

EIGHT NAMES ON A WALL:
WINTHROP'S VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

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A Thesis Presented

By

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ABSTRACT

In early 1988 the Winthrop School Committee authorized the creation of a Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedicated to the memory of local residents who had died during the Vietnam War. This memorial was dedicated and installed in the lobby of Winthrop High School on Sunday, May 22, 1988.

This study examines two groups of people connected to the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The first group consists of those people in the community who helped create the monument; the second group consists of members of the families whose sons' and brothers' names comprise the memorial itself.

I conducted oral-history interviews with fourteen people; I spoke on the telephone with five others; and I had in-person conversations with two additional people. I wrote to and received information from four military archives, two bureaucracies, two state bureaus of vital statistics, two public high schools, one parochial elementary school and one university; I also received a letter from an uncle of one of the young men whose name is on the memorial.

The "Background Interviews" focus on the issue of creating a Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial and placing it in the high school as well as on how it will be used by the community. The "Names on the Wall" section reveals an untold story of the Vietnam War - that of the families of the deceased. These stories include descriptions of family life, how these young men grew and developed, and how these families have coped with the ultimate tragedy that Herodotus wrote about in the 5th Century B.C.E.: "In peace, children inter their parents; war violates the order of nature and causes parents to inter their children."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
CHAPTER	v
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. BACKGROUND INTERVIEWS	2
Why Another Vietnam Veterans Memorial?	.2
Donna Segretti Reilly	.4
Lawrence Larsen	.17
Arthur Cummings	.22
Matt Boyle.	.31
Bruce Ross.	.41
III. NAMES ON THE WALL	48
Cherished Memories.	.48
Paul Frank Brugman.	• 50
John Cullin White	.57
Robert Winslow Belcher.	.60
John Alden Countaway, Jr.	.85
Joseph Patrick Logan, Jr.	.100
Joseph Michael Pignato ..	.117
Edmund Lambert MacNeil III.	.157
George W. McRae	.203
IV. COMMENTARY	213
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	265
APPENDIX. . .	276
A. Ellen Pinzur's Speech.	276
B. Interview with Richard Kennedy	280
C. Richard Alan Yates ..	290
D. Dennis Guy Case	293
E. Conversation with Norman Gill.	296
F. Conversation with Warren Pepper.	297
G. Dates of Interviews and Conversations.	299

Dedicated to:

Michael Gaynor Brogan,
Gary Douglas Marshall,
Duncan Balfour Sleigh and
all people whose lives have been affected by the Vietnam War

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, was dedicated on November 11, 1982, to honor and recognize all Americans who served in the Vietnam War. As a special tribute to those who did not return, the names of 58,132 who died or who remain missing are inscribed on the Memorial's reflective black granite panels.

During one 366-day period - from November 6, 1967 to November 6, 1968 - six young men from Winthrop (MA) died in Vietnam; the last man from Winthrop who died in Vietnam was killed in 1971. These seven names are engraved among the 58,132 on "The Wall" in Washington.

In July 1971, another young man from Winthrop who had completed his tour in Vietnam and was being reassigned by the Marine Corps was killed in an automobile accident in California. His name does not appear on the monument in Washington.

These eight men have been memorialized in their home town in several ways. The words "Vietnam War" were added to the base of a non-representational sculpture which had been dedicated in 1965 "in memory of the men and women of Winthrop who served our country with courage and devotion"; this memorial stands in Town Hall Square. On Memorial Day 1984, a marker which lists the names of those men killed in the Korean War on one side and those killed in the Vietnam War on the other side was placed in Winthrop Cemetery. On that same day, the intersection of Pleasant and Ingleside Streets was named Robert Belcher Square.

In 1988 the Winthrop School Committee created a Vietnam Veterans Memorial and installed it in the lobby of Winthrop High School. This memorial comprises seven individually framed rubbings of names taken from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington; the eighth name was computer generated to resemble the rubbings from "The Wall." The eight plaques are arranged in chronological order by date of death in two vertical columns on both sides of a large photograph of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

This study, using the technique of oral history interviews, examines the creation of the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the use to which it will be put by the community through the school system, and the stories of six of the eight families of the men whose names appear on the monument.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND INTERVIEWS

Why Another Vietnam Memorial?

By 1988 there were approximately 450 Vietnam Veterans Memorials throughout the United States, as well as one each in Germany and the Philippines and five in Japan. Most of these memorials were created after Jan Scruggs' 1979 announcement that he and a group of Vietnam veterans would build a national Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. But, many of the monuments had been established while the Vietnam War raged. At least eight monuments were created before 1969; probably the first one was established in the summer of 1966 - a 10-1/2 acre park in Chicago on Lake Michigan, named after PFC Milton Lee Olive, who was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor¹.

Eleven of these 450 memorials are connected with high schools. Dunedin High School Memorial Stadium (Dunedin, FL) has marble plaques bearing the names of 13 area servicemen who died in Vietnam and nine Honor Roll plaques that list the names of men and women who served in the armed forces during the war². Five Orlando, Florida, high schools - Bishop Moore, Boone, Colonial, Edgewater and Maynard Evans - have memorials to former students who died in Vietnam³. Elberton, Georgia, has a memorial on the football field dedicated to two students killed in Vietnam⁴. Havelock, North Carolina, has a flagpole at a high schools. Oxford, North Carolina, has a memorial plaque in J.F. Webb High School in honor of graduates killed in action in Vietnam⁶, Sheffield, Pennsylvania, dedicated a new sports complex at the county high school in honor of Army Staff Sgt. John G. Gertsch,

¹Jerry L. Strait and Sandra S. Strait, VIETNAM WAR MEMORIALS: AN ILLUSTRATED REFERENCE TO VETERANS TRIBUTES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1988, P. 77.

²Strait, P. 51.

³Strait, P. 62.

⁴Strait, P. 70.

⁵Strait, P. 155.

⁶Strait, P. 155.

who was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor⁷. Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, has a monument located at a local high school⁸.

The town of Winthrop (MA) had the words "Vietnam War" added to a non-representational sculpture which also has "World War II" and "Korean War" chiseled into its base. A marker in the town cemetery lists the names of the men who died in the Korean War on one side and those who died in the Vietnam War on the opposite side. An intersection was named for one of the Vietnam War dead. These three are in addition to at least 31 other memorials, plaques, statues and squares honoring local citizens who served and/or died in every war fought by America since the Revolutionary War.

So, the very legitimate question arises: why another Vietnam Veterans memorial? The six interviews which comprise this chapter attempt to answer that question. Lawrence (Huck) Larsen proposed the idea for a monument to be located in Winthrop High School; Donna Segretti Reilly, a member of the Winthrop School Committee, put together a subcommittee and brought the idea to fruition. Arthur (Arky) Cummings and Matt Boyle taught and coached at Winthrop High School in the 1960's; they knew five of the eight men who lost their lives. Richard Kennedy is the Veterans Agent for Winthrop; he provided institutional information for the group which created the monument. Bruce Ross is the Chairman of the Social Studies Department at Winthrop High School; he talks about using the memorial when his staff teaches about the Vietnam War.

⁷Strait, Pp. 171-172.

⁸Strait, P. 211.

Donna Segretti Reilly

E: Donna, you are on the Winthrop School Committee and have been for a while. I know that last year you were approached by a teacher from the high school about establishing a memorial to the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans. Would you tell me what occurred; who approached you and why; and what happened after that?

D: I was elected to the Winthrop School Committee in April of 1987. One of our teachers, Larry Larsen - we call him Huck - who is our computer coordinator at the high school and throughout the system, approached me, I guess it was sometime in January of 1988, requesting that a Vietnam memorial plaque, whatever, be set up somewhere in the high school in memory of the eight young Winthrop men who had died during the Vietnam War.

E: You knew there were eight?

D: Yes, based on what Huck Larsen had said to me. The interesting thing is that he indicated at that time that he had approached members of the School Committee a year or two previously, but nobody had - everybody deemed it a nice idea - but it was just a matter of somebody getting the ball by the horns and grappling with this and organizing everything that needed to be organized in order to get a project of this nature off the ground.

I then shared the whole idea, Huck's dream as it were, with our Superintendent at the time, Joseph Laino, who thought it was a really good idea. It's funny how sometimes circumstances and events begin to coincide, sometimes even when you're not looking for them. Early in February of 1988, I had run ~nto you at a surprise 40th birthday party for one of my sisters-in-law. We got to talking and updating, after not having seen each other for twelve or thirteen years. You told me about things that you were doing, and you mentioned that you were very much interested in the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, and in particular, the memorabilia that was left at the Wall. I told you about the wonderful coincidence that we in Winthrop were interested in dedicating some plaque, some monument, not sure of what form it would take, but some kind of memorial to the Vietnam Vets from Winthrop. We became very excited about possibly working together on this project, since you had been raised in Winthrop, graduated from high school here, and still maintained ties with various people in the community.

You had the tremendous brainstorm of using - no, wait, you told me about securing the rubbing from the Vietnam Memorial in Washington for Bobby Belcher.

E: I told you about my recent trip to Washington, having the rubbing made, and then having a plaque made from it, which my high school class wanted to present to the high school as a gift.

D: I think that's when you took it another step and said it's a possibility that we make up a kind of plaque for all eight of the young men. That's when we set a date for you to come before the School Committee so you could show the sample of Bob Belcher's framed rubbing. That meeting, with all five members of the School Committee and the Superintendent, took place on February 17, 1988. Al Saggese was in the audience; he was there as part of the Class of 1964, not as State Rep from Winthrop. And Gerry Coviello, another classmate of yours, was there, too.

E I had asked a few of my classmates to come, to give me some moral support. Gerry and Al were the only ones who could make it that night. The Class of '64 had a vested interest in this memorial's coming to fruition; they wanted to make sure the School Committee opted to sponsor such a memorial. And in fact, there was no opposition.

D: No, not at all. Everyone approved the project. That was the easy part.

E: Then what happened?

D: The difficult part came once I took the bull by the horns and acted as primary coordinator of the project. It's often been said that we never know our limitations until sometimes we've exceeded them. And this was one that became for me a full-time job. I was working part-time, but this project really became a full time job - eating, breathing, sleeping this memorial.

E: What did you do?

D: One of the things I would not have undertaken was the fund-raising effort. I never realized just the extent of this kind of operation. Specifically, what we did in the area of fund-raising was I drafted and had typed - we have a tremendous secretarial staff that took care of that through the school - but I drafted every letter that explained the project to various organizations, particularly the Elks, the AMVETS, the American Legion, the VFW post, the Jewish War Veterans. These people I wrote to, telling them about the dream we had, and Huck's dream particularly, to build a more visible monument to our eight Vietnam vets.

I want to explain a little bit more - and Huck can explain this to you a little better - about why he felt it had to be in the high school. Huck felt he wanted some visible, viable connection between our present students who, some of whom weren't even born at the time of the inception of the Vietnam War and who were probably toddlers at the time when it ended, so that they would be able to ask questions and it could become a topic for their social studies and history classes, and recognize the connection between the past and the present and the whole historic significance of this.

Some of the aspects of the operation that I was in charge of, or that I took charge of, were the fund-raising; all the public relations; all the letters of invitations to speakers, such as Judge Ferrino, our State Senator Michael LoPresti, our State Representative Al Saggese, our Chairman of the Board of Selectmen John Lyon; all the letters of invitation, all the newspaper articles explaining what we were trying to do, when we were trying to do it, what form it would take, and why - I wrote. I also, with Huck's help, got in touch with the Executive Director of WCAT, our cable channel here in Winthrop, Channel 3. They were most happy to oblige, with free advertisement of the up-coming event, which took place eventually on Sunday, May 22, 1988, outside the Winthrop High School, right on the steps entering the high school. All of the publicity - I took care of - all the invitations. That's pretty much what I did.

E: Didn't you also write to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to get the rubbings?

D: Oh, yes, I did. I forgot about that! Oh, my, I forgot about all that I did do. Yes, we were able to secure the rubbings, and the association was just marvelous. They did them and sent them to us, with no donation required. What we wanted to do - and maybe this is an aspect that is still pending - if we had any monies left over, I think Matt Boyle, who was Acting Principal at the time and who knew many of these young men personally as their teacher years back, was going to send a donation to the association, to the Memorial Fund. So they were just tremendous to us.

As far as motivation, of why I got involved with this and maybe why I picked up where some school committee members failed to recognize the importance of such a memorial, I'd like to talk about that for a minute. The motivation was personal in nature on two counts.

I can look at my life over the past 43 years and look at influences, and what influenced me to become who I am today - a member of the Winthrop School Committee, a social worker of some 13 years, a mother, a parent, a wife - what made me ME. And of course we can think of our parents, we can think of our friends and our teachers and our neighborhood and community that we grew up in. But these are all rather personal and kind of really home-type influences, community influences. As far as any large, outside, national, international event or circumstance that affected my life personally - I can always say it was the Vietnam War. Specifically, every generation can say it had its defining moment, and for many of us who were the youth of the '60's, I feel very strongly that that moment was the Vietnam War.

There's a second and personal reason that drew me so avidly into this project; like I said, there were moments when Huck would call me at dinner time or I'd be calling him, and both of our spouses were saying, "Can't that wait? When is this project going to be over?" So we were really fervently involved in this project.

As I said, the other motive, again, was a very personal one. That was having known a young man who never came back from the war. His name was James Francis Polusney. Jim was a year older than I was; we had worked in Sears Roebuck in Mt. Oliver, PA, which is this little borough inside the city of Pittsburgh. We worked in Sears Roebuck, as did a whole lot of other young people who were working their way through Duquesne University. Somehow Sears attracted Duquesne undergrads and vice versa; I don't know, if you hired one good one, maybe you looked for some other ones. At the time, I was manning the cashier's cage, and Jim was working at customer service. And our booths were just kind of around the corner from each other; we could see each other's sections from where we worked. There were nights, every other week the mills got paid; this is when Pittsburgh was a thriving steel city, which it isn't today, but that's a whole other issue. Every other week when the mills got paid, the line would be tremendous - they'd go from my cashier's cage all the way around to Jim's customer service cage. I was cashing checks and paying bills, dealing with quite a bit of money.

I worked for Sears from 1963 to 1966, from the time I was 17 until I was 20, working with all this money!

So, we'd had a long line of customers. Then I'd hear a voice shouting, "This is a stick-up; give me all your money!" And I'd look up, and it was Polusney. And I'd say something to the effect, "It's you! Jim, don't do this to me!" He'd have a good chuckle over it, and I'd nervously laugh back. But this was the kind of guy he was. He was always a guy that always put a sparkle in your day, always was able to make you laugh. It was very tragic news when I heard that he had been shot down in Vietnam. I'm not sure what his position was, I had heard that perhaps he was a Corpsman, and those guys don't carry more than a .45 revolver, I understand. He was shot down, and I was very distressed to hear of his death. And that stayed with me.

There was one aspect of my motivation that I wanted to make note of: particularly when I talked about the influence of an outside force or circumstance, in this case the Vietnam War affecting my life personally. I just remember, it was only when, frankly, it was when the war ended, officially in 1975, in the disco, which was very popular at that time. I said, "My, the young people are dancing again. Isn't this great." I remember looking back and saying, "I don't remember that we danced all that much, but there was this whole craze of dancing coming back; and I'm glad to see the young people are having a good time." And I look back on my dating years, and I said, "It was just a crazy time to be young." I didn't realize, I think, until that point, how much the Vietnam War affected me personally.

I had a friend who said, "What do you mean? I never was affected by it." I said, "Think about it. Guys you were dating at the time, after a 3-month period, you'd have a conversation that went something like: 'Oh, I have something to tell you.' And you could finish the sentence for them and say 'I know, you're going to Vietnam.'" Well, this happened at least three times to

me during the late '60's. Sixty-seven, sixty-eight in particular, sixty-nine - that was when everybody went over - deferments were like nonexistent at that time. I can remember in college, too, people getting deferments because they were married, then that was eliminated; and then you'd have a deferment because you were married with one child, and that was eliminated; and then it was up to two children. And then pretty soon - nothing mattered, everybody went over. So, then you'd have this feeling of who was left? All the good guys had gone over, and were they going to get engaged and marry Vietnamese girls? It was just a very, when I look back on it, a very personal and selfish kind of perspective.

I think by 1970, however, when our troops entered Cambodia, I became very, very politically aware at that time and began to say, "Enough is enough! This war never should have happened. It was a religious, cultural, economically-based war, and we never should have gotten into it in hindsight." But, at the time, that's when I began writing my Senators and my Congressmen, to ask that we just end this thing.

But that was the other aspect of the personal motivation that led me to reconstruct a memory of my involvement and my personal friends' involvement in this war that affected the youth of the '60's, many of whom are now in their 40's today; that's how we want to be able to remember. I think it's very important to be able to re-member what we lived through.

E: It is poignant that you talk about your friend Polusney as part of your motivation. You aren't from Winthrop; you didn't know any of these particular boys. Whereas, Huck's, Matt's, many of the others, my own involvement is contingent on who they knew. I went to high school with several of them. You didn't. Yet, you - the outsider - accomplished something that other people weren't able to do; and that is important, too.

When the project was taking shape - and I mean physical shape, the rubbings were here, they were made into individual plaques, the poster got blown up, Rich Honan volunteered to assist with the fine detail work - how did the program get put together; who decided who was going to speak?

D: That's interesting. You talked about how any outsider; that's a real interesting point. For 23 years I lived in Pittsburgh. For 20 years I've lived outside that city, here in the Boston area. You know how some people have an apartment in New York City but they live in L.A.? Well, I've always sympathized with the bi-coastal people, bi-polar existence that we all experience. If somebody says to me real quick - home - I think Pittsburgh, although a husband, two children and a mortgage later, I would say I have my roots in this community. You no longer live in this town; does that make you an outsider now?

E: Oh, yes; my roots are here, but I am an outsider to the community-at-large.

D: Reality sets me straight to know, and to know well, that this is my community, this is my community. I have children here, that's why I'm active in the School Committee. I'm elected by the populace here in the community, so this really is my home. But, the Vietnam War affected each and every person in every community throughout this nation. So, state borders really can't confine our feelings about a global issue of this nature. I just want to be keen to address that.

E: Yes, I understand that attitude. But while I now live in Cambridge, if Cambridge were to create a Vietnam Veterans Memorial, I would support the effort, but I would never propose it or push for it. My emotional stake in creating a memorial is very definitely tied to specific people, who are tied to a specific location - as much as I wanted out of Winthrop from the time I can remember!

D: Let me add to that. Sometimes I'll go down to the cemetery, to visit my father-in-law's grave. Now, I had the pleasure of knowing him for five short years; he was a beloved person in this community, he owned Reilly's Pharmacy for 30 some years, whatever it was. I will go to visit his grave, and I will say something to the effect, "OK, Dad, you bring a message to my Dad," who is buried in Calvary Cemetery in Pittsburgh. Now, I'm not quite able to go to Calvary Cemetery, and usually when I go to Pittsburgh with the kids and all the activities and friends and relatives that I want to see - well, on not too many occasions will I be able to visit his grave. So, it's a strange kind of situation. But I will kind of commune with my deceased father through my deceased father-in-law at the gravesite here in Winthrop. So, I don't think we can put boundaries on these kinds of things. So, that's my home and this is my home.

But back to how the program was coordinated - well, that was rather interesting. Who to invite? There are people - well, there was political election going on at the time, and that really colored things quite interestingly. As I recall, it got kind of touchy sometimes. What we had to do was draw a line as far as who we were going to invite to speak. We felt, the members of the committee who were myself, you, Huck Larsen, Matt Boyle and Mary Ann Ulrich - we met, or by phone, we would call and get a majority opinion as far as who to invite. We all pretty much felt that Judge Ferrino, who is our Presiding Justice for East Boston District Court, be present; and we also felt that we were going to limit it to elected political officials. At the time, Senator Michael LoPresti and Representative Al Saggese, who coincidentally was also from the Class of '64, were in an on-going election at

the time for their seats. We'd say, "Well, if we invite the runners in the race, that is, Travigliani who was running against LoPresti, and Bobby DeLeo who was our former Selectman in town and did a tremendous job, well then we'd have to invite the other guy from Revere", whose name slips my mind right now, "because they were both running for the Rep's seat." What we wanted to do was avoid a political circus. And avoid this turning into a political arena for any one of the candidates, especially when you had in the front row the families of all these boys.

E: I know there are other memorials in town dedicated to the memory of the Vietnam Veterans. Could you tell me about those?

D: Yes, in fact, I felt a need to explain why we were conducting this effort to construct a memorial; I did that at the dedication ceremony. In fact, one of our contributors, from the Chamber of Commerce, asked - he was more than happy to donate but asked why, since we had already had some memorials dedicated to Vietnam Vets in town.

Specifically, the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans have been memorialized along with the Korean War veterans on a stone in Winthrop Cemetery; there's a second memorial up on the Town Hall green, which commemorates the Winthrop men who died in the Civil War, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. The third Vietnam memorial we have in town is Robert Belcher Square, at the corners of Lincoln and Ingleside; that, of course, is dedicated to your dear friend Bobby Belcher.

What I felt was, however, what I felt a need to explain to those people who did have a question about another memorial, why another Vietnam memorial - I have to say that in general, the nation as a whole was slow in honoring its Vietnam Veterans and the nation, at the time, was torn on whether or not we should be even involved in the Vietnam Conflict, as it was called legally. And Johnny - so to speak - when he came marching home from the Vietnam War was never really honored with parades. In fact, sometimes quite the opposite occurred. It was only on November 13, 1982 - seven years after the Vietnam War had officially ended in 1975 - that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington was dedicated. So, in essence, what we were trying to do as a committee was to do something special, perhaps a little late, but do something special for those eight young Winthrop men who died in Vietnam.

E: Now, you keep saying eight Winthrop men who died in Vietnam. Of the eight names on this memorial, one of them we know did not die in Vietnam; but his name was included - why?

D: Interesting that you should call this one up. George McRae - George W. McRae was his name. It was very interesting. I began

to feel like Nancy Drew on each and every one of these boys, almost beginning to know them, even though I never knew them. After talking with family members, I failed to mention that, of course, we invited the families to the dedication ceremony. In this instance - George McRae; we had seven names on the Vietnam Memorial that was set up in the Winthrop Cemetery, the one that is shared with the Korean War vets. And George's name is not on that memorial. And somebody, I think it was you or my husband Tom, said, "Wait, didn't George McRae die during that time?" Who was it, Ellen?

E: It wasn't me.

D: It wasn't you?

E: No.

D: Somebody knew about George McRae. Oh, wait, was he, then he wasn't

E: His name is not on the Wall in Washington.

D: He isn't? Did you know George?

E: No.

D: You didn't know him? I'm trying to think now; it's very hard to remember, but somebody knew that George McRae died during the Vietnam years.

E: I remember distinctly that you called me one evening to give me the list of names, which I then looked up in the VVM DIRECTORY OF NAMES. I found an Edward Cordeau, who was not on your list - you informed me that he was actually from Everett and is memorialized there - but there was no George McRae listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, although he is on the stone at the Winthrop Cemetery. I asked you about the discrepancy.

