

## Appendix for Module Three

### Supplementary Materials

- Book — *A Piece of My Heart*, by Keith Walker
- HBO special — *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam*
- United States War Department (1863) General Order 100 — *The Rules of Land Warfare*
- Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces of the United States (1954)

### Background Information:

To best understand the experiences of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War, we encourage you to invite veterans of that war to come into your classroom and to speak with you and your students. For historical and statistical information on those who served in Vietnam, please consult the accompanying VFW history guide.

### *Module3: Appendix A — Inviting Vietnam Veterans to Share Their Oral Histories With Your Students*

The following suggestions are based on over a decade's experience by scores of teachers using Vietnam veterans trained by and speaking for the Veterans Education Project in Amherst, Massachusetts. The information here should make your use of veteran guest speakers a powerful tool to teach and intrigue students. A guide for veterans is available at the VVMF Website, [www.vvmf.org](http://www.vvmf.org). You can download and print this to give to speakers, or direct veterans with Internet access to the website. Workshops for teachers and for veterans on using oral history methods are available.

### **Why guest speakers?**

The most obvious value of bringing a guest speaker into your classroom is that s/he is an eyewitness to history. Many students who are bored by "history" are moved by having a speaker who "was there." Everyone agrees that a veteran's experience was greatly affected by when s/he served during the war, doing what job, in what branch of the service, and in what part of Southeast Asia. No one is an expert on all aspects of the war. But they are experts on their own experiences. You will be able to explain the difference as part of the critical thinking component of using guest speakers. The second strength of having guest speakers is the intimacy and vitality that a veteran brings to the classroom. Films and television can be very dazzling. Unlike television characters, however, guest speakers are interactive with students. There is a sense of each performance being unique, just as in live theatre. The third reason is that many students take their classroom activities much more seriously once they have met and perhaps bonded with a veteran speaker. This might explain why a number of teachers report enthusiastic student work on follow-up projects. The fourth reason to bring in guest speakers is to strengthen the students' recognition that there are community adults who care enough to share important stories with young people. Guest speakers, like parent-teacher organizations and booster clubs, can strengthen the school-community bond. The most important reason is that storytelling is probably the most powerful tool ever devised for educating young people. Traditional society relies upon storytelling by one generation to educate the next. Obviously, nonveteran speakers are valuable, too. Consider inviting as speakers people who were part of the peace movement and may have worked with veterans who experienced family tension resulting from arguing about the war, or veterans who lost family or friends. Ordinary people can be effective witnesses to history in any of three ways: (1) some have valuable stories because they took part in a significant event, such as the 1968 Tet

Offensive; (2) others had a revealing contact with a historic personage, such as General Westmoreland; and (3) many can discuss personal experiences, such as getting a draft notice, losing a close friend, or watching a peace march.

Veterans have proven to be wonderful resources in literature classes, as well, bringing to life such works as *The Red Badge of Courage* and *The Things They Carried*. One rural high school in Massachusetts has a veteran in around Veterans Day to do name rubbings with students at the adjacent cemetery, which includes Civil War veterans — and ancestors of some students. Those students have a better understanding of why *The Wall* is so meaningful.

### **Storytelling teaches as it entertains**

There are five major reasons why storytelling works so well. Everyone loves a story. It is that simple. From *The Little Engine That Could* to the latest Hollywood spectacular, a story is at the heart of nearly everything to which we turn for pleasure, discovery, and insight. Wrestling is one of the most popular cable television programming; those shows' producers attribute fan loyalty not to the action but to the creation of vivid characters in continuing stories. Stories convey meanings without preaching. The Roman poet Horace said that the purpose of literature is to delight and instruct. We are often so absorbed in the story that we do not consciously perceive the lesson. Storytelling humanizes knowledge and can add emotions to social sciences, humanities, and even to the sciences. Students previously uninterested in historical data and dates can better understand them by hearing about experiences from someone who was there. Without films such as *Schindler's List* and *Saving Private Ryan*, how well would we understand the 50 million deaths of World War II? Storytelling adds color to historical data and dates. Social studies teachers cannot ignore this information, of course, but guest speakers can help make those larger facts comprehensible. Map study and geography are enriched in a similar fashion when a veteran describes where s/he served and what the region was like. Most of us see our lives as episodic narratives and ourselves as the central characters. Because the listener instinctively imagines himself/herself as the protagonist when a veteran tells a story in class, we have learned to train veterans to pause at the critical moment in their stories to ask the two most fruitful questions possible: (1) how would you have felt, and (2) what would you have done? These questions can trigger amazing classroom discussions that lead students into thoughtful and introspective looks at character and values, and they can demonstrate the human side of the war experience.

### **Integrating oral histories into your curriculum**

Veterans' stories are among the most effective "primary documents" available for your classroom. Not every veteran can address every topic, of course, because no veteran has experienced the entire war. Most veterans did not engage in combat but all have important stories to tell that can enrich your teaching about the war. Only a few veterans defended Khe Sanh or flew over Laos, for example; but nearly all Vietnam veterans can address larger questions, such as the pain of losing a comrade, the power of *The Wall*, attitudes towards the peace movement, race relations in the military, and how young people reacted to the draft. While relatively few Vietnam veterans suffer from PTSD, most can help students understand this painful phenomenon. You might not care much about where or when your speakers served. Many teachers are less interested in the details than they are in the energy that veterans bring and their ability to answer students' most pressing questions about large topics.

### **Finding the right speaker**

A speakers' bureau or veterans' organization can help you find a veteran with the experience to talk about the specific issues you want covered. Some teachers prefer soliciting veteran speakers while others choose speakers from among their students' parents and grandparents. This enhances the school-community bond. Other teachers call local chapters of national veterans organizations, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the Vietnam Veterans of America. You can find the addresses for many of these organizations at the end of this guide. A few teachers read newspapers to find speakers; news stories about veterans speaking to civic groups or at Memorial Day events are good leads. Larger school systems, or small ones truly committed to this aspect of school-community partnerships, can start their own speakers' bureau or encourage a local church or civic organization to do so. These speakers' bureaus can include not just veterans but others, such as people with personal stories about the Great Depression, the immigrant experience, political volunteering, environmental work, and so forth. Perhaps your school has a staff member or a community volunteer who coordinates guest speakers or who would gladly take the time to do so if you ask.

### **Screening volunteers**

Before having someone speak in your class, do some preliminary screening. This is especially important when someone volunteers his/her services without having been trained or sponsored by an organization you know. You will want to know something about the veteran's background, starting with some particulars of when and where s/he served. This information will help your class prepare for the visit and will help you discover how the veteran might best support your classroom goals. Most veterans are happy to select stories from their experience according to your classroom objectives. The Vietnam War is still controversial and painful, and it will probably always be a confusing era of our history. Feelings remain strong. A few veterans may look at a classroom experience as an opportunity to share some intensely felt but rather far-fetched theories. This might generate as much discussion in school committee meetings as in the classroom. Without censoring what speakers have to say, you will want to discover, if possible, whether your volunteer is driven to propound a peculiar agenda. We advise teachers to ask potential speakers what they plan to talk about, not to censor but to prepare, especially by ensuring that students hear opposing views so that they can best exercise their critical thinking skills. If you are worried that a volunteer speaker is politically too far to the right or left, you can pair him/her with another veteran. The presence of a second veteran might temper the remarks of the first and helps in comparison-contrast discussions after the class. The following section on questions and answers offers suggestions to help you see that the presentation does not digress too much. Perhaps some of the students' readings will provide balance. Sometimes individuals may falsely claim to be Vietnam veterans. You are unlikely to encounter any such individuals; but to protect your students and to avoid embarrassment, it should be your school's policy to ask for a photocopy of the veteran's DD-214, the form everyone is given upon discharge, or to have assurances from the sponsoring organization that a DD-214 is on file. Few teachers encounter any problems. Most Vietnam veterans are sincerely interested in helping young people understand the war through their own thoughtful and independent study of disparate sources.

### **Discuss the class with the speaker**

Talk with the veteran to identify your classroom objectives and to explain what your class already knows about the war. This conversation will help you learn about your speaker's background (e. g. , branch, time, and location of service; what they usually talk about in classrooms; what they can contribute toward your particular objectives). Explain how much time s/he will have. Either ask how much time the veteran plans to save for the question and answer period, or tell how much time you would like for discussions. Beginning speakers tend to leave too little time for discussions. A 45-

minute class should have about 25 minutes for students to address their own interests through questions and discussion. While the speaker should provide his/her background and story as a starting point, the liveliest part of the class is often the question and answer period. Reassure your speaker that you will keep the class rolling. You can easily do this by preparing your own questions ahead of time, asking follow-up questions based on what the veteran says, and identifying the controversies or disagreements that have most engaged the students' imaginations. If your speaker has not gone through a training workshop, provide him/her with a copy of the speakers' guidelines (on [www.teachvietnam.org](http://www.teachvietnam.org)). This should answer most beginners' questions and help assure an effective presentation. Discuss with or send to the speaker a copy of your classroom or school policy about speakers. If you have no written policy, consider creating or asking the appropriate committee to create one. If your school is making special efforts to teach tolerance, respect, alternatives to violence, or other aspects of citizenship, let the veteran know. Most veterans are both eager and able to relate their experiences in ways that support school efforts at building personal responsibility and good citizenship.

### **Handling resistance by administrators**

If your principal is wary of your having a guest speaker on a sensitive topic, your strongest response is showing how you have prepared the class for critical analysis and familiarized your speaker with your classroom policy. Point out that the speaker is only one element of the materials your class will consider. Mention your careful question and answer plans. Be ready to invite a second speaker in to offer a different point of view. Using trained veterans or veterans recommended by other teachers alleviates many principals' unease. We have known reluctant principals who have become enthusiastic supporters of our veteran speakers after observing one presentation. In a few schools, an administrator or teacher who is a veteran sometimes sits in on classes with guest speakers, usually enriching the presentation and reminding students that some of their teachers have lived the history that the schools teach.

### **Encouraging critical thinking**

Before your class hears the speaker, discuss strategies for objectively evaluating speakers. Without making the students skeptical, remind them of various tests of validity in the social sciences. In our workshops for teachers, we emphasize teaching such rhetorical matters as use of evidence, stereotyping, respect for opposing opinions, admitted uncertainty, sweeping generalities, black and white thinking, institutional restraint, and the distinctions between statements of fact and statements of opinion. We also talk about the limitations of anecdotal evidence. We suggest that students recall a speaker's background to differentiate between conclusions likely to be based on personal experience and conclusions based on what a particular veteran has heard or read. A Navy pilot's conclusions about life on an aircraft carrier are likely to be more accurate than his speculations about Vietnamese village life.

