America and Americans are willing to embrace all that is good in the world...while maintaining the basic principles of American liberty, as enshrined in our Constitution and Bill of Rights."

*former United States Secretary of State
Condoleezza Rice*

In 1963 while Hillary Rodham was campaigning for Barry Goldwater, 600 miles and a world away another young lady seven years her junior was growing up very much like Hillary in Birmingham, Alabama. A study of their young lives reveals they had much in common: both came from middle-class families with modest but stable livelihoods, both had loving parents who encouraged them to study and pursue advanced educations and who refused to limit their future based on gender, and both had dreams for their future. They were both bright and basically typical young girls developing their separate approaches to the problems in America. Their primary difference was in their political approach to those problems, while Hillary Rodham was a conservative Republican, Condoleezza "Condi" Rice was a traditional Southern Democrat.

The unusual name that Reverend John Wesley Rice, Jr. and his wife Angela gave their daughter when she was born in Birmingham on November 14, 1954, is derived from an Italian musical expression; *Con dolcezza* meaning "with sweetness." An only child, she grew up with the undivided love and attention of her parents to exude the meaning of her name in both word and deed. Her roots in the South ran deep, her paternal great-grandmother was born the child of a slave and her paternal great-grandfather was himself a slave. One of their sons, John Rice, Jr., sought to build a new life beyond the family farm through education.

"One day he decided he was going to get book learning," Condi has said in various presentations, so he asked in the parlance of the day how a colored man might get to college. And they told him about 50 miles down the road there was this little Presbyterian college called Stillman college and if he would go there, he could get a college education. So, he saved up his cotton and he took off for Tuscaloosa and he finished his first year of college. They said, 'Now how are you going to pay for your second year?' He said, 'Well, I'm out of cotton.' They said, 'You're out of luck, you'll have to leave Stillman.' " John Rice learned however, that some of his classmates were getting their education paid for through scholarships, based upon their promise to study to become Presbyterian ministers. Rice continues, "And my grandfather said, 'Well, you know, that's just what I had in mind.' And my family has been Presbyterian and college-educated ever since." ¹

Condoleezza's grandfather pastored in Louisiana and then was sent to Birmingham, Alabama, to oversee a Presbyterian mission. Reverend Rice, drawing on his own experience, became a driving force in encouraging poor young men and women in his Black congregation to concentrate on getting a good education and pursue a college diploma. Among them was his own son, Condi's father, who followed his father's footsteps into ministry and inspiring and encouraging Birmingham youth. She says of her father, "He really was a person who believed that even if Birmingham was, at the time, a place of limited horizons for black children, it should still be a place of unlimited dreams."²

A college education was equally important to the family of Condi's mother Angela, whose father (Condi's Grandfather) Albert Ray determined that his own five children would never have to work as he did in his own teen years in the mines. Holding down three jobs in Birmingham he put all of his children through college; Angela earning a teaching degree. She was teaching music and science at Fairfield High School in a suburb of Birmingham when she met John Rice. Reverend Rice also taught at Fairfield to supplement his ministerial salary and coached the school's basketball and football teams. The two married in 1954 and by the end of the year welcomed a daughter to their young family.

Condi was born on a Sunday morning, even as her father was presiding over his congregation at church. In her infancy the pastor and his family actually lived in a small residence within the church building itself, and later moved to a parsonage a few blocks away. Thus, Condi's life and livelihood was constantly tied directly to the church, her father's ministry, and her own

faith. All would figure prominently in her thinking throughout life. As the only child of two educators, learning was also a primary focus. Condi learned to read by age five but, because she was too young to enter school Angela took a one-year leave from her traditional classroom to home-school her daughter. When she at last began public school, she was well ahead of her classmates and would excel academically throughout her life. To broaden their daughter's experiences the Rice's enrolled her in various schools in the early years to expose her to different people, different societies, and divergent views of life in Birmingham.

The parsonage in which Condi spent her formative years was in the middle-class Black neighborhood of Titusville. As such it was sheltered from some of the problems that plagued poorer Black neighborhoods in the 1960s. Even so, it was impossible to avoid contact with the prejudices that plagued the South. She recalls, "I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, before the Civil Rights movement -- a place that was once described, with no exaggeration, as the most thoroughly segregated city in the country. I know what it means to hold dreams and aspirations when half your neighbors think you are incapable of, or uninterested in, anything better. I know what it's like to live with segregation in an atmosphere of hostility, and contempt, and cold stares, and the ever-present threat of violence, a threat that sometimes erupted into the real thing."³

Reverend and Mrs. Rice did their best to shelter their young daughter from the inequities that existed outside the Fairfield suburb, but knew they could not shield her from the knowledge of what was happening elsewhere. At the same time, they taught their daughter never to bow to racial prejudice when it reared its ugly head. On an outing with her mother to a downtown department one day, Condi picked out a dress she wanted to try on and mother and daughter walked towards a dressing room. The white salesperson took the dress out of young Condi's hand, pointed to the sign that read "Whites Only," and directed them to a distant dressing room reserved for Black customers. Angela Rice, a dignified and well-dressed professional woman, refused and advised the clerk that if she wanted their business, her daughter would try on the dress in a *real* dressing room. Economics won over prejudice and Condi recalled, "I remember the woman standing there guarding the door, worried to death she was going to lose her job."⁴

It was just such prejudice that ten years earlier prompted Reverend Rice himself to reject his traditional Democratic roots. It was hard not to be socially liberal in the face of poverty and repression in the South. In 1952 however, Reverend Rice met bigotry at its most blatant when he tried to vote in the Presidential election. Dixiecrats, segregationist Southern Democrats, in efforts to repress both the poor and the Black vote instituted poll taxes and other measures to control political power. Under the guise of protecting the ballot from the uneducated, literacy and education tests became a common ploy. When Reverend Rice tried to vote in Birmingham that year a poll worker pointed to a jar of beans and advised that if he could guess the number of beans contained therein, he would be deemed smart enough to vote. After learning from members of his Congregation that Republican poll workers did not engage in such tactics, he registered with that party. As a minister and a man dedicated to improving the lives of youth in his community, he remained something of a social liberal, but was after 1952 a life-time Republican. Not until 1982 did his daughter change from Democrat to Republican.

Condi was only eight years old in 1963 when Birmingham erupted into demonstrations and riots. Church leaders rallying around Dr. Martin Luther King frequently involved young Blacks in their efforts to draw attention to what was happening in the South. Birmingham police responded with fire hoses, vicious dogs, and violence. White supremacists and segregationists responded with attacks, shootings, and hidden bombs. While Reverend Rice supported the Civil Rights movement, he objected to putting any children in harm's way for the cause. Danger, however, could not be

avoided. On Sunday, September 15, the pastor of the 16th Street Baptist Church had just finished preaching a sermon titled "The Love That Forgives" when a bomb exploded in the basement killing four young girls and wounding 22 other youth.

"I did not see it happen," Condoleezza says, "but I heard it happen and I felt it happen, just a few blocks away at my father's church. It is a sound that I will never forget, that will forever reverberate in my ears. That bomb took the lives of four young girls, including my friend and playmate Denise McNair. The crime was calculated, not random. It was meant to suck the hope out of young lives, bury their aspirations, and ensure that old fears would be propelled forward into the next generation."⁵

Churches were not the only targets of bombers and violent hate-mongers during that tragic summer of 1963. The homes of prominent Black leaders were bombed, other homes were indiscriminately shot up, and burning crosses of the Ku Klux Klan blazed in the night sky from the lawns of Black families. Condoleezza recalls vividly how during that turbulent time, her father sat up late at night cradling a rifle to protect the family home from outside threats. Those personal experiences framed her current strong support for the right to bear arms. In a May 11, 2002, interview with CNN's Larry King she said, " My father and his friends defended our community in 1962 and 1963 against white nightriders by going to the head of the community, the head of the cul-de-sac, and sitting there armed. And so, I'm very concerned about any abridgement of the Second Amendment. I'll tell you that I know that if Bull Connor had had lists of registered weapons, I don't think my father and his friends would have been sitting at the head of the community defending the community."

In 1965 the family moved to Tuscaloosa where Reverend Rice took the position as dean of students at Stillman College. During summers he attended graduate courses at the University of Denver and, after receiving a Master of Arts degree in education, the family moved to Colorado in 1967. There at the university where he received his degree he worked first as assistant director of admissions, then taught classes, and eventually after 13 years became vice chancellor of university resources. Condoleezza attended St. Mary's Academy, a private all-girls Catholic high school in the upscale neighborhood of Cherry Hills. Those years marked her first educational experience while attending an integrated school.

When Condoleezza finished all requirements for graduation by the beginning of her senior year, her parents tried to persuade her to enroll at the University of Denver. Condi wanted to remain with her class to graduate with a high school diploma and describes the disagreement as her one moment of rebellion against the wishes of her parents. Ultimately, she did both, attending classes at the university in the morning and returning to Cherry Hills in the afternoon for her high school classes, graduating from St. Mary's at age sixteen.

Condoleezza had always been interested in piano and began playing at age three. Through her youth and into her teen years it was her primary passion and her early dreams were of becoming a concert pianist. Slowly she realized that while she did have a talent for the keyboard, it did not rise to the level of a life-time career. At D.U. where her father taught classes in American history and Black History, she took an interest in politics. The burning issue of the day was the war in Vietnam, a conflict her father spoke in opposition to. In an interview with Bill Sammon in 2004 she spoke of her own feelings about the Vietnam War. "For people of that generation," she said, "it became the lodestar for the questioning of authority. And authority was never to be trusted again. And so, whenever people say 'Vietnam,' what they mean is 'Authority is not to be trusted.'"⁶

Condoleezza's political interests were seated in foreign policy in general and, with the Cold War still a subject of concern and her favorite professor Dr. Josef Korbel (the father of Madeleine

Albright) teaching Soviet studies, she applied herself to learning all she could about America's distant enemies. In 1974 at age nineteen she received her Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and the following year received her masters from the University of Notre Dame. In 1977 she began working as an intern in the Carter Administration's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and in 1981, at the age of 26, received her Ph.D. in Political Science from the Graduate School of International Studies at Denver.

In 1982 Dr. Rice, now one of the most astute academics on issues of foreign policy, could no longer agree with the activities of President Carter's administration. Biographer Antonia Felix told *The Washington Post*, "Rice was very focused on foreign policy, as that is her area of expertise, and although she had voted for Carter, she was very disappointed in how he handled the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. She thought the administration was very weak in its attitude about the Soviet Union's capabilities as well as in its response, so she switched parties."⁷

Dr. Rice later described her conversion noting, "The first Republican I knew was my father, and he is still the Republican I most admire," Rice has said. "He joined our party because the Democrats in Jim Crow Alabama of 1952 would not register him to vote. The Republicans did. My father has never forgotten that day, and neither have I."⁸

In 1981 Dr. Rice went to work as an Assistant Professor in Political Science at Stanford University where she was granted tenure in 1987 and promoted to Provost six years later. She was the first woman, the first minority, and the youngest Provost at the University.

In 1984 Brent Scowcroft spoke to a faculty dinner at Stanford about "arms control" and met Dr. Rice, who impressed him with her knowledge and insight into the Eastern bloc. In 1989 when President George H. W. Bush appointed Scowcroft to be National Security Advisor he remembered the bright young academic and hired her to be his expert on Soviet issues. Two years later the Berlin Wall had fallen, and Germany was reunited. The Soviet bloc was broken, and the Cold War was officially over. Dr. Rice returned to Stanford in 1991 to continue her teaching career but took a leave of absence during the Presidential Election of Campaign in 2000 to become Republican candidate George W. Bush's foreign policy advisor.

Following George Bush's election, on December 17, 2000, Dr. Rice became the president-elect's choice to become National Security Advisor. She was the first woman ever confirmed to that post and earned the nickname "Warrior Princess" for her strong determination that was mixed with a mild and insightful manner.

On November 16, 2004, following the resignation of General Colin Powell, Dr. Rice was nominated to become "Secretary Rice," the first woman appointed as U.S. Secretary of State in history and the second Black American to hold that post. She was confirmed two months later by a Senate vote of 85 - 13.

Like the girl who grew up so much like herself, Hillary Clinton, (today perhaps considered Secretary Rice's own antithesis), Secretary Rice remains a controversial figure who is both loved and rejected--perhaps like Senator Clinton because she too is difficult to quantify. Jay Nordinger wrote for *National Review* seven years before Secretary Rice ascended to the post that has now made her one of the most successful women of our generation: "Rice characterizes herself as an 'all-over-the-map Republican,' whose views are 'hard to typecast': 'very conservative' in foreign policy, 'ultra-conservative' in other areas, 'almost shockingly libertarian' on some issues, 'moderate' on others, 'liberal' on probably nothing.' (She calls herself 'mildly pro-choice' on abortion.)"⁹

Senator Clinton and Secretary Rice, despite their differences, remain vivid examples of the changing politics of our time, not only in terms of activism and dissent, but perhaps more importantly in their individual willingness to not only ask hard questions but to change their minds based upon what they have observed and learned. In a very special way, ours is a generation that learned to become pliable and reject any action, simply because "this is the way it has always been done."

Our Nation, indeed, our world, is better for it.

¹ Rice, Condoleezza, Vanderbilt University Commencement Address, May 13, 2004

² Felix, Antonia, Condi-The Condoleezza Rice Story, Newmarket Press, New York, 2002

³ Rice, Condoleezza, *ibid*

⁴ Felix, Antonia, *ibid*, p 44.

⁵ Rice, Condoleezza, *ibid*

⁶ Sammon, Bill, "Vietnam War Fixation Endures," *The Washington Times*, May 11, 2004

⁷ *The Washington Post*, "Interview with Antonia Felix," December 2, 2002

⁸ Rice, Condoleezza, *ibid*

⁹ Nordinger, Jay, "Star in Waiting," *National Review*, August 30, 1999

James Henry Webb



"The political tactic of playing up the soldiers on the battlefield while tearing down the reputations of veterans who oppose them could eventually cost the Republicans dearly. It may be one reason that a preponderance of the Iraq war veterans who thus far have decided to run for office are doing so as Democrats."

Senator James Webb

Mention the terms "politician" and "Vietnam Veteran" to most Americans and they will easily come up with two names: Anti-war veteran Senator John Kerry and former-POW Senator John McCain. In fact, there are two others often overlooked, Democrat Senator Thomas Carper of Delaware and Republican Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska. These four, along with a junior Senator elected in 2006 comprise five of the nine combat veterans in the U.S. Senate--the other four are all veterans of service in World War II.

There was a time, basically from the early 1800s until the 1980s, when military service was almost a pre-requisite for political office. Of the 43 men who have been elected President, 25 can claim veteran's status and most were veterans of combat. From the end of World War II until the election of Bill Clinton in 1992 every one of our nine presidents had served in the military in some capacity. In the 8 elections since the end of the Vietnam War only four veterans of that conflict have been serious contenders for the Presidency and only two, Democrat Senators Albert Gore and John Kerry served in Vietnam.*

Elections have dealt no better a hand to veterans of the Defining Generation in the halls of Congress. In the aftermath of World War II and through the end of the Vietnam War, the majority of legislators in both houses were military veterans. In the 110th Congress only 31 members of the Senate, less than a third, have any personal ties to the military (including National Guard and Reserve status) and only ten (excluding the 5 combat veterans) claim Vietnam era or post-Vietnam service. On the whole, World War II and Korean era veterans outnumber those of our younger generation. Figures for members of the House of Representatives are equally dismal with regards to veteran representation.

For veterans of the war that divided our nation the decision to run for public office seems today to be a minefield with hidden dangers; as it was in Vietnam one's enemies are often hard to distinguish from one's friends. The Internet abounds with articles written by veterans calling into question the loyalty and sacrifice of Senator John McCain and, despite the admiration of other POWs like Medal of Honor Recipient George *Bud* Day, he has consistently failed to get a consolidated loyal following from the veterans community in general. Former Republican Vice President Dan Quayle's National Guard Service during the Vietnam War era was belittled in no small measure by veterans of that war when he tried to capture the 2000 Presidential nomination of his party. During that same year Democrat nominee Senator Albert Gore, who did serve in Vietnam, was placed under a microscope and his service denigrated by some who claimed that as the son of a sitting Senator, he had received preferential treatment in Vietnam.

It is almost as if that war failed to produce the perfect political candidate. In 1992 Senator Robert Kerry of Nebraska, a Medal of Honor recipient who lost a leg in Vietnam, saw his service called into question. Unable to attack his valor on the battlefield, he was accused of committing atrocities in 1969 when he led a Swift Boat raid on the isolated peasant village of Thanh Phong. Twelve years later Senator John Kerry became the subject of scrutiny and the veteran's community largely turned against him because decades earlier he had claimed that atrocities were being committed by American troops in Vietnam.