D: How many were on that list? It wasn't you who told me? OK, George McRae's name, I retract that former statement. I went up there, trying to rub, in the cold weather of March, trying to make a rubbing of the gravestone up there at the cemetery - the one they share with the Korean War vets. George McRae's name is up there. But, upon further investigation, particularly with his sister, Maureen Demers, we found that his name - and after consulting with you, too - does not appear on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. They had written to - was it the Department of the Interior?

E: I don't know to whom anyone wrote. Interior runs the National Park Service; they're responsible for the Memorial now; but they didn't determine whose name got put on it. That would probably come from the Department of Defense - the Pentagon; maybe the National Archives and Records Administration would have information.

D: I have the address - but they had written to the military unit or whomever about - it's the Department of the Navy I ended up writing to. But they had written, and the reason why George's name does not appear on the Washington memorial is that he suffered a non-combat-related death. What had happened was George had been released from the US Navy, and he and a friend had gone off to see a movie somewhere off the base of Ft. Pendleton, CA; and he was in a fatal auto accident. And that's how he died.

E: Donna, non-combat-related deaths is not the issue here. After all, three of the seven - or eight, counting McRae - were killed in combat; the rest were accidents of varying kinds. It's those killed in the War, in Vietnam; those whose names are on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. People killed in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia - the combat zone - were included on the Memorial. Some coastal area deaths were also listed, as well as Air Force personnel who had died during flight operations in Thailand. Three other groups of names have been added since the Memorial was dedicated: a group of Marines killed when their R&R flight crashed in Hong Kong; 125 whose names were added when the geographic criteria were enlarged - mostly those were killed outside the war zone while on or in support of direct combat missions; and a group of 15 who had died subsequently of wounds received in Vietnam. George McRae just didn't fit any of the criteria; that's why he was omitted.

D: Well, we wanted him memorialized as part of the eight young men who had died during the Vietnam Conflict. Because he hadn't been released from the services at that time; he was still a member of the service.

E: There are at least two others who served in Vietnam and who died after they returned to the States - one in '73 and one in '81 - one from social after-effects, that is drugs and alcohol, and one from cancer, or Agent Orange; both were in my class. They aren't included.

D: No, we just did the eight.

E: I had brought these other two up at the

D: time Gee, I don't remember.

E: Well, let's move on. The names Logan and White on this memorial at the high school don't mean anything to people who have strong memories of the town in those days. They don't seem to be able to identify them in any way; no one seems to have gone to high school with them, or played with them; they just aren't remembered. They are listed in the National Archives as having Winthrop as their "home of record" which does not necessarily refer to place of birth, residence of next of kin, place of longest residence or any other common use of "hometown." I'm wondering if we found out somewhere down the road that these two never lived here, what are we going to do?

D: Leave them up.

E: That does seem reasonable.

D: I want to say, too, that I wrote to the Department of the Navy on McRae, just to get a final answer for the family. OK? Now, as far as White goes - wait, who do we have?

E: White and Logan.

D: Logan. Someone remembered Logan, didn't they?

E: No. Not that I've found so far. And I really want to know, because I have no idea who these two are.

D: John Cullin White, unaccounted for; nobody has knowledge of this boy. It was quite interesting, as I said before, I began to feel like Nancy Drew, investigative person here. How did I originally - God, somebody told me to call Pat McGee. I'm trying to think. I knew, we thought the mother and father had died. What happened was Lou Rosetti, who owns Publix Shoes - wait, maybe it was Dick Kennedy who told me to talk to Lou.

John White's father had worked for Lou in the shoe store. Lou said that at the time he was having problems, particularly around the divorce of his wife. And then he moved on. But then Lou suggested I talk with Pat McGee, a local realtor in town and also a teacher at the high school in charge of girls' track - well, she works with the kids at the high school. And Pat said, "Oh, yes, I remember; the father and mother divorced." I then tried to look for the mother, but I couldn't - I also checked with O'Malley's Funeral Home, since somebody said the father had been laid out at O'Malley's. O'Malley couldn't give me - we never really touched base; he was busy, my line was busy when he tried to call me back - I finally did talk to him months after the dedication. He gave me the same information that the Town Clerk's Office gave me - that was on a death certificate; there was a brother, who is in the Army, and that's where I sent the letter. I got it from Marie Turner, the Town Clerk. The father died May 20, 1982; Edward Harrington White; he lived at 186 Winthrop Street; he was in the Army in World War II. Listed as the

informant on the death certificate was a son, Colonel Edward Harrington White, Jr. - that was John's brother. The address listed for him was in Denver (East 7th Avenue); but that was in 1982. Well, I wrote in an effort to try to contact him, but the letter came back; there was just no response. He must have moved on, being a Colonel in the Army himself.

E: But that doesn't really answer the question - who was John White in terms of Winthrop.

D: So he was like unaccounted for. And the mother, I'm not sure. I just don't know if she died or not. Something tells me she just - I heard she went off to live with another man and eventually they got married. So there was really little way of tracking that White family.

E: You see, no one of roughly the same age cohort remembers him.

D: No, they had bases, they were from, originally they were from down the Point, I think.

E: And Logan?

D: There's a Logan in town. It's Joseph P. Logan, Sr. and family, living on Washington Avenue. And we did extend them an invitation. I don't know, I can't recall if they came or not. A lot of people introduced themselves that day. Bay View Avenue rings a bell. Maybe the Whites lived on Bay View - or was that the McRaes?

E: Well, perhaps it's just my misperception. Do you know who put the monument in the cemetery, the one that lists George McRae?

D: That, yes, that was under the direction of the Winthrop Veterans Administration, which is now headed by Dick Kennedy. Dick was marvelous as far as helping me research a lot about these young men and their families, what had happened. But the date of that, I'm not quite really sure when that was erected. I think it was 1973 or 1975.

E: Oh, no, no, no, no!

D: Before that?

E: No! Long after. It was in 1984.

D: Really?

E: Yes.

D: Wow! I'm amazed at that. No, I thought by the end of the War, it was done. Dick Kennedy would know for sure.

E: Well, he's next on my list to call.

D: Gee, you still have me thinking about the White boy. Pat McGee, Pat McGee would be a good contact on that. We couldn't get any family on that. And that was the only one, really. We had family represented on everyone else.

E: And how did the families respond?

D: Oh, that perhaps, was the most touching aspect of my work on this memorial. Talking to the families. I had written them a formal invitation explaining what, why, when and where this memorial was to be dedicated. I got some response on it, particularly from Mrs. Stephanie MacNeil, the mother of Edmund Lambert MacNeil III. She said to me she thought it was just such a wonderful endeavor - what we were trying to do. She was just very touched and moved by it. The interesting part about Stephanie MacNeil, she said that she would be there but she couldn't guarantee that "The Duke" would be there. She and all of her friends, family, refer to her husband as The Duke. Ed MacNeil Senior, no Ed MacNeil II; he was the father; he had never really recovered from his son's death. He walked with an element of bitterness and deep sorrow, sorrow unexpressed. She couldn't guarantee that he would show up. They have real close friends who shared a business with them - Duke & Ray's Sports Shop. Ray was Ray Loomis - Carol and Ray Loomis. They approached The Duke and said, "You have to come to this." And it was through their intervention that they got him down there. Duke MacNeil is a man of few words; but I remember meeting him that day, and his eyes spoke for him. We just embraced and hugged, and he was just so grateful that this memorial was put in place - in a visible place.

So many parents who came up to me the day of the dedication said something to the effect: "We're so glad that it's in a place where people can see it." It seemed that many people did not know that there was a Vietnam Memorial in the upper section of the cemetery. This is a viable, visible monument. People could come, people could see.

Recently, in talking with Huck Larsen, I find that the response to this endeavor has snowballed - more than we imagined when we first had the germ of the idea to undertake this. What happened was on Memorial Day, just a week later, and on other days that we can't account for, flowers will appear at the high school. So that now, the high school staff just set a table in front of the memorial for people who bring flowers. We've had, according to Huck, recruiters who pass by and stop in awe of this memorial - I'm not sure of the dimensions, but it's huge; it's encased in glass. We have the individual's names from the rubbing at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, which are then mounted on a larger frame encased in glass.

E: The rubbings surround the photograph of the Wall.

D: Oh, the photo! The photo was whose idea?

E: That print is hanging in my apartment; Huck saw it and suggested we use it with the rubbings.

D: Well, the photo made it. The black and white photo made it. The starkness of the black and white; the picture really did - it spoke. It really would have been lost without the picture.

E: It's the anchor; it helps create the sensation of being at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, picking out individual names. The names are what's important.

D: We've seen the recruiters pass through the hall and stop in their tracks and look at it and say to the Principal, "That is the best memorial we have seen. Best Vietnam Memorial we have ever seen."

E: Vietnam Veterans Memorial - it's a memorial to the veterans, not to the war.

D: When you walk past that memorial, you have that sense of overwhelming pride of accomplishment. There's something physical, I can see and touch. You can say, "I did this. I and many other dedicated people" - like yourself and Matt Boyle and Huck Larsen.

E: And there's the feedback from it.

D: Oh, it lives on, more than we anticipated. In the form of the flowers being left. I guess Huck wants to be in touch, and this is something you'll want to pursue with him, with the History Coordinator at the high school to see what effect it's had on the young people in the school. In the beginning, after the monument went up, students went up to Huck and said, "Gee, Mr. Larsen, is this World War II?" They had no concept of which war, who was this particular guy? It did spur some interest at the time. But he wants to touch base with the History Coordinator just to see what effect it's had on the young people at the high school.

E: Good - that's what it was supposed to do, have an effect on the community!

Donna, thanks for your time today and for all the work you did on this memorial, as well.

Lawrence (Huck) Larsen

E: Tell me about your idea in the first place to have a memorial to the Vietnam Veterans of Winthrop.

L: Well, it starts out more - and I mentioned this in my speech on the day of the dedication - that there were two parts. The first part was education. I'll share some conversations that I've had with students, as far as just education and students having a feeling for what's going on. The first deals with baseball. I remember talking with some students about Ted Williams; and I saw this look on somebody's face, this is someone who is 13 years old, and he said, "Ted Williams, now let me see who Ted Williams is. Oh, I know, he works at Sears; he sells fishing equipment."

E: Oh, no!

L: Oh, yes. I said, "My God! This is unbelievable! Ted Williams - he did this, he did that." So, I thought these kids can't know anything about what's going on. That was the first clue that the youth don't really have a good understanding of the past.

The second one was we were looking for an exchange student to go to Africa. We had all these students who thought they might be interested; we had them gathered in the auditorium, and I was explaining to them how we were going to go through this process of selecting the student. This was probably the top third of the class that's interested in this exchange program. I was surprised at the questions they raised regarding the Constitution: "Well, when we go to whatever country, do these people understand my rights of freedom from search, or the Bill of Rights?" And I said, "No, you don't understand; the Constitution is for the United States; that doesn't mean it's the law of the entire world." And then another question was: "How about if I get stopped at a road block, do I have to say anything?" I said to them: "The Constitution is only in this country, it has nothing to do about protecting you in the rest of the world."

Then I realized that not only do they not know Ted Williams, but they didn't know the situation in the world! I'm sure they don't know Bobby Belcher, Paul Brugman, Jay Countaway, and so forth. They've got their own little community that suffered losses and so forth, and they don't understand that at all, if they don't understand the other two.

E: That's clear. And what did you do about it?

L: I think that what I did was I started through conversations, perhaps I mentioned it to John Domenico, who was then Principal of the High School.

E: And?

L: Well, most people's attitude was - yeah, you're right, that's a good idea.

E: And that's it?

L: I'd mention it to somebody else, and they'd say, "You're right; that's a good idea." End of it. And then I probably sat on it for a while, and then I finally started blaming myself, saying, "You're not being much better than anybody who's just pondering but not doing more; at what point do you have to take more initiative?" So, I wrote a letter to the School Committee.

At that point, I just mentioned that I thought our youth at the school, the youth of the town, should be more aware of their past, particularly Vietnam, particularly these boys - and there should be some type of plaque, any type of plaque, it doesn't matter what it is; but there should be some type of recognition of that fact and discussion of that fact. From that point, I give a lot of credit to Donna Reilly, because Donna took it from there and really put things - she tied what you were doing in with what was coming from the inside of the school; she really got things rolling.

E: It seems pretty clear that if Donna hadn't been where she was, this wouldn't have taken off. Yes, everyone said it's a really nice idea; but Donna actually did something.

L: That's right.

E: And even she admitted that if she had known how much work and how much personal little bits of her soul were going to be involved, she's not certain she would have done it either. But in the end, of course, it was well worth it. She simply had no idea!

Our little effort here in Winthrop is similar to the background of the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington - without the problem of the design! Jan Scruggs, who thought up that idea, is a friend of mine; and it's essentially the same story, except his was on a much larger scale - \$7 million rather than \$700.

L: It is very much the same in the sense that I think when we took that theme, that it served as a set of guidelines for how the committee should operate, how it should behave, how to present your speeches - it should be nonpolitical and paying tribute rather than making any type of political statement and so forth. So, I think that by following that theme, it made it easier for the Committee to say - wait a minute, now, we don't want this, because this is the wish of the veterans. That theme did make it easier for the committee to operate.

E: True. We don't need to go through the details of the story of who did what - it got put into place, everyone contributed, and we had a very moving dedication service. Now, it's been hanging

up in the lobby for about nine months. What has happened? Tell me about that - I'm interested in when the students came in the following Monday morning, and subsequently.

L: That was nice. I wish more people could have seen the next Monday, or the days that followed. It's right where people come into or leave school. Kids would be standing around, looking at it. Someone would say, "Who was Bobby Belcher? Who was John Countaway? Who was Joe Pignato?" And you'd have a teacher going by that might have known somebody, and they'd make a comment. "Joey Pignato was the first person knew who wore iridescent pants." Not necessarily saying that the person had served and died in Vietnam or whatnot and died for the country, but the fact that they have a personal bit about him.

E: It makes them real human beings.

L: "Joey - iridescent pants and pointed shoes. Oh, Eddie MacNeil - he was a good quarter miler, a good runner. And Bobby Belcher did this." And everybody had a little something to add about somebody. I think Matt knew them all from some perspective, either as a teacher, a coach, or somebody that had disciplined them. He probably had more insight.

E: Matt - discipline? This crowd? (Laughter)

L: Yes, I'm sure! (Laughter) It was good to see the kids pondering who they were. After that you'd see people occasionally walk by, and the kids would stop and look and then walk out. You'd see salespeople come in; they'd come in the front door and wander off to the memorial and take a look; you'd see them talking to one another, and occasionally you'd see a handkerchief come out and the person would walk away. I think the Memorial did what it was intended to do, and that was nice to see.

There are recruiters who come in, and reports that I've heard from the people down in the Guidance Office and so forth is that they felt that that's one of the nicest memorials that they've seen - and they're in high schools all the time and all over the place. They thought that this one is simple, powerful and unique; so they've complimented us on that.

E: Well, we had geniuses design it! I don't see why it shouldn't get compliments! (Laughter)

L: By accident! But, like most great things, that's how things happen.

E: What about a more institutional use of it? I know you don't teach social studies; I assume that it would be history and social studies where it would come up the most. Do they teach about the Vietnam War in high school? Do they get past World War II?

L: I think they do, I think so. You'd really have to talk with Bruce Ross to find out exactly where they get into it. But I think what might come to light - which goes back to some of my reasons - is that they think that the Constitution runs the entire world; and maybe that's how we ended up over there, with that feeling that our way of life is the way of life that everybody should be experiencing. So, I'm hoping that when they do discuss it, that they get into some of the other facts of different countries and different governments. I think they cover it - but to what detail, I'm not sure; and I'm hoping that this becomes part of their curriculum, that they spend a little time and personalize the curriculum. That there isn't a whole lot of difference between somebody now who's 18 years old and these kids now - the only difference is 20 years.

E: And these eight are dead, and have been for 20 years. Where did the eight names come from? Who provided them?

L: I met with Matt Boyle and Donna Reilly; she had given us this list of names - and those eight boys names appeared there. She did mention that these were the names that were at the cemetery, a marker at the cemetery. She did mention that there was some evidence that wasn't directly attributed to the conflict with George McRae. But she said that the Veterans Administration had OK'd his name to be at the cemetery. So rather than dig into the circumstances, I accepted the fact that if the Veterans Administration had said ok to that marker, then why go all the way back through the research; you know how short we were on time. So, I left it at that; that if it was ok with them at that point in time, it should be all right.

E: That's the Veterans Administration here in Winthrop?

L: Right. Dick Kennedy, although it might not have been him at the time of the cemetery dedication. But I think what we did, we chose to say that whatever research went into that marker at the cemetery, then that was fine for us - that we thought that would be accurate.

See, I'm not sure how much difference there is in our foreign policy also - the kids should realize that those names were kids just like themselves,

E: Quite true.

L: That's that. There were a lot of ideas that went into that Memorial, and the more people that were involved - they all chipped in a little bit. And I don't think that any one group or any one person was looking to say "I did that." My feeling was that I wanted to pay tribute to these eight people - and the more credit that other people tried to take, the less tribute was paid to the individuals. So it was important to me that no group, no

organization, tried to gain any type of credit, whether it be a political affiliation or anything else - it was to be nonpolitical, nonpraising to any individual.

E: There's no little marker that says, "Erected by such and such, with a list of names." :

L: Right.

E: I think I would have screamed bloody murder if that had happened.

L: Right. I think a reporter called me and asked me to comment after it, and I said, "I gave my comments at the dedication; to praise anybody out would be to take tribute away from these people. I think the tribute's been made. I think I'd just as soon have it rest at that." I think it's testament to the fact of the saying that when people don't care about who gets credit, that things turn out much nicer. And I think that's a pretty good example of people not really caring about who did what.

E: No, I don't think anyone's ego was involved.

L: Right.

E: In the best sense of the word community, people with an idea to do something all worked together - and the purpose was served.

L: That it was.

E: Thank you for your time today - and thank you for everything you did for this Memorial.

Arthur (Arky) Cummings

E: Arky, you are currently Principal of the Willis School, an elementary school. I want to go back to when you were a math teacher at the High School - to ask you what you can tell me about what you remember about the eight boys whose names appear on the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the High School. I say boys, because you knew them when they were boys.

A: (Laughter) Yeah. Some of them, before they were even in junior high school. I'm familiar with most of them. I became what I consider very close or friendly with a number of them, for various reasons.

The first one is BOBBY BELCHER. I was very close with Bobby and with his family for several reasons. One - he was the kind of young man you attach to as they go through school. Just his personal qualities - his attitude, his involvements, his character, the fact that he was athletic, he was warm, he was up-front, he had a leadership quality by example. It sort of ran through the family, too. I ended up at a point tutoring Bobby in math when he was young, before I even had him in school. We became very friendly with Lois and Harold Belcher, his parents. He had an adopted sister, Kathy, who was a hydrocephalic youngster; technically, she was the first child who was retarded that the state allowed to be legally adopted.

So, I got very close. He had that kind of situation, family situation, where they were empathetic, they were concerned, they were involved with people, they were involved in the community. And Bob brought those qualities with him. He would talk to me about going on to school, and being in school; he's the kind that would come back - you could count on seeing him if he had concerns or problems, what was your opinion? - he'd weigh it in before he made his decision. His sister - well, we got very involved with the family. In fact, all of our family got involved with his family because they developed a patterning program; Mrs. Belcher went down, Lois went to Philadelphia for the Doman Delacarto method of training - it's almost a physical therapy. It took five, a group of five people to do the patterning; one for each limb and one for the head. This isn't exactly Bobby, but

E: That's all right.

A: It slides into it. It points out that seven times a day that's 35 people a day, 7 days a week, for two years in their home. The house was built for it, and people came in; and we worked out a program with Ralph Duplin who was Principal of the High School to allow the kids, high school kids, on their breaks if they had study hall, to go up to the house and get involved in this patterning program; remember, the Belchers lived not far from the High School, where it was in those days. So, Bobby was a big part of that. Seeing that and in drawing other kids to get involved with their family and with him, actually. He was a fine

athlete - state caliber in track and football; he was almost a mirror image of Ed MacNeil, who was an only son. Both Robert and Edmund were only sons in their family.

ED MAC NEIL was an outstanding quarter miler, as ~obby was. Seeing the type of character - big, strong, handsome kids, personable. Just what you like to see in a boy.

E: Or for your daughter to marry?

A: Yeah (Laughter)! I have a couple now that are in that stage; I can appreciate that.

E: One of my classmates wrote me a letter last year in anticipation of our 25th Reunion

A: I remember!

E: Yes. She referred to Bobby as "the spirit of our class." And I think that's accurate.

A: That's appropriate, yes.

E: I could hear someone say that about Eddie MacNeil, too.

A: Yes, exactly. It's interesting. When they were in Vietnam, at that stage I was Principal of the E. B. Newton School, the grade school, and I have some letters - probably put away somewhere - from, we started a letter program at Christmas, Christmas cards to everyone in Vietnam that we had a list of - we got it from the town and through the schools for anyone who knew - and made out lists and wrote to them. Some letters came back from the youngsters - as to the message, only kids can write out in their innocence. They were really warm. I know two of them were from Bobby and from Ed.

The next name is PAUL BRUGMAN. Paul I had in school - an only child. I believe his father was deceased. School was a tough haul for Paul. I think the service gave him an opportunity to realign things in his life. I would hear of him, about him; I worked with him through school, as an administrator and as a teacher. It was difficult. His mother was older.

E: And alone.

A: And alone, yes. This affected Paul and his priorities in life. I've often thought back. I hoped that it brought some measure into him that would be helpful because he joined the Marines, I believe, based on that to give him the kind of stability that he hadn't had. I'm sure it was challenging for him.

JAY COUNTAWAY - it says here John; it's Jay, his father's John. In 1956, the year we came to Winthrop and I started teaching here in this building - it was the Junior High School

then. I was looking for an apartment. I had been familiar with Winthrop for a long time - since the early '30's, when I was a **kid**, and my folks would spend the summers here. So I had always up until that time been a summer resident at Point Shirley.

E: Really!

A: Yeah.

E: Where did you grow up?

A: In Belmont.

E: And you came to the waters for the summer?

A: Yes. We came down to the Point for the summers; so I'm an old Pointee from way back.

E: I see!

A: I got out of the service, the Korean War, and I ended up teaching. I ended up in Boston for a year, '55-'56. The head of the math department there was on the School Committee in Winthrop, Jim Holland. He told me there was a math position open at the Junior High; I wound up coming down - I had always worked at the fish pier, summers, getting through school, through college, and I ran into a friend from there, Alan Graham. Do you know Alan Graham?

E: Of course - another classmate!

A: He lived next door to the Countaways, on Seymour Street. His Dad and his uncle and I worked at the fish pier together for many years. So, he said there's an apartment on Seymour Street. I came down here, and we met the Countaways; Jay was 9 years old, his sister Karen was 6, and his sister Laura, 3. His grandparents lived on the first floor; they lived on the second; and my wife and I took the apartment on the third floor that they had been doing over. To this day, in fact, Jay's parents just moved to Maine this past summer; they retired and moved to Maine because Karen is up there, and Laura, too, in another section of Maine. We were just visiting with them; we talk to them regularly. Probably through them even more than the Belchers, I get a sense of the profound effect of losing a child. And just as with the Belchers and the MacNeils, Jay was an only son. He was the oldest; he had gone to Boston State for a while when he got out of school, out of high school, and he went into the Marines. He went in - and it surprised me, because I, he was a, a real neat kid but he was different in many ways from Bobby and Ed - there were two clones. Jay took his own interest; but inside there was that kind of quality that made him feel that this was the right thing to do for the time. He didn't do it in half measures; he went in the Marines.