### **Preparing your class for a presentation**

Tell your class the veteran's name, and on a classroom map show your students where the veteran served. Ask your students what they want to know about. Some teachers have classes brainstorm the most important questions simply to have them thinking. Other teachers write down the most important questions on cards to hand to the veteran or to distribute to the class. Both methods help you to focus on questions relevant to your objectives and to discourage questions that are trivial. Experienced speakers know how to handle trivial questions. You also should explain that many veterans have painful memories, especially about friends who were killed. Fortunately, most veteran speakers are

prepared for emotionally difficult questions, and most classes are very respectful. We recommend that all teachers discuss decorum. Some veterans who are telling emotionally painful stories might feel disrespected if some students are doing homework, whispering, or laughing. Say it more than once: every veteran has unique experiences and his/her own ideas. No one can speak for all veterans. No one has the whole truth. Your students should not think that anyone's appearance in class constitutes school endorsement. Trained veteran speakers will say this to the class.

### **Conducting the class**

Arrange for a student to meet the speaker at your school office. If you have not already talked with the speaker about your classroom goals, do this briefly before the class begins. Tell the speaker how far along the class is in its study of the war and mention any particular issues they have considered. This reminder can help focus the speaker on the major issues. Remind him/her of when to expect the bell. When the class begins, introduce your speaker, and let the class know whether they should hold questions until the end. Be ready to ask a question yourself to redirect the presentation if it begins to digress or your speaker has not yet mastered short answers. Remember that some veterans will find it difficult to give brief answers to some controversial topics, like the POW/MIA issue, veterans' benefits, Robert McNamara, and why the war was lost. When the class is over, some students may want to ask a more private question or shake the speaker's hand. Ask a student to help the speaker find the next classroom or the way out of the building.

### **Debriefing the class**

After the guest appearance, have your students discuss what they heard. Most teachers focus on the speaker's main point, something surprising, what was on the student's mind right after class, personal responses, or lingering questions. Some teachers ask for written responses. The class discussion usually segues from the story told by the veteran to the larger issues of the war and to comparisons with the readings and other materials used in the class.

Teachers can ask students to speculate on how the speaker's Vietnam background or particular story led the speaker to his/her beliefs. Advanced classes can be asked to read between the lines to speculate on the speaker's core beliefs. Who do you think s/he voted for in 1972 — Nixon or McGovern? If a speaker mentioned or used racially derogatory terms, you might explain how in every war combatants try to dehumanize the enemy as a defense mechanism to make killing palatable. Ask your class to send a thank-you card or individual thank-you letters. Veterans usually find these very moving and encouraging. Even brief handwritten thank-you notes are a rewarding reminder of why speaking in the schools is worth the time and effort.

### **Designing follow-up activities and assignments**

Classroom storytelling has inspired many terrific follow-up activities, building on piqued curiosity and the emotional power of first-person narrative. Some teachers assign oral history interviews, research into newspaper and historical accounts of events the veterans describe, or writing comparison-contrast studies involving the oral history and a written account. Some teachers ask students to write short stories using the veteran as the central character. Role playing is a time-consuming but powerful way to involve students. Even in one class period, some of our veterans do brief role-play activities to illustrate their stories; for example, by asking the class to imagine themselves in a Vietnamese village or an American platoon on patrol. Role playing as a follow-up activity can involve political issues (e. g. , a debate on a Vietnam policy question) or one of the personal choice issues your students debated (e. g. , responding to the draft).

## Turn controversies into teaching occasions

You cannot teach the history of the war without encountering controversies. To begin to understand the war and its effect on American society, foreign policy, and politics, students must understand that some of these controversies are still deeply felt and probably irreconcilable. Your speaker might say something that upsets some of your students or their parents, perhaps because their remarks were not accurately reported. You will need to reemphasize that everyone speaks from his/her own experiences. Larger pronouncements that make general statements out of isolated incidents can be made the subject of formal debate or research.

Use controversies to motivate students to research alternative opinions. Arrange a class debate or assign point-counterpoint essays. Teachers are continually inventing and refining effective classroom activities.

## Finding guest speakers

Listed below are some major veterans organizations' national headquarters addresses. Some of these organizations have local chapters near you. Other veterans groups can be found at [www.vietvet.org/vetorgs.htm](http://www.vietvet.org/vetorgs.htm)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund  
2600 Virginia Avenue, Suite 104  
Washington, DC 20037  
☎: (202) 393-0090  
☎: (202) 393-0029  
Email: [vvmf@vvmf.org](mailto:vvmf@vvmf.org)  
[www.vvmf.org](http://www.vvmf.org)

Association of the U. S. Army  
2425 Wilson Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22201  
☎: (703) 841-4300  
☎: (703) 525-9039  
Email: [ausa-info@ausa.org](mailto:ausa-info@ausa.org)  
[www.ausa.org](http://www.ausa.org)

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.  
5510 Columbia Pike, Suite 205  
Arlington, VA 22204  
☎: (703) 998-0064  
☎: (703) 998-5913  
Email: [gswives2@aol.com](mailto:gswives2@aol.com)  
[www.zebra.net/~gsw](http://www.zebra.net/~gsw)

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States  
406 West 34th Street,  
Kansas City, MO 64111  
☎: (816) 756-3390  
☎: (816) 968-1178

Email: [info@vfw.org](mailto:info@vfw.org)  
[www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)  
Vietnam Veterans Against the War  
P. O. Box 408594  
Chicago, IL 60640  
☎: (773) 327-5756  
Email: [jtmiller@uiuc.edu](mailto:jtmiller@uiuc.edu)  
[www.prairienet.org/vvaw/](http://www.prairienet.org/vvaw/)

Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation  
2001 S Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
☎: (202) 483-9222  
☎: (202) 483-9312  
[www.vvaf.org](http://www.vvaf.org)

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.  
1224 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005-5183  
☎: (202) 628-2700  
☎: (202) 628-5880  
Email: [communications@vva.org](mailto:communications@vva.org)  
[www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org)

Vietnam Women's Memorial Project  
2001 S Street, N. W. , Suite 302  
Washington, DC 20009  
☎: (202) 328-7253

☎: (202) 986-3636  
Email: vwmpdc@aol.com  
Women in Military Service  
Department 560  
Washington, DC 20042  
☎: (703) 533-1155  
☎: (703) 931-4208  
Email: wimsa@aol.com  
[www.womensmemorial.org](http://www.womensmemorial.org)

The following organizations can help you locate speakers who were involved in the peace movement.

The American Friends Service Committee  
1501 Cherry Street,  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
☎: (215) 241-7000  
☎: (215) 567-2096  
Email: afscinfo@afsc.org  
[www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors  
1515 Cherry Street,  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
☎: (215) 563-8787  
email:ccc@libertynet.org  
[www.libertynet.org/ccc/home](http://www.libertynet.org/ccc/home)

### ***Module 3: Appendix B— Women in the Vietnam War***

American women served in the U. S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War. Eight names of women who gave their lives are inscribed on the The Wall in Washington, D. C. Other women served in the Red Cross and government agencies in the war zone as well. Other women were leaders in the anti-war movement. We suggest that you invite a woman who served in Vietnam to your classroom to offer her unique perspective on the war.

In 1993 General Colin Powell gave a speech paying tribute to the women in the military during the groundbreaking at the Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D. C. Below are excerpts from his speech.

In fighting for this day you've all performed a tremendous service, not just for the women who served with you during the Vietnam years, but for all Americans. And I congratulate you for this achievement.

When this monument is finished, it will be for all time a testament to a group of American women who made an extraordinary sacrifice at an extraordinary time in our nation's history: the women who went to war in Vietnam.

Over 265,000 women served in uniform during that time, and this monument of course honors all of them. But it honors most especially the 11,500 who actually served in-country and many of you here today were among that group of 11,500. You went. You served. You suffered. The names of eight of your sisters are etched on The Wall for having made the supreme sacrifice.

And yet your service and your sacrifice have been mostly invisible for all these intervening years.

When you finished what you had to do, you came quietly home. You stepped back into the background from which you had modestly come.

You melted away into a society that, for too long now, has ignored the vital and endless work that falls to women and is not appreciated as it should be.

I knew you there in Vietnam. I knew you as clerks. I knew you as map makers. I knew you as intelligence specialists. I knew you as photographers and air traffic controllers and Red Cross and USO and other kinds of volunteers.

And above all I knew you as nurses when you cared for those who were wounded and when you cared also, as one of them, for me.

### ***Module 3: Appendix C — African Americans in the Vietnam War***

The decade of the 1960s was one of great turbulence in American society. A major issue was civil rights. African Americans were fighting for equality of opportunity. American society had a history of discrimination and the shameful legacy of slavery. Some African American soldiers had great misgivings about fighting for freedom of the Vietnamese while the important struggle for equality was ongoing in the United States. Prominent leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr. , eventually denounced the Vietnam War.

While there was racial strife in the military and in the war zone, the military is an institution with an overall history of more fairness and integration than society at large. For example, in the Korean War, there were no longer separate fighting units for black soldiers, even when there were segregated schools and even segregated restrooms in the United States.

In Vietnam, African Americans served bravely as pilots, infantrymen, and in all other aspects of the military. In the Army, General Frederick Davison became the first African American to be the commanding general of a combat unit — the 199th Infantry Brigade. Another African American saw duty there and later became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — General Colin Powell. Many blacks and whites became close friends through the suffering and hardship of combat. Many soldiers gave up their negative racial attitudes in Vietnam.

In his book, *Bloods*, Wallace Terry wrote about the conflict felt by many African Americans who served in Vietnam. There are African American Vietnam veterans in your community; among them are lawyers, teachers, physicians, and other professionals who can serve as important role models for young people. We encourage you to seek out these individuals, and invite them to your classroom. The following material was excerpted from *Bloods*, by Wallace Terry (Random House, Inc. : 1999).

The Pentagon was praising the gallant, hard-fighting black soldier, who was dying at a greater rate, proportionately, than American soldiers of other races. In the early years of the fighting, blacks made up to 23 percent of the fatalities. In Vietnam, Uncle Sam was an equal opportunity employer. That, too, made Vietnam a compelling story.

*Bloods*, p. xiv

Later that year I returned to Vietnam for a two-year assignment that ended when I witnessed the withdrawal of the first American forces in 1969. Black combat fatalities dropped to 14

percent, still proportionately higher than the 11 percent which blacks represented in the American population. But by that same year, a new black soldier had appeared. The war had used up the professionals who found in military service fuller and fairer employment opportunities than blacks could find in civilian society, and who found in uniform a supreme test of their black manhood. Replacing the careerists were black draftees, many just steps removed from marching in the Civil Rights Movement or rioting in the rebellions that swept the urban ghettos from Harlem to Watts. All were filled with a new sense of black pride and purpose. They spoke loudest against the discrimination they encountered on the battlefield in decorations, promotion and duty assignments. They chose not to overlook the racial insults, cross-burnings and Confederate flags of their white comrades. They called for unity among black brothers on the battlefield to protest these indignities and provide mutual support. And they called themselves “Bloods.”

