VIETNAM – THE *POLITICAL* WAR THAT KILLED TRUST IN AMERICA

THE DAYS WHEN OUR LEADERS TOLD US LIES AND WITHHELD THE TRUTH WHILE RESTRICTING THE WAY THE MILITARY WAS ALLOWED TO FIGHT

THE "FORGOTTEN WAR" OF LIES AND TOTAL DISGRACE OF OUR AMERICAN TROOPS BY OUR PEOPLE.

IN VIETNAM – AMERICANS FIGHT THE VIETNAMESE
IN AMERICA- AMERICANS FIGHT AMERICANS OVER THE WAR

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THE WAR THAT WASN'T A WAR THAT DIVIDED THE UNITED STATES
FROM WHICH WE HAVE NEVER REALLY RECOVERED – NOT AMERICA'S "FINEST HOUR"

Fifty years on we know the trigger for war with Vietnam was a fiction. Will it be another 50 before we know the truth about Iraq? The legacy of the war still shapes America, even if most of us are too young to remember it. The very foundation used to start the War was a lie in itself and set the tone for many more.

WHEN LIES AND SECRETS COST LIVES

The following information is taken from an Essay in the New York Times entitled "Vietnam" 67 written by Karl Marlantes in Jan 2017.

Karl Marlantes, the author of "What It Is Like to Go to War" and the novel "Matterhorn," was a Marine in the Vietnam War. Historians, veterans, and journalists recall 1967 in Vietnam, a year that changed the war and changed America.

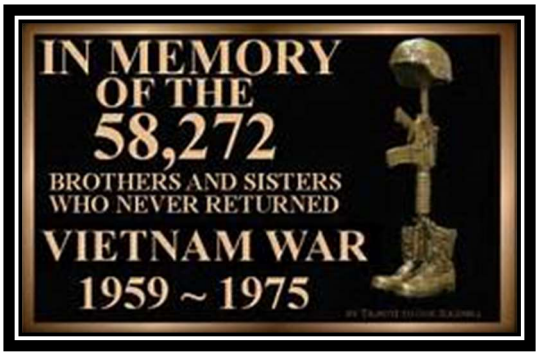
In the early spring of 1967, I was in the middle of a heated 2 a.m. hallway discussion with fellow students at Yale about the Vietnam War. I was from a small town in Oregon, and I had already joined the Marine Corps Reserve. My friends were mostly from East Coast prep schools. One said that Lyndon B. Johnson was lying to us about the war. I blurted out, "But … but an American president wouldn't lie to Americans!" They all burst out laughing.

When I told that story to my children, they all burst out laughing, too. Of course, presidents lie. All politicians lie. God, Dad, what planet are you from?

Before the Vietnam War, most Americans were like me. After the Vietnam War, most Americans are like my children.

America didn't just lose the war, and the lives of 58,000 young men and women; *Vietnam changed us as a country. In many ways, for the worse*: It made us cynical and distrustful of our institutions, especially of government. *For many people, it eroded the notion, once nearly universal, that part of being an American was* serving your country.

But not everything about the war was negative. As a Marine lieutenant in Vietnam, I saw how it threw together young men from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and forced them to trust one another with their lives. It was a racial crucible that played an enormous if often unappreciated, role in moving America toward real integration.



WE WILL ALWAYS WONDER

HOW MANY COULD HAVE BEEN SAVED??

And yet even as Vietnam continues to shape our country, its place in our national consciousness is slipping. Some 65 percent of Americans are under 45 and so unable to even remember the war. Meanwhile, our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, our involvement in Syria, and our struggle with terrorism — these conflicts are pushing Vietnam further into the background.

All the more reason, then, for us to revisit the war and its consequences for today. This essay inaugurates a new series by The Times, Vietnam '67, that will examine how the events of 1967 and early 1968 shaped Vietnam, America, and the world. Hopefully, it will generate renewed conversation around that history, now half a century past.

What readers take away from that conversation is another matter. If all we do is debate why we lost, or why we were there at all, we will miss the truly important question: *What did the war do to us as Americans?*

CYNICISM

Vietnam changed the way we looked at politics. We became inured to our leaders lying in the war: the fabricated Gulf of Tonkin incident, the number of "pacified provinces" (and what did "pacified" mean, anyway?), and *the inflated body counts*.

People talked about Johnson's "credibility gap." *This was a genteel way of saying that the president was lying*. Then, however, a credibility gap was considered unusual and bad. By the end of the war, it was still considered bad, but it was no longer unusual. *When politicians lie today, fact-checkers might point out what is true, but then everyone moves on.*

We have switched from naïveté to cynicism. One could argue that they are opposites, but I think not. With naïveté, you risk disillusionment, which is what happened to me and many of my generation. Cynicism, however, stops you before you start. It alienates us from "the government," a phrase that today connotes bureaucratic quagmire. It threatens democracy because it destroys the power of the people to even want to make change.

You don't finish the world's largest highway system, build huge numbers of public schools and universities, institute the Great Society, fight a major war, and go to the moon, which we did in the 1960s — simultaneously — if you're cynical about government and politicians.

"THE WHOLE THING WAS A LIE"

THE MEMOIRS OF A SPECIAL FORCES HERO

To view: Copy the below link and paste it into your browser.

http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org/index.php/early-veteran-resistance-the-whole-thing-was-a-lie-by-donald-duncan

I live near Seattle, hardly Donald J. Trump territory. Most of my friends cynically deride Mr. Trump's slogan, Make America Great Again, citing all that was wrong in the olden days. Indeed, it wasn't paradise, particularly for minorities. But there's some truth to it. We were greater then. It was the war — not liberalism, not immigration, not globalization — that changed us.

RACE

In December 1968, I was on a blasted and remote jungle hilltop about a kilometer from the demilitarized zone. A chopper dropped off about three weeks of sodden mail and crumpled care packages. In that pile was a package for Ray Delgado, an 18-year-old Hispanic kid from Texas. I watched Ray tear into the aluminum foil wrapping and, smiling broadly, hold something up for me to see. "What's that?" I asked.

"It's tamales. From my mother."

"What are tamales?"

"You want to try one?" he asked.

"Sure." I looked at it, turned it over, then stuck it in my mouth and started chewing. Ray and his other Hispanic friends were barely containing themselves as I was gamely chewing away and thinking, "No wonder these Mexicans have such great teeth."