Three decades after the Vietnam War ended the United States was at war in a situation that, if nothing else, mirrored the Vietnam War years for the divisiveness of the cause back home. Going into the off-year election of 2006, by the end of October it was obvious that anti-war Democrats

* In 1992 former Navy SEAL and Medal of Honor Recipient Robert Kerrey had an unsuccessful bid for his party's nomination and former Navy Pilot and POW Republican Senator John McCain was a serious contender in the 2000 election. Not to be ignored is former POW and Medal of Honor Recipient Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale who was a third-party candidate with Ross Perot in the 2000 election.

would most likely triumph to take control of the U.S. House of Representatives. It was almost unthinkable that they could also capture the Senate but remained within the realm of possibility. The balance of power seemed to hinge upon the Senate race in Virginia where former governor and now incumbent Republican Senator George Allen faced a challenger in a race "too close to call" on election day. The race was in fact so tight that it took two days before a victor could be declared. When the dust settled the winner who ultimately tipped the scales to give Democrats a majority in both houses was a Democrat, turned Republican, turned Democrat. Sometimes described as a complicated man to understand, he is actually a quite simple person to those who knew him best. He was not a chameleon who changed to blend in with his surroundings but rather, was a man for whom principle took precedence over politics and for whom personal responsibility was more important than party affiliation.

James Henry "Jim" Webb is a born fighter who takes great pride in his Scots-Irish roots and authored a book in 2004 titled: Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America. In it he details with pride how his ancestors have fought in every war in our Nation's history. Jim was born on February 9, 1946, a true "baby boomer." His father James Henry Webb was a career Air Force officer who enlisted the day after Pearl Harbor and served during World War II. His wife Vera was the daughter of a sharecropper who lovingly followed her husband across the United States and around the world, raising the family's four children. The life of a military man meant that Jim and his brother and sisters spent their early life growing up on military posts and constantly changing schools, moving, and making new friends.

The lifestyle alone demanded an inner toughness and occasionally an outward fighting spirit. Mr. and Mrs. Webb taught their children not to be troublemakers, but also urged them to never be afraid to meet trouble head on and beat it in the best Scots-Irish tradition of their ancestors. He would ball up his fists and dare his sons to strike them, and to keep striking in spite of the pain, building within an inner toughness. The boys learned to stick up for themselves as well as for each other and engaged in an occasional scrap with their knuckles when necessary. Jim achieved the toughness and a willingness to fight that his parents encouraged, and he excelled with his fists both in the neighborhood where he was usually the new kid on the block and also in the ring as a Golden Gloves boxer.

The Webb boys grew up macho...Jim got his first gun at age eight and he and his brother were taught by their father to enjoy the outdoors and outdoor sports. Still, there remained a soft side as well. Although Jim was not a boy who excelled at organized studies though he read a lot and wrote poetry and short stories. When his father deployed for 3 years and the family could not accompany him, young Jim slept with a picture of his father in his World War II uniform. "I still keep it," he says today, "to remind me of the sacrifices that my mother and others had to make over and over again, as my father gladly served our country."

Mr. Webb never pushed military service upon his children, but he certainly inspired in them a sense of duty. Young Jim dreamed early of a military career and imagined himself someday wearing the stars of a Marine Corps general on his shoulders. His personal hero was the legendary hero of World War II and Korea, General Lewis "Chesty" Puller. His brother Gary eventually also became a Marine Corps helicopter pilot, his sister Patricia married into the Air Force, and sister Tama married Jim's Naval Academy roommate. Theirs was truly a military family with strong feelings about duty and the obligation to serve.

In 1962 after 26 years of night school, Jim's father, still in uniform, graduated from the University of Omaha. He was the first member of his family to obtain a college degree and went on to serve at Air Force Systems command through the Vietnam War and then as a legislative affairs officer in the Pentagon before retiring as a Colonel. The same year the elder Webb got his college degree, his son Jim graduated from high school in Bellevue, Nebraska, and then enrolled in the University of California on an NROTC scholarship. The following year, 1964, Jim was admitted to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. His application listed thirty-three different home addresses in his eighteen years of life.

Recalling his first year at the Academy Webb said in an interview for PBS, "I have classmates who I met 10 years after we got back from Vietnam. Everyone was talking about post-traumatic stress and that sort of stuff. And we'd sit down, and we'd say, 'Do you have any nightmares about Vietnam?' And people go, 'No, but I still have nightmares about plebe year.'"¹ He describes the experience as tough and demanding, but necessary to finding those who possessed true leadership ability. It was also a trade-off in achieving the goals. He noted that he was pursuing a mandatory engineering degree although he didn't really want to be an engineer. But the successful achievement of what the military wanted him to learn would pay off in what Jim Webb really wanted, the chance to lead American combat forces in defense of their country.

Although his father had become a vocal critic of the way Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara directed the war in Vietnam, prompting his own resignation partially in protest, young Jim Webb had not developed an opinion on the rightness or wrongness of the cause in Vietnam. "I had no political views when I went to Vietnam," he says. "I trusted the country's leadership. That was it. I was just a 22-year-old guy trying to learn how to lead troops."² He studied the history of Vietnam while he also studied the nature of warfare. Regaled as a tough competitor he was nicknamed "Spike" and boxed for the Varsity Team. He served for all four years as a member of the Brigade Honor Committee and was one of six finalists interviewed for Brigade Commander during his senior year. He was one of 18 cadets in his class of 841 to receive the Superintendent's Commendation for *outstanding leadership contributions*.

Webb graduated from the Naval Academy in the Spring of 1998 at a time during which news reports from Vietnam were filled with stories of the massive Tet Offensive only months earlier, and the battle for Khe Sanh only weeks before when heavily outnumbered and surrounded Marines sustained a 77-day siege. While most of his fellow cadets opted for commissions in the Navy, Webb joined the minority that opted for commissions as U.S. Marine Corps second lieutenants. Before deploying to Vietnam, the following year, he was required to attend the Marine Corps Officers' Basic School in Quantico, Virginia, where he was first in his class of 243 officers.

In Vietnam Lieutenant Webb was assigned to a rifle platoon in Company D, 1st Battalion, Fifth Marines, of the famed first Marine Division. His Company Commander, Captain Michael Wyly, made it a habit to check out his new officers upon arrival to determine their ability to lead by immediately assigning them to a combat mission. Recalling sending Webb on a patrol his first night in the An Hoa Basin west of Danang, he said that unlike the many other green young officers sent to him Webb showed no hesitation and was eager to go. Later that night when he heard gunfire beyond the perimeter Wyly figured his new platoon leader was probably dead, but Webb showed up back at the base camp eager for more fight.

Wyly also came to appreciate an equally daring independence in his young officer, a willingness to go against the grain and question orders rather than simply blindly following them. Webb was not insubordinate, but he was insightful and willing to put forth his own opinion. "He had the guts to come and say, 'Skipper, there might be a better way to do that,' " he recalls.³ Years

later when Webb abruptly resigned as Secretary of the Navy in 1988 after clashes with Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, he remarked to reporters, "It's no secret that I'm not a person who wears a bridle well."⁴ As an officer in the Marines or an appointee of government, Webb was a man who did his duty but not without thinking, questioning, or offering a better way if he had a good idea himself.

Combat tested but could not break Lieutenant Webb. In a speech he called "Heroes of the Vietnam Generation" Webb recalled, "We had been told while in training that Marine officers in the rifle companies had an 85 percent probability of being killed or wounded, and the experience of "Dying Delta," as our company was known, bore that out. Of the officers in the bush when I arrived, our company commander was wounded, the weapons platoon commander was wounded, the first platoon commander was killed, the second platoon commander was wounded twice, and I, commanding the third platoon, was wounded twice. The enlisted troops in the rifle platoons fared no better. Two of my original three squad leaders were killed, the third shot in the stomach. My platoon sergeant was severely wounded, as was my right guide. By the time I left my platoon I had gone through six radio operators, five of them casualties."

Lieutenant Webb epitomized the terms "warrior" and "leader" with the very best characteristics of both. Perhaps however, his most defining characteristic was his absolute loyalty to the men who served under him. On May 9, 1969, Company D set up a night defensive position and six men from Lieutenant Webb's platoon were sent 400 meters forward to set up a reconnaissance position in a tree line. When the small recon force was attacked by a large North Vietnamese Army force Lieutenant Webb organized a reaction force and led, they into the contact zone to the aid of him beleaguered Marines. Under constant fire he rallied his men and led them one hundred and fifty meters across an open rice paddy to recover several casualties lying exposed directly in the line of enemy fire. Then, as his men laid down a base of fire, he personally raced into the open to pull back the casualties one at a time. He then consolidated his platoon and launched a sudden and vigorous attack that completely routed the enemy force. For his actions he was awarded the Silver Star Medal which further noted, "His determination and bold fighting spirit inspired all who observed him and were instrumental in saving the lives of at least two Marines and undoubtedly thwarting the enemy's plan to launch a major attack against his unit's night position.

One month later on July 10, Lieutenant Webb's platoon located a well-camouflaged enemy bunker complex that they first thought was unoccupied. Webb deployed his men in a defensive force and then personally advanced on the first bunker, only to be suddenly confronted by three enemy armed with grenades. Webb grabbed the closest enemy soldier and brandished his .45 caliber pistol at the others, melting their will to resist with his fierce and aggressive action and all three surrendered.

After turning control of his prisoners over to others Webb and Mac McDowell, one of his men, approached a second bunker, calling for the enemy within to surrender. They refused and threw a grenade which landed dangerously close to Webb. The lieutenant detonated a claymore mine in the aperture of the bunker, killing the two enemy soldiers inside and exposing a tunnel. Despite the smoke and debris from the explosion, and heedless of the danger that other foes might be lurking inside, Webb conducted a search and recovered equipment and several documents containing important intelligence information.

Continuing his advance on a third bunker, he was preparing to fire into it when the hidden NVA threw a grenade out of it which landed close to Webb's comrade. Simultaneously firing his weapon, he pushed his comrade aside and shielded him from the explosion with his own body.

Though wounded himself, Webb threw one of his own grenades into the bunker and killed the occupants. He was awarded the Purple Heart for his wounds and the Navy Cross, which is second only to the Medal of Honor, for his heroism. When he returned home after completing his combat tour, he had added to these one more Purple Heart and two Bronze Stars, making him the most highly-decorated graduate of the Naval Academy's Class of 1968.

Jim Webb's dreams of a military career and a general's star were destroyed by the wounds he received in Vietnam. He was medically discharged in 1972 to rebuild his life. Despite the growing anti-war movement, he continued to be proud of his service. Mackubin Thomas Owens, a Vietnam Veteran who is Associate Dean of Academics for Electives and Directed Research and Professor of Strategy and Force Planning at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, wrote of him: "What most endeared Webb to me and many others who served in Vietnam was his unflinching defense of Vietnam veterans against the slanderous charges that have been leveled against them: dopehead, baby-killer, war criminal...you remember. Webb is the man who time and again stood on the front lines of the culture war that still rages between those who served during the Vietnam era and those who didn't, a culture war that played a major role in the recent election. He could always be counted on to stand up to the elites who peddled falsehoods about Vietnam veterans."⁵

Webb enrolled for classes at Georgetown University's law school where he received his Juris Doctor in 1975. As an attorney he provided pro bono services to other veterans, including the defense of one Black Marine who was convicted of atrocities. Even after that Marine took his own life in 1975, Webb continued his work until in 1978 the man's name was finally cleared. Also, in 1978 Webb's first book was published. *Fields of Fire* is considered to be the classic novel of the Vietnam War, of which the *Houston Post* wrote: "Few writers since Stephen Crane have portrayed men at war with such a ring of steely truth." It was perhaps that striking ring of steely truth and the unapologetic realism of Webb's portrayal that made the book a best-seller and a must read for every Vietnam Veteran or, for that matter for all veterans.

It was in 1977 that James Webb converted to the Republican Party. Earlier he had not had strong leanings to either side, though the roots of his family caused him to identify with the working-class elements of the Democratic Party. He was disillusioned after returning from Vietnam to witness an anti-war movement largely tied to his party, but his "lot was cast" to the GOP on January 21, 1977, when on the second day of his Presidency Jimmy Carter fulfilled his campaign promise to pardon all who had dodged the Vietnam War Draft. "It was the last straw," Webb has said. "There had never been an amnesty program in history that gave blanket pardons to everyone. There were a lot of people back from Vietnam who kept trying to identify with the Democratic Party and it was like they didn't want us."⁶

The following year and until 1981 Webb served as Republican Counsel to the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. This was during the same period in which efforts were undertaken to design and build a memorial to veterans of the Vietnam War. When the design for what is now simply known as "The Wall" was introduced, Webb was among those who objected to the selected design that underwent nearly a full year of controversy. Webb did not object to a memorial to the war dead from Vietnam, but he wanted the memorial to also remember the sacrifices of the living...men like Dale Wilson who had lost both legs and an arm while serving with Webb in Vietnam but who had survived to return home to a hostile welcome.

In a compromise move that expedited completion of The Wall it was determined that a statue would be added at a later date. In 1982 the design for that statue was expanded to include the images of three (not just one) men, one white, one black, and one Hispanic. Webb was one of the leaders in the efforts to ensure that it was a multi-racial memorial to all who served. His own combat boots became the mold for the statue and The Wall remains a poignant symbol to the man who once opposed it. Nearly every year Webb reunites with his former comrades, visits graves of fallen comrades at Arlington National Cemetery, and often leave a pack of Marlboro cigarettes for his buddy, Snake.⁷

In 1980 Webb's conversion to the GOP was cemented when candidate Ronald Reagan spoke of the Vietnam War as a "noble cause." Fifteen years earlier in support of that effort Reagan had noted, "We should declare war on North Vietnam. ... We could pave the whole country and put parking strips on it, and still be home by Christmas." President Ronald Reagan restored a sense of pride, patriotism, and appreciation for members of the military from all generations, and in doing so endeared himself forever to Webb as a mentor and role model. In 1984 Webb was appointed as Reagan's Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. In 1987 Reagan appointed Webb to become the 18th Secretary of the Navy.* He was the first Naval Academy Graduate to serve in the military before holding that civilian post.

As Secretary of the Navy, Webb was concerned with the deterioration of the services in the aftermath of a divisive and unpopular war. He pushed for a bigger and better Navy and Marine Corps at a time when the official policy was cutting the military force. On November 23, 1987, Frank C. Carlucci replaced Caspar Weinberger as Secretary of Defense and he and Webb clashed over reducing or increasing the size of the Navy. In frustration, only ten months after assuming his position, Jim Webb resigned. The formal delivery of his resignation is indicative of the fighting spirit of the man, even in a lost cause. He respectfully mailed his resignation to President Reagan, whom he admired, but flippantly left Frank Carlucci's copy on the desk of one of his aides. His departure marked the beginning of his return once again to the Democrat Party, though in a little recognized fashion at that time.

Over the years that followed Webb returned to writing, and to date has published eight books, six of which became best sellers. His Senate biography notes that he taught literature at the Naval Academy as their first visiting writer, traveled worldwide as a journalist, and earned an Emmy Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for his PBS coverage of the U.S. Marines in Beirut. In 2004, he went into Afghanistan as a journalist, embedded with the U.S. military. He has also worked in Hollywood as a screenwriter and producer.

While it seems, politics was far from Webb's plans, it was something he could never avoid. In 1992 he supported Vietnam veteran Senator Robert Kerry's bid for the Democratic Presidential nomination. Two years later in an off-year election Webb's former Naval Academy classmate Oliver North challenged incumbent Democrat Senator Chuck Robb. Both men were former Marines, and both had served in Vietnam--solid credentials in Jim Webb's view. But North cast suspicion upon the service of Robb, claiming that because he was married to President Lyndon Johnson's daughter Lynda, Robb had received preferential treatment and served only light duty.

* Prior to establishment of the Department of Defense in 1947, Secretary of the Navy was a Cabinet position that was held by 47 different men from 1798 to 1947.

Such attacks against any veteran angered Webb who threw his endorsement to Robb. Even so, veteran status or party affiliation was not enough alone to elicit Webb's political support. Six years later in Webb endorsed Republican George Allen when he successfully challenged Robb's seat and, when Allen ran for a second term in 2006 Webb himself challenged the incumbent and won his seat.

If the changes in the man who went himself from Democrat to Republican and then returned to his Democrat roots, who supported Robb one year and then endorsed his Republican opponent before thereafter unseating him as a Democrat make Jim Webb appear inconsistent, it is most likely for failure to look close enough. Jim Webb walks a tightrope between what he perceived as duty and obligation--and a special sense of loyalty to veterans. Webb was the pro-Vietnam War veteran who editorialized that, "(Senator John) Kerry deserves condemnation for his activities as the leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War...(he) went far beyond simply criticizing the politics of the war to repeatedly and dishonestly misrepresenting the service of Vietnam veterans and the positive feelings most felt after serving."⁸

Webb himself had once refused to even shake Kerry's hand and yet with insight he continued to note, as he put his support behind the Massachusetts Senator's 2006 bid for the Presidency, "Kerry's negatives, however, do not automatically become (President George W.) Bush's positives."⁹ Furthermore, while Webb understood the animosity many veterans felt for John Kerry as a result of his anti-war activism, even identifying with them, when unfair attacks were leveled at Senator Kerry's awards and the nature of his service was called into question, he found such dirty tricks deplorable. In another op/ed piece he wrote: "In recent years extremist Republican operatives have inverted a longstanding principle: that our combat veterans be accorded a place of honor in political circles. This trend began with the ugly insinuations leveled at Senator John McCain during the 2000 Republican primaries and continued with the slurs against Senators Max Cleland and John Kerry, and now Mr. Murtha."¹⁰

Perhaps Webb's own thinking was best defined during a 2006 Campaign stop when he met the father of Donald Ryan McGlothlin, a Marine Second Lieutenant who was killed in Iraq on November 16, 2005. McGlothlin's father explained that his son had supported the war in Afghanistan but opposed expanding it to Iraq. Before deploying he had told his father, "I would never vote for George Bush, but I'd take a bullet for him."¹¹

Such sentiment seemed not the least ambiguous to Jim Webb who had opposed the war in Iraq from the beginning. While campaigning for George Allen's Senate seat, Webb missed one of Virginia's most important political events, the Labor Day parade and associated activities. While his opposition in one of the nation's tightest Senate races worked the crowd, Jim Webb was driving down the Interstate to transport his son, Lance Corporal James R. Webb to the Marine Corps post at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Two years earlier Jimmy, as the younger son is called, left his studies at Penn State to enlist and follow in the footsteps of his father, his uncle, and his grandfather.