*Bloods*, p. xiv

There weren't many opportunities for blacks in private industry then. And as a graduate of West Point, I was an officer and a gentleman by act of Congress. Where else could a black go and get that label just like that?

Throughout the Cav, the black representation in the enlisted ranks was heavier than the population as a whole in the United States. One third of my platoon and two of my squad leaders were black. For many black men, the service, even during a war, was the best of a number of alternatives to staying home and working in the fields or gumming around the streets of Chicago or New York

*Bloods*, p. 221

### ***Module 3: Appendix D — Hispanic Americans in the Vietnam War***

Hispanic Americans continue to serve with distinction in the U. S. military. When the Vietnam War became a national crisis many served, as did their fathers, in World War II and in Korea. Some were recent immigrants. Thousands of Hispanic names are on the The Wall in Washington, D. C. We encourage you to make a special effort to seek out Hispanic Americans who served in Vietnam, and invite them to your classroom.

America's highest award for gallantry is the Congressional Medal of Honor. This medal is only awarded to those in the U. S. military who serve “above and beyond the call of duty.” One of these men was Jose Francisco Jimenez. Born in Mexico City, he joined the U. S. Marines. In 1968 enemy soldiers hidden in camouflaged positions ambushed his unit. Jose charged into the enemy positions destroying several fortified posts. He next single-handedly silenced an enemy anti-aircraft weapon. Other Marines rallied after seeing his courageous assault. After destroying an enemy machine gun emplacement, he succumbed to wounds from rifle fire. His courage was above and beyond the call of duty and earned him the Medal of Honor.

The bravery of Hispanic Americans on the battlefields of Vietnam could be an intriguing research project for your students, particularly recent immigrants. A similar project could be done on the Native Americans who served in Vietnam and in other wars, such as World War II where Navajo Indians served as “code talkers” to confuse enemy soldiers listening to U. S. radio transmissions.

**Module 3: Appendix E — Tables, Working-Class War By Christian G. Appy**

The following tables were taken from *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* by Christian G. Appy. Copyright © 1993 by the University of North Carolina Press. Used by permission of the publisher.

**TABLES**

**Table 1. Occupations of Fathers of Enlisted Men, by Service, 1964 (percent)**

Father's Occupation	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marines
White-Collar	17.0	19.8	20.9	20.4
Blue-Collar	52.8	54.5	52.0	57.2
Farmer	14.8	10.7	13.3	9.1
Military	1.8	2.1	1.8	2.0
Father absent	13.6	12.9	12.0	11.3
(Aprox. N)	(28,000)	(17,500)	(28,000)	(5,000)

Source: 1964 National Opinion Research Center (NORC) survey, in Moskos', *American Enlisted Man*, p. 195.

**Table 2. Educational Attainment of Vietnam Veterans at Time of Separation from the Armed Forces, 1966-1971 (percent)**

Fiscal Year	Less Than 12 Years of School	12 Years of School	1 to 3 Years of College	4 or More Years of College
1966	22.9	62.5	8.3	6.3
1967	23.6	61.8	9.0	5.6
1968	19.6	65.5	9.7	6.2
1969	18.3	60.0	15.9	5.8
1970	17.5	56.9	17.0	8.6
1971	14.7	55.4	19.4	10.5
Total, 1966-71	19.4	60.3	13.2	7.2

Source: Reports and Statistics Service, Office of Controller, Veterans' Administration, 11 April 1972, in Helmer, *Bringing the War Home*, p. 303

**Table 3. Percentage of Males Enrolled in School, 1965-1970 (percent)**

Age	Blue-Collar	White Collar
16-17	80	92
18-19	49	73
20-24	20	43

Source: Levison, *Working-Class Majority*, p. 121

**Table 4. Percentage of Draft-Motivated Enlistments**

Year	Enlistees	Officers	Reservists
1964	38	41	71
1968	54	60	80

Source: U. S. House Committee on Armed Services, 1966, 100038; 1970, 12638. Cited in Useem, *Conscription, Protest and Social Conflict*, p. 78.

**Table 5. American Draftees Killed in the Vietnam War**

Year	Total Americans Deaths, All Services	Draftees (Percent)	
		All Services	Army

1965	1,369	16	28
1966	5,008	21	34
1967	9,378	34	57
1968	14,592	34	58
1969	9,414	40	62
1971	4,221	43	57

Source: Columns 1 and 2 from U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1971, 253; column 3 from U. S. House Committee on Armed Services, 1971, 172. Cited in *Useem, Conscription, Protest, and Social Conflict*, p. 107.

**Table 6. Entry Motivations of Enlisted Volunteers**

<b>Most Important Reason*</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>1968</b>
Draft-motivated	37.6	47.2
Personal	28.8	20.1
Self-advancement	22.3	20.1
Patriotism	11.2	6.1
None of the above	—	6.6

Sources: The 1964 figures are from a NORC survey and can be found in Albert D. Klassen, Jr., *Military Service in American Life* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1966). The 1968 figures are from a Department of Defense survey and can be found in Helmer, *Bringing the War Home*, p. 34.

- \* These categories are composites of several choices: to increase options in choice of service or time of entry (Draft-motivated); to become more mature and self-reliant; for travel, excitement, and new experiences; to leave some personal problems behind me (Personal); to learn a trade; opportunity for advanced education, professional training; career opportunities (Self-advancement); to serve my country (Patriotism).

**Module 3: Appendix F — Excerpts, *Dear America* Edited by Bernard Edelman**

The following sections are taken from *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam*, edited by Bernard Edelman for the New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission, published by W. W. Norton and Company, 1985.

*Sp/4 William J Kalwas from Rochester, New York, went to Vietnam in June 1970. He was assigned to the Army Engineer Command at Long Binh. Shipped home in January 1971 to a military hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, he committed suicide two months later, while on his first leave from the hospital.*

12 Sept 70

Dear Dad, Bob, & Jean,

I received your letter of September 7 on the 12th, a Sunday. It really seems funny that the summer is already over in the World. Seems like only yesterday that I was going down to the lake and freezing, waiting for it to warm up so I could go skiing. Damn this Army anyhow.

I can just picture looking back on this time period in a few years and suddenly jumping to a tropical environment, blanking out my familiar life patterns for 18 months. Before I get off on an anti-Army kick, I'll end this train of thought, because in my mood right now I could get really violent on paper. And after all I'm over here because the gooks "want" us here. I'm really serving an important purpose over here, allowing the lifers to sock away beaucoup money at my expense and that's about it. Vietnam wants to be free. Look, they even have

elections. What a fine democratic country. Maybe they'll remember us after we've pulled out. . . at least until we stop giving them everything they want.

Well, I didn't suppress all my feelings, because after a while it becomes impossible and they just have to spill out. I don't expect you to swallow everything because you haven't been over here to see the people in action: hooch mates ripping off GIs clothes and other belongings; ARVN troops refusing to take used serviceable equipment yet demanding new pieces (and getting them); government officials charging the American command for using the land and its resources; local nationals hired to work in the offices running around all day doing nothing and getting paid for it. This is why people get disgusted with Vietnam.

The Vietnamese don't want us over here. All they want is our money. Many of us who see all this can't do anything about it because those higher up are too intent on hauling in more money than they could amass anywhere else in the world for doing as little as they do. After a while all I see just catches up with me and I begin to realize the futility of it all. I really don't want any part of it, so I participate as little as possible in all things Army. I just try to enjoy living with the GIs I'm here with and learn what I can from them. Eventually my tour will be over, and I'll be able to come back to the U. S. . . .

One thing I'll applaud is the sincerity and openness of the American enlisted GIs around me. Something in Vietnam releases all the restraints in our people, and you can talk and act freely without fear of retribution. Don't get me wrong, I'd never dream of staying here. But this similarity of situations among most of the GIs is really a unique, moving experience. I will miss this part of Nam. But that's about it. . .

Peace & Love,  
Bill

*Sp/5 Thomas Pellaton worked in intelligence while serving with the 101st Aviation Group, 101st Airborne Division, stationed at Phu Bai, from June 1970 to May 1971. He is maitre d' at the Carlyle Hotel in New York City.*

28 July 70

Dear John,

It was very good to hear from you. You cannot imagine how important it is to receive mail over here. I have a lot of time to write, and most of my friends have been very faithful in writing. It takes some of the edge off the frustration and bitterness of being here. Especially after a week like last week!

You may have read about Fire Support Base Ripcord, southwest of Hue. The 101st, true to its reputation had another defeat like Hamburger Hill and Khe Sanh. You will get the whitewashed version of what happened, I'm sure. But let me tell you, we were driven off that hill after overwhelming casualties. We lost over 80 men in KIAs in less than two weeks and over 420 wounded. A full battalion of men. And for what? There is absolutely nothing out there in the jungle but mountains and a triple canopy. Nothing but NVA who have built roads and who outnumber us in the province by two or three to one.

Yes, it is no longer a case of the big imperialistic American Aggressor killing the pure VC patriots. Instead, we are fighting highly trained, well equipped NVA regiments and divisions.

The South Vietnamese are doing very well militarily here. The 1st ARVN Division does as well as, if not better than, the 101st Airborne Division. The popular and regional forces keep the VC pretty much under control, but the fact remains that we are very much outnumbered and our best weapons cannot be used for political reasons. Napalm is almost out of the picture.

You may be surprised at my seemingly changed position. Talking of napalm, etc. When you see people, Americans, dying for lack of protection, for phony Vietnamization (it's not working because there just are not enough ARVN troops — they lose about a regiment a month in AWOLs and desertion) and for lack of good leadership (the infantry units were needlessly pinned down by the NVA at Ripcord because they stayed in a one-night defensive position for five or six nights in a row, which is never done. The whole thing is to move around and not let the NVA know where you are. Instead, they sat and took mortar rounds every night, with their 74 KIAs every day!) My position has not really changed. There is no reason to be here — and there is even less reason to see Americans dying here. Many of the rear echelon troops (higher ranking officers and enlisted men) seem to be immune to their death. It still makes me limp with rage — overcome with sorrow! There seem to be so many people that are insensitive to this killing, even many of the political left who call the American GI “animal,” etc. But the fact remains that both sides are suffering a catastrophic loss! I don't know if I've expressed myself very well, but perhaps you can sense my frustrations. . .