So we kept very close to them. But the effect that it has on a family - it's never, ever the same. Especially in these circumstances, and in this war; and talking with John, his Dad, on a regular basis for years now - he will every once in a while share some of his feelings, and they still never cease to surprise me after all these years - it's been 18 years since Jay was killed. He had been wounded and he was slated to come back, and he went back for an extra patrol - and he got hit by a shell, killed instantly. But the effect that it has on the family - I guess it's another perspective on it, and this is a lot of years. But the disappointment, the caring, the wondering what if, what he would be - and the why of it all has not diminished; in fact, in many ways, it is stronger than I think 18 years ago.

E: Yes, I'm finding that. I haven't begun talking with the families yet, but just among people my own age - it has a greater impact on them now when they think about it. Some of them say it didn't affect them at the time - they claim the '60's happened without them!

A: But now they look at where their life took them, and they wonder where would they have been - and the ones who didn't come back.

E: Yes. Who would he have married, what would his kids be like - would they be playing with my kids? What careers would they have?

A: Yeah, whatever.

E: And, of course, children aren't supposed to die before their parents.

A: No.

E: It's not written that way.

A: No. I think that's the hardest thing, the point you made, Ellen. Your parents, when you lose them, that's one thing.

E: That's the nature of the world.

A: I look at it as a parent of five children, from 30 down to 19. If I lost one - it's as you say - it's just not supposed to happen that way. And especially under the kind of situation that we're discussing - a war, one that there are so many questions about - the legality, the moral issue, the whole thing - our country, right or wrong - there's just so many things that go around when you look back.

JOSEPH LOGAN. I didn't know him personally; I believe that he lived around Revere Street; no, they lived on Bartlett Road. I didn't know him, and it's probably because he didn't go the Winthrop schools because most everyone that came through at that time I had some association with, because we covered everyone.

E: It's entirely possible that he went to parochial school.

A: Sure, St. John's, and then went on; I think that may be the case.

JOSEPH PIGNATO I knew, but I did not know well. It's interesting, now, that I have one of his nieces here in this school, *Mia*. His sister comes in and I have a chance to talk to her; and I know his Dad, who is on the Fire Department. I had a chance to talk to his sister after the dedication of the Memorial at the High School; and you could see in her the same kind of things that we've pointed out about the Countaways and the Belchers and the MacNeils - that it just hasn't changed. The why of it all. Really. I'm just realizing it.

E: When I met Mr. Pignato last year, I told him that in doing research for Donna Reilly, looking up the various panel and line numbers from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington to find each individual name, I got shocked out of my socks. Joe Pignato, whom I did not know - I knew the name, but I didn't know the person because in the division of class orientation in Winthrop - high school class, not social/economic class - he was in the class behind mine, therefore, I didn't know him!

A: Of course!

E: At any rate, his name appears on the Memorial one line above a college classmate of mine. I know that the names appear in chronological order by date of death, and within that chronology, they tried to keep it in groups by battle or accident, like that.

A: I wasn't aware of that. Hmnmnm.

E: No, most people aren't. But they tried.

A: Sure, as much as possible.

E: As well as they could. There was Pignato - my friend's name begins with an "S," just below it. My friend was a lieutenant, and Joey was, I think, a corporal. And I put two and two together and realized that my friend had been Pignato's officer, and they were killed in the same battle. And I had had no idea. I had pictures of the Memorial and there was the name - but I hadn't ever seen it. I knew it, but I hadn't seen it. I asked Mr. Pignato if he would like to see the picture; I had it on me, but I couldn't know if he would want to see it. He said, yes, he would.

A: Oh, that's nice.

E: I said that my friend, whose affectionate nickname was "Pigpen," was a terrific guy, and I was sure that he had done his best for all of them.

A: Yeah.

E: He just thanked me for saying it. And he told me that the Sleights - "Pigpen's" parents - had invited them and the families of the other boys from the unit from the area to tea after the boys had been killed. He said they went - the Sleights lived in Marblehead, Mr. Sleight was a corporate lawyer - and they were very nice; they all talked and everyone appreciated it. But he said there was never a second time - too vast a difference in background. But, still, he thought it was very thoughtful that they had done it at all.

A: What a coincidence.

E: Not the kind I liked, but

A: Still, things like that happen when you get into a project of the kind that you're undertaking.

JOHN WHITE. There were two White families, and they were cousins. One lived over on Revere Street; there was a George White among them.

E: Did he go to Winthrop High? Or was he another like Logan, who perhaps went to St. John's?

A: I am not sure. But John White doesn't ring a bell with me. I just remember there were two White families.
And GEORGE MC RAE. I knew his sister.

E: Maureen.

A: Yes.

E: Yet another one of my classmates. Maureen, that is. The Class of '64 was well-represented, unfortunately.

A: Well, the year was right for it, for one thing. And it seems to have taken a heavier load as far as Winthrop is concerned.

E: Most of the birthdays fall in 1947; Bobby and Eddie were older, 1945 and 1944, respectively. But '47 was when I was born.

A: That hits close to home for you.

E: Yes, it does.

A: Yes. The McRaes were just a nice, nice family. One of them - and I'm not sure at this point whether it's a cousin or a brother - was at one of the reunions that I hit, because I went to the ones for '60, '61, '62 and '63. I'll go to the High School and check out the yearbook to see the faces; it's amazing, one's that you had in class, that you dealt closely with, I'm better off

remembering students that I had 25-30 odd years ago than the first-graders I had lunch with yesterday! (Lots of laughter) That must say something about my age that you remember things better from long ago than things you did five minutes ago.

E: No. You knew these people as grown people with their own character and foibles and flaws; first-graders are sort of little unbaked cookies. (Laughter)

Arky, what do you remember about Richard Yates and Dennis Case? They aren't on the Memorial, but they both served in Vietnam and both died after returning home. Yates from - well, drugs and stuff.

A: YATES, I know the name but can't place the face.

CASE - there were three brothers; Dennis I had in school. I know I had him in math class, Geometry, up in Room 331 of the old high school.

E: Gee, that sounds rather familiar!

A: Hmmm, yes, most everyone went through there! Super kid. Gymnastics, I recall that. Big guy.

E: We've tried to keep pretty good track of our own classmates; we found out that Dennis died in 1981, from cancer. That was printed right in the obituary, and immediately after that was a sentence that said, "Veteran of the Vietnam Conflict." Now, I don't think you need fourteen degrees to figure out there is a definite link

A: Association, sure

E: Because people don't die before they're 35_years old from cancer. He was in great physical shape, didn't abuse himself in any way.

A: Yeah. He was a big, good-looking boy. Quiet. Good student. Quality - again, quality young man. The family lived over around the Court Park district. I was talking with one of the Mahegan boys who went around with Dennis's younger brother - there were 10 Mahegans, but they were tied in

E: They were everywhere

A: Some one of them was tied in with everyone. It seems that came through for years.

E: I didn't remember that there were 10 of them. Ten Reillys, I remember.

A: From the house I'm in now, with a good stone's throw you could hit four families with 10 or more children - the Roches, the

Mahegans, the Murphys and the Reillys. Crazy old Irish! They had ten or better, right in that neighborhood.

E: You only had 5.

A: Half a loaf! I started a little bit later.

E: It's hard to catch up.

A: Well, the Cases were just fine people.

E: Now, Arky, a year ago the School Committee had a Memorial put into place in the High School. I would just like some brief comments about what you think of it, what you thought of the whole day - the dedication ceremony - the idea of doing it, and the idea of what I'm doing now.

A: Yes. I think it's necessary, and I think for some people *it's* a cause and something ticking within them says - I have to do that for me, number one, because in terms of my life, *it* meant so much. And the people that were involved meant so much in that cause. I think that's important. I think *it's* also important for this country to constantly re-examine because if you don't learn from history, then you're going to perish. That more than any other encounter - war, whether *it's* official or unofficial, *it's* hard to justify any war morally, although you can't sit back - as you tell a kid at the playground, if someone's punching your lights out, don't just stand there; I don't care if you win or lose, don't just stand there, you can't become a punching bag. But to become involved for illegitimate reasons or poor reasons or for petty reasons *is*, as far as I'm concerned - the consequences are indefensible.

E: You fought in the Korean War?

A: I was in the service; I wasn't stationed overseas, I was here.

E: That still has an odd history about it.

A: Another odd one, yes.

E: People still do not understand *it*.

A: Yes, *it* got dwarfed by the Vietnam War; but again *it* was similar to that in many ways, I think. Someone could probably do a paper on that - the parallels of them. But I think *it* is important to do that for several reasons. Number one *is* these young men earned the right for us to remember them; they gave so much, and they contributed. And I think *it's* important - and I think the location at the High School is ideal; and I'm sure that it doesn't strike all the kids that go past it - I'm not there on

a day-to-day basis, but when I go through that door into the lobby, I will look at it - and because of the people that I know, it means something. But I'm sure that it has to touch the lives and the hearts of some of them that are going through. If it does even one, then I think it's worthwhile. I think it's important that the community, and the schools in particular, make note of it and bring it to the attention of a younger generation, our future leaders. Say to them that this is important - maybe they'll be your age or my age when they understand the significance to them, when they can look in hindsight, because it's awfully tough to tell someone that's 17, 18, 19, 20 - like these young men - that they're not invincible. So I think in retrospect as you age, you'll look back and say that means something to me. It was done in such good taste. I correspond with George Reed, who was a classmate of Bobby's and Eddie's and who was just passing through that day, and he came down to speak. I received an awfully nice letter from George not long ago, around Christmas; it's just the caliber of that young man. I think that's important - for those and probably many more reasons, too.

E: Thank you, Arky. Terrific. The tape's still running - do you want to say anything else?

A: No, I'm just glad to spend the time with you.

E: Thanks, I feel the same - I appreciate it.

Matt Boyle

E: Matt, we are going to talk about the eight boys whose names appear on the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial which is in the lobby of the High School. You were a history teacher and a track and football coach when these boys were in high school, and you were a good friend to a lot of them. I'm just going to ask you an open-ended question: Tell me what you can remember about these boys.

M: Two of the boys, especially, Belcher and MacNeil, were on my track team. BOBBY BELCHER was a State Class C champ in the quarter mile. Exceptional young man, who tried after graduating from Winthrop High School as a great example and leader of people and potential great citizen for the country - he tried two times to attend college. He went to the U of Mass, Boston - Boston State at the time - and I believe he went to Northeastern; both times he felt he was unable to be exactly sure of what he wanted to do, and then expressed some interest in the service, at which time I felt maybe he might try the Marine Corps, which he did. To his family's delight, he got involved in communications. He was - in fact, at the time, he was working in charge of all the regimental radio systems; he had worked his way up. His father was a life-long employee of the telephone company. And it looked as though Bob, when he got out of the service, would get into that field and be very, very successful. But more than that, he was a great human being, a great individual, and someone that you felt would be a real help and credit to his, whatever, neighborhood he found himself in - he would have made -

I remember he came over to the house many times; he was like an uncle to my children. It was especially tragic when I heard the news that there was an accident - after he had been wounded once, we were concerned; then, twice, but then two helicopters crashed - so it was just one of those difficult lessons in life that you wonder why this particular individual was picked when there were a lot of others who you might find would be more suited for this type of activity, so many people seeing so much potential in him and so much good in him, almost an ideal type of kid as far as instructions and carrying them out and going through life in a normal, healthy fashion that he seemed to. It's just one of those crosses we all have to bear - and then you find that you're so close to someone that it just happens, because I felt that I would look at and enjoy this type of an individual for a lifetime - at least for my lifetime - and then he would continue on with some of the ideas and concepts that we both shared. I think that's what teaching is all about, that you impart some of his knowledge and information to these people who came to ideally accept it and manifest it in a very positive fashion. I don't think we have enough of those people today that you can tell right off the bat of their special place - and to have these people taken away is, I suppose, as far as history is concerned, something we'll never be able to quite understand. Maybe it helps us grow stronger by

realizing how fallible and fragile we all are, and how we can't really hang onto this. But Bob, to this day, will always be, have a special place with me. I lost a great deal when Bob went. I think the only positive thing now is that some of the things I do silly things - I think Bob helps me out above, so that I've been successful because of, say, that type of intercession and others, I feel, he's helped the same way.

As far as PAUL BRUGMAN is concerned: he was another kid that went through school, he was a youngster that had ability and talent, didn't seem to be able to put it all together, though, when he was in the high school situation, joined the Marine Corps hoping to find himself was the expression, and apparently things were beginning to turn around and, unfortunately, we got the report that he, also, didn't make it. It was, again, quite a shock to the community that had never experienced this kind of activity for a long time, and especially to his folks, who were quite shaken by this.

JOHN COUNTAWAY, another young man who probably felt that he was going to help solve the situation over there. Joined the Marine Corps. Another fellow that attended the school, nice kid; again, looking to find himself, probably; not especially a stand-out in any particular way, but a guy that, again, seemed to be heading in the right direction - but at the ripe old age of 20, it seems kind of sad to have everything wrapped up and finalized.

E: I've heard that he was rather colorful - I think that was the phrase.

M: I think colorful is the right way to describe him. He was a rambunctious type of guy (Laughter). He - being of that age - sometimes - and the longer you're in this business, you find out that a lot of them don't really settle down until something important comes up in their lives, some reason to be exists, and then they rapidly change. It may be a girlfriend or a job opportunity - but while he was here, he was a, more or less, fun-loving type.

JOE LOGAN, I'm not familiar with him.

EDDIE MAC NEIL. Eddie used to run the quarter mile. I'll never forget Eddie because I suppose I was a little insensitive at the time, but Eddie always had shin splints; and Eddie would always complain to me about his shin splints, and I would always tell Eddie, "Well, Eddie, come on, you can do better than that; just rub them down, walk it out, you'll be fine." Eddie would perform; he would seem to recover for the meets, but right after he was in dire straits. He was a good guy; a dependable kid. Another guy that when he graduated didn't seem to know exactly what to do. Did go into the Army and worked his way up in the Army a little bit; certainly he was the type of kid you expected to go and do better things and be a good community citizen and credit to his high school, and certainly, he was a good-looking guy, tall kid. The type of guy that you would feel you had been successful with when you finished coaching and educating him.

JOE PIGNATO was a little different in that Joe didn't have much luck in high school. Joe didn't have much luck with himself. Joe was struggling with himself for a good number of years; not always doing the right thing, not always interested in his education, not always interested in how he was perceived in the community. For these reasons, deep and difficult to explain exactly - I don't know why Joe was like that, but he exactly didn't make the hit parade as far as the teaching staff was concerned. Again, in his restlessness, I guess he felt that maybe the Marine Corps was an answer. Apparently when he got through boot camp, able to stick it out, maybe he had turned the corner; and then we didn't see much of Joe when he went overseas until we heard that he had been killed. But again, not being able to understand Joe or where he was going or what he was doing, the same type of loss or the same type of shock was not, unfortunately, felt for him at that particular time. It was just that he had given his life as so many others in this particular cause and for his country and it was unfortunate, but it didn't carry the same community sense of not having this person to come back and to carry on and do nice things, which is unfortunately human nature that you feel strongly towards one because of their positive and not so because of maybe a negative approach.

JOHN WHITE, I remember the name, but I can't specifically put - he just didn't make that much of an impact on me as far as a total picture of these other individuals that were here.

It was quite a time as far as the high school was concerned; these young men going off and within a few years being in this position that a lot of people didn't have any feeling toward one way or another; and I think the fact that they had given so much made an impact on some of the young people who were close to them or who were in high school knowing about this; and it did give us a little leverage as far as setting up examples for young people who had so much going for them, but then had it taken away from them. I thought, as a teaching tool, it was important to us. I think some of our decision makers at the time weren't exactly giving us the straight story as far as it turned out; and yet, those of us who had been in other wars, myself in Korea, felt that the government was directing you in the cause of democracy and what have you. But I think that we have all historically learned a great deal about the other nations, other people, and have a little more of the sensitivity towards the Asian people or whatever and have not felt as though maybe we should interfere or find ourselves in all of these things as the world's policeman. It's brought more closely to home when these young people have to do these things for reasons that you can't sustain as the strongest reasons you might have had, say, for other types of conflicts; although, even those are suspect. You say, well, they got away with doing it for this, that and the other thing; and you say, well, that's fine. I think the world, if it has learned anything, it's that we all have to learn a lot more about each other and how to get along with each other a little better. Killing each off seems to prove nothing.

E: No, but World War II is generally considered a just war.

M: If, yes, the reasons of World War II would certainly justify the loss - certainly the Nazis had to be removed in one way or another; they had to be - their mentality was just unacceptable by any, any standards. But when the Japanese bomb us in Pearl Harbor and we attack the Germans in North Africa - that sort of tells us that something was not quite (Laughter) going on at the time, and the whole support system that we had in Europe to allow the rise of the situation that happened in Germany was just ignorant, historic ignorance. I think we've tried to do a little better than that. I think our past diplomats, statespeople, really didn't professionally get involved until rather late. I think it was politically involved. Not like a Jefferson or an Adams, who would send his son to Paris to become a John Quincy Adams, and learn about European people and develop a sense of Europe and a sense of timing, and then what have you. I think now we're a little more attuned to what we should be looking for than we were back then. There was prejudice, there was ignorance, there was - you know - insensitivity to a lot of situations that allowed this to grow into the monster it was becoming.

You know, in Germany, they start with, they have to blame somebody for the Versailles Treaty, they're in a mess themselves, they have no strong government, it's almost anarchy. They let this maniac convince them that they're going back centuries to their Teutonic super-race. And the problem, I think, you know, with a lot of the Jews in there, unfortunately, were Germans first; didn't realize how insidious this plan was and didn't nip it in the bud themselves, by using their power when they had it; instead of this you know, loony getting this system going where you blame everything on - you know, it's like, I think, the famous, I enjoy so much, the Fiddler on the Roof, where the Russian peasant who is lower than the slave in the United States, is uncomfortable, so they send the Cossacks in to beat up the Jews, and that makes him feel better. It's so nonsensical, but why do they accept it?

I think we've gone beyond that now. We don't accept these persecutions of any group any more, regardless of low man on the pole, or whatever; and I think that's the, that's the beauty of it. You learn from the silly stuff that happens in history. But, finally, I think it's - although I'm not sure - but I think there's enough information now, anyway, if you want to become a serious student and an honest student, regardless of what's going on in Latin America or skinheads in this country, to understand that prejudice in any form or hate in any form eventually will bring the country down, or bring any country down. When you think about it, you say, "Wow! Why is it always - no matter what the war or what the situation, whether it be good, young, enthusiastic, patriotic men and women have to share the brunt of evil people's mistakes." That's what frosts you when you get a little older, because these people go in with their eyes wide open, thinking they're "saving" the world.

E: Well, one of the things we seem to have learned from the death of 58,000 Americans and no one knows the number of Vietnamese dead is

M: A lot

E: Yes, a lot - the number is very large - is, in fact, what you alluded to earlier - the government lied to us. We know that now; some people knew it then and tried to tell; but most people didn't listen. And so, Bobby Belcher and Eddie MacNeil and 3 million other American boys went marching off to war. And twenty years later, we have to deal with it.

M: We do!

E: In the Korean War, close to 58,000 American servicemen died, also; and there's less known about that war, I think, than there is about the Vietnam War.

M: Right.

E: Maybe someday -

M: It wasn't on television.

E: That's true, it wasn't on television. Not everyone had a tv in those days.

M: At supper!

E: Right. Yes, that was charming; Thursday night's body count.

M: Right.

E: But that's about 116,000 men in two wars, one in the early '50's and the other through the '60's until April '75, and that has surely had an effect on the twenty years of history that's followed it. Of course, we haven't gone to war anyplace recently. Not "real" wars - there are of course low intensity conflicts everywhere!

Do you think having those eight names in vivid, plain sight every single day in the high school will have an effect on the kids who are here now, looking at it, saying, "That kid was 19 or 20 years old when he got killed. Why did he get killed when he was so young?"

M: I think it will, but I don't think the number will be the number that you would like to have. We put out a little table, we put out flowers every once in a while; we have students ask about it. You will, from time to time, almost on a daily basis, hear kids talking while they're standing, staring at it, going over to it, and I'm sure in his/her mind when they do this, that's

personal to them. They are reflecting on it, and it means something to them. Now, how long it will stick with them, like everything else, is a matter to find out in history. But I'm sure that at least this school and this town and the effort~ of the people that got involved in this certainly provided a great service in that they, at least, took the time to remind us - and I think the problem is why we get off onto the different situations be it Korea, Vietnam, or even if you go back to our own Civil War, which I just finished an excellent book on by a guy named McPherson who writes for the Oxford Series, Battle Cry of the Republic - again, it was contrived on both sides to figure out why they had to bring 600,000 people together to be killed over state's rights and/or slavery and/or whatever else they were interested in. But if you don't have the reminders, then you tend, very quickly, to forget.

And I think, you know, the media doesn't help much with the silly types of Rambo or Arnold Schwarzenegger-type movies, that accept all of this carnage as if it was just walking across the street. But the real, honest, hurt, suffering, pain, dying is right for them to see - this is a vivid example that stares them in the face as they go by. I think, although it can't be measured, certainly in my mind, it's pragmatic in this sense: that we talked today about kids that don't have any knowledge of geography, and I go back to the reason why I am so good at geography is because I always saw maps. I always saw maps hanging on walls in school. I don't see maps hanging on walls; therefore, Johnny Jones can't identify certain places.

But I can walk in and out of this school every day, and I can be reminded. And I think the kids can be reminded the same way. Now, some days, naturally Memorial Day or other types of days or certain days, I'm going to be more influenced by it, I'm going to be more reflective. But if it wasn't there, I probably wouldn't be as much, unless I went to Washington or I saw it in the news media or I read it or whatever. I think it has been a good public service to provide this with the hopes that even if it's only for some, it will be important to them and they will be able to stand up and be counted and remind people and say, "Hey, did you see the thing on the wall? You know, that happened here - that didn't happen 5,000 miles away. That didn't happen in Nicaragua or any other - Grenada or Angola or whatever. It happened to Winthrop people who were high school people just a few years ago, who really" - as was pointed out by that speaker we had at the memorial, the young man from Saugus who said, and I'll never forget this 'cause it meant so much to me: "I was 18 years old. I had never had a date. I was sort of a wallflower in high school. And the next thing I knew, I was in Vietnam, all by myself, really. My whole world was back in Winthrop - I didn't go through the mill, I didn't know anything." And then he ended up almost dead, and what a traumatic experience in his young life, compared to so many others who I see sometimes who - you almost want to cringe - because of the comforts that they have and the matter-of-fact way they take their existence and their over-

indulgent parents. Not being in a crisis situation where upon graduation you were being called up, you were being sent off to a military camp - and then these people having it so good, and those other people who were good, not having it so good, not by choice but by chance, because they happened to be born at this time that forced them into this situation.