During the week before his deployment to Iraq with the Sixth Marine Division, Jimmy and his father were joined by José Ramirez, a former marine who is the boyfriend of Jimmy's sister Sarah, and Dale Wilson, the triple-amputee from his father's platoon. Just before the departure of the transport bus that was taking the marines to the airfield from which they would leave for Kuwait, Jimmy and his father and their friends gathered in the parking lot. Webb had filled a Coke bottle with whiskey, which he poured into four cups. The three older men raised their cups to Jimmy, who offered the final toast: "To those who went before me. And to those who didn't come back....."

"Now it's my time."¹²

¹ "Interview with James Webb," PBS Frontline,

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/navy/ails/webb1.html>

² "Q&A: James Webb; former Secretary of the Navy," *San Diego Union Tribune*, October 30, 2005

³ Kunkle, Frederick, "Defiant Iraq War Foe Defined by Vietnam," *Washington Post*, October 27, 2006

⁴ Owens, Mackubin Thomas, "Webb Loss," *National Review Online*, February 13, 2006

⁵ Owens, Mackubin Thomas, *ibid*

⁶ Fiske, Warren, "War Experience Central to Jim Webb's Campaign," *The Virginian-Pilot*, June 2, 2006

⁷ Kunkle, Frederick, *ibid*

⁸ Webb, James, "Veterans Face Conundrum: Kerry or Bush," *USA Today*, February 18, 2004

⁹ Webb, James, *ibid*

¹⁰ Webb, James, "Purple Heartbreakers," Published January 18, 2006

¹¹ Sharlet, Jeff, "Virginia Senator James Webb: Washington's Most Unlikely Revolutionary," *Rolling Stone*, June 8, 2007

¹² Boyer, Peter J., "The Strangest Senate Race of the Year," *The New Yorker*, October 30, 2006

Defining Memories

Jaime Pacheco



From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered-
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.

William Shakespeare

It was inevitable that the name of Jaime Pacheco would appear in this book. Perhaps his name is largely unknown outside our family, but the impact of his life and too-soon death have been far reaching. In Vietnam Jaime was my closest friend--in fact, he was my brother.

I went to Vietnam as an Army combat engineer, one of the guys who swept for mines, built roads, bridges and airfields, and did any number of other important jobs. Often overlooked in the history of combat, we are a proud group of soldiers. The first man to receive the Medal of Honor in the Korean War was a combat engineer, others were decorated in Vietnam, and the only member of the U.S. Army awarded the Medal of Honor to date for heroism in Iraq was also a combat engineer. The motto of my first unit, the 65th Engineer Battalion, says it all: "First In--Last Out."

I volunteered for duty in Vietnam for two primary reasons. First and foremost, I believed in the cause and felt a moral obligation to do my duty. A second, more personal reason is that I also went to Vietnam to find out something about myself. Growing up I had never been much of a fighter and wondered if, in fact, I wasn't a coward. I share that now so the reader will understand that my approach to the war was neither one of bravado nor of seeking excitement. Rather, that war became both a mission and a proving ground for me.

By the time I arrived in country in 1970 American offensive operations had largely ceased and we entered a phase called "Vietnamization of the war," turning responsibility for operations over to the South Vietnamese. That is not to say the war was over; more than 6,000 Americans lost their lives in 1970 alone. One of them was Captain Phillip Nichols from my hometown of Kalispell, Montana. Phil was from my own church and I knew him from there. He went to Vietnam as an Army chaplain. When I enlisted for a combat MOS (military occupational specialty) many of my friends at church were disappointed in me; they thought I should have registered as a Conscientious Objector and gone as a chaplain's assistant. I, however, did not object to killing in war and more importantly at that time, I had to prove something to myself.

When I arrived in Vietnam in August, Chaplain Nichols and I had been maintaining communication via mail and I sent a letter to him in the Central Highlands promising to try and catch a chopper up to see him sometime soon. On October 13, 1970, while accompanying an Infantry patrol, Captain Nichols was killed by an enemy mine. The irony of the fact that he had served as a peaceful man of God and been killed while I went as a combat soldier and survived was never far from my mind.

That same month the 65th Engineers were sent home as more and more American troops were withdrawn, and the Army sent me north. I was assigned to the 14th Engineer Battalion at Quang Tri and had convinced an officer that as a writer, I could best serve the battalion in the PIO (Public Information Office). A letter to that effect was put in my files. The day I arrived at Battalion Headquarters however, it was to find the orderly room nearly destroyed after a failed attempt the night before to "frag" the First Sergeant. I took the letter out of my file and asked what companies were in the field. There was only one and I managed to get assigned to Company C, 14th Engineers at LZ (Landing Zone) Nancy and Barbara where I would work for the next nine months.

I regularly violated the first rule every recruit learns when they join the Army: "Never volunteer for anything." With something to prove to myself I regularly volunteered for every job that was offered, especially if it had an element of risk. In time our Company Commander no longer even called for volunteers, he would simply order, "Go for Sterner." From that time on my nickname in Vietnam was Gopher.

In August 1971 the 14th Engineers were sent home and despite the fact that I had volunteered for a second tour, the Army offered me the option to leave Vietnam and get my honorable discharge. I requested to stay and finish my second tour and was sent to the 27th

Engineers at Camp Eagle where I served with the legendary 101st Airborne Division. Frankly I felt like an unwanted *foster child* being bounced from one home to another, but it at least gave me a myriad of opportunities to see many sides of the war. After a month of generally mundane operations, mostly sweeping for mines, I learned that the man assigned to the PIO was going home and requested his position. As editor and reporter for the Battalion newspaper I would have freedom to go in the field with whatever squad or platoon was going where there was action. This I did until, in December, that unit was also sent home. Again, I declined early release, and in fact I began submitting paperwork to extend for a third tour. Soon I found myself assigned to the 501st Engineers, attached to the First Cavalry Division at Bien Hoa. My request for a third tour was repeatedly denied and I never stepped foot inside the 501st Battalion compound.

Using the portfolio of news stories, I had published while working for the 27th Engineers I managed to get a job with the First Cav's PIO office, which unlike at the battalion level, had a reasonably large staff. I had both an officer and a senior NCO to account to, as well as a number of fellow combat correspondents. Though there were occasionally specific assignments we were left largely free to seek out our own stories, which made it possible for me to try and work with whatever field units were getting the most action.

By January I was hanging out with the guys of F Troop, 9th Cavalry, and going in the field with them on a near daily basis. The unit was called a "Blue Platoon" and they were our brigade's Quick Reaction Force. Their missions were three-fold: reconnaissance, security for downed helicopters, and support for the Rangers of H Troop if they needed it. I already had my eyes on our Ranger company and was determined that I was going to go on at least one mission with them and write their story before I left Vietnam. My bosses repeatedly told me to forget it--the Rangers had never allowed a writer/photographer to go in the field with them.

When there were no specific missions the Blue Platoon would often fly to a clearing in the jungle, land, and set up a perimeter in order to be close to the scene of action if they were needed to rescue a downed helicopter crew or reinforce a Ranger team. Most days were composed of long, boring hours we whittled away over cards while waiting for something to happen. Late one evening in January the radio crackled just before we were to board and fly back to Bien Hoa. A Ranger team had made contact with a large enemy force, and they needed extraction. We quickly loaded up and accompanied a near-empty Huey to the scene. The idea was to extract the team using STABO, a harness much like a parachute harness without the parachute. The designated Huey would hover over the usually outnumbered and surrounded team and drop a rope from either open side. While gunships circled the area to keep the enemy at bay, the members of the team hooked up to loops on the rope and then were lifted out and flown to the nearest LZ dangling at least 100 feet below the helicopter. The Blue Platoon bird hovered just beyond range of enemy fire, prepared to insert us if something went wrong.

The extraction was made under fire but without noticeable incident, and we flew the team back to our earlier cleared and secured LZ. My chopper got back before the Ranger team reached the area and I was waiting to talk to the team members when they came in, dangling beneath the bird that had rescued them. They unhooked quickly and were obviously still hyped from the adrenaline rush. The team's attention seemed focused around a young Hispanic Ranger as they talked excitedly about one enemy soldier who had broken into the Ranger perimeter just as they were being lifted out. "Man did I grease him good," the soldier was exclaiming in excitement, "and then they jerked us out and I dropped my weapon." It was an incident that garnered Specialist Fourth Class Jaime Pacheco considerable ribbing from his comrades and marked the last time he

would ever carry an American-made CAR-15 into the field. From that day forward the enemy's weapon of choice, an AK-47, became Jaime's weapon of choice as well.

Following that action-filled evening Jaime and I became close friends. Having only witnessed the action from a distance and at an hour when it was too dark to take pictures, no story was filed. My friendship with Jaime did however, gain me additional friends in the Ranger compound and I was certain that if I worked at it that I'd somehow get a Ranger Team to take me on a mission in order to write their story. My bosses back at the office promptly advised me that because I was so "short," meaning I had only a few weeks left in my tour, they would not allow me to go out with a Ranger Team even if one of them did agree I could go. Fact is, until I got married years later, I was never very good at following orders, and continued to try.

Jaime was a deeply religious young man from Hobbs, New Mexico, the youngest of seven boys. Only one sister, Lilly, was younger, and Jaime was her hero. Jaime was 19 years old when I met him and celebrated his 20th birthday on March 1 only days before I returned home. Back home praying for his safe return was his young wife Olga, and a one-year-old son Michael.

Jaime introduced me to one of his Ranger comrades, David Patterson, who everybody called "Sling." The nickname stemmed for a controversy that arose shortly after he joined the Ranger unit and got into a discussion on the subject of his favorite Bible hero who also shared his name. One of his fellow Rangers asked why, if the Biblical David had so much faith, he had gone to meet the giant Goliath with five stones--did that mean the shepherd boy didn't trust his aim? David Patterson replied, "David knew Goliath had four brothers, so he went prepared, just in case he had to kill them all." The philosophy sparked more than a humorous laugh...it fit with Ranger thinking. Thereafter he became *Sling Patterson*. He, Jaime and I met regularly throughout the latter part of January for Bible study, developing a sincere friendship.

During the first two weeks of February while completing assigned stories and continuing to bounce with the *Blues*, I was able to fly several times on the helicopters that inserted Ranger teams. The single helicopter carrying a team of 3 to 5 camouflaged Rangers would fly high over the jungle until they neared the appointed insertion point. Then they would quickly dive, the skids skimming lightly above the ground as the team quickly exited and raced for the closest cover. I snapped many pictures but alas, was required to stay in the airship as it sped back to Bien Hoa leaving a small group of Rangers in the jungle, alone save for the enemy.

After one such insertion and after returning to Bien Hoa I went to the Ranger orderly room and asked to see the Commanding Officer. Again, I pleaded my case to not only insert, but to accompany a team on a mission. I had become friends with many of the guys in the Company and the C.O. did want to help me. Finally, he told me that if I would take the in-country Ranger course I could go.

"Sir," I replied, "I'm scheduled to go home on 7 March. I don't have time to go to Ranger school."

"You are three weeks short and you want to go out with a Team?" he said suddenly surprised. I replied that I did. "Sergeant Sterner, you really are crazy--maybe even crazy enough to have been one of us if there was more time. I'll tell you what, the Team Leaders run their teams. If you can convince one of them to take you on a mission, I'll allow it."

Two days later when Jaime was back from a mission, I looked him up and told him what the C.O. had said. Jaime introduced me to the Team Leader for Ranger Team 75, Sergeant Paul "Blinky" Morguez who had become something of a Ranger legend. He told me that the Team had just returned from a mission and that they'd have a week off. When their next mission was assigned however, if I was still in country I would be welcome as part of the Team. The only condition he

advised me, was that I would go as a member of the Team--carry what they carried and pull my share of the load. That was exactly the way I wanted it.

At Headquarters all of the staff had been busily immersed in preparing for writing and assembling the annual full-color First Cav magazine. Excitedly I returned to work to announce, "Save the cover! Next week I'm going out with the Rangers."

"No way," said my sergeant. "Gopher, I do not want to sit down next week to write your parents to say, 'I know Sergeant Sterner was supposed to be coming home this week but...!' Besides, you've never yet shot a good picture...much less one worthy of the cover."

It was true! While I was pretty good as a writer, I had been the brunt of more than one joke for going through rolls of film without ever capturing a decent photo. A couple had made the paper, but that was only on slow news weeks when I shot the Blues or our Cobra gunships in action and got what was at least interesting. The whole staff joked, "One of these days Gopher is finally going to get a good picture...you can't shoot up that much film and not get lucky at least once!"

The following week my moment came and I cammied up (put camouflage paint on my face and hands), strapped on the STABO harness Blinky required all team members to wear, and hefted an unusually heavy ruck sack. I carried six quarts of water, three dried LRRP meals, and several Claymore mines. I was given my choice of weapons and selected the cut-down version of the M-16 called a CAR-15 and fitted it with a 30-round banana clip. I carried several magazines and grenades, and to top it all off Blinky walked over and said, "Gopher, you can carry the medical kit." He then checked me over to insure I had adequately taped everything I had on me for sound discipline, and that I also had duct tape covering the flash suppressor of my CAR-15. From that moment on the real Rangers of Team 75 treated me like a member of the Team, not as a writer/photographer along for the show, and they expected me to operate as one of them.

A short time later a helicopter inserted us into a "sterile box," a 1-kilometer grid in which there was supposed to be no friendly forces or civilians. Anything that moved was either animal or enemy. Our mission was to search for the enemy, and we would be required to stay out for five days (a *duration mission*) unless we made contact. If we engaged the enemy, once the battle subsided, we would be extracted. If we had a body count, we would get time off to celebrate and relax. If we didn't, we would be inserted again the next day, and again after that until we either pulled a duration mission or killed at least one enemy soldier.

Contact came late on the afternoon of the first day. In the immediate exchange of fire, I operated as a team member, laying out an initial base of fire. When my first clip was expended instead of replacing it I grabbed my camera and began to do my other job. The rest of the team had things well in hand on their own. An hour later we were pulled out without any bodies to report. That suited me fine--it meant we'd go back out again the following day. When we reached Bien Hoa, I raced back to the office to develop my film. My hands shook as I scanned a one-to-one contact sheet of the negatives. It looked pretty good, which was highly unusual for me. One of the pictures especially stood out. I quickly shot and developed an 8 x 10 and raced out of the darkroom with it even before it dried shouting "Look at this."

My sergeant looked at the picture and then shouted to the rest of the staff, "Hey, come look at this. Gopher finally got a good picture."

It was a classic shot of Rangers in action. In the background and nearly obscured by smoke was Specialist Kenneth *Snuffy* Anderson, our rear scout, who was protecting the team from that direction. In the foreground Sergeant Lynn *Stubby* Morrison was hitting the ground as an enemy grenade landed nearby. Facing into the enemy and returning fire with his AK-47 was the Ranger Operations Officer First Lieutenant Lynn Moore. "Look at this," one of my comrades in the PIO

said as he put a magnifying glass over the picture, "If you look real close you can see the shell casing being ejected from that guy's (Lieutenant Moore) rifle."

In fact, the PIO Officer blew that photo up into a 2'x3' poster and gave it to our C.G., Brigadier General James F. Hamlet. I was told that upon seeing it he remarked, "What the hell? It looks like you had some crazy guy standing up in the middle of a firefight and taking pictures."

"That's not the least of it," my Lieutenant reportedly replied. "The guy that took that picture is so short he's going home in eleven days."

The following day I was out with Team 75 again, and once again in the afternoon we made contact. I shot more film but the important picture on that day was taken by Stubby. After the firefight ended, three members of the team went out to scout the kill zone for bodies or blood trails while Jaime kept us in touch with our overhead gunships. I crouched next to Jaime to cover him and as we waited. Stubby suddenly said, "Gopher, you've been taking pictures of us for two days, toss me the camera and let me take one of you." I did and he took the picture printed at the beginning of this chapter...that's me in the foreground and Jaime is behind me on the radio. It would become one of the most recognized photos of the Vietnam War and would play a monumental role in my own life decades later. The day after I got my own classic picture it was somewhat ironic that my camera would catch an even more widely used photo--while in the hands of someone else.