There are so few things here that can keep you sane. Everything seems out of whack. People won't watch *Oliver* or *A Lion in Winter*. They're faggot movies. They only want to see violent Westerns — even when they are surrounded by a violence more real! To maintain some sense of humanity, I've been out on Med Caps — the medical service taken out to remote villages. I went along as security and got to help treat some of the children. We played games with them, went for a walk to the beach, took pictures, in general just loved them up. They stole my watch, but it really didn't matter, because just before leaving I sang for them (the “Largo a! Factotum” from the *Barber of Seville* — you know, “Figaro, Figaro,” etc.) They loved it, laughed. But what was most gratifying, they started singing part of it back to each other. I was overwhelmed! They called me “Bee-tho-ven.” It was a truly uplifting experience. I became somewhat concerned when the helicopter became lost and it was getting dark, since the area we were in was a VC Rest and Recreation center at one time and still an area of VC infiltration. But we got out safely.

Well, just now I got word that the camp just north of here (12 WIA, 1 KIA) will get it tonight.

Sleep well-

My best to all-

Tom

*2Lt. Robert C. (“Mike”) Ransom, Jr. raised in Bronxville, New York, arrived in Vietnam in March 1968. He was a platoon commander with Company A, 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry, 11th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, operating out of Chu Lai. He died after two months in country, eight days after he was wounded by shrapnel from a mine. He was 23 years old.*

27 March 1968

Dear Mom and Dad,

Would you believe I am officially assigned to a unit? It's taken so long that it's quite a relief. I have a new address that should be permanent. It is: Company A, 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry 11th Light Infantry Brigade, APO San Francisco 96217

I don't know if you've sent me any mail yet, but if so it hasn't gotten to me and I doubt that it ever will. But with this address everything should reach me, so no sweat. . .

I am told that our AO is quite a good one. There is almost no contact with Charlie, and what little there is rarely turns into much of a fight because he runs away. The principal danger here is from mines and booby traps.

From the people I've talked to I've come up with some new ideas on the war. For the most part nobody is particularly wild with patriotic feeling. There are, of course, those who just get a real charge out of killing people. One lieutenant I talked to said what a kick it had been to roll a gook 100 yards down the beach with his machine gun. But most people generate their enthusiasm for two reasons: one is self-preservation — if I don't shoot him, he'll shoot me — and the other is revenge. It's apparently quite something to see a good friend blown apart by a VC booby trap, and you want to retaliate in kind.

While I am able to read Stars and Stripes and listen to AFVN radio newscasts, I still feel very cut off from the world outside of Vietnam. I would love it dearly if you should subscribe to Newsweek for me. Also, what do you think of Bobby Kennedy for president? What about General William Westmoreland's new job? What does everything mean?

I now have one last editorial comment about the war and then I'll sign off. I am extremely impressed by almost every report I've heard about the enemy I am about to go and fight. He is a master of guerrilla warfare and is holding his own rather nicely with what should be the strongest military power in the world. But it is mostly his perseverance that amazes me. He works so hard and has been doing so for so long. You've heard of his tunneling capability? A captured VC said that in coming from North Vietnam down to Saigon, he walked over 200 miles completely underground. Anyone who would dig a 200-mile tunnel and who would still do it after being at war for some 30 years must be right!

All love,  
Mike

***Module 3: Appendix G — Excerpts, Ordinary Americans Edited by Linda Monk***

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***“A Pure Love of My Country Has Called Upon Me”***

Reflections on the Union Cause

By Major Sullivan Ballou

Initially, Northerners believed they were fighting to preserve the Union, the system of government for which their ancestors had fought the Revolutionary War. Major Sullivan Ballou of Rhode Island was stationed in Washington, D. C. , in mid-July of 1861. Sensing that battle was impending, Ballou set forth his reasons for defending the Union in a love letter to his wife.

The first major battle of the Civil War was fought at Bull Run Creek, near the town of Manassas, Virginia, on July 21, 1861. Sure of a Union victory, citizens of the federal capital — only twenty-five miles away — brought picnic lunches to observe the fighting. But by late afternoon, Union forces had been totally defeated. Major Ballou was killed in the battle.

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are strong that we shall move in a few days — perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again. I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more. . .

I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American civilization now leans on the triumph of the government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and sufferings of the Revolution. And I am willing — perfectly willing — to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this government, and to pay that debt. . .

I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer Sabbath night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying perhaps the last sleep before that of death, while I am suspicious that death is creeping around me with his fatal dart, as I sit communing with God, my country, and thee. I have sought most closely and diligently and often in my heart for a wrong motive in thus hazarding the happiness of those I love, and I could find none. A pure love of my country and of the principles I have so often advocated before the people — another name of Honor that I love more than I fear death — has called upon me and I have obeyed.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless. It seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but omnipotence could break; and yet my love of country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with all these chains to the battlefield.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine providence, but something whispers to me — perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar — that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name. Forgive my many faults and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have oftentimes been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortunes of this world to shield you and your children from harm. But I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit-land and hover near you, with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience, till we meet to part no more.

But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the gladdest days and in the darkest nights, advised to your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours, always, always. And if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; as cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again. . .

***“Men Mutilated in Every Imaginable Way”***

Nursing the Wounds from Shiloh

By Kate Cumming

In the western theater of the war, Union commander Ulysses S. Grant sought to establish control of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. He won major victories in February 1862 at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in Tennessee. But Confederate forces from Corinth, Mississippi, crossed into Tennessee and on April 6 surprised Union troops at a small Methodist church named Shiloh. The Confederate attack was repelled after two days of battle, but Grant’s victory was costly and he was criticized for being unprepared.

Shiloh was the first battle with massive casualties — about 25,000. In that single battle, more Americans died than in all previous U. S. wars combined. Kate Cumming served as a nurse in Corinth, where the Confederate wounded at Shiloh eventually arrived.

April 11, 1862. . . . My heart beat high with expectation as we neared Corinth. As I had never been where there was a large army and had never seen a wounded man, except in the [railroad] cars as they passed, I could not help feeling a little nervous at the prospect of now seeing both. . . .

. . . Mrs. Ogden tried to prepare me for the scenes which I should witness upon entering the wards. But alas! Nothing that I had ever heard or read had given me the faintest idea of the horrors witnessed here. . . . Gray-haired men, men in the pride of manhood, beardless boys, Federals and all, mutilated in every imaginable way, lying on the floor just as they were taken from the battlefield; so close together that it was almost impossible to walk without stepping on them. I could not command my feeling enough to speak, but thoughts crowded upon me. Oh, if the authors of this cruel and unnatural war could but see what I saw there, they would try and put a stop to it! To think, that it is man who is working all this woe upon his fellow man. What can be in the minds of our enemies, who are now arrayed against us who have never harmed them in any way, but simply claim our own and nothing more! May God forgive them, for surely they know not what they do.

This was no time for recrimination: there was work to do, so I went at it to do what I could. If I were to live a hundred years, I should never forget the poor sufferers’ gratitude for every little thing done for them. A little water to drink or the bathing of their wounds seemed to afford them the greatest relief. . .

April 18. . . . Dr. Smith has taken charge of this hospital. I think that there will be a different order of things now. He is having the house and yard well cleaned. Before this, it was common to have amputated limbs thrown into the yard and left there. . . .

April 23. A young man whom I have been attending is going to have his arm cut off. Poor fellow! I am doing all I can to cheer him. He says that he knows that he will die, as all who

have had limbs amputated in this hospital have died. It is said that the reason is that none but the very worst cases are left here, and they are too far gone to survive the shock which the operation gives the frame. The doctors seem to think that the enemy poisoned their musket balls, as the wounds inflame terribly. Our men do not seem to stand half so much as the Northerners. Many of the doctors are quite despondent about it and think that our men will not be able to endure the hardships of camp life and that we may have to succumb on account of it, but I trust that they are mistaken. None of the prisoners have died; this is a fact that can not be denied, but we have had very few of them in comparison with the number of our own men.

April 24. Mr. Isaac Fuquet, the young man who had his arm cut off, died today. He lived only a few hours after his amputation. . . .

The amputating table for this ward is at the end of the hall, near the landing of the stairs. When an operation is to be performed, I keep as far away from it as possible. Today, just as they had go through with Mr. Fuquet, I was compelled to pass the place, and the sight I there beheld made me shudder and sick at heart. A stream of blood ran from the table into a tub in which was the arm. . It had been taken off at the socket, and the hand, which but a short time before grasped the musket and battled for the right, was hanging over the edge of the tub, a lifeless thing. . . .

### ***“Our Country, Right or Wrong”***

Defending the Vietnam War

By Joseph E. Sintoni

Americans were deeply divided over U. S. involvement in the Vietnam War. In a letter written as he was about to leave for Vietnam, where he later died, Joseph E. Sintoni justified the war to his fiancée.

Dear Angela,

This is by far the most difficult letter I shall ever write. What makes it so difficult is that you'll be reading it in the unhappy event of my death. You've already learned of my death; I hope the news was broken to you gently. God, Angie, I didn't want to die. I had so much to live for. You were my main reason for living. You're a jewel, a treasure. . . .

Please don't hate the war because it has taken me. I'm glad and proud that America has found me equal to the task of defending it.

Vietnam isn't a far-off country in a remote corner of the world. It is Sagamore, Brooklyn, Honolulu, or any other part of the world where there are Americans.

Vietnam is a test of the American spirit. I hope I have helped in a little way to pass the test. The press, the television screen, the magazines are filled with the images of young men burning their draft cards to demonstrate their courage. Their rejection is of the ancient law that a male fights to protect his own people and his own land.

Does it take courage to flaunt the authorities and burn a draft card? Ask the men at Dak To, Con Tien, or Hill 875; they'll tell you how much courage it takes. Most people never think of their freedom. . . They never think much about breathing either, or blood circulating, except

when these functions are checked by a doctor. Freedom, like breathing and circulating blood, is part of our being. Why must people take their freedom for granted? Why can't they support the men who are trying to protect their lifeblood, freedom?

Patriotism is more than fighting or dying for one's country. It is participating in its development, its progress, and its governmental processes. It is sharing the never fully paid price of the freedom which was bequeathed to us who enjoy it today. Not to squander, not to exploit, but to preserve and enhance for those who will follow after us.

Just as a man will stand by his family be it right or wrong, so will the patriot stand where Stephen Decatur stood when he offered the toast, "Our country, in her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right, but our country right or wrong."

We must do the job God set down for us. It's up to every American to fight for the freedom we hold so dear. We must instruct the young in the ways of these great United States. We mustn't let them take these freedoms for granted.