"Lieutenant," Ray finally said. "*You take the corn husk off."*

I was from a logging town on the Oregon coast. I'd heard of tamales, but I'd never seen one. Until I joined my company of Marines in Vietnam, I'd never even talked to a Mexican. Yes, people like me called people like Ray "Mexicans," even though they were as American as apple pie — and tamales. Racial tension where I grew up was the Swedes and Norwegians squaring off against the Finns every Saturday night in the parking lot outside the dance at the Labor Temple.

President Harry Truman ordered the integration of the military in 1948. By the time of the Vietnam War, the races were serving together. But putting everyone in the same units is very different than having them work together as a unit.

OPINION TODAY

Our national memory of integration is mostly about the brave people of the civil rights movement. Imagine arming all those high school students from Birmingham, Ala. — white and black — with automatic weapons in an environment where using these weapons was as common as having lunch and they are all jacked up on testosterone. That's racial tension.

During the war, there were over *200 fragging in the American military* — murders carried out by fragmentation grenades, which made it impossible to identify the killer. Almost all fragging, at least when the perpetrator was caught, were found to be racially motivated.

Fragging in the military is when a soldier kills a superior officer. **It is called fragging because the term was coined in the Vietnam War when many of these murders were committed using fragmentation grenades (nicknamed frag grenades).**

And yet the more common experience in combat was cooperation and respect. If I was pinned down by enemy fire and I needed an M-79 man, I'd scream for Thompson, because he was the best. I didn't even think about what color Thompson was.

White guys had to listen to soul music and black guys had to listen to country music. We didn't fear one another. And the experience stuck with us. Hundreds of thousands of young men came home from Vietnam with different ideas about race — some for the worse, but most for the better. Racism wasn't solved in Vietnam, but I believe it was where our country finally learned that it just might be possible for us all to get along.

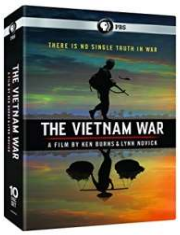
SERVICE

I was at a reading recently in Fayetteville, N.C., when a young couple appeared at the signing table. He was standing straight and tall in Army fatigues. She was holding a baby in one arm and hauling a toddler with the other. They both looked to be about two years out of high school. The woman started to cry. I asked her what was wrong, and she said, "My husband is shipping out again tomorrow." I turned to him and said, "Wow, your second tour?"

"No, sir," he replied. "My seventh."

My heart sank. Is this a republic?

The author and veteran Karl Marlantes discuss the legacy of the Vietnam War in a clip from "The Vietnam War," a 10-part documentary by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick that will air on PBS in September.



The Vietnam War ushered in the end of the draft and the creation of what the Pentagon calls the "all-volunteer military." But I don't. I call it the all-recruited military. Volunteers are people who rush down to the post office to sign up after Pearl Harbor or the World Trade Center gets bombed. Recruits, well, it's more complicated.

When I was growing up, almost every friend's father or uncle had served in World War II. All the women in town knew that a destroyer was smaller than a cruiser and a platoon was smaller than a company because their husbands had all been on destroyers or in platoons. Back then it was called "the service." Today, we call it "the military."

That shift in language indicates a profound shift in the attitudes of the republic toward its armed forces. The draft was unfair. Only males got drafted. Men who could afford to go to college did not get drafted until late in the war when the fighting had fallen off.

However, getting rid of the draft did not solve the unfairness.

America's elites have mostly dropped out of military service. Engraved on the walls of Woolsey Hall at Yale are the names of hundreds of Yalies who died in World Wars I and II. Thirty-five died in Vietnam, and none since.

Instead, the American working class has increasingly borne the burden of death and casualties since World War II. In a study in The University of Memphis Law Review, Douglas Kriner and Francis Shen looked at the income casualty gap, the difference between the median household incomes (in constant 2000 dollars) of communities with the highest casualties (the top 25 percent) and all the other communities. Starting from almost dead in World War II, the casualty gap was $5,000 in the Korean War, $8,200 in the Vietnam War, and is now more than $11,000 in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Put another way, the lowest three income deciles have suffered 50 percent more casualties than the highest three.*

If these inequities continue to grow, resentment will grow with it. With growing resentment, the already wide divide between the military and civilians will also widen. This is how republics fall, with armies and parts of the country more loyal to their commander than their country.

We need to return to the spirit of the military draft, and how people felt about service to their country. The military draft was viewed by most of us the same way we view income tax. I wouldn't pay my taxes if there wasn't the threat of jail. But as a responsible citizen, I also see that paying taxes is necessary to fund the government — by government

People would still grumble. We grumble about taxes. People would still try to pull strings to get more pleasant assignments. But everyone would serve. They'd work for "the government," and maybe start to see it as "our government." It's a lot harder to be cynical about your country if you devoted two years of your life to making it a better place.

Let the armed services be just one of many ways young people can serve their country. With universal service, some boy from Seattle could find himself sharing tamale with some Hispanic girl from El Paso. Conservatives and liberals would learn to work together for a common cause. We could return to the spirit of people of different races learning to work together in combat during the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War continues to define us, even if we have forgotten how. But it's not too late to remember and to do something about it.

WHEN PRESIDENTS LIE TO MAKE A WAR

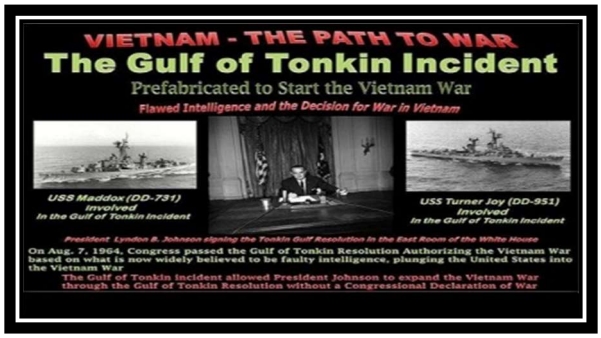
Lyndon Johnson's repeated accusation that the Gulf of Tonkin attacks were unprovoked was the beginning of a disillusion that would lead Daniel Ellsberg to leak the Pentagon Papers.