E: Oh, it's quite true. People born in 1947, 1948, 1949 were the ones most likely to die in Vietnam. Frightening. The draft was not universal, as it was in World War II; it was inequitable, it was unjust, and in many ways it is surprising that there were only eight deaths from Winthrop. I think it's eight too many, myself; but it could have been much worse.

M: If you are concerned about history - and that's the, in the school business - one of the things, the important things, besides the teaching of the subject matter, I think it's very important that we teach how people should act and interact with one another; how they should be aware of what one another is doing and be considerate and just, just trying to be Number One, like they've been indulged with too much, and to claw over one another, but to take time and think about one another and what contribution they all can give and do. I think schools have gotten away from that. And I think, you know, it's made a very difficult type of world and everyone being exceedingly competitive and you lose some of the fine things that humans can exchange with one another - talent, taste, and what have you.

E: You wonder many things. Bobby Belcher is in the thoughts of everyone who went to high school with him. This year, especially, because we're planning our 25th Reunion; and there will be several empty seats - we've lost a number of people - but we lost Bobby in a war. We've led good lives, people are happy, satisfied, comfortable with themselves. And you wonder - Bobby had so much potential; the odds were that he'd have been a pillar of the community, a terrific father, perhaps a coach of some team - who knows? Who knows, really! And we've had these experiences, and he's been dead 21 years. That's one half my life! But his memory is vivid. And you wonder about the kids you're teaching now - is someone going to be that vivid in their memories 25 years from now? We were a small group, we knew each other intimately - 250 of us, in school together from 6 to 12 years in most cases. And that stays with you forever, no matter what happens to you. Or, was it that Bobby was so outstanding?

M: Well, no, I think there's any - whether it's a war or any kind of tragedy that would happen to someone like that would be, have the same effect. I don't think it was particularly the war. I just feel so - we all rejoiced in his personality and his, his finding life so interesting and joyful. And I think that you look for that in people. You look for those people as your role models or guides or to make it a little easier for you. You know you all

have to go at some time or another, but you figure that this guy is like the beacon - when you're down, you look to him. Obviously, he got down at times, but he was a little more clever in couching it than a lot of people. I think the loss is greater, not so much in the governmental/historic sense - I don't think we can always just, you know, assess war; I think the same thing can happen to people through disease, through cancer, through an automobile accident. To me, at least, the loss is the same. I think it's your losing the person rather than why that person got taken away. You know, wars have been a part of society since they began. They don't seem to solve many of society's ills, although indirectly a lot of human feeling comes out in war that wouldn't come out at any other time - medical advances occur, and so forth. So, you've a mixed bag of good and bad involved in wars. They're very difficult to understand, and they're very sad when this type of a situation occurs. I think community-wise, you know, ironically, we didn't know if he was even going to be here - he was going with a girl from California; he might have been, you know, spent the rest of his life in California. But I think we would have been happy for him, wherever he went, having had this situation because I don't think people change that radically in their personalities from, say, seniors in high school probably through their 60's or so; they seem to have some of those same characteristics. They might dress it up with a degree or a promotion or whatever, but I don't think they basically change that much.

E: You mentioned - and several other people have mentioned - flowers that appear. Do you know where they come from? Who sends them?

M: I don't know where they come from.

E: Are you interested in knowing?

M: Not particularly.

E: OK.

M: But I think that is's a fantastic idea because I think that it enhances the idea that someone would take the time - you're probably guilty of it

E: No, honestly, I haven't sent them.

M: This is something that has been done by others in the same sense for other things and so on and so forth, and I think that it does, to quote the poem, "Make you stop and stare a little more." And then dedicate a little more stature in that we haven't forgotten as a school, nor should we forget as a school. Fortunately, we had enough people to be interested in this particular group - and I'm sure the high school in the past, I remember the old high school

E: Yes, I remember that building!

M: Well, we had memorials to World War I and II, and then most of the New England communities have a memorial to the Civil War; I don't think, I think people miss the boat when they, when they identify the situation with the war; I think it's a situation of loss that is the key. In that sense, people who meant, made, a difference, meant the difference, in the community would no longer be present; life is best served through community spirit, community interaction, people caring, people sharing, not in, you know, charging up San Juan Hill or in these other incidents that have happened that's interaction. They even have found out that in some of these meetings of World War II vets that they've brought these Americans and the Japanese together, and they look at each other in their 60's - you know, older men - and they just sort of shake their heads and say, "Hey, you weren't so different from me, and I wasn't so different from you - wow, what a way we had of expressing it, or they had us express it." If the lesson can be learned that way, I think we'll be better off. Of course, today, more than ever, maybe that's important because of all this street violence and shootings and killings and nonsense that permeates these mentally ill or disturbed or imbalanced or irreligious or whatever people that just think they have the right to do this to people. I think, you know, that the message should be: Hey, listen, you don't do this because it only leads to more and worse and unfortunate and more weeping and more loss and more innocent people.

This memorial says to the people who look at it: Hey, these kids were here; they were part of the school, the community - and it wasn't so long ago. Although maybe to the students it seems long - to some of us it doesn't seem long. And if we can do a lot of things like that, I think we'll be more helpful; teaching tools, teaching aids. Good teaching aids! Not frivolous ones, not a style that's in one time and it's out another; it's not a bad thing, we're not doing it for that purpose. I hope it serves its purpose. For me it serves its purpose because I feel, you know, as I see these kids on a daily basis observing and looking and staring and wondering about the flowers as I do, it's an interesting gesture and it's helpful. I thought the girls in the office were doing it; I said, "Gee, that's nice, whoever did that." But they said, no, they just provided the table. It works out well.

Better than a trophy case or whatever. Your idea on the rubbings certainly got the thing going; the way we had it arranged, and we were lucky enough for Huck to get us the picture and blow it up - and fiddled around with it until everybody threw in their two cents' worth and helped out. I mean, just even in the involvement you had a good dozen yeomen there that were bringing it about - which, again, was great. Nobody hesitated. The respect and reverence that the politicians treated it with was impressive; nobody tried to enhance their own nest, and they just said, "Hey, this is a time to reflect." I think the only comment

I got was, although lots of people have now seen it on Channel 3, that they wished they had attended it. They said, "I wish I was there because I didn't know it was going to be like that."

E: Yeah, that's nice; but we didn't know either (Laughter)

M: No, but we were trying. We were trying to tell them what we felt, and like anything, you don't know. We were trying to tell them that this was important to us; that the community should reflect on this - that it not only was just for the kids in this war era but mainly for the kids and anybody who forgot. Some others, of course, didn't learn a thing from it. And that's human nature. Not everybody's going to get the message and march to the same drummer, but as long as most of them can establish that, I suppose, the lesson has been learned. The military people do it through what they call a camaraderie, but it's unfortunate that they couldn't have developed that before that. Which is I suppose part of trying harder, trying to make yourself more available to people. These are the lessons that I think are important - it's important that young people respect each other, respect their, the adults and their own peers and not try to bully them around or whatever, and I think that's important in a school. It doesn't come out in the newspapers, but you try to do it. So that we're not a Revere and we're not a Chelsea; we're a unique little place. And it's because of people working at things like that. Makes them that way.

E: Anything else you want to add?

M: Well, not particularly. I think that maybe the American nation learned something from a war, not what they thought they were going to learn, but maybe they learned something about people their own people - and in how they went about addressing the war - that in the future, they will take the time, maybe, to use this as an example, to reflect on it - what type of, I, although, with the atomic situation and everything else in arms reduction, whatever, maybe they're getting away from that, in a sense. Hopefully, they are.

E: Matt, thanks for your time. I appreciate it.

Bruce Ross

E: Bruce, we are going to talk about the uses being made of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that was installed in the high school a year ago. Please tell me how far into current history your teachers get, and if you are using the Memorial in any way.

B: OK. The background on teachers - there's a lot of factors that determine how far a teacher gets. The primary consideration is the ability of the student to absorb the material, the amount of questions that go along with a unit's being introduced, and then, finally, of course, how well the student grasps it that the teacher moves ahead. So, it's not a rigid lockstep type of system. We attend a lot to the students. In general terms, our teachers try to get up to current issues of today.

E: You mean today's headlines?

B: Yes, today's headlines, certainly. They do attend to current events in the classroom, especially on an emergency basis, if a major topic arises. We're primarily, their task is to move through a period of time topically and chronologically with a curriculum guide, and we have certain priority areas. We have one year in the 10th grade in which they take pre-Colonial history of America, and they stop at an arbitrary point in time called 1877, or the beginning of the westward movement, Reconstruction. So they try to get that far. In the 11th grade - fortunately the School Committee supported this - they let us divide it into two years. They move on from 1877 and try to get to 1989.

The specific question has to do with Vietnam. Each one of the 11th grade teachers teaches a unit on Vietnam specifically - generally lasting from anywhere from 2 to 3 days, maybe more, depending on the way the questions go. As far as the direct use of the Vietnam Memorial at this time - it has not been used to my knowledge yet. This would be our first year with it. What use the teachers are going to make is something we'll take up in department meeting sometime around the end of March, the beginning of April - we'll start to talk about curriculum at that time. There's a chart that they fill out each month that gives me their positions in history, and then we compare our positions in the 11th grade. The Memorial - I have not received questions, quite frankly, from students, except that you hear conversation about the Memorial's being nice; who put the flowers out front - they're conversations of a social nature rather than an academic or classroom nature where, where it's controlled and we respond and react and research and discuss. So in that sense it's a new item in the building and it has not been used to any extent whatsoever.

E: Do you expect that there will be use put to it?

B: I would say that having a prime object like that in the building and a Vietnam unit being taught, the two necessarily,

naturally should go together. What happens I can't predict because I haven't attended to that issue yet.

E: Oh, sure, sure. There's any number of possibilities, really.

B: Oh, absolutely. I think that any creative teacher - and I certainly have creative teachers - you'd better be creative or you won't last long, because the kids will absolutely chew up your room. They need to be taken and led, included, directed and then they have to contribute back with something that they're responsible for. If you don't do that every year, you won't improve yourself.

E: And you lose your students.

B: You lose your students, and you're not teaching effectively. So, no, my staff is not that way.

E: I'm glad to hear it. You mentioned the flowers. Do you know where the flowers have come from?

B: No.

E: Does anyone? The few people I've asked

B: Well, the kind of question you're asking is something that if I wanted the answer, I'd pursue it, ok?

E: Where would you pursue it?

B: I like the mystery, personally.

E: Really?

B: Oh, yes, I do. It's kind of like they put a rose on Marilyn Monroe's grave for years; I prefer not to know who - I'd rather say, gee, I wonder if it was Arthur Miller, I wonder if it was Joe DiMaggio. I prefer the mystery. To this point in time, my own personal preference is: I think it's a wonderful gesture - and I really don't want to know. There's something about little things like that, rituals and ceremonies and heart-felt things that when you discover the background, it takes the dedication out of it, sort of. It's like - well, now I know; so what. I look forward to the opportunity to say, "Wow, they're there again." I don't know if anybody else has that - so I'm not going to run down to the office, which is easy enough to do, and say, "Hey, Matt Boyle, who brings the flowers; who sends the flowers?" And Matt would then say - whatever.

E: For such and such a reason.

B: And then it's, well, now I know that, and I have another piece of information, but I've lost something of the feeling.

E: I understand what you're saying.

B: OK? Which is what's so wonderful about the design of the monument in Washington, and all the symbolism that goes with that. If you break it down into cubic feet and height and width, it's kind of like, gee, I'm uncomfortable with that. You spoil what I see. I don't even want to know the architect's interpretation. It's kind of like Hemingway's telling you, "Well I wrote THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA for this reason." Don't tell me that! Because that isn't the whole reason. You don't even know why you wrote it - that's what makes it a work of art for me to discover. So, on a very, very limited basis - a set of flowers in front of a monument, I like to hold on to a little bit of the mystery of it.

E: That's very nice. Are there teachers in the school, in the history department in particular, who are from Winthrop, who might have known these boys?

B: Absolutely. We have several teachers who are from Winthrop: Mr. Wein, Mr. Krantz, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Skein, Mr. Rudd are all Winthrop natives. Mr. Morrison and myself are the only two outsiders. And the only thing that I remember is that as a young man I came to Winthrop as a vacation spot and dated girls here; I was 15, 16 years old. So many, many years ago. In the Middle School, we have three Winthrop natives. So, the history department is well represented.

E: Firmly rooted in the community?

B: Absolutely. And they're involved in the community at the same time. They're active people in the community.

E: That's good, for lots of reasons.

B: There's good on both sides of that issue.

E: Oh, sure.

B: An outsider can blend it a little. We have other perspectives.

Now, let me ask you a question: when do you plan to finish this project?

E: I had hoped to finish by May. Why?

B: Well, that would not give you time to include what is actually done with the Memorial by our staff because it would be just about the end of May - approximately - when we'd get to that period of time.

E: I can speak with my thesis advisor about putting off the deadline; it isn't difficult - after all, it's my decision. Surely, what you're telling me is that I will need to come back here in May to talk with you again, your staff, come to a department meeting, perhaps sit in a class or two, talk with the students.

B: You would be more than welcome. Certainly.

E: To see what happens, because of course that's the point. I'm planning an introductory section on memorials in general, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and then the offshoot of small towns replicating the memorial - well, not replicating, no one's really done that - but there are over 140 Vietnam Veterans Memorials scattered throughout the country; this is one of them. Of the ones I've seen, this is one of the most fascinating. Of course, the fact that I had something to do with it - I'm slightly prejudiced on that issue.

B: A slight bias?

E: Slight bias. But it wasn't entirely my idea - it was a cooperative venture. But I'm more interested in this one than in any other.

B: You should be. You should be - it's yours.

E: Yes, it is.

B: There's a much more personal attachment to it than there would be for something that's far, far away and can't be attended to in any way.

E: And 58,000 names in Washington is overwhelming; it's supposed to be overwhelming.

B: That's part of it, sure, of course.

E: Eight names in Winthrop, you can grasp. You can handle it. And with twenty years' perspective on it.

B: There's an intimacy that you can't replace.

E: True.

B: But there has to be a social intimacy as well. I just hope researchers don't tear it apart to the point where it becomes a dry bit of academic research, because - like the flowers - you can't reduce everything to its exact meaning. I think Einstein said it: that the greatest of all intelligences is imagination. When you strip away all of the romance and the mystery of things, it's a horrible curse.

E: It was fascinating when I was in Washington trying to find clues about people who have left material at the Memorial. Most of the stuff that's left with any kind of name on it simply says, "Bud," or "George," or "Paulie;" or it will be signed, "Love, Mom," "from your buddies," or something you can't really trace like that. You can't connect the document necessarily with any one particular name.

B: Well, my feeling for it, this is my feeling rather than an academic reaction to it, is that it's a catharsis - it's a release - it's a personal commitment to get public with an issue or an item but to also keep it private. The balance is very delicate. I think if you start to rip it apart - like a newspaper article: "The flowers in front of the Vietnam Memorial were sent by Joe Smith who thought that this would be a nice gesture because Joe went to school with one of them" - interesting; it's a piece of personal news; but I think the newspapers do an injustice. I think an article to the extent - "It's a beautiful memorial, designed by interested community people, and each month flowers arrive as a dedication. Isn't it wonderful that someone has a sense of commitment enough to send flowers." Rather than I've got to have who, what, where, when, why and how in the article because I'm a newspaper reporter. You don't uplift the people.

E: Yes, I see what you mean. It's interesting to hear that come from someone whose background is in history; isn't that what history trains you to do?

B: Yeah, yeah, you have to have all the facts. "Just the facts, Ma'am!" What we find in the classroom is that if you bombard the children with facts constantly, especially at a younger age, you'll lose them. One of the reasons - nationally - that history is one of those subjects that ranks low in interest is that the kids say, "Oh, I can't stand all those names and dates!" Well, it's true - you can't. You have to step back occasionally and show there's human interaction. That comes through the fables, myths, the tales, the literature - which you have to add in.

E: History is taught much better than it was when you and I were in high school.

B: Oh, yes. There is absolutely no comparison.

E: I'm certain that if I had to do it all over again, I would have been a history major. American Civilization for a graduate degree is as close as I could come at UMass.

B: I've heard a lot of good things about that program.

E: It is an outstanding program. I'm just sorry it took me until I was close to 40 to discover that history was a wonderful field to learn. But at least I learned it!

B: Don't look back.

E: No, I don't, really.

B: Aren't you glad you found it?

E: I'm delighted I found it! And you're right - it's the narrative, the development; there are mysteries all around.

B: And they're wonderful.

E: It's fabulous.

B: And you don't want to go in there and rip them apart.

E: No.

B: You'll get the facts you need; you have to leave some things

E: I don't intend to write biographies. I'm not interested in biographical analyses of what brought these particular boys from Winthrop to death in a war in Vietnam. That isn't the point. The point is the remembering and the way the community looks at it. So, maybe I am doing what you're suggesting - I'm really not interested in all the facts; I need them, but I don't have to include them.

B: You won't know until you put your paper down. And then listen to your voice; your voice will tell you what you've done. If you become too objective, you hope you have the distance to see that - that you don't tear away all the shrouds and expose everything to the naked sunlight of intellectual sterility. We kind of get carried away - I've got to tell everything! But you won't know that until the end. Regardless of your purpose, which is stated, it's how you work and finish off the product - then you have to go back and touch up.

E: It's hard. It's emotionally difficult. It's poignant when I'm talking with someone who knew any one of the boys. I knew two of them quite well myself. It's an interesting exercise, just that part of it.

B: I would think it would be. Sure. Because you're right in the history, of the making of the history itself. There's an immediacy to it. Which only time can give it the right distance. We're struggling through this era now. At least the wound is starting to be attended to, which is in every period of time in our history. We've gone through the trauma - the deaths and dying and the causes are just words. The clean-up afterwards of all those words and their implications is the real tragedy. If we didn't ever have to face that, war would be simple.

E: True, but we do have to face it.

B: Every generation, in its own way. Somehow.

E: The power, the sheer numbers, of the baby-boomers has skewed so much of contemporary life in America that that's - people still clinging to it. The baby-boomers came of age with the Vietnam Era; twenty years later, the baby-boomers are the ones teaching the history, writing the history.

B: Attending to it. And the story in another generation will be the very, very heavy influence of immigration. Because the baby-boomers are not booming. Those who are booming are the new arrivals, who are populating and changing the whole political nature of the nation.

E: Many of them from Southeast Asia.

B: Absolutely. Absolutely.

E: Makes life very interesting.

B: There's no way I'd want to be responsible for weaving this one. I'm just going to sit back and take a look at it and find it fascinating. The Great Weaver is the one who put all this together. I don't understand it.

E: Someone has a great sense of humor.

B: Oh, yeah, absolutely. The Carver of it, if there's sense there.

E: Well, Bruce, thank you very much.

B: My pleasure. Now, remember, I've already told my staff that you were coming. We'll keep the lines of communication open. I'll give them a sense of what we've talked about. And you come back in the Spring; I'll see if I can get the specifics of the lesson plans. Give me a call in April.

E: Indeed, I shall.

CHAPTER III

NAMES ON THE WALL

Cherished Memories

The war in Vietnam, waged by America from the end of World War II until 1975, was fought against an enemy we never completely understood, in support of governments hated by their own people. We had unclear goals, unacceptable and unwinnable tactics and divided domestic support. We are only now beginning to deal with the demoralization caused by the failure of our policies in Vietnam.

One of the luminous paths to understanding and what has been referred to as "healing" is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, the culmination of Jan Scruggs' dream to remember Americans who served in Vietnam by listing the names of those who died or who remain missing. In 1988 a subcommittee of the Winthrop (MA) School Committee adopted the design of this remarkable monument in order to create the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which now hangs in the lobby of Winthrop High School.

I was privileged to be a part of that subcommittee; the speech I delivered at the dedication ceremony may be read at the end of this paper in Appendix A. Many speakers that day referred to their memories of those local boys whose names comprise the monument.

Seated directly in front of the speakers' platform were members of the families of these forever-young men. These relatives hold the most cherished memories of all - of their sons and brothers.

This chapter includes interviews with members of six of the eight families represented on the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Presented here are the voices of two sisters, two mothers, and two sets of parents. Regarding the remaining two families, the mother of one of the young men was advised about this research, but she chose not participate; an aunt and an uncle of the other young man responded politely through a brief telephone conversation and a letter, respectively - they both declined to be interviewed. I have included as much information in these two instances as I could find.

The long shadow of Vietnam remains part of living memory. The "lesson of Vietnam" for these families can be nothing more than the revelation of how the lives of ordinary people remain shattered. Yet, as Virginia Woolf once said: nothing is just one thing.

So, too, these interviews are about more than just one thing. In telling the story of a son's or a brother's life, these relatives reveal each family's love, loss, memory, humor, values and strength. These families' stories are the record of sons and families and what happened to them, as well as of a community, then and now, and how it chooses to remember.

Paul Frank Brugman

July 19, 1947 - November 6, 1967
(20 years, 3 months, 18 days)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Washington, DC
Panel 29E - Line 27

Private
Marine Corps

Stories

1. Tom Reilly, Donna Reilly's husband, thought Paul was killed by a gunshot from a boy next to him in the same bunker.
2. Richard Cawthorne, one of my highschool classmates, told me he went to St. John The Evangelist grammar school with Paul. He thinks Paul went on to Dom Savio. Several years ago, Mrs. Brugman was in the same nursing home as Richie's mother; but he believes Mrs. Brugman was moved from there because of a lack of funds.
3. Maureen McRae Demers told me she had heard of one boy who had been electrocuted; she thought it was Brugman. When I interviewed Maureen, I thought that Paul had been the one killed in the accidental homicide and that White was the one who had been electrocuted. I had mixed up the stories.
4. Joe Pignato told me that Paul was a lonely child who didn't seem to have any direction or discipline. His one interest seemed to be electronics. During my interview with Joe, he told me the following story:

Brugman used to hang up the Fire House. He didn't have a father or a mother, I don't think. The grandmother or somebody brought him up. He was tough to handle. But when he come up to the Fire House, he was all right. And then he went in the Marine Corps, with electricity school. That's how he got it - they were stretching wires or something; and he was up on a pole and he grabbed the hot wire
5. Jackie DeBonis, Administrative Secretary at Winthrop High School sent me a note in which she wrote: "Paul Brugman did not graduate from Winthrop High. I don't know if he withdrew or transferred to another school. I would guess that he withdrew."
6. Military records indicate that Paul died in Quang Tri (I Corps) from "Non-hostile action; unknown cause, not reported."
7. I wrote to the Principal of St. John The Evangelist School to ask if she could search her records to find out where Paul Brugman went to school after the 8th grade. Sr. Elaine wrote me the following note: "We do not have any records for a Paul Frank Brugman."
8. Carolyn Marks, another highschool classmate, told me that she understood that Mrs. Brugman had been moved to a chronic illness facility.

9. Mary B. (Ryan) Brugman died on July 31, 1989. Her obituary read, in part:

Beloved wife of the late Harold A. Brugman.

Devoted mother of the late PFC Paul F. Brugman, USMC.

Richard Brugman, Paul's uncle, wrote me the following letter:

In reference to your letter about Paul Brugman, I regret that I honestly feel I would not be of much help, since I lived outside Winthrop in Paul's growing-up years.