The following day Team 75 was flown out to Fire Support Base Spuddis for a Radio/Relay mission. I went along briefly but my bosses were hollering for me to get back and write my story and get ready to go home. I said farewell to all the team, hoping they would get back to Bien Hoa before I left. While they were gone Jaime celebrated his birthday and I was sad I had to miss it.

Only days before my departure date Team 75 returned to Bien Hoa. I had made copies of all my pictures for the Team members and distributed them as we celebrated over beer. I was not then nor am I today an Army Ranger...one has to attend their training and/or be awarded their tab to earn the right to that title. Even so, the guys of Team 75 considered me one of them. Having pulled the requisite 5 missions (counting several insertions and the partial R/R mission), they initiated me, which primarily involved drinking my beer using "Morgan" as a mug. "Morgan" was a bleached Vietnamese skull.

The team then announced they wanted to present me with a beret. They hadn't had a chance to get me one so Jaime took his own beret and put it on my head as they all cheered and spilled beer on me. That beret would become my fondest possession. With great sadness I said farewell to them and, two days later after spending a private evening in Bible study with Jaime and Sling I boarded a *Freedom Bird* for home. It was not a joyous moment for me. I had tried repeatedly to extend for a third tour and the Army kept refusing. I found it ironic that here I was single and wanting to stay and yet I was being forced to go home. Jaime had a wife and infant son waiting for him back in New Mexico. He wanted very much to go home but the Army was requiring him to stay--"Mission essential" was how they put it. Jaime's parting words to me had been, "Amigo, Asta Luego! Always remember Doug, no matter what happens, God is Good!"

Upon returning home after mustering out at Fort Lewis, Washington, I went to Grants Pass, Oregon to visit my mother. The first thing I did upon arrival was go to the local Bible bookstore and purchase two Thompson Chain Reference Bibles. On the flyleaf of one I wrote: "To Jaime Pacheco, From Doug Sterner, 15 March 1972" and then mailed it to Vietnam. Jaime wrote back almost immediately, thanking me for the Bible and bringing me up to date on events in Vietnam. Two more letters quickly followed, letters in which Jaime repeated his eagerness to come home

and be with his family. He invited me to come visit him in Hobbs when he returned, and I promised I would do so.

The one thing that was consistent in Jaime's letters was the way he closed them. Every letter was signed: "In Christ, Your Brother, Jaime Pacheco." It indeed echoed how we felt about each other. Though we had only been together for two months, in that time we had been through much together and developed a bond not unique to soldiers at war. Jaime's third letter, written on May 12, arrived at my father's home in Montana where I moved after visiting with my mother. In it Jaime seemed to be agonizing about the fact that even with troop withdrawals, he might have to stay until August. I quickly sent off a reply.

Three weeks later I stopped by my father's house to check the mail. There was one envelope, addressed from the Army. When I opened it, I found the unopened letter I had sent to Jaime weeks earlier. An explanatory letter stated, "Specialist Fourth Class Jaime Pacheco was killed in action on 25 May 1972." While reading those words a part of me died.

To say that I was bitter and angry would be an understatement. Worse, I felt guilty. Jaime had died serving his country while I had been safely home partying with friends. It just didn't seem right. And of course, though inside I really knew matters had been beyond my control, I could not help but wonder if things might have been different if I had been there.

I did send a letter and copies of all the photos of Jaime that I had to his widow in New Mexico. She responded with a warm but grief-stricken letter. I wanted desperately to go to Hobbs and meet her, hold Jaime's son, and comfort his brothers and sisters. But in such time of bereavement I wondered if my presence would do more harm than good and felt it best to wait. At the same time, I received a letter from First Lieutenant John Fenili detailing how Jaime had died. On May 25 Jaime was serving with Team 76 when the point element walked into an enemy bunker complex. As the point element returned fire and expended their first clips a dangerous lull in fire followed and Jaime, in a relatively safer position at the rear, rushed forward throwing 12 to 15 grenades to cover the Team's withdrawal and save his comrades. The Team set up a perimeter and, as a Cobra gunship came in to provide covering fire one of the guns malfunctioned. An errant round struck Jaime in the back and he died soon thereafter. For his heroism in saving his friends he was awarded the Silver Star.

I wallowed in grief and pity for weeks and, whenever I was visiting with friends, I would drag out Jaime's letters and make them read them. One evening I was doing just that with Sally Johnson, a classmate from years before when I was in high school and a deeply religious young woman. "Doug," she suddenly announced. "This is beautiful." I grumbled and asked her what was so beautiful. "Don't you see, when you read this last letter it is as if Jaime is telling you he is ready to die. He tells you how the bills are paid off for his wife and son, and how he's willing to leave his future in God's hands. And look at this...he always closes his letters with the words "In Christ, Your Brother, Jaime Pacheco." I grunted again and then she directed me to the manner in which Jaime closed his last letter to me, written on May 12 and containing a closing line in all capital letters that I had missed.

It read: "In Christ, for eternity, Your Brother, Jaime Pacheco."

With that new insight, although I was still struggling with my emotions, I sat down and wrote a small booklet about Jaime and myself. I titled it "God is Good" after Jaime's favorite line. I never meant to publish it, it was more of a personal memoir, and for years it was packed away with my pictures, Jaime's letters, the letter from his widow, and my black beret.

When I married a few years later the story of Jaime Pacheco was one of the first stories of my life that Pam learned. As our children grew, they too came to know Jaime, he was an unseen

but ever-present member of our family. While we were traveling in ministry, I lost all of my Vietnam War memorabilia, including pictures, save for the letters and my beret. I especially rued the loss of the last photo taken of Jaime and I but I did not need a picture to remember his smiling face--I saw it every night when I lay down in my bed. Often, I dreamed that one day I would travel to Hobbs, find, and visit the place where Jaime was buried. In those dreams, while standing there a young man would approach and ask why I was there. "Jaime was my closest friend," I would answer. The young man would respond, "I'm Michael. Jaime was my father."

Over those years I made several attempts to locate Michael, Olga, and even Jaime's mother. All were unsuccessful. But at every opportunity I did my best to ensure that Jaime would never be forgotten. When Pam and I began organizing patriotic ceremonies in our hometown, if I was scheduled to speak, I always talked of Jaime. Quite often visiting Medal of Honor recipients would thank me for the work we were doing. My response was always the same: "You don't need to thank me--your thanks belongs to a young man who died in Vietnam decades ago. You may never have heard of Jaime Pacheco, but he's the one you can thank. The reason we do all this is because of him."

As a member of the First Cavalry Division Association, every year I received a calendar with Army photos from over the years. In January 1997 I received an envelope and recognized it immediately by the return address. Knowing it was the annual calendar and being at the time quite busy, I put it aside with plans to open it later. It was actually three days before I finally opened the calendar and stared in stunned amazement...the cover photo was the photo of Jaime and I that Stubby had taken. With great excitement I first shared this with Pam and my children, then placed a call to the First Cav Headquarters. "How can I get more copies of the calendar?" I asked and they wanted to know how many I wanted. "At least 100." They wanted to know why so many. "That's me on the cover." After a long silence they told me that this was only the second time in the history of that calendar they had ever identified someone depicted in a photo.

I believed that Jaime's family would want news of the calendar that also featured him and renewed my search with increased fervor. That summer I even attended the Cav Reunion in Texas. There I met Oscar Martinez. He vaguely remembered me but vividly remembered Jaime. After I came home from Vietnam, he had joined Jaime and Sling for their regular Bible study sessions. Other Rangers attending that 1997 reunion said that years earlier they had tried to contact Jaime's family, and had been told the family did not want communications that would bring back sad memories. I was crushed but wanting to respect the wishes of the family, after 25 years, I put to rest my hopes to one day meet Jaime's son.

Six months later on January 20, 1998, I was preparing to close my office at the apartments we managed when the phone rang. A feminine voice on the other end asked for Doug Sterner and I identified myself. "My name is Lenay Pacheco..." she started, and my heart stopped. The last name was common enough in Pueblo that I had no reason to suspect...but somehow, I knew. Then she confirmed it, "...Michael Pacheco's wife. He would like to talk to you about his father." I simply sat and cried.

Michael had been at work when Lenay called to lay the foundation for us to visit. The wait for him to get home that evening was the longest two hours of my life. While waiting and wondering what to say to him I went to the box where I kept our family papers and pulled out the small booklet titled "God is Good" that I had written decades earlier. I reread it, not to refresh my memory...it needed no refreshing...but simply to ensure that there was nothing I had written that might cause hurt to Michael. When the call at last came Michael's first question was, "What can

you tell me about my father?" I told him I was faxing him a small booklet and that I wanted him to read it first and then call me back. He did.

Later that night Michael told me that his mother had been so heartbroken at Jaime's death that she had never remarried. He had grown up an only child, bitter through his teens because he had no father and destined for trouble. Thanks to his beautiful wife Lenay, Michael turned his life around and the two now had a son Tyler--Jaime's grandson. Michael also told me that *Sling* had escorted Jaime's body home to Hobbs and helped to box up the dead soldier's personal effects. When Michael got older his mother gave the box to him, but he had never had the courage to open it. "Tonight, after we finish talking," he told me, "I am going to finally open it." The next time we visited he advised that the first thing he found, at the very top of the box, was a Bible dedicated to his father from me.

The day following my first visit with Michael, Jaime's aging mother called, then his little sister Lilly, and one by one the brothers. In April Lilly called again and wanted to know if the family could meet me. "We'd all like to get together at Angel Fire (a veterans memorial in Jaime's home state of New Mexico) for Memorial Day. Would you come?" I said it would be the fulfillment of a 26-year-old dream.

Pam and I drove down to Angel Fire on the afternoon of May 24. The Pacheco-Vejar family had rented a large cabin for the holidays, flying in from as far away as South Carolina. Mom Pacheco, Michael, Lilly, and all of the brothers were there. They treated me not at all like Jaime's best friend--instead they acted if I was part of the family.

The next day was Memorial Day, May 25, 1998--exactly 26 years to-the-day after Jaime was killed in Vietnam. A local television station had heard our story and sent someone out to try and get an interview. That morning as we walked down the path to the memorial, we were suddenly confronted by a man with a camera following him. His expression froze momentarily as he looked at Michel and then he said: "You must be Michael Pacheco." Michael admitted that he was. "Wow, I was just looking at your father's picture in the memorial. You look just like him." Then, turning towards the little old lady standing beside me he said, "And you must be Mrs. Pacheco--Jaime's mother." She told him indeed she was. Finally, looking at me he inquired, "And you must be Doug Sterner."

Before I could respond Jaime's, mother spoke up... "Yes, now he's my son!"

That weekend at Angel Fire was truly a dream come true. For hours Michael and I went through his father's personal effects and I held in my hand for the first time in 26 years the Bible I had mailed to Jaime. I made photocopies of Jaime's letters, giving Michael the originals and said, "Anything that I have is yours if you want it." Then, as we passed the beret back and forth, I looked at Michael and said, "This too, is yours, if you ask for it--but please don't ask."

Michael looked at me, smiled, and said, "No Doug, that belongs to you."

Before Pam and I returned to Pueblo, Jaime's family asked if I would send a copy of the "God is Good" booklet to one of the Internet veteran's sites for publication. I did, though after several weeks I had not heard back from any of the webmasters. I was just finishing my first semester at Pueblo Community College and wondered how hard it would be to put that story online myself. On Father's Day "Jaime's Story" was posted; it was my first feeble effort to put history on the Internet. The following month, buoyed by my success, I launched the Home of Heroes website.

When Pueblo, Colorado, hosted the Medal of Honor Annual Convention in the year 2000, Michael, Lenay and Tyler spent the week with us. Repeatedly throughout that week many men, the Medal of Honor hanging around their neck, approached Michael to thank him. When he

humbly deferred to their own greater service many responded, "Michael, we know that Doug and Pam do this because of the father you never had. You deserve our thanks."

The week of the convention fell during Michael's birthday and Pam and Lenay put together a special party for our adopted son. It was the first birthday party in his life that he shared together with his *father*--for that is how he felt about me. I loved him as my own son. Two months later Pam and I drove to Texas where I was to speak for a Veterans Day program in a high school. During that ceremony, which was attended by both Michael and Oscar Martinez, the students dedicated a portion of their memorial garden to Jaime Pacheco. When that event was complete, we visited Michael at his home and at last I realized my dream of meeting Jaime's widow, Olga Pacheco.

Two years later Michael contacted me to see if I would return with him to Hobbs. The Pacheco-Vejar family was planning a reunion, their first, that would bring in uncles, aunts, cousins, and of course Jaime's mother, brothers, and sister. They wanted me to be the "guest of honor" and even give a speech. I readily agreed, and when we arrived, we were treated with a love and kindness I can honestly say I've never felt before or since, outside my own family.

When during the main gathering I got up to speak I was shaking, not only from the great emotion I felt but from something that was nagging in the back of my mind. I hadn't even told Pam what I was thinking because I didn't know if I could go through with it.

As I walked to the front of the room I reached to my pocket, took out my beret, and placed it on my head. Then, through tears, I talked of Jaime and what he had meant to me. I concluded by asking Tyler Pacheco, Jaime's grandson to join me. What happened next surprised Michael and Lenay--Pam was literally stunned. I reached up and removed my beret and then placed it on Tyler's head. I no longer needed it--I had come full circle.



The Glory of their Deeds

There is an uncommon bond that develops between men and women in uniform, even in time of peace and much more so in time of war. Friendships forged in the horror of combat and memories of comrades who never came home become lifetime commitments to veterans of military service. Memorials to honor individual heroes, patriots, and the dead have sprung up spontaneously in the aftermath of every war in our history.

According to Professor David Blight of the Yale University History Department, the first Memorial Day was observed in 1865 by liberated slaves at the historic racetrack in Charleston. The site was a former Confederate prison camp as well as a mass grave for Union soldiers who had died while captive. A parade with thousands of freed blacks and Union soldiers was followed by patriotic singing and a picnic.¹

Inspired by how the South honored the memory of their fallen soldiers, communities in the North began independent efforts to honor their own fallen local soldiers from time to time. On April 29, 1866, General James A. Logan was the speaker for one such memorial ceremony at a cemetery in his hometown of Carbondale, Illinois. The former commander of Union troops in the Civil War was quickly inspired to encourage continuing remembrances on a National level. A student of history, Logan pointed out how ancient Greeks used chaplets of laurel and flowers to honor their own dead and promoted the concept of decorating the graves of fallen soldiers in this historic and commemorative fashion.

Three weeks before that memorial address by General Logan, Dr. Benjamin F. Stephenson founded the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) in Decatur, Illinois. It was based loosely on the traditions of Freemasonry but served the needs of Civil War Union Veterans to continue the bonds of brotherhood developed during the war. The GAR took on a quasi-military structure similar to the organization of the Union Army with "Departments" at the state level and "Posts" at the local level. Beyond the simple matter of providing veterans with a venue to continue to meet socially, and with a sincere effort to promote patriotism locally through parades and educating the young, the GAR became a powerful legislative lobby for Veterans. Between 1868 and 1908, no Republican was nominated to the presidency without a GAR endorsement.² As the membership aged the GAR engaged in a strong effort to influence legislation regarding pensions and the establishment of "Old Soldiers' Homes", veterans cemeteries, and other activities to insure that old soldiers would never be forsaken or forgotten.

In 1868 the GAR's commander-in-chief, General James A. Logan, issued a General Order calling for May 30 of each year to be set aside to remember Union veterans of the Civil War. Such efforts were highlighted by placing flowers and wreaths at the graves of the fallen and therefore became known as "Decoration Day." It is a tradition that continues to this day but that is now celebrated as a Federal Holiday on the last Monday in May. We call that somber celebration "Memorial Day."

In 1885 the Washington Monument, construction for which had begun in 1848 and then was delayed by the Civil War, was dedicated. It stood in proud honor and memory to our young nation's first military hero and our first President. Other physical memorials to great Americans quickly followed, and not only in honor of presidents and statesmen. In the Massachusetts' city of Concord where the "shot heard round the world" was fired in 1775, a bronze statue was erected in 1874 to commemorate the Minutemen. Sculpted by 22-year-old local artisan Daniel Chester French, the approved design depicted Captain Isaac Davis of Acton who was killed at North Bridge

on April 19, 1775. The bronze used for casting one of our country's most enduring memorials came from ten condemned cannon that were said to have been captured in the battle of Louisburg.³

On February 15, 1898, the *U.S.S. Maine* (DD-2) exploded and sank in the harbor at Havana, Cuba. The impressive American battleship was the first U.S. Navy warship designed and built entirely in the United States. The explosion killed 264 Sailors and Marines and 163 of them were interred in the sunken wreckage. Though later evidence suggests that the *Maine* may have exploded due to an internal malfunction in the boiler rooms, at the time it was generally believed that the ship had succumbed to explosives planted by saboteurs. As a result of that belief the tragedy of the *Maine* propelled our nation into the brief but victorious Spanish-American war.