COMMENTS

Once there was a president who warned the world about conduct his government would not tolerate. And when this "red line" was crossed, or seemed to be, he took the US to war. Though this might sound like America's involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, Belgrade, or Libya, and what may yet become a wider war in Syria, this story began 50 years ago, on 4 August 1964.

That was when Lyndon Johnson interrupted TV broadcasts shortly before midnight to announce that two US ships had come under fire in international waters and that in response to what the president described as this "unprovoked" attack, "air action is now in execution" against "facilities in North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations".

The Americans launched 64 bombing sorties, destroying an oil depot, a coal mine, and a significant portion of the North Vietnamese navy. Three days later, both houses of Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing "the president, as commander-in-chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the US and to prevent further aggression". Within three years the US would have 500,000 soldiers in Vietnam. Even today, the Gulf of Tonkin resolution remains the template for presidential war-making.



That August 4th, Daniel Ellsberg started work at the Pentagon. A young mathematician who had served as a captain in the Marines, then gone on to graduate study at Harvard and a job as a civilian analyst for the Rand Corporation, where he had helped shape America's response to the Cuban missile crisis, *Ellsberg was among the first to receive the classified "flash" signal from the USS Turner Joy, the destroyer that claimed to be under attack.*

WHY DID THE US FIGHT THE VIETNAM WAR?

Copy the link and paste it into your browser

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EunyfX-Zjo4

At the time a devout cold warrior, Ellsberg told me his initial reaction was "We must strike back". Yet within a few days, when Johnson repeated his accusation that "the attacks were deliberate. The attacks were unprovoked", and assured the world that "we seek no wider war", Ellsberg knew "all of those statements were false" - the beginnings of a disillusion that would eventually lead him to leak the top-secret Pentagon Papers seven years later. What he didn't know, and what remained for decades one of America's most tightly guarded secrets, is that the attack on 4 August may never actually have happened.

I recently interviewed Ellsberg for the BBC. His memory of the Gulf of Tonkin incident was vivid, detailed, and consistent with the documents – many of them classified "top secret" - which historians have spent years tracking down. But what struck me most forcefully in talking to him and other witnesses and historians about those events were the remarkable parallels with our world today.

Like Barack Obama, Lyndon Johnson was a president who felt "the fierce urgency of now" to address the glaring inequalities of American society. Just a month earlier, with Martin Luther King Jr standing at his side, he had signed the Civil Rights Act, ending racial segregation. And as the Pulitzer prizewinning historian Frederik Logevall told me, "Johnson said in the spring of '64, *'I don't think we can win in Vietnam and I don't think we can get out.' You can have all the military power in the world, but if you can't win the thing politically then you're not going to succeed."*

Reading headlines from Syria, or watching the news from Iraq - where an army that had been trained and equipped at enormous expense simply laid down their weapons and ran away, abandoning territory that had cost British and American troops their lives -it has been impossible to resist the sensation, in the words of the great Yankee catcher Yogi Berra, that this was "deja vu".

Listening to Obama and David Cameron respond to the debacle in Iraq, I kept hearing echoes of President Kennedy declaring in September 1963: "I don't think that unless a greater effort is made by the government to win popular support that the war can be won out there."

Thanks to Edward Snowden and the Guardian we know a great deal more about how Britain and America view the world - and their citizens - than was even suspected in 1964. But we still may have to wait decades to find out what George Bush said to Tony Blair about Iraq, or what Obama told David Cameron about Syria. We can, however, finally tell the full story of what happened - and didn't - in the Gulf of Tonkin.

VIETNAM '67

Historians, veterans, and journalists recall 1967 in Vietnam, *a year that changed the war and changed America*.

Before his efforts to sabotage the Paris Talks On Vietnam were known along with other "fiasco" he had been involved in related to the Vietnam War Conflict (was never a declared War), in time to be disgraced, President Richard Nixon made the following statement:

"No event in American history is more misunderstood than the Vietnam War. It was misreported then, and it is misremembered now. Rarely have so many people been so wrong about so much. Never have the consequences of their misunderstanding been so tragic." ***Richard Nixon (really?)***

AGENT ORANGE

Our Government said it never happened - Until they were forced to after the war - It killed and maimed hundreds of American troops.

Vietnam was the longest war in American History **and the most unpopular war of the 20th Century. It resulted in 58,000 American deaths and an estimated 2 million Vietnamese deaths. Even today, almost 50 years later, many Americans still ask whether the American effort in Vietnam was a sin, a blunder, a necessary war, or whether it was a noble cause, or an idealistic, if failed, effort to protect the South Vietnamese from a totalitarian government.**

SUMMARY

Between 1945 and 1954, the Vietnamese waged an anti-colonial war against France, *which received $2.6 billion in financial support from the United States*. The French defeat at the Dien Bien Phu was followed by a peace conference in Geneva. As a result of the conference, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam received their independence, and Vietnam was temporarily divided between an anti-Communist South and a Communist North. In 1956, South Vietnam, with American backing, refused to hold unification elections. By 1958, Communist-led guerrillas, known as the Viet Cong, had begun to battle the South Vietnamese government.

To support the South's government, the United States sent in 2,000 military advisors--a number that grew to 16,300 in 1963. The military condition deteriorated, and by 1963, South Vietnam had lost the fertile Mekong Delta to the Viet Cong. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson escalated the war, commencing air strikes on North Vietnam and committing ground forces*--which numbered 536,000 in 1968*. The 1968 Tet Offensive by the North Vietnamese turned many Americans against the war.

The next president, Richard Nixon, advocated Vietnamization, withdrawing American troops and giving South Vietnam greater responsibility for fighting the war. In 1970, Nixon attempted to slow the flow of North Vietnamese soldiers and supplies into South Vietnam by sending American forces to destroy Communist supply bases in Cambodia. *This act violated Cambodian neutrality and provoked antiwar protests on the nation's college campuses.*

From 1968 to 1973, efforts were made to end the conflict through diplomacy. In January 1973, an agreement was reached; U.S. forces were withdrawn from Vietnam, and U.S. prisoners of war were released.

In April 1975, South Vietnam surrendered to the North, and Vietnam was reunited.

CONSEQUENCES

Because the U.S. failed to achieve a military victory and the Republic of South Vietnam was ultimately taken over by North Vietnam, the Vietnam experience became known as *"the only war America ever lost."* It remains a very controversial topic that continues to affect political and military decisions today.