Paul was an adopted son, of my brother Harold (now deceased) and grew up in the proverbial "broken home" with its attendant unhappiness. That's all I know.

Sorry I can't be of more assistance and I wish you the best of luck with your thesis.

Sincerely,
Richard D. Brugman

Mrs. John Brugman, Paul's aunt, called me in response to a letter I sent her, after I had heard from Richard Brugman. This aunt told me the following:

She didn't really have very much information because she and her husband lived in Somerville while Paul was growing up.

She did say that Paul was adopted when he was about four; she didn't know where he came from. His parents were separated. Paul had a wonderful life with both his mother and his father - he had everything he wanted.

He went to St. John's through the 8th grade, and then he went to Winthrop High School; she didn't know the year he was graduated, but she was certain that he did graduate. He went from high school into the Marines, didn't go to college or to work. She doesn't think he participated in any sports, but she really couldn't be sure about that. He was an altar boy at St. John's.

The Marines turned Paul's life around. He was going to make it his career.

He stepped on a land mine and both legs were blown off. She believes he died instantly. The date of his death, November 6, 1967, was also his father's birthday. He was the first boy from Winthrop to die in Vietnam. He had a very large military funeral in Winthrop.

The Center for Electronic Records, National Archives and Records Administration, has custody of a database with records from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (R.G. 330) for the U.S. military casualties from the Vietnam conflict. The Combat Area Casualties File includes records for persons who died or were missing or captured as a result of either a hostile or nonhostile occurrence in the Southeast Asian Combat Area, 1957 - , including those who died while missing or captured.

I called the National Archives and Records Administration office to request a list of names of the boys from Winthrop, Massachusetts, who died during the Vietnam war. Since the list I requested had only seven names on it, the National Archives waived payment of a fee. They sent me the "State List," which includes the following information for each casualty: name, rank or grade, branch of service, home of record, date of casualty, category of casualty, country of the casualty and indication, when appropriate, that the body has not been recovered.

For Paul Brugman, this data states:

Non-hostile casualty - died;
Unknown cause - not reported.

The National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records), Navy Reference Branch, for the Marine Corps, would not send me a copy of the Report of Casualty regarding Paul Frank Brugman. Instead, I was sent a Report of Death which provides name, service number, rank, service organization, date of birth, date of death, and place of death (which reads: Vicinity Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam); the actual cause of death remains blank. Under remarks is written:

For any additional information, we do need
the written authorization of the veterans (sic)
nearest living relative.

Since I sincerely believe that it would be impossible for me to obtain such authorization from this family, I wrote to the Chief of the Navy Reference Branch of the Military Personnel Records again and explained this research project in great detail; I asked for his assistance in obtaining Paul Brugman's death certificate. I received two documents:

A. "Report of Casualty, Date Prepared: 1 Dec 67.
"Non-Battle.
"Died 1730H 6Nov67 vicinity Quang Tri Province
(01) Republic of Vietnam result possible overdose of anti-
malaria pills, autopsy has been requested."

B. "Report of Casualty, Date Prepared: 5 Jan 68.
"Non-Battle.
"Results of autopsy received - findings inadequate
to explain cause of death; died 6Nov67) ."

Another notation indicates that Paul Brugman commenced his
tour in Vietnam on March 4, 1967.

I did some investigating about anti-malaria pills and found
the:

compounds are very rapidly and completely absorbed after
swallowing. Toxic symptoms may occur within 30 minutes;
these symptoms consist of headache, drowsiness, visual
disturbances, cardiovascular collapse and convulsions,
followed by sudden and early respiratory and cardiac arrest.
Treatment must be immediate.⁹

Additionally, two physicians told me that because anti-malaria
medication is so quickly and thoroughly absorbed into the system,
an autopsy might not reveal evidence of the drug in the system.
According to a line corpsman in the Khe Sanh Valley,

the malaria pills were non-FDA approved, experimental.
FUO - fever of unknown origin. We lost a lot of kids
over there to that, if you didn't catch it early. Leave it
just one day and they died anyway, despite IV's and
sophisticated antibiotics.¹⁰

Paul Brugman had been in Vietnam for approximately 8 months,
assigned to the 3rd Marine Division in Quang Tri Province (I
Corps), the northernmost military region in South Vietnam.

Ironically, the date of Paul's death - November 6 - was the
date of his father's birthday; one year later, it would be the day
Joey Pignato died in Vietnam.

⁹PHYSICIANS' DESK REFERENCE, 44th Ed. Edward R. Barnhart,
Publisher. Oradell, NJ: Medical Economics, Co., Inc., 1990. Pp.
2306-2307.

¹⁰Patience H.C. Mason, RECOVERING FROM THE WAR: A WOMAN'S
GUIDE TO HELPING YOUR VIETNAM VET, YOUR FAMILY, AND YOURSELF. NY:
Penguin Books, 1990. P. 139.

John Cullin White

September 5, 1947 - January 16, 1968
(20 years, 4 months, 11 days)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Washington, DC
Panel 34E - Line 61

Specialist 4th Class
Army

Stories

1. Joe Pignato told me that he knew Edward White, Sr., and the older brother who is still in the service. According to Joe, John White and another fellow were fooling around with their guns in their living quarters; the other fellow's gun went off and killed John.

2. Stephanie MacNeil told me that she met the former Mrs. White, mentioned the research I am doing for this thesis and asked if Mrs. White would like to be interviewed. Mrs. White exclaimed that it would be far too difficult for her since she has never been to her son's grave in all these years.

Mrs. MacNeil added that Mrs. White always wears a Gold Star Mother's pin in a way that practically forces you to say something to her about it and then exclaims that her son was killed in Vietnam and she has never been to his grave.

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For Paul White, this data states:

Non-hostile casualty - died
Accidental homicide.

I received a copy of the Report of Casualty regarding John Cullin White from the National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records). The section regarding casualty status reads: "Non-battle; DIED 16 January 1968 in Vietnam from gunshot wound received while in his billets when struck by a round from a weapon which was accidentally discharged by another individual. Commenced tour in Vietnam 21 June 1966."

I learned that John was assigned to Advisor Team t96 at MACV-Headquarters in Vinh Long Province (IV Corps), the marshy Mekong Delta area, southernmost military region in South Vietnam. He arrived in Vietnam on June 21, 1966; he passed his 19th birthday that September.

Two weeks before the Tet Offensive in 1968, just four months and eleven days after his 20th birthday, John White became one of the 1,163 homicides in Vietnam, as counted by the Department of Defense.

This might go a long way toward explaining John's mother's reported attitude and behavior. After all, she had been married to a World War II veteran; much of their socializing occurred in local VFW and American Legion Post halls; she allegedly met her current husband in one of these locales; her older son made a career in the Army. The death of a child is devastating; the death of a son in war is horrible; the death of a son in a war that is controversial is disastrous; the accidental homicide of a son in a controversial war must compound this tragedy exponentially.

Robert Winslow Belcher

November 11, 1945 - April 11, 1968
(22 years, 5 months)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Washington, DC
Panel 49E - Line 19

Corporal
Marine Corps

Winthrop High School
Class of 1964

Yearbook caption;

Class Day Committee 3; Projection Club 1,2;
Lunchroom worker 1,2; Football 1,2,3; Track 1,2 - Captain 3;
Fudge Drive Captain 3; Gymnastics 3
"Joys have I many, cares have I none."

Lois Belcher was the first family member whom I called to interview. I had known Bobby all through high school; and I had known his sister, Beverly, both in high school and for many years previous to that in dancing school. Lois reminded me that she would hang out with the "smokers" among the mothers waiting for their daughters; therefore, she and my mother were long-time friends, too. In addition, in the early 1970's I was elected as a representative to the Winthrop Town Meeting where I would often see Lois.

Because of these intertwined relationships, I felt that this interview would be simultaneously the easiest and the most difficult for me.

Lois invited me to spend the weekend at her home in Yarmouth, and I arrived early on a Saturday afternoon. She showed me my room; introduced me to her 89-year-old mother who was staying with her for a few days; and introduced me to Kathy, her 32-year-old daughter, who lives with her. I had agonized over the kind of "bread and butter" gift I should bring to thank Lois for having me stay overnight. I thought - what would a woman who is retired and living on the Cape like from Cambridge; I debated bringing wine - what if she not only doesn't drink but doesn't approve of other's drinking; perhaps a fancy coffee from the Coffee Connection would be better - but what if she only drinks de-caf; finally, I decided on scented soap - rationalizing that everyone washes their hands. I pulled the gift-wrapped soap out of my overnight bag, presented it to Lois, and told her the story of my internal debate in choosing what to give her. Lois Belcher has one of the greatest, heartiest laughs I've ever heard; she roared her approval. It seems she's never been a coffee drinker (in fact, when I wanted coffee, I made it for myself - she's not very adept at using her own coffee-maker); she stopped drinking alcohol a while ago and now only drinks 3.2 beer herself, but she does have wine and alcohol on hand for others; she loved the soap.

We sat down in her sun room and talked and talked and talked. All of this was un-recorded. It was a way to reacquaint ourselves and get comfortable with one another. We didn't avoid talking about Bobby when it was relevant; but mostly we talked about our respective families and our own lives, the town of Winthrop, people we know in common. Lois fixed dinner for her mother and Kathy, and then she drove to a take-out fish restaurant to get our dinner. After we ate, I showed her pictures from my high school 20th reunion, and we talked about my classmates and Bobby's friends. We finally went to sleep at two o'clock in the morning.

After breakfast Sunday morning, Lois and I sat down in the sun room again; this time, I plugged in my tape recorder and we talked about Bobby.

E: It is Sunday morning, March 5; I am at the home of Lois Belcher in Yarmouth, MA. Lois is the mother of Robert Belcher, my highschool classmate and friend. Lois and I are going to talk about Bobby and his life and his death and what effect that has had on the Belcher family.

Good morning, Lois.

L: Good morning, Ellen. Where have I seen you before?

E: I don't know! What I'd like to start with is a very, very open-ended question that concerns the family - Bob's place in the family; how the family dealt with him, how the family expanded, what your dreams and hopes were for him, his childhood and early adulthood. Tell me anything at all that you want to tell me.

L: First thing is there isn't anybody in my family who ever called him Bob or Bobby. I think it's a riot because everybody who referred to him called him Bobby that day at the dedication [The Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated on Sunday, May 22, 1988]. That impressed me really funny. Beverly Joy [her daughter] and I discussed it; and she said, "It was Robert!" We always called him Robert, never called him by his nickname. That was one of the first things that struck me - "Well, look at that; your son's known by others very differently than you've ever thought of him."

Of course, Robert was our first-born - the first of seven pregnancies; the next successful pregnancy was Beverly, who is two years younger than he was. And, of course, he was the brother of Kathy, whom we eventually adopted when he was 10 years old. He was exceptional with her. As you know, she's a handicapped child, and that was our clue to his whole personality. The way he accepted her and the way Beverly accepted her were two entirely different ballgames. Beverly was very good with her within the privacy of our home but had a problem dealing with taking her places, whereas it never bothered Robert at all. He would always - took her everywhere; down the corner when he was meeting with the boys, a track meet, track practice. Just a difference in the personalities of the two human beings, and one of the main clues - main telling things - of what he probably, if he had survived, would have been. He would have been a person who dealt with people; he was very people oriented. What he would have become if he had come through this is a matter of conjecture, of course, but he would have been, feel - the gut feeling of all parents - that it would have been as a teacher, a coach, a social worker, or maybe even if he'd gone into the clergy, he'd have been a minister. Very hard, very hard, of course, to tell. Because who knows in what condition he would have come home if he did survive? I think of all the sad human beings who haven't been able to cope with life - with the drugs and drinking or whatever - that could have been Robert. I sure hope not, but it could have happened. And you always remember, your memories are always with the good things.

I mean, he was no angel (Laughter). He got into his share of scrapes. I can remember the first time that he got stopped by the police when he was driving. He ran a stop sign or something somewhere in Winthrop, and he got stopped. And I can remember when he came home, he said, "Boy, everybody knows you in town; you really have to behave!" (Laughter) Which is a very telling thing. But it came in handy, too.

He was a very small baby, premature like all my children. Weighed 4 pounds; he was in an incubator for 6 or 8 weeks. Never thought he'd go into the service because he had a crossed valve in his heart, and always thought we were safe - but that didn't work. He went into the Marines; he was accepted, no problem. Can't help but say I'm sorry! I wish there had been a problem, to a degree. But there wasn't.

He was a likeable kid - very outgoing - a clown. I've always been surprised he didn't get Class Clown! He was such a cut-up.

E: He had some stiff competition.

L: He wasn't the greatest student. The marks he got, he had to really work for. He goofed off an awful lot. One of the problems we had was to get him to apply himself, because every parent wants the best potential in their offspring, to motivate them. He had a very normal childhood. He got interested in sports; he played football, which I wasn't too happy about; but the track part of it, I was thrilled.

E: He was an outstanding athlete.

L: Yes, he was in very good shape, always. I can remember the size of his legs, like a man's legs from running; the muscles were hard. Part of a big crowd in school. Dated lots of girls; he had girls chasing him. Normal telephone calls you get at that age. He and Beverly were close. Especially after we - he was goofing off in school, and we kept him back, I think it was in the eighth grade, but it could have been the ninth - so that put them only a year apart. So socially a lot of their - they did a lot of things together, which we felt good for Beverly that she had a big brother to protect her. They might not have felt the same way many times, but we always felt better about them when they were out socially because they were in the same group. For a while his cousin Clayton Clayter lived with us after his parents died; he was two years older than Robert, so he had a peer within the household, and that was good. He was active in track; he was a pole vaulter; I think he had state records at his young age.

He was just a darned good kid. Mischievous as anybody else is at that age, but he managed to get through high school, was well-liked, had decent marks. And all of us, especially parents from my generation and Harold's, we wanted for them what we hadn't had, which mainly included a college degree.

So, he was accepted at Northeastern, and we felt the experience of living away from home, even though Northeastern was in Boston, would be a good one for him. So we did without a few extra things and came up with the money for him to live in a dorm.

he had a glorious year of partying, not studying, and having a ball, and he didn't make it into his second year at Northeastern. So when his father very smartly got him a job - he was an engineer with the telephone company - he got Robert a job digging ditches for the telephone company.

E: Aha!

L: Yes. After a summer of that, he realized that that was not what he wanted to do with his life and that he wanted to go back to college. We said, "You're on your own. We put you in a year; now it's up to you." He got into North - no, he went to Boston State. Yes, Boston State. I think by a back door, with some help from somebody in the administration at the high school, from his track records as an athlete. He lived at home that time. And I never saw anybody who did less homework in my life (Laughter). I don't know how he got through - and we had plenty of words about it. "When are you going to get responsible? When are you going to buckle down? When are you going to accept responsibility?" One day he acted - a weekend, when he had just partied the whole weekend long - I was so upset with him, I had words with him that morning; and that night, he didn't come home. I think it was October 28, 1966 - which was Kathy's 10th birthday. He got home late that night; my husband and I were in bed, and he came into our bedroom and said, "Well, I decided you were right, Mum. It's time I became responsible, grew up and accepted responsibility, so I joined the Marine Corps today." I thought it was the end of my world. A very difficult time. His father had a hard time accepting it, and I did too. I felt responsible because I had had words with him that morning about his lack of responsibility.

He was a darned good Marine! He became gung-ho to the gung-hoest of the gung-ho. I think if Ollie North says he's gung-ho, well, Robert was a gung-ho Marine! I remember we went down to his graduation, my mother, Beverly, Harold and I. We saw a man there, there's no doubt about it; he was definitely a man. How anybody can live through Marine basic training and not become a man is more than I can see. As a mother walking around that day, all I wanted to do was pop those Drill Sergeants, the way they were pushing those kids; but of course I realized that it was for their own survival. He went through two or three courses here in the United States, anyway, then ends up volunteering for duty in Vietnam.

He was within 30 days, I think, of coming home, leaving Vietnam, his tour was over, when during one of the strafings of whatever hill it was he was on at Khe Sanh - they had numbers for all the different hills - they had strafed the hill. This information, by the way, we got later from a Mr. Bagley in Winthrop; he was very, very good about helping us because we just

wanted to understand what had happened; he was an officer over there, a Marine, and he found out what had happened. So it seemed that Robert was diving for a trench and injured his back, and a couple of days later, it was so severe that he was put on a Marine medevac helicopter and was being taken with the wounded to the hospital, which now I can't remember where it was; it was close by. He would have been out of there, wherever they would have taken him. Our helicopter and an Army helicopter, with the vagaries of the weather and lifting off and stuff - the two of them collided. It had nothing to do with the enemy; we didn't even have - there isn't anybody to hate. It wasn't anybody's fault. It was human error, mechanical fluctuations of helicopters. They crashed, and they were all killed.

Mr. Bagley found out that - or we were told, depending on what you want to believe - that they - somebody - went out to the area of the jungle where they crashed - it's hard for me to believe because you can't see wasting more human lives to go out into the jungle for what had, you know, two fiery crashed, you know there's not going to be any survivors. But they said that's what they did. And they said they got the bodies back. The only thing that I ever asked for from the Marine Corps were his dog tags, so I'd have proof, you know, that it was him. Because he wouldn't be without his dog tags. And I never got them! So, for years I was looking ahead or around a corner or sitting in the church or, you know, thinking that he was still alive. But of course he couldn't have been. When they brought back the sealed casket and everything, you couldn't look; it could have been a pile of stones in there. But that was a very hard thing for us, when his effects came back, there were no dog tags with them. So I have a feeling they never did go out and retrieve the bodies. But that's just motherly anguish. (Very teary and emotional.)

I don't know what else to tell you about him, his part in the family. He was the first-born. I was unfortunate with many miscarriages. Beverly and Robert suffered a lot with the times I went - "Oh, Mummy's going to come home with a new baby" type of thing. We never quite made it. And so we adopted Kathy.

Another thing I can remember about how he fit in and how life was, was the grilling that social workers would give at the time that we started proceeding - we were foster parents for Kathy, first, and then we started to, you know. When her time with us as a foster child was up and she was put into Waltham - I forget what the place was called, I can't think - but we decided to start to fight to adopt her And it took a long time before we knew. But

the children were subjected to a great deal. Beverly and Robert were subjected to a great deal of grilling by the social workers for the state in terms of how they felt about this handicapped child becoming legally their sister. "How would you feel with her at your wedding; how would you feel when you bring dates home?" Robert was very feisty about the whole thing, "She's my sister. What difference does it make how - I'd never be embarrassed by her." I can remember that very well. I felt that they were very hard on the kids. They would say, "Money is going to be taken for

Kathy for medical expenses; that money could have been yours to go to school. How are you going to feel about this?"

E: That's obnoxious.

L: But, you can see their point, too, you know.

E: But they couldn't have been very old - 10 or 11 or so.

L: Well, they were 12 and 14, I think, by the time we got to the adoption stage. It was hard on them, and they both felt the same way. I can remember Robert - Beverly just sat there because she was very quiet and everything and didn't speak up - and he was belting out the answers to them about how he'd feel. That's a big thing I can remember.

Another thing I can remember, which I think we owe his life to Mattie Boyle is - and another thing that's an indication of the type of human being he would have been if there had been no war and he hadn't gone, was he wanted to go down and march with Martin Luther King, very badly. He felt very strongly about it. There was nothing his father and I could say to dissuade him. So we finally said to him, "Go and talk to Mattie Boyle. You respect him, he's an ex-Marine, he's been there, he went through - where did he go to college, I can't remember where he went to college he's a city boy, he lived in the city, had much more experience with the black and white situation in life and mixing together than we have here in Winthrop where there are so few mixture and everything; so, go and talk to him. And we'll sup - we'll go - we can't fight you on this anymore." And they talked at length; and sure, we didn't contact, we didn't do anything behind the scenes. And he came home, and the best I can remember it, it was that Mattie said, "You want to help people and you want to fight for their rights, and that's right, you want to do the right thing. But do it where it will count. Get your education, be somebody that can hold some weight in this situation. Don't go down there and get thrown in jail and get a police record that will always be with you and will hamper you not only to get into the military, but as far as your credibility in life." So that's where we owe a lot to Mattie Boyle, because he could easily have been one of the ones that was clubbed to death or, or, you know, hurt.

E: Are you telling me that Robert wanted to go to Mississippi for the summer?

L: Yes.

E: That was the summer after we got out of high school, 1964, the year of Mississippi Freedom Summer?

L: Yes, that's what he wanted. We, of course, didn't want him to go - not because of what he was going for but because we were

afraid. We didn't want our son killed or beaten or - it wasn't that we didn't feel that he was going to work for a good thing; it was that was the way we felt. But that's just another indication of where he was headed in life.

Let's see. Family, first-born, how he fit in, close relationships with his sisters and cousins. What else about Robert?

E: Dreams?

L: Dreams for him to be the best he was. If he was a street sweeper, be the best street sweeper around! We never had a career in mind - you know, "Oh I want you to be a doctor." No, just be the best at what you are and develop your potential.

E: Once he got into the Marines did you see that it was something that he apparently loved very much - did he enjoy it?

L: He was gung-ho; h~ wanted that to be his life. That was going to be his career, at that stage. But whatever you're immersed in, is very important to you.

E: He was 20 years old at the time, too.

L: Right. But whatever you are involved in, be it Boy Scouts, PTA, Town Meeting, whatever, you're living for that.

E: But there was something in the Marines and in Bob that he put together.

L: Right, right. He felt that he wanted to - that was his career at the time. And it would have been a good career. And he would have been a damned good Marine! I can always see him as one of those people back down there drilling the kids, and I'd think, "Oh, no, don't do that!" When I see that they were teaching them how to survive - if they weren't like that, they wouldn't make it through any trouble in the war.

E: When Bob went off to Vietnam, and he sent letters, did he talk about what he saw going on there; or did he send letters home saying, "Don't worry; things are fine?"

L: I haven't been able to pull his letters out to re-read. I still have them all. I'm sort of chicken on that! It's hard bringing up all that. But, no, I think he, within the restrictions of the censorship, I think he talked about the people and other men with him. Gee, Ellen, that's a hard one for me to answer. Certainly there were never any complaining letters or certainly not "90 more days 'til I come home," or anything like that. He did his job - he was in electronics of some sort, codes and radio and scrambling and things like that, was what he was into when he was over there. He wasn't a front-line infantryman

or whatever, I forget the term that the Marines used to use - grunt, or whatever. But he had to do, well, I'm sure he had to fire his gun many times, but I don't have any instances of that. He'd say how he missed us all and loved us all, and everything like that. Beverly might have some different memories on the letters.

You know, when you're hurt, you shut a lot of things out; and as we discussed before, being in Winthrop, everybody remembers different things in a different manner. People whose life he was part of talk with you and give you a whole other side of them that, naturally, his parents aren't aware of.

I just know that he was a son that we were very proud of. We were hard, we were strict parents; in some ways, like most World War II parents, we overindulged our children because we wanted them to have what we thought we had missed out on. When we all came through it and started raising our families, we did without things to give them that extra thing many times. But we were also very hard on them academically. I pushed; I wanted him to excel.