On December 20, 1898, the bodies of the 163 dead Sailors and Marines who went down with their ship were recovered and interred at Arlington National Cemetery. In 1912 the ship itself was partially recovered and towed out of Havana harbor to be sunk at sea. Before the ship was scuttled however, the mast was removed and returned to the United States. The following year it was installed at Arlington National Cemetery near the graves of the sailors and Marines whose bodies had been recovered, becoming the *U.S.S. Maine* Memorial. The site features 23 panels listing the names and occupations of each of the 264 men who perished in that tragedy, becoming one of our first National memorials to commemorate individually so large a number of military veterans who had died in service.

There is of course, perhaps no more-sacred memorial to America's war dead than Arlington National Cemetery itself. More than 300,000 persons lay beneath its 624 acres of lush, manicured grounds. Interred therein are men and women who have died during every war in our Nation's history, from the American Revolution to the current War on Terrorism. Veterans who survived those wars but were accorded some of our military's highest honors also rest there, as do two former presidents and eleven Supreme Court Justices.

Before the Civil War began those now-hallowed grounds were the estate of George Washington and passed on to his granddaughter, Mary Anna Custis Lee. Before that war began, she lived at Arlington House atop the hill overlooking the Potomac River with her husband, Robert E. Lee. Lee himself was planning to turn the manor into a memorial to George Washington, his own father's closest friend.*

When Robert E. Lee made the difficult decision to command the Confederate Army, he and his wife fled Arlington House to reside deeper inside Virginia. In their absence, and strictly as an act of retribution against Lee, Union Brigadier General Montgomery Meigs began using the grounds of Arlington to bury soldiers. By the end of the war more than 16,000 soldiers had been interred there and use of the land as a cemetery prevented it from ever again being inhabitable as an estate, thereby prohibiting the return of the Lee family after the war. Today its gentle hills on the land that once belonged to our first war hero reflect in quiet dignity the immense price of our Nation's freedom.

In 1917 American men and women were again called to service and sent to Europe to "save the world for democracy." Nearly five million served with two million deployed to the combat theater where more than 50,000 paid the ultimate price and another 60,000 died of war-related accidents and disease. The fighting ended in World War I with the signing of an armistice at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month--November 11, 1918. Thereafter that date became known as "Veterans Day," a National holiday to remember all veterans, living or deceased. On Veterans Day in 1920 a solemn procession was held in Washington, D.C., as a horse-drawn

* It was Robert E. Lee's father, Henry Lighthorse Lee, who eulogized George Washington with the now-famous words, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

carriage transported the body of an unidentified soldier across the Potomac River to his final resting place at Arlington. Before the casket was placed inside a specially designed crypt President Warren G. Harding bestowed the Medal of Honor on the unknown soldier, laying the distinctive medal over the casket. An inscription at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier of World War I read, "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God." It became a symbolic memorial to the valor and sacrifice of all who had served in the *War to End all Wars*.

In 1920 Ernest Moore *Dick* Visquesney of Spencer, Indiana, himself a veteran of the Spanish-American War, undertook the challenge to design and cast in bronze, "the only absolutely perfectly equipped and historically correct example of what the United States infantry soldier was, and stood for" in World War I. The *Spirit of the American Doughboy* statue was copyrighted, and these statues were purchased by communities all across America as local memorials to the heroes of that war. Nearly all of the statues were erected between 1920 and 1930, and it is estimated that more than 110 of them are still standing in communities across America to this day.⁴

Often the larger-than-life and historically accurate image stood guard on a local courthouse or city park lawn, frequently with a bronze plaque affixed to its base bearing the names of local men and women who died in that war. Boys and girls growing up in the 1920s and '30s found the statues fascinating, often climbing up to run their fingers over bronze replicas of an Army rifle, magazine belt, or gas mask. Designed with his right arm extended in a "let's go get them" pose, it was an inspiration to young men and women who within a few short years would be called to service in another war. There is no way to gauge the positive and patriotic impact the silent bronze memorial had on a new generation of warriors--it is sufficient to know that it was considerable.

During and immediately after 16 million men and women of the *Greatest Generation* answered the call of duty during World War II, which would cost nearly half-a-million of them their lives, the names of war dead from that war were often inscribed on local plaques, frequently on or near the traditional Doughboy statues. But plans to expand the memorial at Arlington to include the Unknown Soldier of World War II were interrupted five years after that war ended, when many of the same soldiers who had fought against Germany and Japan returned to combat duty in Korea. On Memorial Day in 1958 the Unknown Soldiers of World War II and the Korean War were interred side-by-side at Arlington.

World War II did provide our nation with one of its most recognized war memorials, the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial--often called the "Iwo Jima Memorial"--which now stands just beyond the gates of Arlington National Cemetery. On the morning of February 19, 1945, U.S. Marines were battling to gain control of the Japanese island of Iwo Jima. Mount Suribachi, an extinct volcano, rose 550 feet from the sea and was the dominant feature of the 8-square mile island. On that day a cheer went up among heavily engaged Marines fighting bitterly in the sand below when they watched a group of their comrade's scale Mount Suribachi to raise a small American flag. Later that day five Marines and one Navy Corpsman removed that first small flag to preserve it for history and, in an action photographed by News-Photographer Joe Rosenthal, raised a second and larger flag. Rosenthal received a Pulitzer Prize for that historic photograph and three of the six flag-raisers from that second event came home to be feted as reluctant heroes. The other three had been killed while fighting on the island after the flag raising.

In 1951 work began to turn Joe Rosenthal's famous World War II photograph into a bronze memorial to all Marines who have ever served in defense of our nation. The figures of the six flag-raisers measured 32' feet tall and the flagpole rose 60 feet from the recreated bronze replica of Mount Suribachi's summit. The U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial was officially dedicated the day before Veterans Day--November 10, 1954. That day was the 179th Birthday of the U.S. Marine

Corps. On one side of the memorial's base can be read the words: "In honor and memory of the men of the United States Marine Corps who have given their lives to their country since 10 November 1775." The other side quotes Admiral Chester W. Nimitz' famous tribute to the men who fought at Iwo Jima: "Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue."

While there existed in our Nation's Capital, various state capitols, and cities around America numerous memorials to individual veterans or even, as with the new Marine Corps Memorial a tribute to an entire branch of service, prior to 1983 there existed no comprehensive National War Memorial. Decades before there was a World War II National Memorial, a Korean War National Memorial, and a National Memorial to Women in Uniform there was the Vietnam Wall. While the desire of returning Vietnam War veterans to honor the memory of their fallen comrades was no different than that of previous generations, their passion and determination gave us a new view of how to properly define memories of our most challenging moments.

What was unique to the veterans of the Defining Generation's war was the reception those young defenders of freedom received when they came home. Unlike the returning warriors of past wars who came home victoriously to parades and accolades for their service, Vietnam veterans came home to a country that tried with great embarrassment to ignore what it considered a sad defeat, and turn the other way. Even among fellow veterans of previous wars, returning Vietnam veterans were often unwelcomed reminders of a war America wanted to forget. Many American Legion and V.F.W. posts in cities across the country were reluctant to accept these veterans into their organization.

In the 1960s and '70s Vietnam veterans felt shunned and abandoned. Many simply *clammed up inside* and became rather reclusive, some became homeless veterans aimlessly living a post-war life seeming devoid of purpose, others turned to drugs or alcohol. Indeed, these who were a minority of our number came to represent us all in what many Americans came to believe. It is a very wrong stereotype that has nearly blacklisted the Vietnam War Veteran in our culture to this day.

In fact, most veterans of that war returned home, tried to forget unforgettable memories, and built productive and admirable places for themselves in American society. Often unseen, unheard, and overlooked, they are today the very fabric of our nation's greatness. They are also, in general, a very self-effacing group of American warriors. While hurt inside by the rejection of the country they served in Vietnam, that pain was overshadowed by their concern that friends who never came home were being largely forgotten.

With resolute determination we determined that, in the famous words of General John J. Pershing to the returning veterans of World War I, "Time shall not diminish the glory of their deeds."

¹ Wikipedia

² ibid

³ Robbins, Roland Wells, The Story of the Minute Man The Country Press, Inc, New London, NH, 1967

⁴ Emmitsburg Area Historical Society, "The History Behind the Doughboy,"

Jan Scruggs



"A long and painful process has brought us to this moment. Our nation was divided by this (Vietnam) war. In the process, we ignored those who bravely answered their nation's call. We are ready at last to acknowledge more deeply the debt which we can never fully pay to those who served."

*President Jimmy Carter
1980 Bill Signing for the Vietnam Memorial*

Two days after Veterans Day (November 11) 1969, half-a-million men and women encamped on the green grass of the Mall in Washington, D.C., in the shadows of the Lincoln Memorial where only six years earlier Dr. Martin Luther King had delivered his famous "I have a Dream Speech" to a crowd half their size. Dr. King was dead, assassinated little more than a year earlier, but this new gathering was endorsed by his widow and many other well-known and respected American leaders. It was the "March Against Death" that had been organized by Dr. Benjamin Spock and others in order to protest the ongoing war in Vietnam.

Those who gathered in the Nation's Capital to exert their influence on American foreign policy were not, indeed did not even look like, traditional politicians. Mostly young and the majority of them college students, they came dressed in jeans and tee-shirts, most including the men with long hair, peace signs and flowers painted on their faces. Some, in fact, were even returned veterans of that war. Though no war is popular and every war in our nation's history including and since the American Revolution has had its share of those who stood in opposition, never before in history had there been so large an organized anti-war movement.

On the first evening of the protest the crowd gathered just beyond the gates of Arlington National Cemetery where many of the young men of their generation now rested. The buried were those, some of whom supported and others who opposed the Vietnam war, who had answered the call to service out of a sense of obligation regardless of politics and then paid for their dedication with their lives. From Arlington the protesters began a long, twilight march across the river, past the White House and on to the Ellipse. To draw attention to the high cost of the war in Vietnam the protesters carried signs bearing the individual names of each of the more than 40,000 American who had been killed in Vietnam.

Thirteen years later to-the-day, another large crowd gathered beneath the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Again, it was a largely young crowd, albeit ever-so slightly older, and again they came dressed in tee-shirts and jeans, although far more came wearing distinctive camouflage fatigues than had attended the earlier protest. Their focus was once again on the war in Vietnam, now ended some seven years in history. With what might be called an *irony somewhat by design*, once again the individual names of those killed in that war, now numbering more than 57,000, were solemnly read over a loudspeaker. The difference was that in the earlier gathering those names had been displayed as examples to validate a cause; on this day those names were read in fond memory and tribute to their service and sacrifice.

Watching the dedication of the new Vietnam Veterans Memorial was Jan Scruggs, a 32-year-old veteran of that war. His body bore the physical scars of the conflict that had divided our nation. Now, while watching with pride the fulfillment of a nearly impossible dream, his psyche bore the scars of his personal effort. Bringing to reality a memorial to the veterans of that war had been nearly as divisive, and certainly as scarring as the war itself. To compound that irony, the opposition had not come so much from former anti-war protesters as from many of the veterans themselves. Neither had the effort been welcomed by some Washington politicians who had previously lent their political support to the war itself.

In fact, in a city where memorials stand on every corner and where funds are generally available for some of the most mundane of causes, the idea of a memorial to Vietnam's war dead and to its living veterans had faced monumental opposition. Every penny of the \$6 million effort was raised among the veterans themselves or from supporters in the private sector. This added irony was also not lost on Scruggs who said, "As it turned out, the monument has more of an impact being done privately. It was Viet Nam veterans taking care of buddies."¹

Jan Scruggs was born in our Nation's Capital in 1950 and grew up in nearby Bowie, Maryland. Though his father had been medically disqualified for service in World War II, it was a patriotic family that believed in service. Many of his uncles served in World War II and Korea, and his two older brothers served in the Army and Marine Corps prior to the Vietnam War. When Jan graduated from high school in 1968, he volunteered for the Draft. It was, he believed, his patriotic duty as an American. In August he was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for Basic Training and then on to Fort Polk, Louisiana for Advanced Individual Training as an infantryman...a "grunt." He arrived in Vietnam in April 1979.

Assigned to Company D, 199th Light Infantry Battalion in the Central Highlands, over the next year he witnessed virtually half of his comrades in the company either killed or wounded. Near Xuan Loc on May 28, 1969, Jan was himself wounded in action when an enemy Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) sent nine shards of metal into his back. His wounds were treated, he was awarded a Purple Heart, and returned to duty--fulfilling a full one-year combat tour. He was also awarded the Bronze Star.

When he returned home, the bulk of his military commitment fulfilled, he was honorably discharged. He enrolled for classes at American University in Washington, D.C., earning a bachelor's degree and, in 1977 a master's degree in Counseling. His post-graduate work returned him mentally to Vietnam as he focused on the problems faced by returning veterans of that war. While writing his thesis he took time to pen a "Letter to the Editor" of the *Washington Post* calling for some kind of memorial to his Vietnam War comrades.

By 1979 nearly a decade had passed since Jan Scruggs had answered the call of duty and served in what was now a war our Nation was trying hard to forget. The problem was, there were 2.7 million men and women who could never forget Vietnam--they had been there. In addition, there were the parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters of nearly 60,000 young men and women who had given their lives and would never be forgotten by those who loved and reverently recalled their youth, their sense of duty, and their untimely loss.

In Washington, D.C. "The Tent," an aging green canvas structure with the flaps open had become something of a pilgrimage for those who would not, indeed could not, forget the Vietnam War. Manned by volunteers and family members of veterans, it was a crude but poignant reminder of what the Vietnam War had cost. "At the door there was a wood box with a pair of boots still muddy with the remnants of Vietnam. On the ground (was) an upturned helmet into which one could drop a 'buck for luck'...if you had it. Inside were broken tables held together with duct tape upon which were placed piles of papers, all of them about Prisoners of War and Missing in Action in Vietnam. The forgotten men of a war most just wanted to forget about. There were cardboard shoe boxes full of simple POW-MIA bracelets, pins, more papers, bumper stickers, even more papers and always a bunch of good folks with a smile on their faces and the words 'Welcome Home' on their lips."²

"The Tent" was an obscure but constant reminder to those who stopped there that our generation had done its duty and served with a valor and dignity forgotten in the continuing effort to put the war behind us. The words "Welcome Home" were a simple but sincere expression and, when spoken beneath the heated canvas of "The Tent" it often marked the first-time returning veterans had heard those words. For that very reason those two words have come to mean much and to this day it is the standard manner in which Vietnam Veterans greet each other.

In April that same year Jan Scruggs was working as an employee in the Department of Labor in a good but not atypical career when he chose to divert his attention one night by watching a movie. The movie that inspired a dream was *The Deer Hunter*, a gripping tale of three young men drafted to serve in Vietnam. The cinematic experience mentally took him back nearly a decade to the day when a U.S. mortar shell accidentally exploded and killed several of his comrades. While reliving the experience in his own mind he ached for his fallen comrades, now forgotten an American public that wanted to forget the war. He determined that day that his buddies would never be forgotten.

On April 27, 1979, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) was incorporated as a nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to raising funds to build such a memorial. In addition to Jan who served as President, former Army Captain and Vietnam Veteran John Wheeler became Chairman of the Board. Robert Doubek, who served in Vietnam as an Air Force intelligence officer, became the Projector Director. Of course, at the time there was neither a project or money to begin one.

The following month for Memorial Day, with little more his dream and \$2,800 of his own money which he raised by selling a small parcel of land, Jan Scruggs became a man with a mission. He had no idea what a memorial to his comrades would look like or even what it would cost. He knew only that any such memorial must list, individually, the name of every man or woman who died in Vietnam or who was listed as Missing in Action. Fortunately, he did not know at the time, nor could he have imagined, the battle it would take to bring that dream to fruition...such a realization might well have caused him to give up in despair before the project ever began.

Initially the Board of VVMF set a fund-raising goal of \$1 million and began efforts to raise that formidable amount. The three VVMF founders approached their project with idealistic intent; it would be non-commercialized and would reflect no political statement on the war itself. Beyond such idealism they further undertook the effort with a naïve understanding of what it would take or how long it would take to complete such a memorial. They determined to raise the money, locate and purchase two acres of land in or near Washington, D.C., and dedicate the memorial on Veterans Day 1982--only slightly three years later. Jan wrote to John Wheeler noting, "We've got something good here. Enclosed are envelopes and stationery. Write anyone, ask for anything."³

One of the first answers to the plea for "anything" came from an unlikely source, Senator Charles Mathias. The Maryland Senator had been a vocal opponent of the war a decade earlier, now he saw in Jan's dream not just a memorial but a means of bringing together and reconciling the gap that controversy over the war had generated in America. He asked the three men to meet with him and explain what they wanted. John Wheeler laid out his vision of the memorial as being "a landscaped solution, a garden-type approach," centrally located in the Capitol with easy access for everyone. Senator Mathias pulled out a map and scanned the Capitol layout for an appropriate location, at last pointing to spot in the Mall's Constitution Gardens.

"Once the possibility of this site entered (our) consciousness, it seemed overwhelmingly logical. Right at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial--what a spot! No one could ignore it. Members of Congress would see it every morning as they drove to work. Presidents would see it whenever they ventured to set forth from the White House. Everyone in America, especially Vietnam vets themselves, would know that a special honor had been granted. The symbolism was perfect."⁴

Senator Mathias subsequently introduced a bill in the U.S. Senate to set aside two acres in Constitution Gardens for a Vietnam Memorial. The project drew support from the most unexpected places including Senator George McGovern* of South Dakota, one of the war's most outspoken critics and who ran for President in 1972 primarily on an anti-Vietnam War platform. It was an inkling of what was to come--signs that this memorial might at last unite a still-divided nation. Before it did it would divide the veteran's community, but that too was something unforeseen in the future.