The U.S. suffered over 47,000 killed in action plus another 11,000 noncombat deaths; over 150,000 were wounded and 10,000 missing

Congress enacted the War Powers Act in 1973, requiring the president to receive explicit Congressional approval before committing American forces overseas. *This cancelled the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which gave absolute power to the President.*

The erosion of public trust in government began in the 1960s. The share saying they could trust the federal government to do the right thing nearly always or most of the time reached an all-time high of 77% in 1964. Within a decade – a period that included the Vietnam War, civil unrest, and the Watergate scandal – trust had fallen by more than half, to 36%. By the end of the 1970s, only about a quarter of Americans felt that they could trust the government at least most of the time.

One of the most divisive wars in American history ended 25 years ago, but the United States is still dealing with the fallout. Some historians say that the Vietnam War was so drawn out and costly that American policymakers have since turned fearful of military involvement in another potential quagmire. Others note Americans' diminished trust in government because politicians and military leaders lied about the war. However, some observers say the vigorous U.S. response during the Persian Gulf War helped prove the United States isn't afraid to use its military power when necessary. And they blame other factors, like Watergate and the Iran-contra scandal, for citizens' increased distrust of government.

JOHNSON, WESTMORELAND AND THE "SELLING "OF VIETNAM

By early 1967, American and Allied forces appeared stuck in the morass of Vietnam. Publicly, military commanders talked about progress; off the record, Army officers told journalists that they weren't "anywhere near the mopping up stage."

Moreover, the press increasingly noted Lyndon B. Johnson's frustrations. One report even suggested that the president was "tormented by the slow progress" of the war effort.

Ever an eye on domestic political trends, the president responded that spring by starting what would become a yearlong campaign to not only "sell" his Southeast Asia policy, but also disprove accusations of a stalemated war in Vietnam. Johnson began this publicity drive in April by bringing the head of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Gen. William Westmoreland, to report on the war's progress. It was the first time in American history a president had called back a wartime field commander to testify on the administration's behalf.

At the time, Westmoreland seemed the embodiment of post-World War II American military power. In naming Westmoreland its 1965 "Man of the Year," Time magazine called the four-star general a "jut-jawed six-footer" and a "straightforward, determined man." Westmoreland, already a veteran of two wars before arriving in Vietnam, had led the famed 101st Airborne Division and had served as West Point's superintendent. In inheriting the multiple roles of a politically sensitive command in Vietnam, Time quipped, Westmoreland wore "more hats than Hedda Hopper."

In 1965, however, Westmoreland had only one strategic goal in mind — arrest the losing trend. By most accounts, South Vietnam teetered on the verge of collapse. Hanoi was sending full infantry regiments along the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail into South Vietnam. Acts of terrorism targeted local officials. The South Vietnamese Army (officially known as the Army of the Republic of Vietnam or A.R.V.N.) appeared incapable of keeping pace with the escalating levels of violence.

Westmoreland realized, though, that regaining the strategic initiative meant more than just killing the enemy. Rather, military operations were a means to a larger end. In short, battlefield victories were intended to have a political purpose.

If this isn't Treason, What is?

Thus, throughout 1966 and early 1967, American forces undertook a host of missions helping to extend Saigon's control over the population.

They fought alongside the A.R.V.N. and local militia against enemy main force and insurgent units. They implemented nonmilitary civic action plans, such as medical visits to rural hamlets and administrative training of district officials. And they instituted programs to "win the hearts and minds of the people.

Contrary to the way it was later portrayed in the press and history books, Westmoreland's war proved far more than a singular focus on attrition of the enemy and racking up high body counts simply for a "false sense of military pride."

Of course, there were myriad difficulties in implementing such a wide-ranging strategy, of balancing a war whose nature was as much political as it was military. Westmoreland grappled with contentious party politics in Saigon, with a Communist-nationalist message that resonated among the South Vietnamese countryside, and with a stubborn enemy committed to Vietnam's reunification and freedom from Western influence.

When idiots like this aiding the enemy should have been shot.

Perhaps most troubling, by 1967 the American military command faced a home front increasingly questioning the sacrifices for a war that seemed to produce so few tangible results.

As the year wore on, words like "stalemate" and "quagmire" became commonplace in appraisals of America's strategy and chances for victory in Southeast Asia.

Westmoreland's designation as the president's chief surrogate in the spring of 1967, though, *left little doubt that Johnson had committed himself, and the nation, to continued war*. Johnson intended his "salesmanship campaign" to shore up defenses backing the United States' commitment to Vietnam, and to push back against those questioning the viability of his policies. The nation's top field general would disprove critics by demonstrating progress.

At Westmoreland's first stop, The Associated Press's annual editor's luncheon on April 25, the general argued that Vietnam's fate would affect the future of all "emerging nations." He lauded his soldiers' performance in rescuing a Saigon government "on the verge of defeat," while highlighting the complexities of this kind of war — "a war of both subversion and invasion, a war in which political and psychological factors are of such consequence." And while a confident Westmoreland painted a favorable military picture, he twice emphasized a point that most likely made Johnson wince. "*I do not see any end of the war in sight."*

Three days later Westmoreland gave another speech that overshadowed his A.P. address. To a joint session of Congress, the general roused legislators to "enthusiastic cheers," according to one report, pledging that his command would "prevail in Vietnam over the Communist aggressor.

(Such language intimated a threat more external than internal.)

Yet Westmoreland noted that military success alone would not ensure "a swift and decisive end to the conflict." The enemy was waging a "total war all day — every day — everywhere." Westmoreland maintained that only a strategy of "unrelenting but discriminating military, political and psychological pressure" on the enemy would lead to success.

At no time did Westmoreland mention the issue of stalemate. While their enemy was "far from quitting," American forces, backed at home by "resolve, confidence, patience, determination and continued support," would succeed.

Critics, though impressed by the general's speech, believed Westmoreland had won no converts. Tom Wicker of The New York Times saw the oration as nothing more than a bid by Johnson to "enlist the general's military prestige in the administration's struggle to maintain political support at home." And for all the plaudits he received, Westmoreland flew back to Vietnam having persuaded precious few in Washington.