I remember going to one of those Parents' Nights, you know how you have to go to Parents' Nights after marks? He was a B/C student, he wasn't an all A student, like my grandchildren are. I can remember the teacher's face - funny, I can't remember his name - if he were alive, he'd give you a different view of Robert - well, we were standing in line, working our way up to his desk, and we got up there and he looked up. He was a dark, thin teacher, and I think his name began with C - I can just see him. We introduced ourselves and said, "We're Robert Belcher's parents." His mouth actually, literally, fell open; "You're Robert Belcher's parents? I thought he came out of nowhere!" His idea of Robert was the clown that didn't pay attention - he couldn't believe that he came from a set of parents that cared enough to come to Parent's Night (Laughter).

E: Oh, my! (laughter)

L: I can't remember his name. It began with K or C or something. But he - uh, uh, after that he was, he realized he was part of a family, knew that somewhere someone did care about him, and he seemed to pay more attention, and it turned out he was one of Robert's favorite teachers, and Robert learned the most from this man! But it really was funny. The man's mouth literally fell open. "You're Bobby Belcher's parents?!" He had no idea anybody was going to care enough to come up there to school to see about this C he had gotten. It was something! That just popped into my mind now, as to how different people saw him.

Of course, Peter Allen was one of his best friends. I think Peter kept him even and level and from doing crazy things sometimes. Peter was more stable; Bobby, now Bobby - I never called him that, Bobby! Robert was more outgoing and involved.

E: Peter was very quiet; my guess is that Peter was sly. I think he didn't get caught. (Laughter)

L: (Laughing) That could very well be! That could very well be!

E: His mind was always working. (Laughter)

L: But of course parents have entirely different views than you and the classmates and the other people. I don't know, you'll have to ask me another question and lead me on; I'm at the end of whatever I think you asked. Hint, hint.

E: After Bobby died, the war continued on for 5 more years, and other boys from Winthrop died. It was a small group of families who had suffered the loss of a child. The town suffered, but each family suffered individually and alone. Was there anything that you - the families - did together to comfort one another?

L: No, I, we, each one went to the other; you know, like once you've lost a son and the next person who comes up, Mr. Countaway, and I went to the Logan's, who I didn't know; the Countaways I knew from town things vaguely. But the only time we were together in a group - and I was trying last night to think why - was on the grounds of the Chelsea Naval Hospital; we were lined up in public display, which is a very difficult thing, was a very difficult thing when we went to the dedication of this Vietnam Memorial in Winthrop; but I can't remember why. I don't think it's when, maybe it's when they gave their Purple Hearts and things like that. But that's the only - it was too painful to be with the others. Our grief was too painful to talk with them, and yet we could talk to other people.

I can remember going down to the Center in the time following Robert's death, and I could see people coming at me sometimes who'd cross the street; it was because it was too painful for them to address me. Some days I'd say, "Thank God," and other days I'd think, "Hey, he lived; we have to talk about him." They lived, they were part of life, they were your heart's love, and you can't not. talk about them. Mr. Belcher and I had a very hard time talking about him together, but we each could talk to other people; by the grace of God, we had that capability. It was just too painful to talk to the other parents. I don't know if the others got together, but Harold and I didn't. Not that when we saw each other we, there wasn't an unspoken sympathy going between us, empathy, sympathy; but, no, we didn't form a group. I never became a Gold Star Mother; it just wasn't, wasn't my way.

I was more fortunate than Mr. Belcher in dealing with the grief because we were "patterning" Kathy at the time; patterning is a form of physical therapy for brain injured children. I had teams of volunteers coming in and out of the house, 7 days a week. I had to tend to that - it was a constant thing. Mr. Belcher, on the other hand, on the day that Robert's body was returned to Logan Airport, the telephone company went on strike, and Mr. Belcher was out of work. And it was a long period of time; I can't remember now, but it was 6 or 9 months. It was a very long

strike. And it couldn't have been a worse time that he didn't have his job to go to, keep his mind busy; and the house was a beehive of activity and he had no privacy. It was very, very difficult.

Grief is so individual. I didn't hold any bitterness. I didn't have anybody to be bitter against, except myself for having fought with him, for having him join the Marines in the first place that morning. But you can't hang on to that.

E: No.

L: You can't do that. Not if you're going to survive. And you can't not talk about it if you're going to survive. You just can't carry a load of guilt, can't carry blame, and you can't blame other people. I seemed to sense in my Harold that he even blamed other young men of the same age for being alive. And that was very difficult, and it ate at him; and that type of bitterness and everything even contributed to his cancer. I've often felt that a person under extreme emotional distress is a prime target for whatever cancer is within your body, which I think it is, that we all have inside, and something triggers it; it triggered his. He could never, could never let loose of his grief, and it gnawed at him.

E: I've heard many returned veterans say that they have felt that kind of feeling emanating from the parents of someone who died: "Why wasn't it you? Why was it my son?"

L: I don't know how they can live with themselves with that. I don't think Harold would ever have felt that way about boys who came back - it was boys who didn't go. Me, I was saying to every young man that came in, every nephew that was getting to that age, "Go to Canada!" I didn't want them to go to Vietnam; Harold had strong feelings that if his son had to go, then they should go. I don't know. You don't know another person's inner world; it just ate him up, it just absolutely ate him up, there's no doubt about it. As I say, I had to keep going; I had all these other wonderful people working for another of my children, so how could I - I was fortunate.

E: Both you and Harold were World War II veterans?

L: Yes.

E: You were in

L: Coast Guard, and he was in the Navy.

E: And, as you said earlier, the parents who lived through World War II, actually lived through the Depression and then served or came through World War II, wanted to provide for their children;

you wanted to keep us safe, give us the college educations you had missed because the War interfered, bigger and better houses, suburbia, make our lives better in general.

L: Yes, the majority of us in that age bracket were that way, yes. I think that also led to a lot of the problems - because we had overindulged you; and a lot of us hadn't made you all accept responsibility for your own actions because we were trying to protect you. You can't do that.

E: Someone I interviewed last year for another project told me that it wasn't until our senior year in high school, when Jack Kennedy was assassinated, that she had any idea that something that happened in the nation could affect her as a person. I think you can apply that to what happened to us when we got out of high school and then went off to college or dropped out of college and went into the service or dropped out of college to fight the war that was going on, to try to stop it. That all happened at the time when we were the right age to go off to do battle in whatever area it was. The Civil Rights Movement was unfolding in front of our eyes on television when we were the right age to understand the morality of the issue and want to do something about it - even if there was very little we could do as teenagers in Winthrop; but it had an effect on us for the rest of our lives. Robert was not alone in wanting to aid in that effort.

Robert was killed in 1968, which in the annals of American history was a miserable year. The war went on for seven more years.

L: Right at this point while you're talking, I'd like to say to you when you refer to it as a war, at that time remember it was being referred to as the Vietnam Era. Era in my mind being spelled e-r-r-o-r, and not e-r-a. They didn't even dignify this thing that took 58,000 boys with the word war.

E: Yes, officially, it was not a war.

L: That was a very hard thing to deal with.

E: I've often heard it referred to as the Vietnam Conflict. It's also known as the Second Indochina War - the first belongs to the French, of course. I often think of it as the American War in Vietnam, myself.

L: Era was the word that always stuck in my mind. E-r-a, but it's e-r-r-o-r to the rest of us.

E: And with our Boston accents, it comes out the same anyway.

Towards the end of the '70's, we started to see in movies and on tv, stories about returning Vietnam veterans who were almost always portrayed as psychologically damaged, if not also physically damaged. There was not a great image of these boys.

They had served their country, sent off to fight in a foreign country, and came back to a nation that seemed totally different than the one they had left. The country was divided on the issue of Vietnam; the women's movement had exploded; race riots had occurred in many, many cities. The whole country wasn't behind Vietnam the way it was for World War II. So, we got the portrayal of the deranged Vietnam vet who'd shoot up a whole city or kill his family or sit in the corner and whimper for the rest of his life. Sadly, some of that is based in reality; but not for most of the ones who served. Three million boys did not come back damaged to that extent - yes, everyone's been affected, but they are not all in that kind of shape. And these movies and tv shows didn't help; in a lot of ways, they contributed to the myth of the poor, maimed, unfortunate soldier.

The vets themselves do not present a monolithic image. Some came back gung-ho the war; others became anti-war activists. The academicians and politicians talk about strategy and purpose and will - we never lost a battle, we lost politically; TET was really our victory, TET was their victory; the soldiers weren't allowed to win. All that stuff. Which left the mythology open to what has been called Ramboization.

Eventually, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial got built. I sent money - I said, "I have three friends whose names will be on that wall, I'm going to help." I got a little pin for my donations - I'm very proud of that; it means a lot to me. Local groups started to create their own monuments. And in Winthrop, there was a gravemarker put in the cemetery that lists the Vietnam dead on one side and the Korean dead on the other side. That was put into place in 1984. The same year, the same Memorial Day Weekend, the intersection of Lincoln Street and Ingleside Avenue was named in honor of Robert - Robert Belcher Square.

L: That was another big shock to me because they notified me and everything. They had put a little stand up there, and the parade stopped there and they had a little service. I was - here, I think. What year did you say?

E: 1984.

L: Yes, I was here; I was a widow. Naturally, I went up there. I was under the impression that there were going to be seven or eight of that same thing done that same day; and it was a great shock to me that that was not true. I had real bad feelings about it for all the other parents; their sons were just as dead. I was pleased for Robert; and it was an ideal spot because we lived on Ingleside, of course, and his father had been born and brought up in that house. But I was truly shocked because I thought it was going to be everybody - and it was hard for me to deal with that it was just Robert Belcher Square that year. Then we got to the cemetery, and the list was on the other side of the Korean vets - and I realized how terribly unremembered all those boys were. For some reason, I thought they should have their own. I'm sure they

were pressed for time. It's a lovely spot of course. But at the time, I thought they were taking away from their having given up their lives.

Going back to what you said before about coming home psychologically damaged, everybody came home from World War II psychologically pretty damaged, also. But the damage that these young men are suffering today from and have suffered all along was because of their lack of acceptance at home. That's what did the damage more than the war. If they had support of the - well, a few people helped. A lot of these boys' lives wouldn't be so sad and wasted. I often feel sad, sadder, for those parents than I do for the boys who are dead because in the hospitals are many Vietnam people who are living dead - their parents don't have their sons, but he's not buried someplace, he's not at rest. And it's the ones who are walking around with these horrible remembrances - and how can you not have any self pity - and we just don't, no matter how much we think we understand, we don't. We didn't go through it; we didn't have to run bayonets through a child; we didn't have to destroy grandparents. I feel sadder for that group of parents than I do for us, because ours - if you believe - our sons have gone on to some other form of life.

And that's another remembrance of Robert. It was something that helped me go on and hope. The summer after he was killed, Beverly Joy went to work in Nantucket. She asked, "Are you sure you and Daddy will be all right?" We assured her we wanted her to enjoy the summer; we were being macho brave and forced to go on with life. Yet dying because she was going to leave us, and we wouldn't have her. But I drove her down, and we got on the boat and went over and helped her get unpacked at the boarding house where she was going to stay - she was going to work at Young's Bicycle Shop on the wharf. Robert had worked for them one summer, too. And then I left her and came back, very sad; here I was going to be three months without her. I was really sad. I was standing out on the deck, and it was raining hard as we were coming into Wood's Hole. Usually the boat just comes in. But for some reason or another this day, the engines shut off and we sort of backwatered as we approached the dock. All of a sudden, a big shaft of sun came out - and Robert spoke to me. He said, "Morn, it's all right to be sad. But don't be so sad." Just like that! And then the boat started up and went into the dock. And that's been a very helpful thing to me because of my believing in the continuity of the spirit that was the person when they were here in this form as a human being. It was a real big help. (Very teary and emotional.)

E: Mattie told me that he feels Bob is looking over his shoulder; that he, Matt, seeks approval - "Am I doing something that Bob would think was the right thing?" I don't know that I've ever quite put it that way myself; but I know the first time I went to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial - being the tall person that I am,

L: You little shrimp! (Laughter)

E: Yes - the only name that I knew personally that I could physically reach was Bob's. And I couldn't bring myself to touch it because I was afraid I'd add to the hurt. I couldn't touch one of the names that had brought me there. I knew in my head that this was engraved marble - but it was so alive that I didn't want to add to the pain. And I couldn't do it. I still haven't touched it. And yet that's the only one that I am physically capable of reaching because it's at the right level for me.

L: I've never been able to touch it. I go, as I told you, twice a year usually, when I visit the grandchildren. Beverly usually brings flowers, and on his birthday in November, she'll bring a balloon - a Happy Birthday kind of thing. But I've never laid a note or anything there. It's a very moving thing.

I can remember at the dedication what you said about that movie that was going to be aired - I watched it. That was a big help. Scuggs?

E: Scuggs.

L: Scuggs and their aiming for this goal. And you talked about Winthrop's memorial coming from individuals - and this certainly did. And inept ones, you know, at that, and all in all - it was a very well done thing. I'd like to meet him - see if he thinks it was well done. But it certainly made it very human, the whole thing. And I've never understood the feelings the people had when they put the statue of the three men up there overlooking the Wall. I just thought that was a wonderful top-off of the whole thing, but there were a lot of feelings about that, too.

Everyone's entitled to their own opinion, their own thoughts. It's wonderful how you can go to either end and look in the book - I couldn't tell you today what panel and what line because I don't want to, I can't do it, you know, I have to go look each time. Beverly knows it by heart. I know about where to walk to and find it, but as far as counting the panel, I don't have to count them; I look down because, as you said, it's right there.

But I think the part you said last night about them trying to put together on the day - those that died on that same day, and maybe in the same instance - that was truly revealing to me. I'll have a pad of paper and pencil with me when I go down next week - and I'll write down the names - not that I'll ever do anything with them, but at least I'll have something to associate with him.

I was contacted by a young man who was going to write a book, and I had the worst vibes about it - it was exploitation and stuff. He was a Vietnam vet, and he had known Robert. I suffered terribly when I got it. He got to me through the service; he mailed it to them, and they mailed it to me, because they don't give out addresses - and he asked to hear from me. He gave me an idea of what he wanted in the book. Somewhere I have that. That was the most pain - that was very painful for me. But I had very

bad, very bad feelings about it. I let different nieces and nephews, my sister, my daughter, read it to see if they'd go along with this and allow this. And they didn't. And I didn't. I got this official document after I was here, as a widow and everything. I was like - "He's really alive. I was right; he never was killed. He crawled out of that jungle, and he's been there all this time." That's what I thought it was. I thought, I thought I was going to have a heart attack. When it was in that official envelope from the government. But, no, that wasn't it. I didn't do anything about it. He was a very, very confused - very, trying to struggle back from - but I couldn't allow Robert's life to be part of that book. Right or wrong, that's what I decided. I asked Beverly if she felt strongly about it; I would have gone along and let him contact her. He said he'd written a couple of letters to her right after it happened, and she vaguely remembered the name. I had never known it before. I went for years aching for somebody who knew him to contact me in the beginning, something, some connection with some other human being I never had it. And then '84, '85, whenever this was - time gets lost to me now, in my semi-old-age.

E: Lois!

L: (Laughter) But I couldn't; in fact, I was going to go to Mattie with the whole thing and see what he - and then I thought, "No, it's just something that has to be decided by me." He probably would have said let him get into print, but I-I couldn't do it.

E: I prefer to think my way *is* a better approach.

L: Yeah. I don't know. It's so painful.

E: I'm biased.

L: It's - it's not painful. It's funny, when you called and you said something about being very painful - it isn't painful because you have to - I mean, have to remember and you want to remember, and it's a major part of your memory - so painful wasn't the right word. But I don't know what the right word was. It's emotional, I guess. As you can see, I'm already emotional and teary. But go ahead.

E: In the creation of the Winthrop memorial, my part of the story was that I had been at the Washington Memorial the previous winter; and I had the rubbing made.

L: Yes.

E: For myself. Bobby's name. They mailed it to me, and I had it framed, and I put up in my apartment. And when it came time for the High School Class of 1964 to start planning its 25th

Reunion, I was going to bring this plaque with me and ask the Reunion Committee, as the only still-existing body that can speak for our class, to give that as a gift to the high school in honor of Bob's memory, in honor of our class. Here we've lived 25 years; we're successful, not successful, happy, not happy, mid-forties, watching our kids grow up - and in every single one of our hearts, there's a spot that's Bob Belcher.

L: Who stayed where he was then and hasn't gotten to this point.

E: Exactly! Exactly!

L: That was the shock of looking at the Class of '64 20th Reunion pictures with you last night, seeing them all - Oh, I forgot, he's older or fatter, he wouldn't be the way he was in high school.

E: That's right. Bob can't age; he's eternally 22. Well, that was my part of it. I knew my classmates would go along because I knew how everyone felt, feels, about Bob. There isn't anyone who didn't like him.

L: Well, I wouldn't say that. I'm sure there's

E: Let's say that I haven't found anyone who didn't like him!

L: Speaking of memories brings me back to Carol Dalrymple. Around the time that Robert was killed, she had received a legacy of some money from her grandmother. So she established the Bobby - Bobby again! Ha-ha! - the Robert Belcher Scholarship, under the Dollars for Scholars program. Different boys who've gotten it I've heard from; not every year, but quite often, they've written a letter. I think I got one last year or the year before; and of course, this child's parents could be younger than him - and that's quite a wonderful thing. And that's a plaque in the high school the recipients have their names put on each year. When you told me about the plaque, you brought back that to my mind. It's quite a thing. I got a letter from Dollars for Scholars this year; I think the point of its being given is running out now without being refunded or something. But that was a really wonderful thing all these years.

E: Well, my little plaque idea got joined with the already-existing notion that one of the teachers had.

L: Was that Huck Larsen who started it?

E: Yes, he had been talking about it apparently for a while; he told me he realized that talking about it wasn't getting it done and he had to do something further. So he wrote to the School Committee because he wanted it in the high school to be used in both a formal classroom situation when teachers taught about the

Vietnam War - that they would have something to show to the kids in the school saying here were boys from Winthrop who served in that war, and they were killed; there are others who served who were not killed, but this is the form we've got in order to remember all of them - to use it as a teaching device, a living memorial. And he also said he wanted it to be there for just anecdotal conversation stimulation. It is now a huge piece of art in the lobby of what was formerly a bare entrance-way to the high school.

L: Oh, it is well, well done. It really is a tremendous memorial. When I walked in that day and saw it - it just couldn't have been done better.

E: I'm looking forward to the end of the school year and going back to the high school to see what they're going to do with it. The head of the History Department has told me that they spend two or three days discussing the War in Vietnam.

L: You mean a class, a class spends two or three days on Vietnam as part of their curriculum?

E: Yes, that's what I've been told - each history class. They will make some use of the memorial. And again, it will be a reminder of the lives, not just the deaths, but the lives of the eight boys from Winthrop, serving as representatives of 58,000 Americans - God knows how many Vietnamese; there's no accurate number of that.

From the evidence of the day of the dedication, the families were deeply moved, touched and proud. Again, I'm looking forward to talking with them to see what they have to say. I'm just guessing that those are the emotions I was reading that day. It will be interesting.

L: Yeah, it really will. Let's see, that day my niece Ann and I drove up from here, I left Kathy with Barbara. Ann's husband, Tom, is a photographer and he came, too. I hadn't notified anybody because I figured they're recipients of the paper; Harold has a brother and sister in town. I figured, they're Winthrop residents and they get the paper - and who am I to say, "Would you come to this ceremony, twenty years later?" It wasn't something that even - I suppose it did occur to me, but I didn't - I did try to get Beverly Joy up, I was going to fly her up, but it happened to be the Sunday when her Bobby had to stand up in church and declare, "Yes, I want to be confirmed and become a Catholic" - and that was the day he was to do it. So, naturally, she had to be there, and couldn't be in Winthrop. But Robert's godfather, Bob Fulton, who's my - was - my husband's best friend, our attorney, too, was very put out with me, very hurt that I hadn't let him know; he's in upper state New York, and I hadn't let him know so he could be with me. It didn't occur to me that I had supporters - my younger sister was very angry, she wanted to be there for ~

sake. That didn't occur to me. It was just something I had to go through! Ann was seven or eight months pregnant, and it never even occurred to me to say to her "Come sit in the family seats." I mean, I was just blind, obeying orders; they said, "Family sit down," and I sat down. It was just a, a - you were focused in on "Let me get through this with some dignity." As I said to Tom, "Don't, do not, turn that camera on that group of us sitting there; don't take - don't expose us to that." That - you know - when they did the filming, thank God they worked from behind us so that these people didn't have to see themselves.

I felt sorry the whole time for the people - you people up there on the steps looking down at us! I thought, "Boy, that must be hard." A couple of speakers had to talk over our heads.

E: Yes, I was one of them.

L: (Laughter) It was - doesn't matter the number of years, it still hurts. You know. You wish he had lived, and you remember him; but it hurts. When you get some of these young people who see that tape - and it was done for the parents of the remaining people there - have to relate in some way to "This could be my parent." And the young man that spoke [Robert Giullano, WHS Class of 1968], God, that was practically ripped out of him; he did a marvelous job. But it took a lot out of him, emotionally. And I suppose it's a cleansing thing for him in a way, afterwards; he must have realized it was - it must have been terribly painful for him to go through. When he spoke about speaking to his son about it and everything, he spoke of his anger at his reception at getting home - good! That was a good thing to say. But it must have taken a lot of guts - he should be much admired.

E: Huck has promised that he will contact Bob and ask if I can interview him for this project.

L: Oh, good. In hindsight, there must be a lot of boys from Winthrop who were there in Vietnam who didn't come. Now, Bruce McEachern's son, Peter, came; now he was in Vietnam. And I think I spotted one other; and there was George Reed's accidentally being in town. If they see this, and I understand they showed it on the Winthrop channel, I bet a lot of them wished that they had gone to it, as well as a lot more townspeople. The audience that I think you on the Committee hoped to get, being the high school kids, other than the band members who had to be there, it didn't hit them; but if they saw it on television, then, that-that really was a-a very smart thing to do.

E: I've been told that people have said, "Gee, if I had known it was going to be that wonderful, I'd have come." Well, we didn't know it was going to be that wonderful, but we tried to encourage people to come. I remember focusing on Lenny Riley - he was leaning against the gate of the tennis court; he's tall and has

red hair, and I could look at him and not be too emotional - so I could avoid looking at the families right under my nose. Lenny was my saving grace. I saw Ronnie Camacho and Shep Gurwitz - both of them served in Vietnam. Sheppy spoke to me afterwards; what he did was pick me up and give me the world's biggest bear hug, a kiss on the neck - and then he walked away. There was nothing he could say. I know there are other Vietnam vets in town, but they apparently don't want to be approached.

L: It's painful, painful. I mean, they have got to feel that hindsight's not going to make up for what they suffered, you know.

E: There is no way to make up for it.

L: No, no. It's hard.

E: But what Jan Scruggs has said to me - Jan and I have become friends in the last couple of years

L: Oh, how nice!

E: Jan said that in the early years after the dedication, he would go to the Wall at all hours of the day and night, but he doesn't do it as much any more. And there would always be someone there. It didn't matter what time of day

L: That's true.

E: Or what time of the year, what kind of weather. There is always someone there.

L: Yes, I've been there on Christmas Day, on Easter - I've been there on Robert's birthday.