I want you to go on to live a full, rich, productive life. I want you to share your love with someone. You may meet another man and bring up a family. Please bring up your children to be proud Americans. Don't worry about me, honey. God must have a special place for soldiers.

I've died as I've always hoped, protecting what I do hold so dear to my heart. We will meet again in the future. We will. I'll be waiting for that day.

I'll be watching over you, Angie, and if it's possible to help you in some way I will. Feel some relief with the knowledge that you filled my short life with more happiness than most men know in a lifetime.

The inevitable, well, the last one; I love you with all my heart and my love for you will survive into eternity.

Your Joey

### ***"No Cause Other Than Our Own Survival"***

Fighting a Different Kind of War

By Philip Caputo

The Vietnam War presented a difficult challenge to the U. S. military. Instead of all-out combat campaigns, American soldiers were forced to fight a war of attrition against a largely unseen enemy, the Viet Cong — communist guerrillas in South Vietnam. Philip Caputo, a Marine lieutenant, describes the frustration of that kind of warfare.

For Americans who did not come of age in the early 60s, it may be hard to grasp what those years were like — the pride and overpowering self-assurance that prevailed. Most of the 3,500 men in our brigade, born during or immediately after World War II, were shaped by that era, the age of the Kennedy's Camelot. We went overseas full of illusions, for which the intoxicating atmosphere of those years was as much to blame as our youth.

War is always attractive to young men who know nothing about it, but we had also been seduced to “ask what you can do for your country” and by the missionary idealism he had awakened in us. America seemed omnipotent then. The country could still claim it had never lost a war, and we believed we were ordained to play cop to the communists’ robber and spread our own political faith around the world. . . .

So, when we marched into the rice paddies on that damp March afternoon, we carried, along with our packs and rifles, the implicit convictions that the Viet Cong would be quickly beaten and that we were doing something altogether noble and good. We kept the packs and rifles; the convictions, we lost.

The discovery that the men we had scorned as peasant guerrillas were, in fact, a lethal determined enemy and the casualty lists that lengthened each week with nothing to show for the blood being spilled broke our early confidence. By autumn, what had begun as an adventurous expedition had turned into an exhausting, indecisive war of attrition in which we fought for no cause other than our own survival.

Writing about this kind of warfare is not a simple task. Repeatedly, I have found myself wishing that I had been the veteran of a conventional war, with dramatic campaigns and historic battles for subject matter instead of a monotonous succession of ambushes and fire-fights. But there were no Normandies or Gettysburgs for us, no epic clashes that decided the fates of armies or nations. The war was mostly a matter of enduring weeks of expectant waiting and, at random intervals, of conducting vicious manhunts through jungles and swamps where snipers harassed us constantly and booby traps cut us down one by one.

The tedium was occasionally relieved by a large-scale search-and-destroy operation, but the exhilaration of riding the lead helicopter into a landing zone was usually followed by more of the same hot walking, with the mud sucking at our boots and the sun thudding against our helmets while an invisible enemy shot at us from distant tree lines. The rare instances when the VC [Viet Cong] chose to fight a set-piece battle provided the only excitement; not ordinary excitement, but the manic ecstasy of contact. Weeks of bottled-up tensions would be released in a few minutes of orgiastic violence, men screaming and shouting obscenities above the explosions of grenades and the rapid, rippling bursts of automatic rifles.

Beyond adding a few more corpses to the weekly body count, none of these encounters achieved anything; none will ever appear in military histories or be studied by cadets at West Point. Still, they changed us and taught us, the men who fought in them; in those obscure skirmishes we learned the old lessons about fear, cowardice, courage, suffering, cruelty, and comradeship. Most of all, we learned about death at an age when it is common to think of oneself as immortal. Everyone loses that illusion eventually, but in civilian life it is lost in installments over the years. We lost it all at once and, in the span of months passed from boyhood through manhood to a premature middle age. The knowledge of death, of implacable limits placed on a man’s existence, served us from our youth as irrevocably as a surgeon’s scissors had once severed us from the womb. And yet, few of us were past 25. We left Vietnam peculiar creatures, with young shoulders that bore rather old heads.

### ***“Helping Someone Die”***

A Nurse’s Trauma

By Dusty

About 7,500 women served in Vietnam, more than three-fourths as nurses. One of these nurses — so traumatized by her experience that she is known only by her nickname in Vietnam, Dusty — recalls the intimacy of helping a young soldier face death.

When you are sitting there working on someone in the middle of the night, and it's a 19 year old kid who's 10,000 miles from home, and you know that he's going to die before dawn — you're sitting there checking vital signs for him and hanging blood for him and talking to him and holding his hand and looking into his face and touching his face, and you see his life just dripping away, and you know he wants his mother, and you know he wants his father and his family to be there, and you're the only one that he's got — I mean his life is just oozing away there — well, it oozes into your soul. There is nothing more intimate than sharing someone's dying with them. This kid should have had a chance to die in a bed with his loving family around him. Instead, he's got his second lieutenant. When you've got to do that with someone and give that person, at the age of 19, a chance to say the last things they are ever going to get to say, that act of helping someone die is more intimate than sex, it is more intimate than childbirth, and once you have done that you can never be ordinary again.

***Module3: Appendix H — Perspectives On Events at My Lai and the trial of Lt. Calley***

On March 16, 1968, each soldier at My Lai made a choice. What compelled these men to act as they did? Why did the massacre at My Lai happen? Can the actions of Charlie Company be explained? If they can be explained, can they be justified? Is there a difference in responsibility between officers who give orders and those enlisted men who follow the orders?

Here are a variety of perspectives and opinions about the events at My Lai, the nature of the Vietnam conflict, and the attitudes toward Vietnamese that some American troops developed. Some of these statements express opinions about the realities of war — not just the Vietnam War, but war itself. Military personnel and Vietnam veterans are identified as such.

In your opinion, which statements defend Lt. Calley? Which statements condemn his actions and support his “guilty” verdict? And which statements try to explain the acts of Charlie Company without either condemning or defending the men?

NOT everyone commits atrocities. . . armies from democracies tend to commit relatively few of them. . . Even though I saw horrific combat I never had any problem understanding that you weren't supposed to kill civilians. . . I and everyone I know in the Vietnam veteran community was horrified and ashamed by My Lai, and consider it to be an aberration. That we acted on Hersh's news reports and were able to . . . bring people to trial is very much to our country's credit. Systematic torture and murder were used by the North as a means of waging war; U. S. atrocities were occasional and aberrations.

*Jack Smith, a decorated Vietnam veteran who now works as a national correspondent for ABC News.*

[I]n truth, because truth matters, my sympathies were rarely with the Vietnamese. I was mostly terrified. I was lamenting in advance of my own pitiful demise. After fire fights, after friends died, there was also a great deal of anger — black, fierce, hurting anger — the kind you want to take out on whatever presents itself. This is not to justify what occurred here [in My Lai]. Justifications are empty and outrageous. Rather, it's to say that I more or less understand what happened. . . , how it happened, the wickedness that soaks into your blood and heats up and starts to sizzle. I know the boil that precedes butchery. At the same time,

however, the men in Alpha Company [my company, stationed in Quang Nai a year after the massacre] did not commit murder. . . we did not cross that conspicuous line between rage and homicide.

*Tim O'Brien, "The Vietnam in Me," The New York Times Magazine. O'Brien, who has authored fiction and nonfiction books about the Vietnam War, served a tour of duty in Vietnam with the Army infantry.*

When we first started losing members of the company, it was mostly through booby traps and snipers. We never got into a main conflict. . . where you could see who was shooting and you could actually shoot back. We had heard a lot about women and children being used as booby traps and being members of the Vietcong. As time went on, you tended to believe it more and more. . . There was no question they were working for the Vietcong. . . You didn't trust them anymore. You didn't trust anybody. . . And I would say that in the end, anybody that was still in that country was the enemy.

*Fred Widmer, radio operator with Charlie Company in My Lai.*

Our mission was not to win terrain or territory or seize positions, but simply to kill; to kill Communists and to kill as many of them as possible. . . Victory was a high body count, defeat a low kill ratio, war a matter of arithmetic. The pressure on the unit commanders to produce corpses was intense, and they in turn communicated it to their troops. . . It is not surprising, therefore, that some men acquired a contempt for human life and a predilection for taking it.

*Philip Caputo, A Rumor of War, 1988, N. Y. , New York, Ballentine Books. Caputo, a Vietnam veteran, served as a lieutenant in the U. S. Marine Corps.*

When you're in an infantry company, in an isolated environment like [rural Vietnam], the rules of that company are foremost. . . The laws back home don't make any difference. What people think of you back home don't matter. . . What matters is how the people around you are going to see you. Killing a bunch of civilians in this way — babies, women, old men, people who were unarmed, helpless — was wrong. Every American would know that. Yet this company. . . didn't see it that way. . . [The company] was all that mattered. It was the whole world. What they thought was right was right. What they thought was wrong was wrong. The definitions for things were turned around. Courage was stupidity. . . and cruelty and brutality were seen sometimes as heroic. That's what it turned into.

*Michael Bernhart, one of Charlie Company who refused to take part in the massacre, reflecting on the "laws" of Charlie Company. Four Hours in My Lai, p. 19.*

Under no circumstances do I think a person placed in the situation of being required to kill should be punished for killing the wrong people.

*Jerry Cramm, a student from Oklahoma City, letter to Life magazine in December 1969.*

When you lose 21 men in an hour's time in a minefield, you tend to want something back for it. We actually wanted heavy contact out there. We were hoping for it.

*Lawrence La Croix, squad leader, 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company.*

We were kids, 18, 19 years old. I was 21 years old at the time [of the My Lai massacre]. I was one of the oldest people around among the common grunts.

Most of them [Charlie Company] had never been away from home before. . . Here are these guys who had gone in and in a moment, in a moment, following orders, in a context in which they'd been trained, prepared to follow orders, they do what they're told, and they shouldn't have, and they look back a day later and realize that they probably made the biggest mistake of their lives. [There were] only an extraordinary few people who were in those circumstances who had the presence of mind and the strength of their own character that would see them through. Most people [in Charlie Company] didn't.

*Ronald Ridenhour was a helicopter door gunner in Vietnam during 1968 stationed near My Lai, although he was not present at My Lai on March 16. Ridenhour's letters to government officials about what had happened at My Lai triggered the original Army investigation of the massacre.*

You really do lose your sense. . . not of right or wrong, but your degree of wrong changes. . . A different set of rules [emerges] and I don't think that any of us quite knew what those rules were.

*Greg Olsen, a soldier in Charlie Company.*

I thought that people were basically good and that they couldn't do this. I thought most of the values people held were pretty solid, that when we defined things as being good or bad, that they were good or bad and that we would know something was really bad. But I had seen that that was not the case. I wasn't sure that I could trust anyone again. I wasn't sure I could ever get close to anyone very closely because of what I'd seen over there.