Johnson's salesmanship campaign fell short on two levels. Westmoreland did not convince the president's opponents that American policy in Vietnam indeed was making progress. Nor, perhaps more importantly, did these speeches cause the American public to embrace the complex realities of the continuing war in South Vietnam.

In truth, Westmoreland proved unable to articulate the convoluted nature of a struggle over Vietnamese national identity that no foreign entity was likely to resolve. The war remained as "undefinable" as ever.

The saddest thing of all is the fact that during all this time of "decision making "Americans were being killed every day.

As 1967 unfolded after Westmoreland's return to MACV headquarters, more and more evidence surfaced that the war might indeed be mired in stalemate.

Pundits lambasted the quality of South Vietnam's fighting forces. The pacification program appeared "tottering on the brink of collapse." A political shake-up in Saigon — by 1967, a common occurrence to weary American officials — seemed to reflect security woes in the countryside. By year's end, the battle over measuring "progress" seemed to rival the ferocity of the war itself.

Such debates aside, Westmoreland's public statements in April 1967 offer a useful perspective on how Americans talk about war, particularly the strategies designed to win them. Throughout his tenure in Vietnam, Westmoreland wrestled with how best to communicate, to numerous and varied audiences, the complexities of a war so unlike the conventional battlefields of World War II. As one United States Embassy official in Saigon admitted, "I cannot make any positive statement about Vietnam that I cannot honestly contradict with another statement."

But if the American war in Vietnam was truly "unlike anything else in the experience of our country," 50 years on, it still can remind us of the need to embrace the nuances of war.

War is chaotic and messy. It defies easy explanations. And yet we turn to clichés all too often. In reality, for Vietnam, longstanding tropes like "body counts" and "attrition," a mainstay of the historical narrative, have done little to advance a deeper understanding of what was always a complicated political-military affair.

How we — as politicians, as journalists, as historians, as the general public — talk about war, then and now, matters. Reducing complex wars to one-word phrases — Vietnam as a war of "attrition" or supposed successes in Iraq as a result of a "surge" — dangerously oversimplifies.

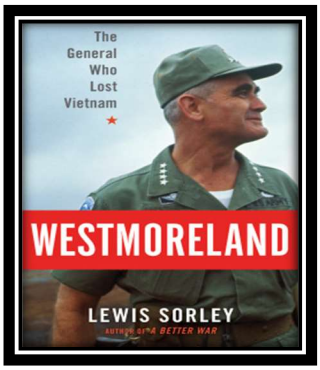
Rudimentary language dismisses the inherent chaos central to the deadliest of human endeavors. Easy explanations for victory and defeat make it hard to understand what happened and make us less ready to understand the next conflict.

And in the end, simplifying war allows us to turn to it far more readily than we probably should.

WESTMORELAND - THE GENERAL WHO LOST VIETNAM

A BOOK WRITTEN BY LEWIS SORLEY

STARTLING STATEMENTS ABOUT AN AMERICAN 4 STAR GENERAL WITH AN INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR



INTRODUCTION

"Westmoreland is a great book, a classic by an author who knows his subject well and tells the story without hesitation." — General Donn A. Starry, U.S. Army (ret.), Commander, Army Training and Doctrine Command (1977–1981).

Is it possible that the riddle of America's military failure in Vietnam has a one-word, one-man answer?

Unless and until we understand General William Westmoreland, we will never understand what went wrong in Vietnam. An Eagle Scout at fifteen, First Captain of his West Point class, Westmoreland fought in two wars and became Superintendent at West Point. Then he was chosen to lead the war effort in Vietnam for four crucial years.

He proved a disaster. **He could not think creatively about unconventional warfare, chose an unavailing strategy, stuck to it in the face of all opposition, and stood accused of fudging the results when it mattered most. In this definitive portrait, Lewis Sorley makes a plausible case that the *war could have been won were it not for Westmoreland*. *The tragedy of William Westmoreland carries lessons not just for Vietnam, but for the future of American leadership.***

Westmoreland is essential reading from a masterly historian.

THE AUTHOR

Lewis Sorley III is an American intelligence analyst and military historian. His books about the U.S. war in Vietnam, in which he served as an officer, have been highly influential in government circles.

THE "CHAT"

QUESTION: ***What's the most important thing you learned from writing Westmoreland: The General Who Lost Vietnam?***

The most important, *and also the saddest,* is that in Vietnam and thereafter Westmoreland was willing to shade or misremember or deny or invent the record when his perceived interests were at stake. This was true in matters both great and small.

A very significant instance was his determination to arbitrarily hold down the estimate of enemy strength during a 1967 order of battle controversy. Although Westmoreland denied it, he imposed a ceiling on the reported number of enemies by instructing his intelligence officers to adhere to a "command position" of not more than 300,000, even though newly acquired and more accurate data developed in his headquarters then indicated a much higher figure. And, to further demonstrate "progress" in reducing enemy strength, Westmoreland arbitrarily and entirely on his own removed from the order of battle several categories of enemy forces that had long been carried there, including during the three years Westmoreland had already been in command of U.S. forces in Vietnam.

A more minor case, but one revealing of Westmoreland's character, stemmed from his unwillingness to level with his senior Marine subordinate at the time of the 1968 Tet Offensive. Westmoreland established a headquarters known as MACV Forward in the northern provinces of South Vietnam and put his deputy, General Creighton Abrams, in charge, placing him over the Marines and also the Army forces in that region.

This infuriated the Marines, who viewed it as evidence that Westmoreland lacked confidence in them. Westmoreland held a press conference in which he categorically denied any such loss of confidence. But in a contemporaneous cable to General Earle Wheeler, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Westmoreland *complained that "the military professionalism of the Marines falls far short of the standards that should be demanded by our armed forces*. Indeed they are brave and proud, but their standards, tactics, and lack of command supervision throughout their ranks require improvement in the national interest." And, he added, "I would be less than frank if I did not say that I feel somewhat insecure with the situation in Quang Tri province, because of my knowledge of their shortcomings. Without question, many lives would be saved if their tactical professionalism were enhanced."

Years later, when Marine Corps historians were at work on their history of the war, Westmoreland met with them. Of course, they raised this issue, leading Westmoreland to declare vehemently that establishing MACV Forward "had not a damned thing to do with my confidence in General Cushman or the Marines, not a damned thing." That again was not only false but, given the existing paper trail, reckless as well.