Congressional records reflect that all 100 U.S. Senators co-sponsored the bill to allocate two acres in Constitution Gardens for a Vietnam War memorial, though that uncommon vote of unanimity was not easily attained. Jan Scruggs shrewdly applied pressure and, as more and more Senators joined the cause, he called the aids of undecided Senators to advise that every other Senator had signed on. Time Magazine later reported, "Fearful of being the only one left off the list, the remaining Senators quickly gave their approval."⁵

While the U.S. House of Representatives remained divided over the bill that would pave the way for a Vietnam War memorial, the leadership of VVMF bent to the even more daunting task of raising funds for the memorial, now estimated to be \$2 million. Their effort was destined to be the first overt signs of the healing process the completed memorial would one day bring. Comedian Bob Hope penned a letter urging contributions for the effort and Rosalynn Carter personally sent "thank you" letters to contributors. Senator John Warner of Virginia, a veteran of the Korean War and one of the first to join Senator Mathias in promoting the bill granting the land, also lent his support for the fund-raising effort to build it. Warner invited a group of major defense contractors to a special but simple sausage and egg breakfast that raised \$40,000, a hefty tab for breakfast but well worth the price tag--the meal was cooked by the Senator's wife, actress Elizabeth Taylor. Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot donated another \$10,000 to the cause.

For the most part however, the total sum that eventually would total nearly \$9 million and that in early 1980 had not yet reached the \$1 million mark came from \$1, \$5, and \$10 individual contributions from veterans and those who loved them. To further promote this grass-roots campaign that would make the memorial the first such National war memorial built entirely with private funds, Jan and his team issued a mass mailing to 200,000 veterans and others. A large number of names and addresses for that first plea came from an old "McGovern for President" list of supporters, drawing a strong negative reaction from many Vietnam Veterans. VVMF directors discussed the problems this divisive issue presented and decided to stand by their original principles...the memorial would be apolitical. As a result, today that monument stands because veterans and non-veterans, war "hawks" and hippies at last came together in a common cause--to insure that dead young men and women of their generation would never be forgotten.

The wisdom of Jan and his Board was further vindicated in May when the House at last took the previously passed Senate Bill under advisement. Though the bill had 177 co-sponsors it was not without opposition. Representative Phillip Burton of California balked at it, citing his 1964 experience of rushing too quickly into voting in favor of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that had authorized the Vietnam War. He made clear his intent not to be rushed into another decision involving Vietnam. Though he was just one voice in the House, as member of a subcommittee that had oversight over the use of public lands his opposition carried considerable weight. Eventually the bill was amended to authorize "two acres in the District of Columbia," a stunning set-back. First and foremost, by now the VVMF had settled on placing the memorial in Constitution

* During World War II as a member of the U.S. Army Air Forces George McGovern was highly decorated for his own heroism in combat.

Gardens. The bill as amended left the potential for it to become hidden away in some "back alley" of the Capitol. Furthermore, the amended bill if passed by the House would have to go back to the Senate and time was running out.

Jan requested and received an audience with Congressman Burton, sending his staff to earnestly explain that the memorial was aimed at reconciling both sides of the Vietnam War controversy, that it was about healing old wounds, not bringing up bad memories. Ultimately, they prevailed but in yet another twist of irony it was thanks to the very man some veterans had already criticized the Foundation for enlisting. Wrote Jan, "(We) finally won Burton over with one single sentence, 'George McGovern is on our sponsoring committee'." ⁶ The House passed the original Senate Bill designating Constitution Gardens as site of the Vietnam Memorial Jan hoped to dedicate little more than two years hence. President Jimmy Carter quickly signed the bill in a brief Rose Garden Ceremony.

With the land secured and the fundraising campaign under way and ongoing it was time to develop some concrete ideas on what that memorial would look like. In October of 1980 VVMF announced that concepts for design of the memorial would be submitted through a national competition, open to any U.S. citizen 18 years of age or older. From those proposed designs, ultimately numbering 2,573 in all, the winning proposal would be selected by a jury of eight internationally recognized artists and designers. To maintain integrity all designs would be judged anonymously based upon an assigned number rather than the competitor's (or in some cases a design team's) name. Only four criteria were specified for the design:

1. It would be reflective and contemplative in nature
2. It would harmonize with its surroundings
3. It would contain the names of those who had died in the conflict or who were still missing
4. It would make no political statement about the war itself

The following Spring submission #1026 was unanimously selected by the jury. The proposed memorial had been designed by Maya Ying Lin, a 22-year old architecture student at Yale University. In the statement accompanying her submission she wrote:

"Walking through this park, the memorial appears as a rift in the earth. A long, polished, black stone wall, emerging from and receding on either side, growing out of the earth, extend and converge at a point below and ahead. Walking into this grassy site contained by the walls of the Memorial, we can barely make out the carved names upon the Memorial's walls. These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers, while unifying these individuals into a whole. The Memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition to be understood as we move into and out of it. The passage itself is gradual; the descent to the origin slow, but it is at the origin that the Memorial is to be fully understood. At the intersection of these walls, on the right side, is carved the date of the first death. It is followed by the names of those who died in the war, in chronological order. These names continue on this wall appearing to recede into the earth at the wall's end. The names resume on the left wall as the wall emerges from the earth, continuing back to the origin where the date of the last death is carved."

The outcry in opposition to this memorial, the first of its kind in history, was both immediate and intense. Many Vietnam Veterans found their first objection in the fact that the memorial would be dug out below ground level. Since coming home veterans of that war had often felt like outcasts; one described his reception in social circles like the manner in which a room becomes cool, silent, and suspicious when a police officer enters. Many of these veterans felt like they were already buried by the desires of a nation to overlook them, and the subterranean design of Maya Lin's creation served only to further validate that feeling. Illinois Senator Henry Hyde called it a "black ditch."

Others objected to the black granite upon which the 58,000 names* of Vietnam's war dead was to be engraved. Again, Senator Hyde rose in opposition noting in a December 30, 1981, letter calling for President Reagan to withhold permission for construction, "In a city of white memorials rising, this will be a dark memorial receding." Others objected to the origin of the granite itself, quarried in East India instead of the United States. In fact, no such granite could be cut in the quantity and size necessary in America.

Tragically, among a generation that had grown up listening to Dr. Martin Luther King talk about judging people "not...by the color of their skin but by the content of their character," some detractors stood in opposition based upon the designer's ethnicity. Maya Lin's parents were Chinese and fled China just before the Communist takeover in 1949. Seeking their own *American Dream*, they settled Athens, Ohio, where both became professors at Ohio University. Maya Lin had been born in Athens in 1959 where she was co-valedictorian of her high school class before being accepted at Yale. She and her family were every bit American, but because she had seen in a memorial to Vietnam Veterans what few others would not understand until it reached out and touched them after it had been built, the young woman found herself the object of stinging racial epithets and hateful slurs.

In February 1982 everything came to a head in Washington, D.C. when Jan Scruggs, the VVMF Board and other memorial supporters met with the opposition to reach some kind of compromise. What Jan wouldn't compromise was his principles or the criteria that had been his mantra since the earliest days when the memorial had been a dream without either land or money.

As the rather heated debate continued throughout the day, sitting unobtrusively nearby and hearing the heated exchange about black granite sat retired Brigadier General George Price who had served as an advisor to the Vietnamese 1st Infantry Division. Pushed to the brink by what he saw he finally rose to his feet and in a strong voice said, "I am sick and tired of calling black a color of shame." Forty pairs of eyes turned toward the imposing figure and his intense eyes glaring from behind his own black skin, and suddenly a major issue was no longer an issue.

Yet another point of contention in the 5-hour meeting was related directly to the design itself. War memorials of the past had been individuals...The Minuteman, Spirit of the American Doughboy, The Marine Corps Memorial...but the design for the new Vietnam War Memorial was "only names on a wall." Furthermore, nowhere in the design was there plans for an American flag to fly over the memorial. Some intoned that absence of the flag was symbolic of how America had turned its back on returning Vietnam Vets. Towards the end of the meeting General Mike Davison, the retired commander who had led American forces into Cambodia in 1970, proposed a compromise. He suggested that at a later date the figure of a soldier could be erected in front of the black granite walls and that from that location would fly the Stars and Stripes.

* When the "Vietnam Wall" was dedicated a total of 57,939 names were inscribed. Since then in ten instances groups of names have been added bringing the total today to 58,256 names listed on the wall.

For months Jan Scruggs had felt his dream slowly slipped away in the controversy that surrounded it...wondered if all the efforts might have been in vain...even if it was even worth the struggle. On that day in February any lingering doubts vanished. There was too much work yet to be done. Dedication of the memorial was only 9 months away.

In Vermont, engraving of the names of nearly 58,000 names was underway. In front of each name was also engraved a symbol: a diamond for those who were confirmed casualties, a cross for "unaccounted for," and a diamond superimposed over a cross for 'remains returned.' In the unlikely event that one of the "unaccounted for" (Prisoner of War or Missing in Action) returned alive a circle...for life...would be etched around the diamond.

On March 26, 1982, fifty Vietnam Veterans turned shovels of dirt in Constitution Gardens, breaking ground for a memorial unlike anything in our nation's history. On July 22 the first panel was installed. In November for Veterans Day a week of celebration and somber reflection was held in our Capitol, drawing Vietnam Veterans and former anti-war protesters together in a common cause. On Veterans Day itself "The Wall," as it came to be commonly known was dedicated.

When the speeches were done and a final prayer had been uttered those in attendance found themselves magnetically drawn to the polished black granite surface containing the names of so many young men, dead now simply because they answered the call of duty. Aging mothers wept openly and unashamed as they gently ran their fingers over the name of a son or daughter they would never again hold in their arms. Men and women still young but maturing brushed back tears as they traced outlines of comrades they had served with and, in all too many cases, watched die. Younger teens looked searchingly at the name of a father they had never known to find their own face staring back in reflection. Silence permeated a two-acre shrine in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial, for that is exactly what the once bitterly contested memorial had become.

Noted Jan Scruggs, an ordinary man who had dreamed this place three years earlier, "You don't set out and build a national shrine. It becomes one."

Two years later on Veterans Day another somber reflection was held at the Vietnam War Memorial to dedicate what had once been envisioned as the statue of a soldier facing the wall. In completion it became in fact three soldiers, one White, one Black, and one Hispanic. If indeed there is a political statement on those hallowed grounds it could be found therein, the statement that said though we are different we are one. Above them now flies the Flag for which they all served as Americans.

While the names of 8 nurses are among those listed on the wall, they too would one day take their rightful place in the quiet solitude of "The Wall." On Veterans Day 1993 a bronze statue depicting three women veterans of that war was dedicated.

On July 27, 1995, not far from the Vietnam War Memorial yet another memorial was dedicated to brave young men and women who answered the call of duty in Korea. That same year across the river near Arlington a memorial was opened to commemorate the service of all women in military service from all generations and in all wars. Nine years later in celebration of Memorial Day 2004 the long-awaited World War II memorial opened to commemorate both the individual and collective service of 16 million men and women of the Greatest Generation.

It is fitting that the veterans of any, and of all wars, be long remembered. It is notable that in a land that honors its war dead and in a city of memorials, that the meaning of the words "duty, honor, country" and the reconciliation of the past would first be defined by a new Generation of Americans in the aftermath one of the most divisive periods in our history. Today, the Vietnam War Memorial is the most visited place of reflection and remembrance in America.

Noted the young man who first dreamed the memorial while recalling his own comrades on the day back in 1981 when the first stone was selected, "I had a dream that regardless of the controversy and division centered around Viet Nam, the American people could come together and build a memorial to honor the sacrifices of Vietnam Vets. That dream is a reality today."

¹ Stanley, Alessandra, "Healing Viet Nam's Wounds," *Time*, November 26, 1984

² "Histories: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," All POW Network,
<http://www.aipowmia.com/histories/histwall.html>

³ Scott, Wilbur J., *The Politics of Readjustment*, Walter de Gruyter, New York, 1993

⁴ Scruggs, Jan C., *To Heal a Nation*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1986

⁵ "Honored at Last," *Time*, July 14, 1980

⁶ Scruggs, *ibid.*

On July 31, 2007, I received a phone call from the state of Virginia. On the other end of the line was General Colin L. Powell, U.S. Army (Retired), a man I greatly admire and who was, despite the fact I had never met him, a personal hero to me. General Powell was calling to provide a requested interview for this book. A few weeks earlier he had responded via mail to my request by advising me that he would take 15 minutes out of his busy life to answer my questions. I had spent three weeks researching him and planning my questions well in advance.

When the call came in, I quickly opened the clock on my computer to monitor the time. I appreciated General Powell's kindness and wanted to ensure that I kept within the 15 minutes he had graciously offered. I guess I was over-prepared because although General Powell patiently and eloquently answered my questions, I completed the interview in 12 minutes. I thanked him and told him I would not consume any more of his time simply for the sake of taking advantage of the opportunity to talk with one of my personal heroes. Surprisingly, General Powell's voice became quite conversational and we continued to visit for another five minutes. During that more personal visit, which was not planned by me for this book, he spoke of a new project...as if one of the busiest men in America needed another. He described it as a new building being planned as an underground teaching facility near the Vietnam Wall, a Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center. He excitedly explained he was personally involved in this effort that would collect photographs and information on those who died in that war, putting faces and personalities with the names.

Fifteen minutes after we hung up, I placed a call to Jan Scruggs for what was a previously scheduled interview for this book as well. I told Jan, "I just got off the phone with General Colin Powell and he was telling me about a Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center near the Wall. Is that part of your (VVMF) project?"

He replied proudly that it was and that, in fact, General Powell was Honorary Chairman of the project to raise \$75 million for this exciting new expansion of "The Wall." General Powell had said of this new educational complex, "This is an important project of national significance that will enable our young people to gain a better understanding of the Memorial and its impact on our nation's history. It is fitting that America should have such a place to reflect on stories of courage and heroism. When it is completed, I am confident the Memorial Center will serve as a poignant reminder that the freedoms Americans enjoy are bought with a price."

Scheduled for groundbreaking in 2010, the center was designed by Ralph Appelbaum who explained its concepts and purposes:

- **Faces of Service Members:** A wall of photos of fallen servicemembers who had their birthday on that particular day, along with any images, letters or other remembrances left at The Wall for that individual.
- **Display of Values:** Words such as respect, loyalty, courage, duty, service, honor and integrity, combined with excerpts from letters of fallen service members that convey those concepts.
- **Artifacts Collection:** A dramatic series of glass cases that contain selections of the more than 100,000 items that have been left at the memorial, including personal letters home from men and women in uniform.
- **Timeline:** A factual chronology of military events to give an overview of the span of the war and the key actions.
- **History of the Memorial:** A visual and written history of The Wall and the way it has uniquely influenced the way Americans memorialize and pay tribute.

- Resource Center: Interactive stations where visitors, specifically young people, can access additional information.
- Legacy of Service: A visual connection between those who served in Vietnam and all Americans in uniform, past and present.

When standing silently at "The Wall" and contemplating what seems to be a never-ending list of names those persons honored there are indistinct beyond the moving fact that they were all men and women who served their country and paid the ultimate sacrifice. It is fitting and proper that they remembered as such, not as individuals but as a generation. But much can be learned by connecting those names to a face and to a story. That is the purpose of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center. It is an admirable effort by Jan Scruggs, General Powell, and many other veterans who began with service, recalled their comrades with a Wall, and now reach out to future generations.

For more information on the VVMC we encourage you to visit www.vvmf.org or write to Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, 1023 Fifteenth Street, NW, Second Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005. It is a worthy tribute in the memory of the Defining Generation as well as those who preceded us, as well as an investment in the young men and women of the future.

Delbert Schmeling



"All my buddies are heroes. It ain't right to forget them. I miss all of them."
Delbert Schmeling

When Delbert Schmeling's story was published in the book Chicken Soup for the Veterans Soul in 2001, I received a mix of reactions from people who read that story. Many thanked me for highlighting the accomplishments of a caring veteran. A few others emailed to tell me how disgusted they were that I would write a story about someone as mentally challenged as Delbert, broadcasting his disability to the whole world. I could understand the latter complaints; I had indeed struggled with the appropriateness of accurately telling Delbert's story at the time I wrote it.

Delbert himself, faces no such quandary. He realizes he is what most people would politely refer to as "slow" and accepts himself for who he is. In fact, he proudly refers to himself as "Pueblo's Forrest Gump."

Born in Pueblo, Colorado, on May 16, 1947, he was the oldest of Herman and Marie Schmeling's three children. A sister Janis was sandwiched between Delbert and his kid brother Karl, three years his junior. The two younger children were "normal" but early in Delbert's life his parents knew that he had some problems. His learning disabilities aside, they raised all three of their children in a loving environment, never conceding that there were some things their oldest son might never do.