E: I was there on Robert's birthday this past year! [Robert Belcher's birthday is November 11 - Veterans Day; since 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington has been the site of a major ceremony on Veterans Day.]

L: Oh, were you? That's one of the greatest tributes. And the demeanor of the people. The first time we went was before they even had the walk; you know, it was all mud and everything like that. And that's a tribute. That's the unsung tribute. That's a lot of people who are trying to make up - it's wonderful (crying). I've never been there when there hasn't been a big crowd, myself, no matter when I've gone. And we're there more often than most parents, having a daughter who lives in Washington. I never go down but what I go to the Memorial.

E: I don't go to synagogue very often

L: I don't go to cemeteries

E: No, I don't go to cemeteries very often, either.

L: My husband, son and children that didn't survive aren't there for me! A lot of people do, and it's very important to them, and it's a help.

E: Yes. I remember my father telling me that it wasn't necessary for me to go to my grandparents' graves; I wanted to for some reason, and I asked about it - but my father said, "There's no reason that you have to go. It's just a stone with names on it. They're in here (pointing to heart)."

L: Yes, that's right.

E: He said the same thing when he was dying. "You don't have to go to the cemetery when you come to Florida. It's in here (pointing to heart again)."

L: Speaking of that makes me think - I had a cardinal here.

E: A bird cardinal.

L: A bird cardinal, yes.

E: We're on tape here; the tape isn't going to know we're in a sun room looking out at your garden.

L: Right! In fact, I saw one this morning. My grandchildren were very, very close to Harold. When their grandfather died, Robert was 8 and Amy was 6. And they were having trouble dealing with his death - why was he taken from them, and everything. Like any grandmother, I wanted to help them. They were with me for a month that first summer; Beverly and Richard were very good letting me have the children. I was trying to explain eternity to them, as I understand it. About the person - what you are is inside you, and this is the body and you leave it, but you go on in some form or another. It happened to be a year when we had a bad caterpillar year. And I said, "You come back in some form or another, that's what I believe." Well, the children were 6 and 8 - very little. And I couldn't kill a caterpillar or a mosquito or an ant for two or three days - "No, that might be Grampy!" So, I thought I've got to do something about this! As I was sitting out here one morning before they came out, a cardinal was in the yard. I said, "I've made a decision; Grampy was a handsome man; he was very much alive and everything, and I want to think of him being free. So, I've decided that cardinal is Grampy." I had to be able to start to kill the bugs!

E: Otherwise you'd have no company!

L: I said, "To me, that's going to be Grampy." That sounded really good to them, and they called the bird Grampy. Well, soon

after that, I was in the house and Bob was out here: "Grammy, Grammy, come here quick!" And I came out, and he said, "Grampy's taken a new wife." So I went to the edge of the porch, and I put my hands on my hips and I said, "Now, Harold, it's all right for you to take a new wife, but you don't have to bring her around here!" (Laughter)

So that apparently bothered Amy. The next morning, she came out and she sat here on the steps and she said, "Grammy, I've been thinking. You know Aunt Evelyn [the wife of Bob Fulton, Harold's best friend] died a few months back. I don't think Grampy's taken a new wife; I think that's Aunt Evelyn and he's taking care of her." (Laughter)

E: That's sweet.

L: Yeah.

E: I like that.

L: It helped them out. You never know what little thing is going to help anybody face anything.

E: Let me ask you one more question, and you may want to defer this to Beverly. Beverly's oldest child is a boy, and his name is Robert. He's named for your Bob?

L: Richard has a brother named Robert, as well, so he's named for both of them. And he was born November 4 - and Robert was - no, that's wrong. He was born April 4 and Robert was killed April 11; Amy was born November 10, and Robert's birthday was November 11.

E: That's interesting. When I was speaking with Beverly earlier this morning (unrecorded telephone conversation), she was telling me about her Bobby. And you've talked about him; it sounds to me - with the exception of this Bob's being a better student than your Bob - it sounds to me like Bob Belcher's alive in this kid somehow.

L: Yes. We feel that, we feel that way. He's very caring, extremely sensitive, he cares about the other kids that have problems; yes, I see a lot of Robert. Physically, he resembles more his father's side, the Berardinos, and Amy resembles the Belchers more. But, yes, there's many, many, many things that we - both of us - see. And it is something that when you visit with her you can ask her about. Yes, and you probably will meet him yourself. He's gone in for the same type of things as Robert - Boy Scouts, he was an acolyte - I don't think that's what they call it in the Catholic Church, but like Robert was in the Episcopal Church - altar boy, I think they call it.

E: That's it.

L: Right. And he's built like the Berardinos, but his build is older for his age; he's muscular, and that reminds you. Yes, I relive a lot of Robert in my grandson.

E: That must be warm and comforting to you.

L: Yes, very comforting. Yes. Some of his anger I can relate to Robert. I think Robert if he - my Robert, Robert Senior, Robert Junior! - I think that he held things, if he was angry or disapproved at rules we set down or something or restrictions put on him, and he held it back from us, although you knew he was angry. I can see that in young Robert. I wish he'd spit it out - I think it's healthy to spit it out. He's intensely loyal to his father - with their divorce and everything - he's intensely loyal and ripped between them, but he wants you to think everything's fine. Yes, he does, it's a very great resemblance.

They were very touched - I got a copy made of the film; and in fact Beverly got a VCR so they could see it! She could have taken it to her neighbor! The one I had bought for them, when they divorced, Richard took that with him - and I didn't want this film to go Richard's house! I had very strong feelings about that, nasty though it might be. I did not want in any way any conversation with the children watching the film without Beverly present. I didn't want any demeaning remarks at all. Probably Richard wouldn't have done that, but I had very strong feelings about it. So she bought a VCR so they could see the film; now she's enjoying the VCR, of course.

E: Good, good.

L: I guess that's it. Amy is Beverly all over - Amy looks like her, very quiet like her, keeps things inside like her, wants to make you think everything's all right. They're very - I can see my two children in my two grandchildren very clearly.

E: One of the things that most often comes up when our classmates talk about Bob is how he would always be aware if you were unhappy.

L: Oh, yes.

E: Or in pain. Or had a bad day, or something. He would go out of his way to throw an arm around you - or, if it was a cute girl, to flirt a little more during the day than he would have done normally. But even at teen years - it was clear that his character and compassion were outstanding.

L: It was a gift from God, there's no doubt about it.

E: And that's what we remember and care so much about. I think that's part of what has compelled me to do this kind of project. I want people to know that he - and the others - lived, not just

that they died. It's important to keep the memory alive. Your own family, each family, yes - but that's private business. It's also important for the community, and that's what my aim is. I hope I can contribute to that.

L: Oh, certainly you have in the part you've already done with the memorial and the dedication service - absolutely riveting when - and that was something that we all learned from, and I'm sure - I haven't talked to the other parents other than at the coffee hour afterwards - but, I think that was the best, best part for everyone, not just an individual - as all the different references to Robert were, although there again I was very conscious of the other parents. It took me a while to understand the origin of it. That was something we could share in without sadness; that was something that had to do with our children - and we store more things in our head, and all the history of it and everything, and hopefully, everybody watched that film - and if you speak to Jan and the others, just tell them I'm one of the millions, no thousands, of parents who is deeply grateful to him that he pursued his dream of getting that memorial built; it couldn't be more appropriate. It just couldn't be, with that black marble - seeing yourself - it just couldn't be more appropriate. Seeing yourself even as you're standing there.

E: I will tell him. He's not far from Beverly.

L: Oh, he's in that same area?

E: Yes, that same area of Maryland. And I will tell him.

L: Oh, good. Maybe you'll see him when you get to visit Beverly. All right?

E: OK.

L: Can you shut it off now?

E: I'm going to shut it off now. Say goodbye, tape.

L: Goodbye, tape!

I received a copy of the Report of Casualty regarding Robert Winslow Belcher from the Chief of the Navy Reference Branch, Military Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, after exchanging letters and forms for more than five months. The section regarding casualty status reads: "Non-Battle; Died 11 Apr 68 Quang Tri Province (01) Republic of Vietnam result injuries to the head and body when a helicopter he was aboard was involved in a mid-air collision with another helicopter and crashed. Date Arr RVN 26 Jul 67."

John Alden Countaway. Jr.

May 14, 1947 - May 8, 1968
(20 years, 11 months, 24 days)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Washington, D.C.
Panel 56E - Line 37

Lance Corporal
Marine Corps

Winthrop High School
Class of 1965

Yearbook caption:

Bridge Club 3; Photography Club 3

I didn't know the Countaways, nor did I remember meeting them at the dedication ceremony for the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Because of the story Arky Cummings had told me about his close connection to the family, I asked Arky if he would tell the Countaways about my project and find out if they would speak with me. I saw Arky at a testimonial dinner in Winthrop in mid-March, and he gave me the Countaway's phone number at their home in Maine. I spoke with Edie Countaway in late March, and she invited me to come to Saco, Maine, the following Saturday.

Edie greeted me at the door of their beautiful new ranch house, which she told me was designed to their specifications, located next door to the home of one of their daughters. She showed me around the house, which they moved into only six months earlier.

As we came to the kitchen, John Countaway joined us. He helped Edie set the table with coffee cups and silverware. I asked if he was going to join us; he said no, he was just going to be in the living room watching television. Edie asked me if Arky had told me about John; I said Arky had said that John's short-term memory was faulty but his long-term memory was good.

Before I turned on the tape recorder, Edie showed me pictures of Jay - in his Marine uniform, high school graduation, prom. She also showed me pictures of him as a little boy; in one Jay had on a military-style cap. Edie said that even as a very small child, Jay loved the military - and she had no idea why. She said that when they would ride in their convertible, Jay would stand up and salute if he saw an American flag. She would admonish him not to stand in the car, but she could never stop him. He insisted on attending all parades in town.

She told me a story about a red blazer jacket that she had bought for Jay when he was a little boy; apparently, he never liked wearing it. One day she saw him in a neighbor's yard shredding the front of the jacket on the neighbor's grinding wheel. When he got home, he showed her his ruined jacket. She asked what had happened, and he said, "It got torn." She said to him, "Jay, it did not get torn by itself." Jay looked up at her and asked, "Did you see me?" Edie didn't say that she punished him - she just laughed at the memory of it.

She also told me about Jay's running away from her after the second day of school; she had Karen by the hand and Laura in a carriage. She said she raced home in tears. When Jay arrived, she asked him why he had run away, and he said, "I was afraid you were going to kiss me right there!" Edie said she never met him outside of school again.

Edie also told me that the girl Jay took to the senior prom later became his fiancée.

She told me that Jay spent four months on a hospital ship while recovering from a wound to his leg; he returned to Vietnam and was killed two days later. Edie said she wished he had been hurt worse, and then he never would have had to go back.

She said she and John couldn't talk to one another about their loss, but they each could talk to others. She wondered if that happened to other families. I told her that Lois Belcher reported a similar story, and Edie seemed relieved to hear it.

EP: It is Saturday, April 1, and I am speaking with Edie Countaway at her lovely home in Saco, Maine. We are going to talk about Jay, who was killed in Vietnam twenty-one years ago.

I am just going to ask you to tell me about your son - about his place in the family, what your dreams were for him, what his dreams were for himself, how he found himself in the service, and things like that.

Edie: OK. Well, Jay never - we called him Jay because we had so many Johns in the family; my father was John, his father was John, John's father too; so it was easier to call him Jay.

He was a very good kid; I won't say he was an angel, but he was a good kid. Wasn't a particularly good scholar; he had to be pushed in that regard. What else can I tell you about him? He was a very religious boy. As a matter of fact, he had gone down to North Carolina several times with his minister. Very polite kid. I had a few little, little problems with him. One was smoking - it was never drinking, thank goodness. So, he wasn't ever a really big problem. Jay was what you would call a late bloomer. He didn't start, I guess he just didn't realize that time was passing him by, and his school years were moving along. So in his junior and senior years, he finally started buckling down, to the ability that he was able to do the work. And so he did get into a college in Milwaukee (Milwaukee Polytechnic Institute); and his hopes were to be a civil engineer.

EP: Good career.

Edie: Yeah. He worked summers with Howard - oh, what the heck was his name, it'll come to me - all I can think of is Miles Howard. Anyhow, they were a civil engineer firm in Boston; that's when he decided that that's what he would like to be. He started there as an office boy. He had gone to school in Milwaukee for about a year and a half, and he was home on one of his breaks, had gone into Boston, came back - this was April of 1967 - and told us he had joined the Marines. We have no idea why, except as I told you before, he just always seemed to be very fascinated by the military. I, of course, was devastated by it; his father wished him the best of luck. (Crying)

PAUSE: Tape turned off while Mrs. Countaway composed herself.

Edie: OK. So, he went down to Parris Island, and he became a private. He had a chance to go to school, for some reason he didn't want to do that - he wanted to be a grunt, which is your foot soldier in the Marines. We went down and watched him graduate, which was quite an experience.

EP: I bet.

Edie: Yeah. We were very proud of him. I had a thought before, and now I've lost it.

EP: It will come back.

Edie: It had something to do with - I never really could accept - and I had feelings of-of-of dread the whole time he went in the Marines. I just had a feeling that he wasn't going to make it. Maybe this is something all parents feel. (Crying)

EP: It could be.

Edie: And, but Jay kept telling us over and over, "It'll be OK." He had a great deal of faith, carried a little Bible with him everywhere he went. He was shipped over to Vietnam, let's see, he joined in April, he was shipped out in October. In the letters that we got from him, he said, it "was a very difficult place to be, but that the people in Vietnam were a beautiful race of people; the children are just gorgeous. And what was happening over there was awful. Because they would put booby traps on these little kids and send them into the troops." So he said, "After a while you got so you couldn't even talk to the little, little kids." He said, "The country was gorgeous. It was a shame that the, that that particular island was at war. Some of those people had never known peace over there." And we kept sending him things in the mail; he'd write, "Please don't send chocolate because it gets here as soup."

EP: Ooooh.

Edie: "Send crackers and other food." But we felt, *i* felt, that e should never have been there. Jay himself did not feel that way. He felt, as a matter of fact - he was hurt, injured in the leg, and he was on a hospital ship for about four months. And when his leg healed pretty good, and he was sent back, he was back for two days, and he was killed.

PAUSE.

Edie: I could remember one time when Karen was in the fifth grade, and she was flirting with boys in the seventh grade. (Laughter) Jay grabbed her one day and said, "You stay away from those boys."

And she was so mad! She came home and she said to me, "You tell Jay to leave me alone!" I asked "Why? What's he doing?" So when she told me what had happened, I said, "Well, I think he's right. You should stay with kids in your own age bracket; never mind flirting with those kids a few years older." Jay and Karen are three years apart, and they were very close to each other. Laura is six years younger than Jay, so they didn't have as much in common as - it seemed every time that Jay had any kind of a problem, he would talk to Karen about it. He knew she was a level-headed girl. Too bad she isn't over here because she could probably tell you a lot of things about him. He had a protective attitude toward his sisters.

EP: Did he enjoy their company; did they like to be together?

Edie: Oh, yes. We used to, in summers, we went down to the Cape for a month. And he did, he enjoyed his sisters. But he used to tease them a lot. I can remember when we didn't have a dishwasher back in those days, and the girls, of course, that was their job - to do the dishes. And he had other chores, like bringing out the garbage and cleaning the trash, and in the winters, shovelling snow. And I can remember him taking towels and snapping them at the girls, and then they'd start screaming. So, I mean

EP: Fairly normal.

Edie: Fairly normal, yes. They had their arguments, mostly over what television program they were going to watch, and stuff like that. But once he got his license, he used to take them places.

EP: Oh, that's nice.

Edie: He was good to his sisters, I would say.

EP: Did they write to him when he was in the service?

Edie: Oh, yes, especially Karen. She wrote, she wrote to him a lot. Especially, well, see she graduated in '68, the same year that he died. And so her prom was-was-was kind of difficult for her. But Jay wanted to know what her dress was like. He had written, "Well, what is your dress like?" So we had sent a piece of material in a letter to him, along with a drawing of the dress and stuff. (Sigh) He never did get the letter; we got that letter back with the piece of material in it. (Very softly)

So. So, he was interested in his sisters, yes. And his grandmother. We had John's mother, after John's father died, she came to live with us. She was the most remarkable mother-in-law you could ever have (Laughter) - she was fantastic. And Jay just spent lots of time with his grandmother. As a matter of fact, she took him to Washington, DC, to see the different national monuments and stuff.

EP: Now, I know that Jay was killed in combat.

Edie: Yes.

EP: And you got word from the Marines.

Edie: Umhm.

EP: Could you tell me the circumstances

Edie: Well, yeah. We had been at a friend's house, and we got a phone call from John's mother; John's mother was home. And it was to come home right away. And it was funny - the minute I got that, I knew why. And so when we got there, there was a Marine waiting, and it was his duty to tell us about Jay. The poor guy - I mean he's leaning back, pulling away, because I guess he's been punched, punched out several times by people's reactions. He never knew how people were going to react to it. And I can just, I couldn't believe it.

It took me seven years to believe it. One time, I-I didn't really cry or, until seven years after that. We were out with a bunch of friends, and a song came on the radio - to this day I can't listen to that song, it was "The Impossible Dream." And I just started sobbing. I guess that was really in way what broke-broke - I think it was a good thing that it happened to me because up until this point, I couldn't talk about him at all. And after that, it seemed like it was all I could talk about. And it was kind of embarrassing to my friends because they didn't want me to-to-to be upset, yet I seemed to have this need to talk about Jay constantly, as if I was afraid I'd lose him in my mind, I guess. But up until that evening - even at the funeral - and I can remember being in the car, and these little kids were saying, "Oooh, a parade!" I'm sure Jay would have loved that! Because there were all these Marines and everything, and they're playing their drums. And it just struck me funny; it didn't really hit me that that was my son. I wonder if that's ever happened with anyone else? Maybe I'm a slow, slow - you know (crying)

PAUSE while Edie got up to get more coffee and dry her eyes.

EP: No, no. That's a reaction that has happened to some of the soldiers themselves. I've heard that from returned vets - they won't talk, but once whatever it is breaks the silence, they then can't stop. You're only the third family person I've talked with - and each of those experiences has been quite different; it may turn out that someone else tells me the same thing.

Edie: Yeah.

EP: And it's a good thing, too.

Edie: Well, I think that it might have hit me sooner, perhaps, if Jay had been home. I mean, he had been away to school, so I wasn't used to having him around the house.

PAUSE while a granddaughter arrived with her dog and needed to be tended to.

Edie: And now I think I'm on an even keel, where I can talk about him and I can not talk about him. I mean, most of the time I can talk about him without completely breaking down - but

EP: Well, as Lois said - and I'm not quoting exactly, but essentially: They were part of our lives.

Edie: Of course (Anguished sigh)

EP: You don't ever forget; and when it's appropriate, you talk about them.

Edie: Yes. We know a family - do you know the Muldoons?

EP: No.

Edie: Well, they lost a son in the Navy. He was not lost in combat - he was lost, drowned, drowned. And the father - it was quite a large family - he, the minute it happened, took down all the pictures, anything with that boy's name on it, that boy's name was not allowed to be spoken in the house, and it was almost like he turned on his other kids. And it was hard, because this one boy, Jimmy Muldoon, was very close to his brother, and he wanted to talk about him. And his father wouldn't do it. Finally, now, this happened 20 some odd years ago, finally now, he's beginning to bring out pictures, and he is beginning to be able to talk about it - 20 some odd years later.

EP: That's hard.

PAUSE while another grandchild arrived.

EP: Jay was killed in 1968. In 1979, Jan Scruggs began the fund-raising effort to build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; in 1982 that got dedicated. It's considered a healing spot, a source of healing for veterans, for their families, for people who were opposed to the war - it brings a lot of people together. I know I asked you earlier if you have ever been there and you said no, but you are aware of it, you know what it looks like. Do you have some thoughts about it? Would you like to go see it?

Edie: Yes! I would love to go to see it! It's just that I feel it might be a difficult thing to do, yet - in a way, I think we owe it, in a way we owe it to Jay to go. Perhaps next Fall, we will make the trip. I have never been to Washington. We all have

to do certain hard things that we particularly don't want to do. But I hear it's a beautiful memorial. It must really hit you when you see all those miles of names - and to think that each one of those names was a boy - or a nurse; there's nurses, also, yes?

EP: Yes, there are eight nurses' names on there.

Edie: So, all these people. And I think that this war for so many years, it was like a forgotten war. And most of these boys that went out there, they did it because their country asked them to (crying). The Memorial to me was a great thing in showing - even the younger generation - when they go over there with their Moms and their Dads, and they tell them what it is - I mean, this has got to make even a young child, it's got to make an impression on a young child - and hopefully we will be able to prevent other wars. Sometimes you wonder why the hell we have them. But, we live in a - God-created a beautiful world for us - why are we fighting over it? It's a sad thing, but I guess that's human nature. And I think that the Memorial did bring it to public attention, which you could say was about time. As I said before, I'm repeating myself now, it must be really mind-boggling to see all those names. Part of my reaction when I first heard about it - we got a letter, I think most of the, probably the boys' parents got these letters - and it described the Memorial. Now, when I've ever thought about a memorial, I've always thought of a statue of a soldier or something like that. And I thought, "For crying out loud, that's, that's horrible! Black marble and all those names." And yet, the more I thought of it, the more I thought "Well, this is really more individualistic than some statue that doesn't look anything like any of the boys that might be, that died." So, then I had a complete change of, change of mind. I said, "It really is a beautiful memorial."

EP: It's an interesting experience to go to it. It's smack dab between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument; the walls of the Memorial point to each of those. The statue of the three soldiers looks at the Wall from a distance; many people say it looks as if they are coming out of the jungle looking for names. It's haunting in some ways. There are recessed lights, so it's lit up at night. There are directories at both ends so you can find any name you are looking for. And of course the black marble is very, very highly polished so you see yourself reflected back.

Edie: You can see that. Some of the people that have gone there have sent me pictures, like the one I showed you before. And you could see their feet reflected because Jay's name is easy to find because it's right at the last name on the bottom of the panel, so I knew that it was highly polished.

Also the memorial that we had in the cemetery in Winthrop was very nice.

EP: Were you notified about that?

Edie: Yes. The only disturbing thing I found with that memorial was that the Korean boys were on the back, and then the tree was right there! I thought, "Gee, if I was a parent of a boy that died in Korea, I don't think I would like that too well." Have you had this comment from anyone before?

EP: I've had people ask why are they on the same memorial - why don't they each have their own?

Edie: Yes! Why?

EP: Why don't the Korean War vets have their own? I've yet to find an answer, to be perfectly honest. My understanding is that the American Legion Post sponsored that memorial marker; and I'm not about to go pick a fight with the American Legion.

Edie: Yeah.

EP: But, on the other hand, it is a little peculiar. I think that when they did it, it was generally considered that both Korea and Vietnam were forgotten wars; the boys who died were forgotten.

Edie: Yes, right.

EP: And the American public wanted to forget about both wars.

Edie: And it's so sad. I think the Korean War boys are still forgotten now. They're really not getting as much attention as Vietnam is finally getting.