These two instances are illustrative of many, many more, ranging from his actions or lack of action in combat situations to his determination to take over the war and win it with U.S. forces to his resultant failure to build up South Vietnamese forces to the validity of body count to the decision to close Khe Sanh to his actions when Lang Vei was overrun to denying predictions he had made of an early end to the war to claims of not being surprised at Tet 1968 to denying a post-Tet request for many additional U.S. forces.

QUESTION*: Is your subtitle –"The General Who Lost Vietnam" – fair?*

Yes, eminently. General Westmoreland had complete freedom of action in deciding how to prosecute the war within South Vietnam. He decided to conduct a war of attrition, using search-and-destroy tactics, in which the measure of merit was body count.

The premise was that, if he could kill enough of the enemy, they would lose heart and cease their aggression against the South Vietnamese. In his single-minded pursuit of that objective, Westmoreland (despite his repeated claims to the contrary) essentially ignored two other crucial aspects of the war, improvement of South Vietnam's armed forces and pacification.

Implementing the attrition strategy, Westmoreland typically employed a series of large unit sweeps conducted in the deep jungle regions along South Vietnam's western borders. These operations were designed to seek out enemy forces and engage them in decisive battle. This proved possible only with enemy cooperation since they could break contact and limit casualties as they wished by withdrawing into sanctuaries across the border.

Over time Westmoreland asked for and received large numbers of U.S. troops, eventually totaling well over half a million. And he was able to inflict massive casualties on the enemy. This did not, however, achieve the postulated outcome. The enemy did not lose heart and did not cease aggression. Instead, he simply sent more and more replacements to make up for his losses. Westmoreland's first resort in claiming progress in the war was always body count, but this was meaningless. All the enemy's losses were quickly made up. Westmoreland was on a treadmill.

There were available better concepts of how to prosecute the war.

Army Chief of Staff General Harold K. Johnson put one forth in the PROVN Study, a "Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam."

That document held that Westmoreland's approach was not working and could not work because it ignored the real war in South Vietnam's hamlets and villages, where the covert enemy infrastructure was through coercion and terror dominating the rural populace.

Publication of the PROVN Study, whose precepts were later implemented with great success by Westmoreland's successor, illustrated a matter of fundamental importance. Not later than the autumn of 1966 the leaders of both services involved in fighting the ground war in Vietnam—Army Chief of Staff General Harold K. Johnson and Marine Commandant General Wallace Greene—both saw Westmoreland's approach as fatally flawed and agreed on a viable alternative.

General Westmoreland's close associate, General William DePuy, later admitted the futility of the Westmoreland way of war. "We ended up," he said, "with no operational plan that had the slightest chance of ending the war favorably." Westmoreland could not or would not ever bring himself to acknowledge that reality.

The result of his manic commitment to the war of attrition was that Westmoreland squandered four years of his troops' bravery and support by the public, Congress, and even much of the news media for American involvement in the war*. Yes, Westmoreland was the general who lost Vietnam.*

QUESTION*: Assuming you believe the subtitle to be accurate, who were GEN Westmoreland's biggest accomplices in the loss? In order, from most culpable down.*

There are several contenders for the top places on such a roster. Among them are, of course, Lyndon Johnson himself, Robert McNamara, and General Earle Wheeler.

The problem begins with the fact that nobody in the chain of command was competent to critique Westmoreland's performance. Lyndon Johnson had no understanding of military affairs whatsoever, nor did Robert McNamara. General Earle Wheeler was essentially a staff officer with virtually no troop-leading experience, much less combat acumen.

General Harold K. Johnson was an authentic battlefield hero, and as noted above was fundamentally at odds with Westmoreland's approach, but he was not in the chain of command.

As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he theoretically had some influence there, at least to the extent he could shape the collective viewpoint, but even then LBJ and McNamara were famously impervious to advice from the Joint Chiefs.

As previously explained it was to be a war of attrition and statistics, a policy that suited Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who distrusted the military and often bypassed the Joint Chiefs of Staff in issuing directives

Thus, almost by default, Westmoreland was left to go his own way, year after bloody year.

Military historian Russell Weigley rendered a succinct judgment on LBJ: "*No capable war President would have allowed an officer of such limited capacities as General William C. Westmoreland to head Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, for so long."*

While there is much to criticize LBJ for in his conduct of the war, one cannot help having some sympathy for the dilemma posed by the often wildly conflicting advice he was getting from his senior aides and advisors, including those in uniform. General Wheeler was often just flat wrong in what he told the President. When major U.S. ground force deployments were under consideration in July 1965, for example, LBJ worried that North Vietnam would respond by pouring in more men of its own. He need not be concerned, soothed Wheeler, because the "weight of judgment" was that the enemy "can't match us on a buildup." *That turned out to be one of the classic misjudgments of the war, comparable in magnitude and consequence to General MacArthur's assurances to President Truman that Chinese forces would not enter the Korean War.*

If pressed to rank the miscreants, I would place Wheeler first, then LBJ, and then McNamara, with all entitled to recognition as important accomplices in dooming the endeavor.

Contrarily, I would not so stigmatize another important player often criticized by others, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge. He spoke up in Honolulu, during an important U.S. planning conference in February 1966, observing that "we can beat up North Vietnamese regiments in the high plateau for the next twenty years and it will not end the war." Westmoreland's later dismissive comment was that "Ambassador Lodge does not have a deep feel of military tactics and strategy."

QUESTION*: What myths or misperceptions surround Westmoreland that you would like to clear up, if any?*

Westmoreland is often described as a "Boy Scout," usually implying, it appears, that he was well-intentioned but naïve. He was certainly naïve, but the Boy Scouts need to be defended here. Their orientation, indeed the core of Scouting's values, is selflessness and service to others. Westmoreland's devotion to advancing his interests, even when necessary by misrepresentation was fundamentally at odds with what Scouting is all about.

QUESTION*: You worked for GEN Westmoreland when he was Army Chief of Staff. What was your impression of the man when you were working for him? Would he be upset if he were alive to read this book today?*

Most younger officers who worked around General Westmoreland, excepting only a very few among his many aides-de-camp or executive officers and the like, had no personal relationship with this difficult and distant man. There was no warmth, no apparent interest in his associates as people. Some staff officers who briefed him one-on-one at deskside were dismayed when Westmoreland occupied himself by signing photographs of himself, one after another, during their presentations.