Herman Schmeling served in the Navy in World War II and then spent his post-war career working for the Federal Government. Until he retired when Delbert was himself coming of age during another period of war, he served at the nearby U.S. Army's Pueblo Chemical Depot. Photos of Herman in uniform were displayed prominently in the living room of the Schmeling home and all of the children grew up with a sense of pride in their father's service. Delbert himself took a special interest and was fascinated by military service.

School was a constant struggle for Delbert, but he remained determined to finish. In 1967 at the age of twenty he graduated from Pueblo's Centennial High School, two years behind the rest of his class. Even as he was graduating his 18-year-old classmates were registering with the Selective Service. One day the subject of the draft came up and Delbert seemed puzzled by it all. One of his classmates explained that every young man was required to register at the age of eighteen or they might go to jail. Delbert hadn't understood that and was horrified..."I was afraid I was going to jail," he says. So, he hurried down and registered. It never occurred to him that it was a moot point. The young man's physical appearance alone marked him as different, his slow speech confirmed it, and there could be no doubt he would have been found unqualified for military service.

Delbert did want to serve his country, just as his father had during an earlier war. After graduating from high school, he tried to enlist in the Navy. The recruiters were kind but made it very certain to him that they didn't need him in the U.S. Navy. Obviously the eager but incapable young man should not be drafted or sent to Vietnam. Fortunately for Colorado veterans he was, on both counts.

How the Draft Board could have ever called Delbert to service I will never know. Even more unbelievable is the fact that he made it through the initial processing and was sent to Fort Bliss, Texas, for basic training followed by Advanced Individual Training as a Field Wireman at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Ten months later the 21-year-old Private arrived in Vietnam. "I'd have got there sooner," Delbert says, "but I had to go through Basic Training three times." Where some might have been embarrassed to admit as much, for Delbert it is a source of pride. To him he may have failed twice, but he stuck with it and succeeded in the end. It is the simple philosophy of a simple man from whom I've learned more than from some of the most brilliant people I've ever known.

In Vietnam Delbert was assigned to the 42d Field Artillery, 4th Infantry Division at Pleiku, Kontum, and Ban Mi Thout. Though he never saw combat in the field, over the next 365 days he literally slept with his M-16 rifle. Vietnam was frightening enough to the average soldier with confidence in his training, it was terrifying for a young man who lacked confidence in himself and suspected that he hadn't really mastered his training. It was obvious to his Company Commander that to put Delbert in the field would be a tragic mistake. Thus Delbert spent his year in the base camp, dialing making the rounds to pull the half-barrel receptacles from beneath the wooden seats of the latrines, douse them with diesel, and then stir the pot while the human waste of the previous day burned. It was a lousy job, one that many times local Vietnamese were hired to come in and perform because it was beneath the dignity of the average G.I. Delbert didn't mind...he was just doing his job. If someone today asks Delbert what he did in Vietnam they won't get any war stories...he'll just look you in the eye and say with pride, "I was he Company's shit burner."

On his last night "in country" the enemy reached out one last time for him. That night Delbert huddled in a bunker with other soldiers as a major rocket attack was launched against his position. Throughout the night he never knew from one minute to the next if he would be walking onto the "Freedom Bird" to go home the next day, or if others would carry his body to the belly of a cargo plane for the return to Pueblo. Men died around him that night he recalls with tears in his eyes. "They wouldn't tell me who died," he says. "Maybe I didn't really want to know."

After completing his enlistment at Fort Carson, Colorado, Delbert was honorably discharged and came back to Pueblo to try and put his life back together. Vietnam continued to strike fear in his heart, regularly invading his dreams. Many nights he would awaken screaming, his body shaking and covered with sweat. For 14 years he worked at menial tasks on the housekeeping staff at the Colorado State Hospital. But the inner demons plagued him time and again until he finally broke down. After six months in a VA hospital he was diagnosed with PTSD and determined to be 40% disabled. Two years later the VA re-evaluated him and granted 100% disability.

Living at home with his parents Delbert struggled to survive the bad days and sought to find a sense of purpose in his few good days. He found some comfort and understanding among fellow Vietnam Vets in the local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). As did so many returning veterans, most of whom felt abandoned and ignored by their own country, the small group became a supportive brotherhood. To remember the sacrifice of comrades who didn't make it home, the small band began planning for a memorial--not a small one, but one for all the men and women from Colorado who had paid the supreme sacrifice in Vietnam. Lofty goals were discussed and even some rough diagrams were developed and circulated. But long before the project could gain any semblance of reality the group disbanded, and Delbert was left alone. Encouraged by his parents he continued the work on his own.

I first met Delbert during the second Independence Day celebration Pam, and I organized in 1993, the first that included Medal of Honor recipients. Events included a dinner that was a fundraiser for the event and Delbert came with his father. When the ceremony concluded we were swamped with people wanting to shake our hands and offer their thanks for an inspiring evening. As I visited, I noticed an elderly man and his son waiting on the fringes, watching me. When the crowd thinned some Herman Schmeling walked up to me with his son virtually hiding shyly behind him. "Mr. Sterner," he said, "I'd like to introduce you to my son, Delbert. Like you, he is a Vietnam veteran."

I tried to acknowledge Delbert and thank him for his service, but he just grunted and kept his eyes on the floor. Almost immediately my heart broke--I assumed Delbert must have been

severely wounded in Vietnam. Only much later did I learn that he had lived his whole life fighting disabilities I could not begin to imagine. "Mr. Sterner," Herman continued, "we've been watching everything you and your wife have been doing and it is great. You know, if you can do something this big, Delbert's hoping you can help him with a little project he is working on...tell him about its Delbert."

Delbert grunted again and then said slowly, "You tell him for my dad." Herman Schmeling took his son by the arm and pulled him in between us so he was the sole object of my attention, and then pushed his son to explain the project himself. Somehow in slow, halting words, he managed to communicate to me that he was trying to build a memorial to all of Colorado's Vietnam War veterans who had died. Never once did he look me in the face, his eyes remained focused self-consciously focused on his shoes.

"Little project--right!" I thought. I admired Delbert for his dream, it reminded me of the idealistic zeal of a small child. I knew there was no way someone with Delbert's challenges could ever pull off a job so large, but I was strangely drawn to him. I was especially impressed with the love and pride I read in his father's eyes. I wrote down my phone number and told Delbert to call me in a week...after I had recovered from the activities of the current project...and I would set up a time to meet with him to discuss his project.

Delbert is literally the kind of guy whom, if you said, "Call me in a year," you can expect a phone call exactly one-year-to-the-day. Strangely, he wouldn't even have to write it down or check a calendar...he would just seem to know. One-week later Delbert was sitting in my office to lay out his big dream...one that was reflected in the Chicken Soup story as being "Pie in the Sky."

That day Delbert laid out on my desk some rather impressive sketches of his proposed memorial. He had designed a memorial consisting of three 8'-tall black, granite slabs on which was to be engraved the names of each of the 620 Colorado Vietnam Veterans who had been killed in action, as well as that of one woman civilian. He had even compiled the list containing every name and could almost repeat it verbatim by heart.

It was indeed a lofty goal, and despite the fact that Delbert had already negotiated a very large discount on the engraving from a local company, was going to take some serious fund raising. Pam and I were dipping deeply into our own family budget to cover the costs of our own recent project and would be for several months to come. I felt there was little I could do and, furthermore, I did not see this as a project that had a realistic hope of success. It was a wonderful dream and I was thankful Delbert had this to occupy his mind and his time, but I knew down deep it was never going to happen. I felt much like a father listening to his 6-year-old son saying, "Dad, when I grow up I'm going to be an astronaut," as I patted his back and said "Sure, sure...if you can dream it you can achieve it."

"Thank you so much, Doug," he told me as he departed, and I couldn't understand what he was thanking me for...I hadn't done a thing except listen to him politely and pretend to look like a believer, all the while knowing he was chasing a rainbow's end he would never find. Still, I developed a deep love...almost a paternal sense of responsibility, for Delbert. Over the next two years he would call me every month to update me. He seemed to be making progress but even then, I was hesitant to believe.

Our City Manager Lew Quigly, a dedicated professional who had been critical to Pam's and my success in the now on-going Medal of Honor activates was the first person of influence to become captivated by Delbert and his project. He promised Delbert he would help him get a section of land in a park north of town, right near our own *Spirit of the American Doughboy* statue for his

memorial. "But you are going to have to go before City Council to explain your project," he told Delbert. The young man who had trouble visiting one-on-one with strangers and could not engage in any conversation without fixing his eyes on the ground pleaded with Lew to do it for him. "Delbert," the City Manager replied, "this is your project. You have to explain it yourself if you want it to happen." For a noble purpose far larger than himself, Delbert mustered the courage to do just that. In return, a captivated and deeply-moved City Council quickly offered the plot of ground that was needed.

Funding was the critical need and again Delbert mustered the courage to become a public figure. With a glass jar he literally spent every day sitting at a small card table in front of the local Safeway and Wal-Mart stores near his home collecting nickels, dimes and quarters. He rapidly became a fixture in our city, literally Pueblo's *Forrest Gump*. Everybody fell in love with Delbert and his dream and pocket change soon became dollars, and more.

In late 1995 Delbert ordered his three granite panels to be delivered to the local artisan who would engrave the names. Then, while there was still snow on the ground he went to the site where he had envisioned those panels and began staking it off. He personally turned the earth and, in the Spring of 1996, supervised the pouring of concrete. A few months later when a large crane began delivering the panels, it was Delbert who guided them into place.

On November 2, 1996, just nine days before Veterans Day, Pam and I drove to the site of Delbert's dream. On that day it was crowded--literally hundreds had gathered including veterans from all over the state. There were dignitaries from the state, county and city, all come for the dedication of the new Colorado State Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Medal of Honor Recipient Peter Lemon was there to give the keynote address. Delbert saw us walking towards the three gleaming panels above which flew the American flag, the POW/MIA flag, and the flags of the five branches of military service. He ran me and gave me a big hug saying, "Doug, thank you so much for everything."

"For what?" I thought to myself in embarrassment; it was a humbling moment.

Though Delbert had, for all practical purposes done it all, the day belonged to others who spoke for the ceremony. Delbert eschewed attention and remained quietly as a part of the crowd, unseen save for a brief moment when Colorado State VVA president Carl Rust, in concluding his remarks pointed to the solitary figure who had made it happen. "We all thank you, Delbert, for a job well done. You are relieved of your duty."

When the ceremony ended everyone gathered silently around Delbert's dream. Elderly mothers gently ran their fingers across the engraved names of Colorado sons and daughters who had answered their Country's call and paid the supreme sacrifice. Others left flowers, mementos, and tears at the base of the three granite panels. I walked over to Delbert and gave him a big hug and said, "Delbert, I'm so proud of you." Suddenly he began to shake uncontrollably as his tears damped the back of my shirt.

"Doug," he said, "they're taking away my disability payments."

"What?" I said in disbelief, and then my brother poured out his heart. In its infinite wisdom the Veterans Administration, aware of Delbert's achievement, had determined he could not be a 100% disabled veteran. He showed me their letter announcing their decision to reduce his monthly payments by \$900 per month. He was being penalized for doing what everyone thought impossible.

Fortunately, Pete Lemon and Colorado Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell took up the cause of Pueblo's *Forrest Gump*. Local veterans also, indeed the most prominent of our city leaders rallied behind the man who was now our town hero. Under pressure the VA reversed its decision

and Delbert remains 100% disabled, though he sure taught us all what a true believe could accomplish no matter what words are used to define them.

A few months after I launched the Home of Heroes website in 1998 I began working on a 10-story series for Veterans Day that I called "The Brotherhood of Soldiers at War." Delbert is and always will be my brother, and I asked him if he minded if I wrote his story for that series. He was excited and, when I tried in vague terms to allude to Delbert's mental slowness, I'm afraid I was far too conservative, and the true nature of his accomplishment was lost. It was Delbert himself, when I read to him the story I had prepared, that pointed this out and he insisted that I not sugar-coat his problems. Delbert is who he is, and he accepts that. He would have it no other way.

Soon thereafter I received an email from Sid Slagter, who advised me he was compiling a series of inspirational stories for a book to be titled Chicken Soup for the Veterans Soul. While there were literally scores of inspiring veteran's stories he had reviewed in my website, it was the story of Delbert Schmeling that stood out to him. It was one of the very first to be selected for that inspiring book and Delbert was thrilled. In an interview with our local paper Sid noted, "As soon as I read Delbert's story, I said 'That's what we call a Chicken Soup story!' "Over the next year and a half Delbert called Sid nearly every week for progress reports. While a busy author fighting a deadline might have found this a nuisance, Sid as had everyone else who had ever come in contact with Delbert, was fascinated by Delbert's personality and fell in love with him too. In 2000 Sid was my guest at the National Medal of Honor convention. He came excited to meet American heroes but specially to meet Delbert.

When at last the book was published on May 15, 2001, Sid returned to Pueblo where Delbert became the focus of attention. In a city-wide book signing Delbert refused to speak from the podium but certainly loved autographing scores of books for others. Over the following week we took the book across the state, Delbert constantly reminding Sid and I where we were supposed to be next, how many miles away our next stop were, and how much time we had to get there. We just shook our heads in amazement at Delbert's attention to the smallest detail and wondered if in fact, he wasn't somehow smarter than the two of us put together.

Delbert was in for one additional surprise. In 2001 Centennial High School where he had taken longer to graduate than perhaps any other student in the school's history inducted Delbert into its "Hall of Fame" where he joined Drew Dix as one of the schools outstanding heroes. Dix had earned the Medal of Honor in the Vietnam War.

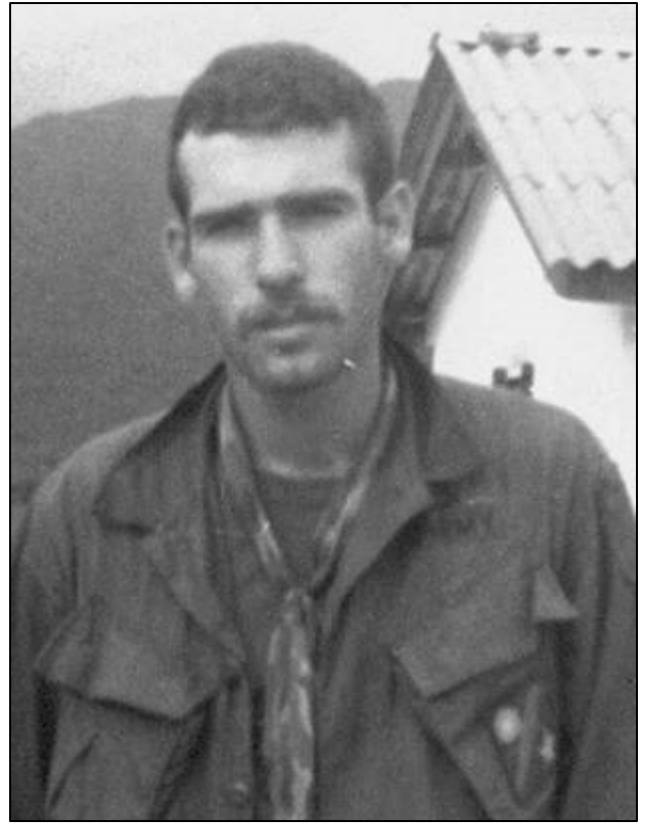
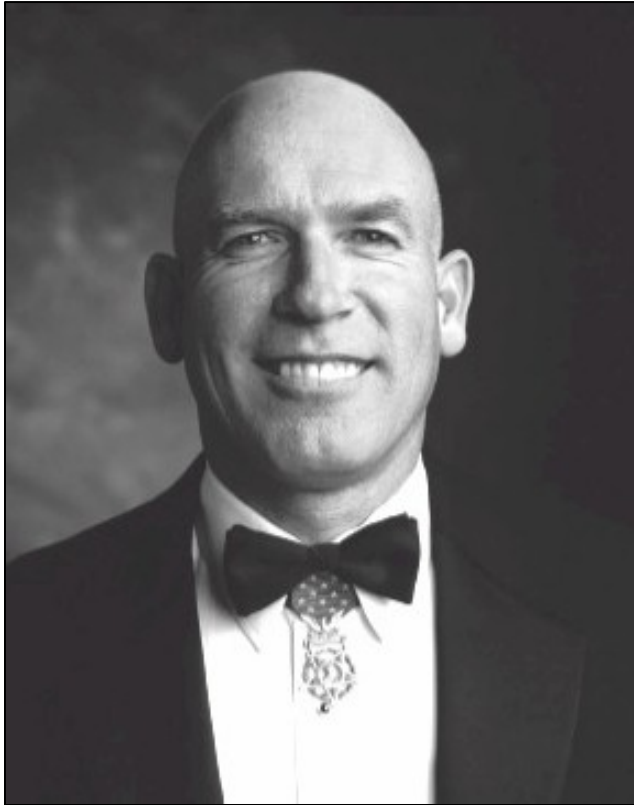
One of the few times Delbert spoke more than a few words was when he hesitantly agreed to be interviewed for a story in our local paper. After highlighting the beauty and symbolism of the Colorado State Vietnam Veterans memorial Delbert had nearly-singularly built, Reporter Juan Espinosa who was also a Vietnam War veteran wrote:

(Delbert) Schmeling said he was driven to create the memorial out of a desire to visit the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. "That was my dream--to go to the wall," he said. Instead he brought the spirit of the wall to his hometown and home state.