*Michael Bernhart, a soldier in Charlie Company who did not participate in the massacre.*

I would expect that the President of the United States. . . would stand fully behind the law of this land on a moral issue which is so clear and about which there can be no compromise. For this nation to condone the acts of Lt. Calley is to make us no better than our enemies and make any pleas by this nation for the humane treatment of our own prisoners meaningless.

*Capt. Aubrey Daniel, the Army's prosecutor in the Calley trial, in a letter to President Richard Nixon rebuking the President for granting Calley parole.*

This is God's punishment to me Calley, but you'll get yours. God will punish you, Calley.

*Paul Meadlo to Lt. Calley after Meadlo had stepped on a landmine the day after the massacre. Meadlo, who admitted to killing civilians at My Lai during the investigation, lost one of his feet.*

How can I forgive? I can't forgive myself for the things — even though I knew it was something I was told to do. . . [H]ow can you go ahead with your life when this is holding you back. I can't put my mind to anything. . . Yes, I'm ashamed, I'm sorry, I'm guilty. But I did it. You know. What else can I tell you. It happened.

This [memories of My Lai] is my life. This is my past. This is my present and this is my future. And I keep it [an album of news clippings about My Lai] to remind me. . . This is my life. This is everything. This is the way I am. This is what made me this way.

*Varnado Simpson reflecting to the authors of the book **Four Hours in My Lai**. Simpson committed suicide in late 1997, a few months prior to the 30th Anniversary of the My Lai massacre.*

The massacre at My Lai and its subsequent cover-up stand in the history of the Vietnam War at the point where deception and self-deception converged. If the Tet Offensive of 1968 had mocked America's complacent expectation of an imminent victory, My Lai's exposure late in 1969 poisoned the idea that the war was a moral enterprise. The implications were too clear to escape. The parallels with other infamous massacres were too telling and too painful. My Lai had been on the same scale as [some of the Nazi's] World War II atrocities. . . Americans, who at Nuremberg had played a great part in creating the judicial machinery which had brought the nazi monsters to book, now had to deal with a monstrosity of their own making.

*Michael Bilton and Kevin Sim, **Four Hours in My Lai**.*

I think about it all the time, and that is why I am old before my time. I remember it all the time. I think about it and I can't sleep. . . I think of my daughter and my mother, both of them dead. . .

I won't forgive. I hate them [the soldiers of Charlie Company] very much. I won't forgive them as long as I live. Think of those children. . . still at their mother's breast being killed. . . I hate them very much.

*Troung Thi Le, who lost nine members of her family during the massacre. Mrs. Le spoke to authors Michael Bilton and Kevin Sim through an interpreter. **Four Hours in My Lai**, p. 23.*

## **Historical perspectives on war**

We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux [Indians], even to the extermination of men, women and children. Nothing else will reach the root of the cause.

*General William Tecumseh Sherman, a Civil War hero, writing to General Ulysses Grant during a campaign against the Sioux in 1866.*

As time went by our need to fight [for the ideal of freedom] increased to an unquestioning possession, riding with spur and rein over our doubts. Willy-nilly it became a faith. We had sold ourselves into its slavery. . . bowed ourselves to serve its holiness with all our good and ill content. [W]e had surrendered, not body alone but soul to the overmastering greed of victory. By our own act, we were drained of morality, of volition, of responsibility, like dead leaves in the wind. . .

The everlasting battle stripped from us care of our own lives or of others'. . . Gusts of cruelty, perversions, lusts ran lightly over the surface without troubling us; for the moral laws which had seemed to hedge about these silly accidents must yet be fainter words.

*T. E. Lawrence, **Seven Pillars of Wisdom**, 1935, Garden City, NY, Doubleday, Doran & Company. A British soldier, Lawrence, popularly known as "Lawrence of Arabia", fought in the Middle East during World War I on the side of Arabs opposing the Germans and Turks.*

Time had no meaning, life had no meaning. The fierce struggle for survival. . . eroded the veneer of civilization and made savages of us all. We existed in an environment totally incomprehensible to men behind the lines — service troops and civilians.

*Eugene B. Sledge, ex-Marine and a veteran of the Pacific islands campaign during World War II.*

### **Module 3: Appendix I — Excerpts, Voices From Captivity by Robert C. Doyle**

The following material has been excerpted from *Voices From Captivity: Interpreting The American POW Narrative*, by Robert C. Doyle.

Nothing is worse for the military combatant than to have to lay down arms before the enemy. Although surrender is not considered dishonorable when a commander is no longer capable of fighting, it tarnishes a combatant's sense of personal honor. Universally, soldiers are taught that the objective of war and individual combat is to win. Surrender implies losing; and Americans in particular dislike losers, regardless of the context.

Beginning in 1963, American infantrymen and advisors to the South Vietnamese Army began to be captured. James N. Rowe was a first lieutenant in the U. S. Army's Special Forces, who in 1963 fought in a furious but losing engagement with the VC in the Mekong Delta region in South Vietnam. Rowe was captured while aiding his wounded comrade, Captain Humbert Rocky Vetsace, who, with his Army Sergeant Kenneth Roraback, would later be executed by his captors in reprisal for the Saigon government's execution of a VC terrorist. In his narrative, *Five Years to Freedom*, Rowe describes his capture:

I tied the bandage and slowly turned my head. There was the muzzle of an American carbine and behind it, the Viet Cong [sic]. I stood up, the two VC pulled my equipment harness from my shoulders, grabbed my arms, and quickly tied them behind me, once at the elbows, once at the wrists.  
God bless you, Nick.  
God bless you too, Rocky.  
Di! [Go]  
They threw me down the path.

Most prisoners in North Vietnam were airmen from the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force who were shot down by anti-aircraft batteries, small arms, or surface-to-air missiles during combat missions over North Vietnam. From time to time, aircraft would collide in combat; or pilots suffered equipment malfunctions and, as Navy combat pilot and POW Richard Stratten commented, they would in effect shoot themselves down. With the aircraft on fire and probably disintegrating rapidly, each pilot had to balance the certainty of immediate death against the fear of captivity — either eject into the enemy's hands or die immediately.

All pilots and navigators carried survival equipment (e. g. , pistol, radio, flares, compass, money, and personal effects); but few of these items did much good when a parachute's passenger hit the ground with a broken leg, injured back, or even more serious wounds. The downed aviator was a rat in a maze. Regardless of the circumstances, every shoot down was a traumatic experience. Injured or not, the airman's first thought was survival, his second thought was escape, and his third thought was rescue. Some were saved by Search and Rescue in North Vietnam; many were not.

Often prisoners, when captured, would be referred to by their captors as war criminals or as air pirates. In many cases, prisoners who invoked the Code of the Geneva Convention were at the least ignored and at the worst mocked. The rules of governance for treatment of POWs would not be a reality for Americans captured in Southeast Asia. Many U. S. military POWs were held in the capital of North Vietnam at a facility they referred to as the “Hanoi Hilton.” Within the walls of this facility many prisoners were tortured or subjected to abuse by their captors. All told, 766 Americans were held as POWs during the Vietnam War, with 114 dying while in captivity. These men were held longer than any group of American POWs who were captured during America’s previous wars.

The several Geneva Conferences, which were held during the course of the twentieth century, based their principles for the treatment of POWs on the articles drafted at the Hague Convention of 1899 in an effort to address disarmament, war at sea, and the establishment of a world court to adjudicate international disputes in lieu of war. The POW provisions reflected the principles of the Brussels Code, created in 1874, which was the first European conference to consider the treatment of POWs to be a humanitarian as well as a military issue. The representatives at Brussels incorporated many ideas of the American-Prussian immigrant Francis Lieber, who during the Civil War compiled for Abraham Lincoln General Order 100, *The Rules of Land Warfare*. As a result, in 1909 the U. S. ratified acceptance of the 1907 provisions that were made to the 1899 document signed at the Hague Convention. The most significant POW provisions include Section 1, “On Belligerents,” chapter 2, articles 4-20, (module 3, appendix K).

In 1929, after the horror of World War I, the Geneva Conference convened with the purpose of laying down humanitarian rules to mitigate the barbarism of war. In spite of the Brussels Code, the activities of the International Red Cross, the traditional international rules of war, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, and the separate treaties concluded by the belligerents in 1918, the abuse of POWs had continued occasionally on all sides during World War I. The gathering of nations in Geneva in 1929 attempted to establish rights and responsibilities for captors and captives alike and attempted to establish provisions to make sure that the statutes of the convention were observed. This convention dictated the basic rules for POWs during World War II: a new POW must tell captors his name, rank, and service number but need say nothing more. It set minimum standards for medical care and life maintenance and prohibited physical labor for officer prisoners. In other words, a prisoner had rights. By the time the United States became involved in a war in Vietnam, the military, diplomatic, and political communities knew that the Geneva Convention was a useless document to POWs caught in battles between nonsignatories or between parties that had made major reservations — such was the case of the government of North Vietnam. The soldiers, as usual, were caught in the middle. Consequently, from a practical and legal point of view, American POWs in Vietnam had no international law on which to base reasonable expectations; rather, they had only the idealistic Code of Conduct for members of the Armed Forces of the United States, which was first promulgated as a guideline for Americans in captivity by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1954.

The Vietnam War showed a startled American public that it was possible for captors consumed by a political ideology, antiquated neocolonial influences, and vengeance to avoid adherence to or find loopholes in the documents agreed upon at the various international

conventions. Caught in the middle were U. S. military personnel in the hands of captors who told them they were criminals, pirates, and enemies of the people.

### **Van Anh**

Van Anh, a member of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) in 1964, participated in the capture of an American pilot in Laos and narrates his experience in David Charnoff and Doan Van Toai's *Portrait of the Enemy* (1986). Stationed in Laos, Anh and his comrades responded to an alarm that signaled an air attack and fired all the small arms at the aircraft they could. After they destroyed the plane, the North Vietnamese soldiers captured the American pilot.

The pilot came down into the jungle about three kilometers [almost two miles] away. We ran, struggling against time to get to the place where he fell before his comrades could get him. About fifteen minutes after he parachuted, the sky was full of jets, helicopters, and an L-19 spotter plane. We climbed the mountain, past the waterfall while they circled around, looking for him in the wrong place. It took us almost six hours to find and capture him, but by then the sky had clouded over, and the planes couldn't see anything underneath. . . The battalion commander told another comrade and me to write down the interrogation. This was the first time in my life I had met an American.