Westmoreland's book about himself gives some indication of how he would react to this more recent one. Wrote Kevin Buckley in a scathing review, "From the beginning, Westmoreland probably expected to write a memoir of victory similar to Crusade in Europe…and the defeat in Vietnam has not deterred him from this."

WAIT A MINUTE

Did the United States win or lose the Vietnam War? We are taught that it was a resounding loss for America, one that proves that intervening in the affairs of other nations is usually misguided. *The truth is that our military won the war, but our politicians lost it.* The Communists in North Vietnam signed a peace treaty, effectively surrendering. But the U.S. Congress didn't hold up its end of the bargain. In just five minutes, learn the truth about who lost the Vietnam War.

Was this well-known by all Americans? I must have missed something here. Oh Yea!

THE TRUTH ABOUT VIETNAM

WATCH THIS VIDEO!!!!!!!

Copy the below link and paste it into your browser.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hqYGHZCJwk

THE COSTS OF A BIG FAT LIE

There are a lot of ifs, buts, maybes, hopes, what ifs, why not when, and perhaps in this information below collected from the internet about what might have come to be if the Vietnam War had never taken place. We know that it would have been spent in some areas other than those shown below but it puts the enormous cost in perspective.

1. The war cost 10 times more than support for all levels of education and 50 times more than was spent for housing and community development during that same period, Clayton said. *The United States spent more money on Vietnam in 10 years than it spent during the nation's entire history on public higher education or police protection*

2. Taking the highest estimates, it has been calculated that the United States could have paid off the mortgage on every home in the nation and had money left over had there been no Vietnam War. Surprisingly, Congress had not compiled figures on the *total cost of the war as of April 1975. The House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, for example, told a Boston Globe reporter that* the figure was "hard to get a handle on" because of "sloppy bookkeeping" at the outset of the nation's involvement in Vietnam.

3. The Pentagon, however, has kept accurate records on one cost of the war—the number of U.S. aircraft lost between 1961 and 1973. A total of 3,699 fixed-wing planes were lost in combat or accidents during the period, while 4,865 helicopters were written off. 31 of these losses were B-52s.

4. Secretary Of Defense James R. Schlesinger in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 15 estimated the cost of U.S. equipment in South Vietnam through mid-April as $ 3 billion to $ 4 billion based on original cost figures, although he said much of the equipment was damaged.

5. He also estimated that equipment left behind by South Vietnamese forces during their withdrawal from some southern provinces had cost more than $ 800 million. Final accounting he added probably would push that figure above $1-billion.

6. At least 1.5 million persons including civilians died in the Indochina conflict. U.S. combat losses totaled 46,463; another 10,355 died from non-hostile causes. A total of 303,704 were wounded. South Vietnam battle deaths totaled more than 196,000 and enemy deaths about a million.

7. The highest number of combat deaths in U.S. history was recorded in World War II when 291,557 were said to have lost their lives. In other modern conflicts, the death toll was recorded as 53,402 in World War I and 33,629 in the Korean conflict.

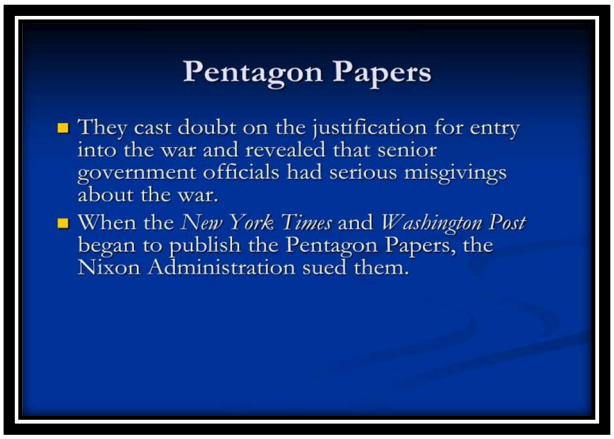
LYING ABOUT VIETNAM – THE PENTAGON PAPERS

BY DANIEL ELLSBERG
Article dated 2001

"While not all that is said is not true, not all that is truth is told."

***The Pentagon Papers published 30 years ago this month, proved that the government had long lied to the country*. Indeed, the papers revealed a policy of concealment and quite deliberate deception from the Truman administration onward.**

A generation of presidents, believing that the course they were following was in the best interests of the country, nevertheless chose to conceal from Congress and the public what the real policy was, what alternatives were being pressed on them from within the government, and the pessimistic predictions they were receiving about the prospects of their chosen course.



Why the lies and concealment? And why, starting in 1969, did I risk prison to reveal the documentary record? I can give a definite answer to the second question: I believed that the pattern of secret threats and escalation needed to be exposed because it was being repeated under a new president.

DANIEL ELLSBERG IN1971

About the first question, I can still only speculate. Let me speak to the Johnson administration, in which I was a minor participant. The familiar answer is that in 1965, Lyndon Johnson was protecting his Great Society programs by concealing the scale of the war he was launching.

But there is also a much less familiar reason that applies to 1968. Throughout the campaign of 1964, President Johnson indicated to the voters -- contrary to his opponent Barry Goldwater -- that no escalation was needed in South Vietnam. He sometimes added, almost inaudibly, "at this time."

As the Pentagon Papers later showed, that was contradicted as early as May 1964 by the estimates and recommendations of virtually all of Johnson's own civilian and military advisers.
I believe he worried, not only in 1964 but over the next four years, that if he laid out candidly just how difficult, costly, and unpromising the conflict was expected to be, the public would overwhelmingly want escalation on a scale that promised to win the war.

To this end, Congress and the voters might compel him to adopt the course secretly being pressed on him by his own Joint Chiefs of Staff. From 1964 through 1968, the Joint Chiefs continuously urged a litany of secret recommendations, including mining Haiphong; hitting the dikes; bombing near the Chinese border; closing all transportation routes from China; sending ground troops to Laos, Cambodia, and the southern part of North Vietnam; possibly full-scale invasion of North Vietnam.