"I never gave up," he said. "I just kept pushing and pushing until I got it done." ¹

¹ Espinosa, Juan, "Gentle Giant," *The Pueblo Chieftain*, May 1, 2001, p 8A.

Peter C. Lemon



"When we shared our dreams back then (in Vietnam), everyone supported each other. I believe it is our responsibility to those that didn't make it home to realize our dreams and our children's dreams for them: to pursue our profession, as they would have; to love our family, as they would have; to be a proud American, as they would have, knowing that their service not only contributed to the history of this great nation but defined it as well."

Peter C. Lemon

On June 15, 1971, President Richard Nixon hung the Medal of Honor around the neck of a young soldier for his heroism in Vietnam. It was an incredible moment for Peter C. Lemon, the Canadian-born kid from Michigan who was still recovering from wounds received more than a year before. While his mother watched in pride as her son was enshrined as one of our nation's greatest heroes, Pete felt an acute uneasiness inside. It was intimidating enough to be ushered into the White House to meet the President, even more stressful to be the focus of attention as he received a sacred honor. The real problem was that this was an honor he felt he didn't deserve--it belonged to someone else. Inside he felt like a fraud and a thief.

When he returned home after a heady experience at the Nation's Capital he took the distinctive medal with its gold star, gleaming emeralds, and blue ribbon and placed it in a shoebox. Then he tucked that shoebox away in his closet.

Of the 245 young men who earned Medals of Honor in Vietnam, only six were not born in the United States or its territory of Puerto Rico. Peter C. Lemon was the only one who was a native of Canada. Born in Toronto on June 5, 1950, his family moved to Tawas City, Michigan, while he was a young boy and he became an American citizen at the age of twelve.

It is not uncommon for those born elsewhere and subsequently naturalized in the United States to feel a great sense of obligation to their new homeland. Pete was no different and grew up feeling he owed his adopted nation a debt of gratitude and sought to repay his country by enlisting in the Army early in 1969. One month after celebrating his 19th birthday he arrived in Vietnam.

Just after being assigned to a combat unit Private First-Class Lemon was required to take Recon training. This was a difficult course, designed to weed out those who couldn't measure up to the high standards the unique missions U.S. Army Rangers required, and to further prepare those who could. Pete completed the course with fellow soldier Henry Mallory and was assigned to a team in the *Big Red One's* (First Infantry Division) I Company, 75th Rangers. He served in that elite unit for most of his Vietnam tour and was transferred to the First Cavalry Division's Company E (RECON), 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry in March 1970 when the *Big Red One* was sent home. Only five months remained in his tour of duty before he, himself, would be going home.

Now a Specialist Fourth Class, Pete served as an assistant machine gunner in an under-strength 18-man reconnaissance platoon led by Lieutenant Gregory "Greg" Peters. Throughout the month of March these young men made regular trips into the jungle to seek out and destroy scattered enemy squads. They were dropped into hot LZs flanking the enemy who were battling other First Cav units beyond their Base Camp at Tay Ninh. They often crossed over into the North Vietnamese Army's (NVA) sanctuary in Cambodia. As the month drew closer and closer to the end it seemed easier and easier to find the enemy; or perhaps, the enemy was finding them.

On March 20 two Fire Support Bases (FSB) were carved out on the extreme western edge of Tay Ninh Province along a major NVA infiltration and supply route. One was labeled *Illingsworth* and further south was another named *Jay*. The FSB concept was to establish temporary forward bases to interdict the enemy, emplacing artillery along with infantry and sometimes armor for security. Battery A, 2d Battalion, 32d Field Artillery set up their big guns at FSB Illingsworth, where they were joined by Armored Personnel Carriers of a Troop, 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment for security. Along with Company C of 2/8 Cav, Specialist Lemon's E Company Recon Platoon brought total strength at the hastily built position deep inside *Indian country* to about 200 Americans.

Because under the FSB concept it was expected that FSB Illingsworth would only be occupied for a few days to a week no heavy fortifications were brought in. The earthen berm that served as a protective wall was only a few feet high in many places. It was built in the middle of a

dried soot pond bed. There was no barbed or concertina wire surrounding the perimeter. Rather than being built in a circle with equal lines of fire from any position to the wood line, it was constructed oblong at one end with a mere fifty yards to the wood line, contrasting the 500 yards on the other side of the FSB. Artillery ammunition is usually stored underground but on Illingsworth they were stored all together in the open on pallets visible for the enemy to see. Living quarters were largely culverts flown in by helicopter and quickly covered with dirt and/or sandbags.

When both FSB Illingsworth and FSB Jay remained operational for more than a week the young men manning those isolated outposts began to worry. When darkness fell on March 29, Easter Sunday, the enemy attacked FSB Jay. Into the early morning hours of the following day the battle raged and the artillerymen at nearby FSB Illingsworth were called upon to train their big guns south in support of their embattled comrades. Though the "Sky Soldiers" of the Cav's 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry beat back the furious assault, they took heavy casualties.

Aware of what had happened nearby, instinctively everyone knew that FSB Illingsworth would be next. Many of the soldiers, including Specialist Lemon, began to believe that they were being used as "bait" to draw the enemy into a confrontation all knew was coming, especially since the command immediately ordered two 8" howitzers be flown in and placed on the FSB. These were the ultimate prize for the hard core North Vietnamese Army.

Lieutenant Peters' Recon Platoon returned from a patrol on the evening of the following day (March 31) tired, sweaty, and with an ominous sense of impending battle, but spirits were high. They were responsible for and manned the berm sector closest to the wood line where the enemy would attack. They reinforced their positions by hiding claymore mines at intervals starting in front of the woodline up to, although risky, into the berm itself. They chowed down and tried to rest their weary bodies in their makeshift bunkers, knowing the enemy would come that night. They did!

Early in the morning of April 1, April Fool's Day, at 12:30 a.m. the bombardment began. Over a 20-minute period more than 300 incoming rocket and mortar rounds fell inside the tight perimeter that was less than the size of one football field. In the waning minutes of the bombardment rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) began striking the berm. It was certain notice that enemy ground forces were within striking range and a signal for the soldiers guarding the berm to come out of their bunkers and man the berm. When the artillery lifted, they came, 400 soldiers of the NVA's 272d Regiment, the majority of which converged on the eighteen-man RECON platoon lead by Lieutenant Greg Peters. There was no perimeter wire to hold them back and they came in waves of fifty abreast.

Pete Lemon and Specialist Fourth Class Lou Vaca raced to the berm to return fire with their M-60 machine gun. Virtually alone on their sector of the perimeter, when the gun jammed there was a dangerous lull in the defensive fire and attacking NVA concentrated much of their effort on that vulnerable sector. Pete killed five of them with his M-16 rifle before it, too, jammed. As Lou Vaca tried desperately to get the machine gun in operation, Pete then began throwing grenades at the onrushing attackers killing three of them, and then leaped over the small dirt wall to kill the fourth. He unleashed a torrent of fire at the continuing wave of screaming enemy as a grenade exploded nearby, wounding him in the head and neck. He dove over the berm, located his buddy, and carried him to the aid station.

Lieutenant Peters, barely visible through the soot, could see that the Artillery's big .50 caliber machine gun sitting on the berm was vacated and not being used to fire on the enemy. The LT ordered Specialist Fourth Class Casey Waller and Lemon to run across a barrage of enemy fire

and get the .50 firing again. "We couldn't get the darn machine gun to work," Pete later recalled. "We tried desperately for at least five minutes to open fire; all the while being shot at by the enemy. Then a mortar shell went off by us, wounding me and totally destroying my buddy Casey."

Meanwhile the enemy continued to attack in waves. Two of Lemon's comrades, Specialist Fourth Class Brent Anthony Street of Inglewood, CA, and Specialist Fourth Class Nathan Mann of Warsaw, Missouri, manned their own guns in their sector of the perimeter. The nearby ammunition storage area that was exposed caught fire, illuminating them and exposing their position but, realizing the enemy was about to overrun the perimeter they remained at their post to beat back an overwhelming force. When their weapons jammed, they began desperately throwing grenades and, when these had been expended, engaged the encroaching enemy in hand-to-hand combat.

As Pete raced back to the berm after grabbing a weapon and more ammunition an enemy RPG struck nearby, wounding him a second time. In the flickering light of the overhead flares beyond the berm however, he could see more and more enemy soldiers converging on Illingsworth. Realizing that the defensive sector was about to be overrun he ignored his wounds and engaged the enemy, lobbing grenades and again resisting them in hand-to-hand combat.

Suddenly the entire camp was illuminated in a brilliant flash of light and the ground shook with a rolling tremor. The ammunition dump had been hit and tons of high explosives erupted in a massive explosion that dug a crater 20 feet deep. A nearby 8-inch artillery piece weighing 30,000 pounds was knocked over as if it was a toy. Almost simultaneously there was a second, smaller explosion as an enemy RPG round struck near Mann and Street and both men were mortally wounded. Then the base camp went suddenly dark and almost quiet.

Tons of soot from the dry pond bed mushroomed heavenward, dislodged in the explosion of the ammunition dump that had excavated a huge crater, and began raining back down on the base camp. It masked overhead flares, blew into the eyes of sweaty men fighting for their lives, and permeated intricate moving parts to jam weapons. Wiping his eyes with the back of his sweaty and blood-stained hand, Pete Lemon strained to see through the thick clouds to identify the enemy positions. Though he was wounded a third time in this action the second wave of enemy attackers was thrown back temporarily, and Pete sank exhaustedly, and painfully to the ground next to the machine gun.

The respite was all too brief...another wave was massing for an attack. It was like a bad movie where the hero keeps shooting vainly at a monster which, seemingly unfazed by bullets, continues to threaten. Pete's mind momentarily engaged in a ghoulish replay of the events of the early morning--the first wave followed by wave after wave, and now another was preparing to assault. It seemed that the nightmare was a never-ending. "I'm never getting out of here alive...none of us are," he thought. Grabbing up the M-16 he defiantly stood exposed atop the berm to unleash his weapon. "The hell with it," he said to himself, now resigned to his fate. "If I'm going to die, by God I'm going to take as many of them with me as I can." He continued to fire until his world suddenly went black. When he regained consciousness lying next to the berm Staff Sergeant Jim Taylor tried to convince Lemon to be evacuated by helicopter, but he refused until his more seriously wounded comrades were air lifted to safety.

After four hours of intense battle twenty-four American soldiers had died and more than fifty were wounded. Every man in Pete's Recon Platoon was wounded in one form or another; three of them died. Almost unbelievably, the dead enemy body count in front of the RECON position was sixty-seven. Pete, along with his unit which included Lou Vaca, Lieutenant Peters, Gordon "Tex" Fleshner, Kenny Valdijuli, Henry Mallory, Fred Sporar, Tim "Chicago" Broden,

Jim Corban, Jim Taylor, "Von Cowboy," Steve "Yuma" Herreas, Gerald "Gary" Underwood, Rudine "Chief" Jones and Nick "The Medic" Austin, were evacuated that day and the following day FSB Illingsworth was abandoned.

After recovering from his wounds Pete was assigned to a support unit and then, on December 4, was honorably discharged from the Army and returned home. Seven months later he was called to the White House to receive the Medal of Honor. Every man in his platoon was decorated for valor, in addition to the Purple Heart each one of them received for wounds sustained in the battle. Casey Waller and Brent Street were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor, and Nathan Mann was posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

In the years that followed, though Pete's Medal of Honor remained boxed away *out of sight and out of mind*, there was no closet large or secure enough to hide the memories of that horrible morning at FSB Illingsworth. "I had deep guilt feelings over the loss of my friends," he said. "I wasn't sure if I had done enough to keep them alive." It was a reaction common for veterans of all wars, identified in the aftermath of the Vietnam War by the term's "PTSD" (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and "survivor's guilt." Pete moved from Michigan to seek solace in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. There, in 1976 he enrolled in college earning a bachelor's degree and an advanced degree in Business. In the years that followed he became an entrepreneur, starting, building, and growing several successful businesses.

Throughout the years however, his mind was never far from FSB Illingsworth or the friends he had lost. The survivors of E/2/8 remained close and stayed in contact in the years after the war, visiting by phone often and even traveling to see each other from time to time. In one personal meeting at a lounge in New York with fellow RECON comrade Alan "Rapp" Rappaport, Pete was asked about the Medal of Honor. He acknowledged that he still had it. "Where is it?" asked "Rapp."

"In a shoebox in my closet."

"You don't wear it?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"It isn't mine," Pete quickly answered. "It belongs to Casey Waller, Nathan "Laredo" Mann, Brent Street who paid the ultimate sacrifice with their life, and to the guys in our unit."

In the weeks that followed Pete thought often of that conversation. From time to time he would look at the Medal and his name engraved on its back side, then put it away in the realization that it belonged to other men. More years passed.

Pete remained especially close with "The LT," Greg Peters, who had commanded the Recon Platoon. Peters had himself endured much, struggling not only with the long-range consequences of his wounds but additional health issues. Like Pete and the other survivors, he also struggled with guilt, perhaps more guilt than all of the others because he had been their leader.

One day during a visit with "The LT" the two men were walking in the rain on a deserted beach south of San Francisco and talking about Vietnam. Lieutenant Peters said something very telling...a story Pete had never before heard and a concept he had never considered. "Pete," the now gravely ill former officer said somberly, "There were eighteen men on the perimeter of Illingsworth that night and every one of them deserved the Medal of Honor. But you know as well as I do that, I couldn't submit twelve men for the Medal of Honor--chances are they would have all been downgraded. One of the hardest decisions I ever had to make was what one person to recommend. Pete, I chose you because I knew that you were the one who would always wear it to keep alive the heroic story of us all."

Pete had indeed earned that high honor which was bestowed by the President because of his actions. On that evening however, he suddenly realized that he had first been selected for the award by a man he dearly loved, not for what he had done but because of who he was. Slowly in the years that followed the Medal of Honor in the shoebox in the closet began to be worn, not for himself, but for his comrades.

In 1993 Pete, who was living 35 miles up the road in Colorado Springs, began helping the people of Pueblo organize and conduct a series of ongoing ceremonies to honor our city's own Medal of Honor heroes. Until the year 2000 Pueblo, Colorado, was the only city in America with as many as four living recipients of the Medal of Honor and was designated by Congress as America's "Home Of Heroes." Pete took well to advising and assisting in the project because its aim was towards honoring other heroes, not Pete himself. In 1997 after his children had met almost all the living recipients and asked, "Dad...who are these guys?" he undertook to tell the story of other heroes with a compilation of their stories in the acclaimed book Beyond the Medal of Honor. When one reader once commented that every child in America should read that book, he approached several of his business friends and raised the funds to put that book in every secondary school in the nation.

At the turn of the millennium Pete was the driving force behind the National Congressional Medal of Honor Society's annual reunion being held in Pueblo. During that event larger-than-life statues were erected to Pueblo's hometown heroes in what became one of only four National Medal of Honor Memorials. Three years later the story of those four heroes premiered on Veterans Day in the PBS documentary titled "Beyond the Medal of Honor." Pete was an Executive Producer of the award-winning documentary that highlighted others, not himself, and that was subsequently placed in every high school in America.

In 2001 Pete called me for ideas for a speech he had been asked to present in his home state of Michigan. He had agreed to keynote the dedication of the Michigan Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Veterans Day. As we bounced ideas back and forth over the phone, I suggested that our generation--the Vietnam War generation--had done far more for America than most people can ever begin to recognize. "That war redefined so much--equality regardless of race or gender, the right to disagree with the policies of government, even the content of entertainment. Look," I pointed out, "before there was any other war memorial there was the Vietnam Wall. Tom Brokaw just wrote about the *Greatest Generation* that saved our world. Pete, I believe our generation redefined it and made it better."

Pete picked up the concept, wrote his speech around it, and delivered it in his home state on Veterans Day. When he returned home, he called to thank me for the idea and to tell me how it had gone. "Doug," he said, "this Defining Generation concept is great. You need to write a book about it." For that reason, perhaps more than any other, you have in your hands the account of many of the young men and women of our time who did indeed, Define America for the future.

Not lost on the people of Pueblo was how much work Pete Lemon has done to ensure that the memory of our hometown heroes and other Medal of Honor recipients should never be forgotten. He is an adopted son in our city. During the Medal of Honor Convention in 2000 that saw dedication of the large and impressive statues of Pueblo's hometown heroes, we who appreciated Pete so much wanted to also do something to honor him. He humbly refused until at last the idea of naming a rose garden at our local convention center provided a compromise he would accept. It was dedicated in a simple, rather quiet ceremony.

Today, not far from granite panels with the names of American heroes of all generations and just beyond the shadows of four large bronze images of young men of both the Greatest Generation and the Defining Generation grows a peaceful bed of roses. In the midst of their quiet beauty is a simple rock bearing a bronze plaque identifying this place of solitude as the "Peter C. Lemon Rose Garden."

At the base of the plaque are three other names...the names of three young men of our generation who though not widely known are among the greatest of our heroes. They are:

Casey Waller, Nathan Mann, and Brent Street.