### **Colonel Norman McDaniel**

Colonel Norman A. McDaniel, USAF, was an officer-crewman on a mission over North Vietnam in 1966, early in the war. His aircraft was struck by a missile and exploded into a fireball, and McDaniel faced his first decision: bail out or die. He left the burning aircraft for captivity in North Vietnam, which lasted from March 1966 to February 12, 1973. According to McDaniel:

I went there not expecting to become a prisoner of war, but I knew that that possibility existed. And so as I flew my combat missions over North Vietnam, I was well aware of the perils and the possible dangers.

On the morning of July 20, 1966 the EB-66C aircraft which I was flying — which is an electronics reconnaissance airplane — was hit by surface-to-air missiles. Fortunately, the detonation of the missile was not directly upon the airplane. Had it been, certainly, I would not be your speaker tonight. But fortunately, or unfortunately, the missile detonated close enough to the airplane that some of the fragments punctured the fuel tanks and the plane caught on fire immediately. Within a matter of seconds, I moved from a position of relative security — expecting to complete my mission and return to my base to rest and prepare for the next mission — to a position of imminent danger and possible death. Because as the plane went out of control, began to lose altitude, lose oxygen, pressurization, communication, I had to make a decision to stay with the airplane or to eject.

There were six of us on the crew; four ejected downward, two ejected upward. I was supposed to be the first one to eject downward. Since we had lost communication I had to make that decision myself. And so I chose eject.

When he landed, he met the enemy face to face.

As I descended, I saw holes being ripped in the parachute above me, and I heard the bullets zinging past my ear because the North Vietnamese were shooting at me as I descended in the chute. As soon as I hit the ground, the enemy converged upon me and captured me immediately. I had no chance to escape. I was stripped of my flight suit, flying boots, and clothing. My hands were tied behind my back, and I marched down the knoll of the little grassy hill to a hut. In the front yard of the hut was a pit which they began to force me into. I assumed at that time that this was the execution place, and for some reason I was not afraid. It might have been shock or it might have been the realization that it was my time. I thought to myself. "Well I have done my best, and I guess it's my time to go."

On the ground, McDaniel faced angry captors who made no bones about his status; McDaniel was a "war criminal" and an "air pirate." In a conversation with journalist Wallace Terry, McDaniel commented:

I could smell the hate. Some of them had pistols. Some guns. Some shook knives at me, shovels, even hoes. They motioned for me to stand up. Then they inched forward, about fifty of them, communist militia, like popular forces. . . They made me strip down to my shorts and T-shirt. They took off my boots. They tied my hands behind me. . . When I mentioned the Geneva Convention, they laughed in my face. "You're not qualified to be treated as a prisoner of war. You're a criminal. Black American criminal."

### **Colonel Fred V. Cherry**

Colonel Fred V. Cherry, USAF, a fighter pilot and the first African American POW in North Vietnam, was a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Squadron, U. S. Air Force, Karot (Thailand) Air Force Base. He was shot down in May 1965 and was shuffled between various prison camps near Hanoi until his release on February 12, 1973. In Wallace Terry's *Bloods* (1984), Cherry narrates his remove and reflects on the length of time he would have to spend in captivity. He had little notion that it would last eight years: "Now they got me dressed the way they want me, and they are going to walk me three miles to this village. I didn't know my ankle was broken, too. I was dusty, hot, sweaty, and naturally, pissed off 'cause I was shot down. Didn't wanna be there. I'm thinkin' about two, three, four months. I'm not thinkin' about years. I'm not even thinkin' six months." Cherry was brought into the village and encountered violently angry civilians: "And this guy jumps on me, straddling my back. And he puts his automatic weapon right behind my ear with my nose pretty much in the dirt. And I said to myself, you know, this man might even shoot me." Then Cherry began to resist his captors: "When we got to the vehicle, they had a cameraman there. And he wanted to take pictures of me walkin' toward him. I wouldn't do it. I'd frown up and fall on my knees and turn my back. Finally, they quit. They never took any pictures. And they got me in the jeep." Finally, Cherry was interrogated for the first time: "The first place they tried to interrogate me appeared to be a secondary school. And they put me in this hut. I did what I was supposed to do. Name, rank, serial number, date of birth. And I started talking about the Geneva Convention. And they said forget it. "You a criminal."

### **Sergeant James Jackson**

Sergeant James Jackson, Jr., of Talcott, West Virginia, was a Green Beret medic captured in South Vietnam on the morning of July 5, 1966. Sergeant Jackson was wounded in the battle before capture and could not be moved very easily. He knew that the Vietcong shot wounded prisoners on

the spot or shortly after their capture, and because his captors spared his life and removed him to a prison pen, Jackson was thankful for his life. Released in 1968 as a political gesture, he narrated his eighteen-month ordeal of captivity to *Ebony's* managing editor, Hans J. Massaquoi. Typical of narrations published before the war's end, his polemic intent focuses on describing his personal experience, while he carefully avoids specific descriptions of mistreatment at the hands of the Vietcong.

Since I couldn't walk because of my injury, I expected to be shot on the spot. But instead, my captors dragged me away from the immediate battle area. I was beaten and kicked and generally treated quite rough. At first I was taken to a small village and from there, after dark fell, I was moved to a Vietnamese POW camp for interrogation. It was early morning when I arrived there, anyway after midnight. The interrogation started soon after daybreak. The methods need not be described. All I can say is that it was quite agonizing. . . Eventually, I was moved to another camp that contained Americans, with no Vietnamese prisoners. Being in the company of other Americans definitely lifted my spirit.

### **Larry Guarino**

In *A POW's Story: 2801 Day in Hanoi* (1990), Larry Guarino describes what the American prisoners called the "Heartbreak Hotel" section of the "Hanoi Hilton."

I was shoved into the cell. I looked around me. It was about seven feet wide by sixteen feet long. Against the far wall was a wooden bench with a set of rusty old iron leg stocks set up to hold four people. . . There was an arched-shaped window seven feet from the floor, with a double set of iron bars across it. I could see out by climbing up on one of the benches, but there was nothing to see but another wall, six feet away. It was about sixteen feet high, topped with broken glass. Steel angle irons, strung with barbed wire, protruded from the top of the wall.

### **James Rowe**

Most POWs saw only ugliness, dirt, and filth, with only their imaginations to create fantasies of the beauty of home. James N. Rowe, however, saw the U Minh Forest from his cage as offering a paradox between Vietnam's natural beauty and the ugly loneliness of his close confinement.

Rest there, stranger, and enter not  
the green canopied world of progressive decay.  
From afar you viewed this land of trees,  
standing straight, leafy green,  
and thought to yourself in a pleased, human way,  
"how tall they stand, how thick the leaves.  
How alive that world of trees must be."  
For from afar it so appears. The trees reveal  
their gift of Nature, but hide from view the world within.  
So you approached while the sun was high,  
thinking of the shade and the cool relief  
from the sun's burning rays.  
I watched you come and knew your thoughts,  
for there are those who have entered before.

## **Eugene McDaniel**

The North Vietnamese went further than prohibiting POW-written newspapers; they forbade even interpersonal communication between their prisoners. Eugene “Red” McDaniel’s resistance narrative, *Scars and Stripes* (1975), notes that there were times when the prisoners beat the system by taking advantage of the Vietnamese custom of the midday snooze:

From 11:30 am to 1:30 pm was siesta, and during this time we did our serious communicating. The guards were relaxed, knowing we would be napping anyway. At this time we would write notes. . . by mixing the brick dust that collected under our beds with water and using a bamboo stick from our brooms, we could write fairly well on the stiff onionskin toilet paper. We stuck these notes to the indented place in the underside of our toilet bowl. . . We called this our “pony express” system, and it worked well. . . There were other ways to communicate too: pounding on the walls, thumping the signals in the dirt with our brooms, and using coughs, hand signals, and clothes snapping.

### ***Module 3: Appendix J — Illustrations, Prisoner of War: Six Years in Hanoi By John M. McGrath. McGrath***

The following illustrations were taken from *Prisoner of War: Six Years in Hanoi* by John M. McGrath. McGrath also provides a brief description of each of his drawings.

"Communications were the lifelines of our covert camp organization. It was essential for everyone to know what was happening in camp, whether the news was about a new torture or just a friendly word of encouragement to a disheartened fellow POW.

The primary means of communication was by use of the ‘tap’ code. The code was a simple arrangement of the alphabet into a 5 x 5 block. It was derived through one man’s code knowledge gained from an Air Force survival school.

The Vietnamese were able to extract, by torture, every detail of the code. They separated us and built multiple screens of bamboo and tarpaper between each room, but they never succeeded in completely stopping us from communicating.”

"Here, I tried to depict the ‘Vietnamese rope trick.’ The arms are repeatedly cinched up until the elbows are forced together. Sometimes at this point the ‘hell cuffs’ are applied. The ‘hell cuffs’ are handcuffs which are put on the upper arms and pinched as tightly as possible onto the arms, cutting off the circulation. The resulting pain is extreme. If the prisoner has not broken down by this time, his arms are rotated until the shoulders dislocate. Words could never adequately describe the pain, or the thoughts that go through a man’s mind at a time like this.”

Reprinted, by permission, from John M. McGrath, *Prisoner of War: Six Years in Hanoi* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, © 1975).

### ***Module 3: Appendix K — Excerpts, Hague Convention IV***

Hague Convention IV (18 October 1907)  
Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land  
Articles 1-56

Entry into Force: 26 January 1910

**SECTION I, "ON BELLIGERENTS"**

**CHAPTER II**

Articles 4-20

Prisoners of War

Art. 4. Prisoners of war are in the power of the hostile Government, but not of the individuals or corps who capture them.

They must be humanely treated.

All their personal belongings, except arms, horses, and military papers, remain their property.

Art. 5. Prisoners of war may be interned in a town, fortress, camp, or other place, and bound not to go beyond certain fixed limits, but they cannot be confined except as an indispensable measure of safety and only while the circumstances which necessitate the measure continue to exist.

Art. 6. The State may utilize the labor of prisoners of war according to their rank and aptitude, officers excepted. The tasks shall not be excessive and shall have no connection with the operations of the war.

Prisoners may be authorized to work for the public service, for private persons, or on their own account.

Work done for the State is paid for at the rates in force for work of a similar kind done by soldiers of the national army, or, if there are none in force, at a rate according to the work executed.

When the work is for other branches of the public service or for private persons, the conditions are settled in agreement with the military authorities.

The wages of the prisoners shall go towards improving their position, and the balance shall be paid them on their release, after deducting the cost of their maintenance.

Art. 7. The Government into whose hands prisoners of war have fallen is charged with their maintenance.

In the absence of a special agreement between the belligerents, prisoners of war shall be treated as regards board, lodging, and clothing on the same footing as the troops of the Government who captured them.