I think that this escalation would not have won the war. I suspect that Johnson thought this as well. But beyond that -- as Johnson brought up repeatedly -- the Joint Chiefs' course would have greatly risked war with China. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were ready to accept that risk. President Johnson was not.

But Johnson didn't want to get out either. We now know from memoirs and documents declassified after the Pentagon Papers that a number of his people, not only George Ball, were urging him to do just that, to extricate us by a disguised withdrawal. But Johnson couldn't face being accused of losing a war*. Instead, he stayed in and lied about the prospects*. And that made for a prolonged war, an escalating war, and essentially a hopeless war.

I do not believe that the war would have been less hopeless if the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs had been followed. It would have been much bloodier. It might well have involved a nuclear war or a major conventional war with China. That would have been even more catastrophic than what happened. So the worst was avoided. But at the cost of 58,000 American *and several million Vietnamese lives*.

I first learned of these debates in 1964 and 1965, when I was special assistant to John McNaughton, the assistant defense secretary. I read all the documents of that period that were later included in the Pentagon Papers, and I heard from McNaughton of his discussions with Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and President Johnson*. I strongly regret that at that time, I did not see it as my duty to disclose that information to the Senate*.

But then I was in Vietnam for two years from 1965 to 1967. I saw that our ground effort in South Vietnam was hopelessly stalemated, and I did not believe that increased bombing of the north would ever cause our adversaries to give up. Therefore I came to the belief in 1967 that we should negotiate our way out.

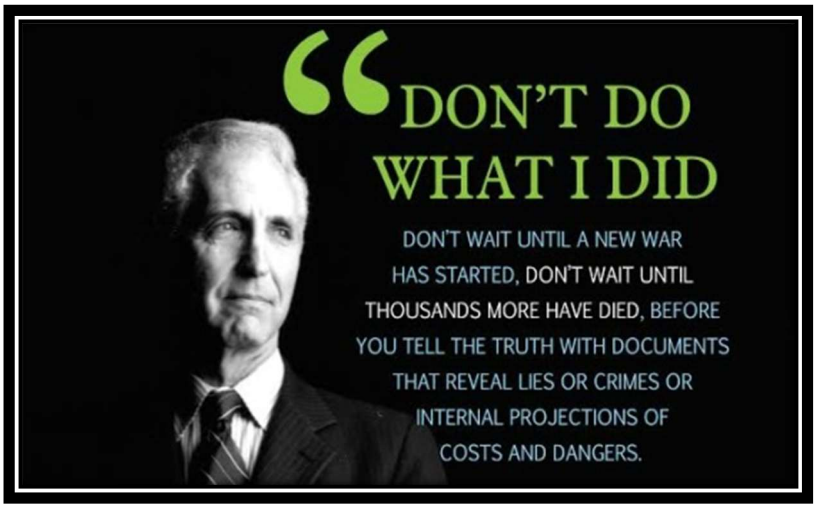
But in 1969, when I read the entire Pentagon Papers, covering 1945 to 1968, I became aware that every president from Harry Truman on had heard this advice from people more authoritative than me. And for some reason, the presidents had always chosen to stay in. *Their determination not to suffer the political consequences of losing a war outweighed, for them, the human costs of continuing.*

Finally, I learned that Richard Nixon also refused to lose. In the fall of 1969, Morton Halperin, who had just given up his job as deputy to Henry Kissinger, informed me that Nixon had a secret plan. It was widely thought he had no plan, that his campaign claim was just a bluff. Not true. His plan included secret threats of escalation unless there was a mutual withdrawal of North Vietnamese as well as United States forces.

A LITTLE ABOUT DANIEL ELLSBERG

Daniel Ellsberg is a lecturer, writer, and activist on the dangers of the nuclear era, wrongful U.S. interventions, and the urgent need for patriotic whistleblowing.

Ellsberg began his career as a strategic analyst at the RAND Corporation and consultant to the Department of Defense and the White House, specializing in problems of the command and control of nuclear weapons, nuclear war plans, and crisis decision-making. He joined the Defense Department in 1964 as Special Assistant to Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton, *working on the escalation of the war in Vietnam*. He transferred to the State Department in 1965 to serve two years at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, evaluating pacification in the field.



On return to the RAND Corporation in 1967, Ellsberg worked on the top-secret McNamara study of U.S. decision-making in Vietnam, 1945-68, which later came to be known as the Pentagon Papers. In 1969, he photocopied the 7,000-page study and gave it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; in 1971 he gave it to The New York Times, The Washington Post, and 17 other newspapers. His trial, on 12 felony counts posing a possible sentence of 115 years, was dismissed in 1973 on grounds of governmental misconduct against him, which led to the convictions of several White House aides and figured in the impeachment proceedings against President Nixon.

Ellsberg's 1961 article, "Risk, Ambiguity and the Savage Axioms," is widely considered a landmark in decision theory and behavioral economics. He has authored Papers on the War (1971), Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers (2002), and Risk, Ambiguity and Decision (2001).

Ellsberg holds a B.A. and Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University. He studied for a year at King's College, University of Cambridge, on a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, and spent three years in the U.S. Marine Corps.

The Day It All Ended – For the Americans 58,000 American lives were lost with many other innocent civilians of other countries and millions of US dollars spent for WHAT?

THE SCARS OF THE VIETNAM WAR SPAN TWO CONTINENTS AND THREE GENERATIONS

REMEMBERING THOSE WHO FELL IN VIETNAM

VIETNAM: RESISTANCE, REGRET AND REDEMPTION

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THE WALL OF REGRETS

The Wall stands in silence, glistening against the sun,
Upon the panels names are written, the best of America's Son..s

The black granite seems transparent as we stare into its' depth,
The dreams of young warriors past have faded into death.

The war was one of controversy, yet we fought with all our hearts,
Our duty was to defend freedom, though defeated at the start,

Gallant men trod the muddy soil in a land far away from home,
Blood ran red in a foreign land, now their names are etched in stone.

How many generations lost? How many paid the price,
Thousands fought in Vietnam and made the ultimate sacrifice,

Friends reach from within the wall as we stare with tear-filled eyes,
We long to touch our comrades but only memories survive.

Never forget the ones we lost! Never forget the battle cry!
Never forget what freedom costs to those who can't question WHY.

As you stare into the wall your life will in some change
Search the wall and you will see, much more than just A NAME!

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