Art. 8. Art. 8. Prisoners of war shall be subject to the laws, regulations, and orders in force in the army of the State in whose power they are. Any act of insubordination justifies the adoption towards them of such measures of severity as may be considered necessary.

Escaped prisoners who are retaken before being able to rejoin their own army or before

leaving the territory occupied by the army which captured them are liable to disciplinary punishment.

Prisoners who, after succeeding in escaping, are again taken prisoners, are not liable to any punishment on account of the previous flight.

Art. 9. Every prisoner of war is bound to give, if he is questioned on the subject, his true name and rank, and if he infringes this rule, he is liable to have the advantages given to prisoners of his class curtailed.

Art. 10. Prisoners of war may be set at liberty on parole if the laws of their country allow, and, in such cases, they are bound, on their personal honor, scrupulously to fulfill, both towards their own Government and the Government by whom they were made prisoners, the engagements they have contracted.

In such cases their own Government is bound neither to require of nor accept from them any service incompatible with the parole given.

Art. 11. A prisoner of war cannot be compelled to accept his liberty on parole; similarly the hostile Government is not obliged to accede to the request of the prisoner to be set at liberty on parole.

Art. 12. Prisoners of war liberated on parole and recaptured bearing arms against the Government to whom they had pledged their honor, or against the allies of that Government, forfeit their right to be treated as prisoners of war, and can be brought before the courts.

Art. 13. Individuals who follow an army without directly belonging to it, such as newspaper correspondents and reporters, sutlers and contractors, who fall into the enemy's hands and whom the latter thinks expedient to detain, are entitled to be treated as prisoners of war, provided they are in possession of a certificate from the military authorities of the army which they were accompanying.

Art. 14. An inquiry office for prisoners of war is instituted on the commencement of hostilities in each of the belligerent States, and, when necessary, in neutral countries which have received belligerents in their territory. It is the function of this office to reply to all inquiries about the prisoners. It receives from the various services concerned full information respecting internments and transfers, releases on parole, exchanges, escapes, admissions into hospital, deaths, as well as other information necessary to enable it to make out and keep up to date an individual return for each prisoner of war. The office must state in this return the regimental number, name and surname, age, place of origin, rank, unit, wounds, date and place of capture, internment, wounding, and death, as well as any observations of a special character. The individual return shall be sent to the Government of the other belligerent after the conclusion of peace.

It is likewise the function of the inquiry office to receive and collect all objects of personal use, valuables, letters, etc., found on the field of battle or left by prisoners who have been released on parole, or exchanged, or who have escaped, or died in hospitals or ambulances, and to forward them to those concerned.

Art. 15. Relief societies for prisoners of war, which are properly constituted in accordance with the laws of their country and with the object of serving as the channel for charitable effort shall receive from the belligerents, for themselves and their duly accredited agents every facility for the efficient performance of their humane task within the bounds imposed by military necessities and administrative regulations. Agents of these societies may be admitted to the places of internment for the purpose of distributing relief, as also to the halting places of repatriated prisoners, if furnished with a personal permit by the military authorities, and on giving an undertaking in writing to comply with all measures of order and police which the latter may issue.

Art. 16. Inquiry offices enjoy the privilege of free postage. Letters, money orders, and valuables, as well as parcels by post, intended for prisoners of war, or dispatched by them, shall be exempt from all postal duties in the countries of origin and destination, as well as in the countries they pass through.

Presents and relief in kind for prisoners of war shall be admitted free of all import or other duties, as well as of payments for carriage by the State railways.

Art. 17. Officers taken prisoners shall receive the same rate of pay as of officers of corresponding rank in the country where they are detained, the amount to be ultimately refunded by their own Government.

Art. 18. Prisoners of war shall enjoy complete liberty in the exercise of their religion, including attendance at the services of whatever church they may belong to, on the sole condition that they comply with the measures of order and police issued by the military authorities.

Art. 19. The wills of prisoners of war are received or drawn up in the same way as for soldiers of the national army. -The same rules shall be observed regarding death certificates as well as for the burial of prisoners of war, due regard being paid to their grade and rank.

Art. 20. After the conclusion of peace, the repatriation of prisoners of war shall be carried out as quickly as possible.

### **Module 3: Appendix L — Poems**

#### ***Like Swans on Still Water***

By Dana Shuster, ©1991

Like swans on still water they skim over the war  
As dais gliding, rustling serenely  
gleaming black hair pulled primly away  
from faces that reveal nothing save inner repose,  
a beauty so deep even war can't defile.

I note my reflection in their obsidian eyes —  
an outsized barbarian, ungainly, unkempt,  
baggy in ever-wilted greens,  
five-pound boots taking plowhand strides,

face perpetually ruddy, dripping in alien heat.

In their delicate presence I exhume teenage failures —  
the girl in the back row forever unnoticed,  
the one no one ever invited to dance,  
the one never voted most-likely anything,  
the one who was never quite something enough.

But once in a while, on a crazy-shift morning,  
when I've worked through the night and I'm too tired to care,  
a young man who reeks of rice paddies lies waiting  
for someone to heal the new hole in his life.  
He says through his pain, all adolescent bravado,  
“Hey, what's your name? Let's get married. I love you.”

And just for a moment I become Nefertiti  
and for all the Orient's pearls and silks  
I would not trade the glamour and privilege  
of these honored hands, licensed to touch  
on filthy GI.

In the sonnet below by Stephen Sossaman, a Vietnam veteran is at a barbeque years after returning from the war. At many base camps in Vietnam, latrine waste was collected in halves of 55-gallon drums and disposed of by being doused with diesel fuel and burned, creating a smell that most veterans cannot forget. The poem opens when the speaker's memories of the war are triggered by smelling the barbeque smoke. Sossaman was in the U. S. Army near Ben Tre in Vietnam's Mekong Delta.

***A Veteran Attends A July 4th Barbeque***

By Stephen Sossaman, ©1980

Black clouds of bittersweet and greasy taste  
Encircled all we had and all we wore;  
They came from cleansing fires of latrine waste  
And left a trace of ash on every pore.  
It gathered there and worked its way quite deep  
Like napalm stink when Ben Tre cracked and burned,  
Like sounds of rockets heard in fitful sleep,  
Or popping pork when the steel spit is turned.  
Those shreds of meat impaled upon the spit  
Those shards of petrol bursting through the smoke,  
Those bones burned black and brittle in the pit  
Can cause a careless man to gag and choke.  
Others cradling beer cans 'round the pyre  
Advise me not to go near the fire.

Student's Guide to *A Veteran Attends a July 4<sup>th</sup> Barbeque*

**Special vocabulary**

Latrine: a military toilet (here, an outhouse with seats over halves of oil drums).

Ben Tre: a Vietnamese city badly damaged during the 1968 Tet offensive.

Shards: jagged fragments created by the explosion of an artillery or rocket round, but used here to describe the sharp smell of charcoal fluid.

Pyre: the mound of wood used to cremate a corpse, but used here to describe the barbeque.

**Ask yourself:**

1. What evidence suggests that the veteran is troubled by the war?
2. What remembered images appear to the veteran?
3. What two types of rockets are meant in line 7?
4. What is happening in line 12?
5. How might the advice given to the veteran by others at the barbeque be ironic?

*(©1980 Stephen Sossaman. Published in Centennial Review. Teachers may copy and distribute this poem for classroom use. )*

**Teacher's Guide to *A Veteran Attends a July 4<sup>th</sup> Barbeque***

1. Smoke from the barbeque triggers the speaker's memory of smoke during the war, initially smoke from burning latrine waste and then smoke from napalm and other explosives. Memories of smells trigger memories of sounds and sights.
2. The speaker moves from consciousness into a reverie, probably at its deepest at line 11, until he is jolted back to the present by his gagging and the futile advice of those around him, who think he is gagging from the smoke, rather than from memories.
3. The pleasure of the barbeque has an unpleasant mirror image in memories of the war. Cooking meat suggests napalm victims, charcoal fluid evokes napalm's smell, and the pork ribs or steak bones suggest human war victims.
4. The speaker might be gagging from the barbeque smoke or from the horror of his recollections. If the former, the couplet is trivial; if the latter, the poem shows the power of veteran's memories. In this case the bystanders' ignorance of the cause of the veteran's suffering symbolizes the feeling some veterans have that others cannot understand what they experienced or feel.
5. The poem uses several poetic devices, including:

Ambiguity: (multiple complementary meanings) "rockets" suggests both the enemy's rockets heard while the soldier is half sleeping and the July 4th fireworks. "Careless" suggests that the speaker is not paying attention to where the barbeque smoke is drifting, but it also suggests a man who has no cares (ironically, since the veteran certainly has worrisome cares).

Imagery: the sounds, sights, and smells of the present evoke memories of similar sounds, sights, and smells of the war.

Connotation: the beer cans suggest leisure, pleasure, and the bystander's lack of understanding."Impaled" suggests violent death.

Alliteration: the repeated "b" sounds in line 11 suggest the hypnotic reverie of the veteran.

Irony: "cleansing" fires destroy excrement but leave ash on the soldier. The bystander's suggestion is ironic because while the veteran can stand back from the barbeque it is too late to avoid the fires of war that haunt him.

Symbols: "fire" in line 14 symbolizes the war. The ash symbolizes unpleasant memories.

Form: this is an English sonnet (three four-line sections, each relatively contained, followed by a couplet that provides closure). The rhyme scheme is abab cd cd efef gg.

### ***Module 3: Appendix M — Beyond Tthe War: Hollywood and the Vietnam War***

You may wish to use various Hollywood interpretations of the Vietnam War in a creative fashion. These suggestions are based on the work and ideas presented in the book *American History on the Screen: A Sourcebook for Teachers*. Because so many students today learn their history, through motion pictures, it is imperative that some lesson be put in place as part of this unit that explores the difference between "real" history and "reel" history.

This outline provides a great deal of latitude should you plan to use motion pictures as a part of your study on Vietnam. Please note that a number of the films that are listed contain an "R" rating, and showing the films or asking your students to watch the films may require that you check with your school district's policies. In any case, teachers should preview all material prior to having students watch them.

Since this is a long-term research project, students should be given ample time to complete the assignment. Teachers may want to consider assigning the work six weeks before it is due. In some respects, students will need to be their own historians. If the assignment is given in this context, teachers will have to expect that students will need to do their own investigation into the background of the war, with minimal teacher direction on or classroom discussion on Vietnam. You may also wish to consider this follow-up activity once the student presentations are complete.

Have students write an essay on how the history of Vietnam has been interpreted through feature-length motion pictures and how the motion picture industry has helped shape the legacy and perception of the Vietnam War.