EP: There seem to be several reasons for that. One of them is that those of us now reaching our 40's are the earliest products of the baby boom; and the bulk of the deaths in Vietnam were those born in the same years, '46, '47, '48, '49. We're now the school teachers and the history book writers, and the parents, and the public officials. And we're the ones saying, "Why did we lose 60,000 of our friends and contemporaries; what's with this policy; the government is still doing things like this; we know they lied to us all those years ago - and they're still lying to us now!n And we want answers, so we're the ones doing the pushing to get Vietnam remembered. I'm afraid that the Korean War is just enough earlier that it slipped through; after all, it came just five years after the end of World War II - and so many other things seemed more important once our boys came home from there. There is much more interest in the Civil Rights Movement, the student movement, the anti-war movement, the women's movement, the after-effects of Vietnam on the ones who did come home.

Edie: To their lives, yes. I often wonder about that. If Jay had come back - how he would have reacted to the way his country, the

people in his country, were being. I think it would have been a very difficult thing for him to handle because I know he had lost quite a few of his buddies. But it must be hard to come back and have people almost spit on you - and you know that there have been people who gave up their lives for you. It's got to be hard, very difficult thing to take (Choked up).

I'll never know how he would have reacted. But no wonder the boys have come back having problems - now you hear about this Agent Orange and where the government lied to the those kids about that. You really, you really sometimes begin to wonder about the policies of your own country.

It's sad. My parents came from Finland; they left Finland because it was becoming a very socialistic country. They heard about America, how wonderful things were here. I'm sure your Russian grandparents thought the same thing. And they came here - my father became an ironworker and helped build many of the tall buildings; he had been a sailor before that - so he could climb the rigging and ladders - so height was no problem.

EP: Not a job for me!

Edie: No, me either! But I was always instilled - they were glad they came to this country; they were never sorry that they came here. And so all my life, I was instilled with what a great country this is. Well, maybe it still is, I don't know, I've never lived anywhere else so I really can't judge that. So, I instilled the same feelings in my children. So when this war came up, Jay just felt he should go.

EP: A lot of people couldn't distinguish between the policy and the boys who fought.

Edie: Yeah.

EP: And that became part of the problem. People have come to their senses, at least I hope people have come to their senses, and understand that these boys were mostly trying to stay alive.

Edie: Right.

EP: That's what they wanted to do; they wanted to go home.

Edie: Sure.

EP: The government is another story. There are people who will never understand; probably the families of the boys who died understand the least. But people are trying not to forget in order to pass on lessons - and that was the purpose of the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial that we put into place last year. We had it put in the lobby of the high school so that it can be used by the teachers. At some point in May, I'll be going back to the high school - the head of the social studies

department invited me. I've been told that the history classes spend two or three days on Vietnam. I'm glad that they spend any time on it; but I spent ten years fighting to end that war, and I've spent twenty years working with vets who've come back - and it seems to me two or three days is not enough time!

Edie: Yeah.

EP: But I under stand

Edie: At least it's a start. Yes, it's a start. And they are going to use this Memorial - I'm very proud of it - this terrific monument that we put up last year. One of the things that is important in Winthrop - a small, self-contained town, reasonably stable - is that they remember the living boys - that they remember more than just those boys died in a war that is still hard to understand, but that they remember the personality of this one, the smile of that one

Edie: Yes, right.

EP: The character of them. And that they were part of the community, and their families were part of the community. I wonder if that's what the families feel?

Edie: Oh, sure they do. I mean, to us, Jay will always be a, I can't say a living person, he was a living being; but we will talk about things and say, "Remember when Jay did that? Remember when he brought that turtle in the house down the Cape?" That scared the heck out of me; it was one of those snapping turtles (laughter). The thing got away, and he was chasing it around because I made him bring it back out to the sand where he found it. That's a living memory to me. I mean, there's a lot of loss - I can't see how anyone who has had a person live with them, I mean, he was with us for at least, say eighteen years, and then of course he was back and forth there for a few years - you can't shut that, you can't shut, I don't think you should shut it out. It's part of your life. Now I know that both of my daughters - my grandchildren know all about Jay - what happened to him. As a matter of fact, Ryan had written an essay on "What the Flag Means to Me" - and in it he had mentioned his Uncle Jay. That's a good thing (crying).

EP: Yes, it is.

Edie: He's living in a younger generation again.

EP: It's important, and it's part of their heritage.

Edie: It's a heritage to be proud of. I met a woman one day - this is like I was telling you about when Lois said to me, "You're

lucky; you know what happened to Jay. You got a letter from one of his buddies, and he told you what happened to him." And she will never know what happened to Bobby, and she's had to live with that all the rest of these years - that's got to be a really hard thing. Well, on another occasion, a woman came up to me and said that her son had been caught in a drug raid and he got sent to jail; I think he got out of jail and got shot in some kind of gang war. But, anyhow, I had gone to the funeral of this boy. And she came up to me and said, "I know you lost your son; but you can be proud of him." See. She wasn't proud of her boy. That's true - I can be proud of him (wistful). But there's a lot of little, little things that people say kind of help you out a little bit.

EP: I asked Lois, and now I'll ask you: did you go to the other families in Winthrop, did you find solace in talking with other people?

Edie: Well, it was funny. Now I don't know, the Logan boy - his mother is Gracie. I went with Gracie to a Gold Star Mothers' meeting once. No, it wasn't any solace. I think the reason why is it was too soon for us. I think maybe five years later it might have been a solace to us, but at the time it was too close. And we found it, we couldn't handle it. We both went home and said, "That's it!" I talked to Stephanie MacNeil on occasion; the other people I don't know. Mary Brugman, I think she's an aunt or something, I have spoken with them. When a tragedy like this is close to you, sometimes it's hard to talk about it.

EP: Sure.

Edie: You know what each person is thinking inside and what they're feeling, but you can't always come out - I mean, if you went around and said, "I know just how you feel," well, that's all the other person needs to break down. So, you just sort of skirt around it. I think it was very, very difficult for John because Jay was his only son (whispering); and he feels he not only lost a son, but he lost a buddy (crying). When we moved up here, he'd say, "Well, you have your daughters. Girls always find things to talk about. But I don't have anyone to talk to." I did my best, but we had two girls! Awww. They're good girls.

EP: I don't really have anything else specific to ask you. Would you like to add anything?

Edie: Did you talk to Arky about Jay?

EP: Yes, I did.

Edie: Because he knew Jay when he was a little kid.

EP: I think he told me Jay was nine when they first met.

Edie: Yes.

EP: And Karen was six, and Laura was three - is that how the ages broke down?

Edie: Yes, that's how - it wasn't planned, but that's how it worked out!

EP: I went to Donna Reilly and then Huck Larsen for information about how the memorial came about; then I went to Arky and Matt Boyle, as the two people I knew I could count on who were part of the school system that I could find easily who were teachers back twenty years ago and who conceivably knew most of these boys.

Edie: Sure.

EP: So, I talked to Arky. He talked a lot about Jay. In fact, he informed me in no uncertain terms that it's Jay, not John, Jay!

Edie: Yes!

EP: Well, of course, it's written down as John A. I didn't know him. And Arky barked out: It's Jay! And there I was, sixteen years old again in Mr. Cummings's algebra class, saying very quietly, "Yes, Mr. Cummings." (Laughter)

Edie: It was funny - everyone in high school called him Jay; I think even his teachers did. But when he went to college and he met people out there, all of a sudden he became John. And when he'd come home and he'd get calls asking for John - why, I'd put his father on the phone. And they'd say no, they were looking for young John or John Junior. It seemed so funny to me to have him called John, but that was his decision for his college friends. It started out when he was little, we called him J.A., his initials, because he's John Alden. Then the J.A. just sort of slid into Jay.

EP: I figured that was where it came from because I knew that Mr. Countaway was John Senior, and I thought

Edie: And his father was John. And you can't have all of those - you start with the juniors and seniors and the twos and threes. I was bugged - I wasn't going to call him Junior. So, it was Jay.

What else can I tell you about Jay? He was a good boy - he wasn't an angel, but he was a good boy, never gave us any kind of problems. I think back then we didn't have quite the problems they're having today. So.

EP: You told me earlier about the girl he was engaged to; do you know what became of her?

Edie: We got a letter from her about four years ago - and she finally got married. It-it I guess took her all this time to find someone else. She's a very nice girl. I think it must have hit her very hard. Right after it happened she went, she had moved out of her home, and she was working in Boston and living with some other girls, and we sort of lost contact. But she told me she was taking a course - and she didn't know how I was going to react - it was a course on how to handle these boys that came back psychologically damaged, because they would be having problems. I said, "I think that's an excellent thing to do!."

EP: Oh, yes. Do you know if she continued with it, or if

Edie: I don't know, I just don't know. I'm sure these kids had nightmares from their experiences. At one point our minister was doing missionary work over there, Hong Kong, I think. And Jay had some R&R coming up, but because he was hurt and was on that hospital ship, he lost the R&R. He was going to go over there to see Dr. West; he was going to make Jay Southern Fried Chicken - Dr. West was a Southerner. And Jay never, he never got there. And the reason he told us was, "Right now, I'm acting like an animal." The way they lived in the mud and all. He said, "My language isn't very nice. I don't dare go over to see him." But Dr. West had worked with many boys, and I'm sure he would - I'm sure it wouldn't have been the first time that he had heard bad words. But Jay just didn't want Dr. West to see him that way.

(Two more grandchildren arrived, and we simply stopped taping at this point.)

I received a copy of the Report of Casualty regarding John Alden Countaway, Jr., from the National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records). The section regarding casualty status reads: "Battle - KIA. Died 8 May 68 Quang Tri Province (01) Republic of Vietnam result gunshot wounds to the head and body from hostile rifle fire while engaged in action against hostile forces; Date Arrived in RVN 10 Oct 67."

Joseph Patrick Logan. Jr.

June 7, 1943 - May 29, 1968
(24 years, 11 months, 22 days)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Washington, DC
Panel 63W - Line 8

First Lieutenant
Air Force

Winchester High School
Class of 1960

Yearbook Caption:

A golf enthusiast. . . water skiing, hockey, and convertibles
please Joe, while broken shoelaces and Latin rate nil. . . afraid
that Mr. Finigan will lose an argument . . . with a million Joe
would buy a 50' yawl and sail to South America
heads for Tufts or Yale after graduation.
Golf, Captain; Math Club; Rifle Club; "Red and Black;"
Thrift Association; Bowling; Philosophy Club.

Ohio Wesleyan University
Class of 1965

Math Major. Soccer Team. Chi Phi Fraternity. ROTC.

I didn't know the Logan family; Donna Reilly told me that she thought someone from the family had attended the dedication ceremony for the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial. So, I wrote a letter to the family at the address in the Winthrop phone book, explaining my wanting to interview them. Almost a month passed before I received a reply from Cathleen Logan Walsh. In her letter, she wrote:

My mother has had a stroke so I do not know whether she will want to put herself through the emotional trauma of being interviewed about my brother's death. It still is not easy for either of us to talk about it. However, if she does not want to talk to you, I am willing, if she agrees.

I called Cathy Walsh and told her I understood the situation. I would be delighted to interview her, after she talked with her mother. I explained to Cathy that I needed to tend to my own mother, who now lives in Florida and who was going to have eye surgery the following week. Cathy and I agreed that I would call her when I returned from Florida.

When I got back, I called Cathy; Memorial Day and the anniversary of her brother's death were the next week. We agreed to meet the week after that in my office in Cambridge. Cathy has a 3-year-old son, and we had decided that my office provided a quiet setting for an uninterrupted interview. She dropped her son off with her husband, and came to my office on June 5 for the interview.

E: Cathy Walsh is the sister of Joseph Logan. I'd like to know about your family; to begin, when did you move to Winthrop?

C: In 1964.

E: Was your brother with you at that time?

C: No. He graduated from Winchester High, I think in 1960; I've been trying to remember dates. He went from Winchester High School to Cushing Academy for a year; he was too young to go to college - they wanted boys to be older, and he was just 16 or 17, so they shipped him off there. After that, he could get into college, and he went to Ohio Wesleyan.

E: Did he graduate from there in '65?

C: Probably it was '65. He didn't stay for graduation. My father got very sick, so he had to come home. I was remembering him doing his thesis for graduation during that summer.

E: Not well planned - there are better ways to spend your summer. Tell me what he was like as a youngster.

C: It's difficult to think of because he was six years older than I am, and my other brother was three years older than I am - he was the one I was closer to. Family-wise, we were very close. My mother was always home; my father wouldn't "allow" her to work. When my father was growing up, his mother had (undecipherable) We were always together; the five of us went everywhere.

E: Joe was the oldest and you were the youngest?

C: Yes. Tom was in the middle.

E: Were you a little princess?

C: No, not in an Irish family. My mother claims I'm spoiled. I say if I was, she's taken care of it since then! (Laughter) I might have been. Actually, I was spoiled a little. You don't think of it.

E: Well, having two older brothers, did they tease you. Most big brothers do.

C: I don't remember too much of that. A lot of things we did - I think Joey was the apple of my father's eye because my father was in the Army Air Corps and couldn't fly because he had a depth-perception problem, so they made him a bombardier; he never got out of the States - and my father loved to play golf. My brother Joey flew and he played golf, so the two of them used to go off a lot together. When there's six years difference, there's not a lot - our paths very rarely crossed socially.

E: Sure, when he was 16 you were only 10.

C: Yeah. And I didn't go to Winchester High; I went to parochial school. My middle brother used to get it - "Oh, Joey Logan's little brother." But by the time I got into high school, no one was before me, so I didn't get known that way.

E: So, you were in high school in '65 and '66 in Winthrop, and Joey joined the service?

C: He was in Air Force ROTC in college. I looked at his high school yearbook at home; that's got to be when he started. That's all I knew - he wanted to fly. We had a beach house down at Green Harbor, and he started taking lessons; he'd come over and buzz the house.

E: So he went into the Air Force. Did he go to Officer's Candidate School?

C: I don't think he had to because he was in ROTC in college, and when he got out he was a Second Lieutenant. He went to flight school in Valdosta, Georgia.

E: Did you go to the graduation ceremony?

C: My mother and father did; my brother and I didn't. When you look back, I was trying to remember why we didn't go down; but I must have been in college, he probably graduated in May and I had finals to take, so I didn't go.

E: And that was in 1967?

C: Probably.

E: He was killed in 1968 - just short of his 25th birthday. Was he in Vietnam the whole time?

C: He was, from what I recall, he went from Georgia to Apple Valley, California; and then from there he went to the Philippines for a very, very short amount of time. And then over to Vietnam. He was only there for a few months.

E: He was killed in accident of some kind I understand?

C: That's what they say. He was in a Phantom jet. I later read in Newsweek - this is why - they had trouble with the ejection seat; so what happened is, when he came in to land, he wasn't going fast enough or he wasn't high enough for the parachute to open. So he ejected, and just crashed to the ground. And my mother used to say - my father and mother never recovered from it - my father never talked about it; so she used to say, "Maybe it was sabotage, maybe it was this, maybe it was that." But many, many years later, Newsweek had an article about other accidents with the ejection seat, where a lot of it happened with people trying to get out and they'd break an arm or something. But I think there were only two deaths. Any way you die is awful, but thinking about it, it's kind of gruesome. I don't like planes!

E: I can understand that.

C: When I was in college, it was in the middle of all this SDS and all that sort of stuff, and most of the people I knew were all protesters. There was a young man who had been in Vietnam, and he came back - oh, probably a month or two after my brother was killed - and he was showing pictures around. And he supposedly had a picture of my brother being killed. He was in Danang the same time as Joey. And my ex-husband, who was my boyfriend then, saw the picture and said, "Yes, it probably is."

E: What happened to it?

C: He destroyed it. He asked me if I wanted it, and I said, "No thank you very much." But it's one of those things. Later people would ask, "Do you really think he was telling the truth?" I knew the man well enough that I didn't believe he would have any reason

to lie. He had said that over there - he was a soldier, I guess they call them grunts - and he said that out of thousands of deaths, this one was spectacular.

E: Yes, I suppose that's true - as long as it's not someone you know. You said your father never talked about it. What about your mother? You said your father and mother didn't ever recover from it. You also said your second brother died - we don't have to talk about that

C: (Very emotional) Thinking about it, what we did after, how it affected the family - my father never mentioned my brother's name again; he never called him Joe. He'd say "your brother" to me, or "your son" to my mother. I think the toughest thing was that no one talked to anyone else. (Crying)

E: (Brings over a box of Kleenex)

C: I have Kleenex (half-smile). My father was all alone in his hurt, and my mother was in her hurt, and I was the only kid at home. My other brother was away at school. So, you don't do anything to shake the boat or upset anybody, so you didn't talk about it. When I went down, I went down right after the Wall was built in Washington; it didn't have the walkway or anything, it was just basically there. I just wanted to check to make sure my brother's name was on it. And I thought to myself when I saw it - there's 58,000 names on that, and nobody ever thinks that's just the least of it - there are parents, close family members, wives - and I don't think people really realize the effect that that war had on people (crying).

E: Cathy, that's why I'm doing this thesis. I know that it's very hard; I know I make people cry, and I feel rotten about it.

C: I figured you would (Laughter)! But I think the truth should be known. I think that the politicians didn't let them fight the war and I think that they did die for nothing. My mother would disagree with me there, but we come from different sides of it. I'm glad that Vietnam veterans have really come out and forced leadership - because they are right, when people came home, nothing was done. I had friends that came home, and it would be like if you knew them, you'd meet them at the airport; but other than that, you didn't talk about it. And the things that those young men must have seen and were made to do!

E: It became a war where staying alive became the only reason for fighting. And when you came home - you came home to a totally different world that didn't understand them or the war. The soldiers were blamed for the war itself - my God, — didn't make policy! They were the victims of it too. It's taken years to try to get people to deal with it, to move on, to get help - and still, a lot of them won't talk about it now.

C: Therapy is needed.

E: The outreach centers seem to be very helpful. Some of the books may have helped, some of the films too.

C: The only one I've seen was the HBO special, Dear America, and I thought that was pretty good - and I cried my eyes out all through it, but at least it wasn't gory. It wasn't, from what I've heard, Platoon is just, there's no need for me to see it.

E: Platoon is one of the better ones, and it certainly isn't as gory as some of the bad ones! It's a good movie. If it didn't directly affect you about Vietnam, it would be worth seeing.

C: I don't like blood and guts in anything. Even saying that, my brother Tommy didn't talk about it either. He was accepted for pilot training, it was either the Air Force or the Navy; and my mother said to him, "If you walk through that door with a uniform on, I'll kill you." So he didn't go. But I think that he always, he would have liked to have gone and try to avenge my other brother. But you know, in thinking how your lives have been affected, thinking about my brother Tommy, he changed his mind; he wasn't going in the service, so he went to Texas A&M for, he wanted to be an oceanographer. But my Dad was sick during all of this time. So after a year, he turned around and came home. I never went away to school like I wanted to. So, your lives were affected in little, different ways that you'll never put back together; and you'll never know what difference it would have made.

E: How long ago did your Dad die?

C: He died in 1970. He had open-heart surgery when I was 16, and then he had some heart attacks and diverticulitis; so, so, he died when he was 52 - so those five, six years that he was very, very ill. He'd just get better and then he'd get sick again. During this time, Joey went in and then Joey died. It was really tough.

E: I've talked to Lois Belcher and Edie Countaway; both of them said that they remembered coming to pay their respects to your mother.

C: Sure. They did.

E: Both of them said that they - not Lois and Edie together, but rather Lois said that she and your mother, and Edie said that she and your mother - went to a Gold Star Mother meeting.

C: Right.

E: It didn't work for any of them; they couldn't find comfort or solace or group support. I had asked them if they could find anyone in the town to talk to about the loss of their sons, seeking comfort from others. They both said that there wasn't much that the mothers needed to say to each other because they kneH. The Gold Star Mothers was nothing they wanted anything to do with. Edie Countaway said that perhaps five years later she and your mother might have felt differently, but they never tried it again.

C: I also know that my mother has told me that when they went to the Gold Star Mothers, shortly thereafter she got some hate mail. So that would have turned her off against any group.

E: What?

C: She assumed that the only way that they could have gotten her name was through that organization. Now, I told her that I'm not sure that's true, because names are published in the newspaper; but my mother directly thinks there's a connection.

E: Hate mail?

C: Stuff like, you know, "Your son killed innocent children; it's good he's dead." Things like that.

E: That's disgusting!

C: But I don't recall her getting it; but she wouldn't have told me anyway, so. But there wasn't really any support. I was thinking about Mrs. Countaway - Jay was a few years ahead of me in school. When we moved to the high school, if I walked down the street - see, he was down the end of our street - he'd always give me a ride to school. They thought that when my brother was killed, Jay was killed right before my brother; and there was a big, some sort of a battle going on that they couldn't get the planes out and the bodies home. And it almost seemed like, and Mrs. Countaway said that, that my brother was killed when they were trying to get rid of the anti-aircraft that was holding them back, flying Jay's body home. It was that close. That's what they always thought he was doing, but no one knows. I mean, they tell you things, and

E: You get the official documents, and you always wonder what they really mean. Did you ever hear from anyone who actually knew Joe?

C: No. Again, my parents might have but they never shared it; or if they did, I've forgotten about it.

E: I imagine if they had, it would have become a family treasure.

C: Well, he was only there three months, so you wonder how much, how close he could have gotten to some of them unless he knew them before.

E: Was he buried in Winthrop?

C: Yes. On his 25th birthday.

E: Oh, God!

C: It was a terrible week. That's the week Bobby Kennedy was killed; he was killed June 6th - and we buried Joey on the 7th.

E: I remember that week very vividly myself. You've said you've been to the Memorial in Washington; has your mother?

C: No.

E: Does she want to?

C: I asked her once, and she said no and then she said yes and then she said no. So. I think she's glad I went. Just to make sure. You don't want (Laughter) - they have this big monument, and you don't want your name left off! (Laughter) E: No, of course not! They say they're all there,

E: No, of course not! They say they're all there, and well, you just want to make sure.

C: Plus she's handicapped, and I don't know if she could take it. It's not easy to get to; well, I suppose she could take a cab.

E: Oh, yes; the cab can drop you off right at the Lincoln Memorial.

C: But I don't think so.

E: What about the memorial in Winthrop? Do you know about it?

C: I've never seen it; I knew it was there.

E: There are more than one. There's a memorial in the cemetery - a stone marker that's about three feet high, and on side it has the names of the boys who were killed in Korea, and on the other side it has the names of the boys who were killed in Vietnam.

C: I didn't know about that one.

E: That was put up in 1984. I've asked a few questions about it - who's idea was it, among other things. Apparently, it was a combined effort of the American Legion Post and the Selectmen or

the Cemetery Commission. I asked why there weren't two markers - one for each war; I wasn't trying to be nasty about it, but I wanted to know why the Korean War vets didn't get their own.

C: The Korean War vets were forgotten too.

E: Yes, absolutely. I was told that they ran out of time and money. So, I said, "Well, fine; it was a nice gesture." I think Mrs. Countaway mentioned that she was appalled that the side where the Korean War names are is practically smack up against a tree, so you can't see them anyway! Well, that same Memorial Day, in 1984, the American Legion and the town christened, dedicated a square in honor of Bobby Belcher. Lois Belcher was under the impression that all of the boys were going to have a square named for them, and it didn't happen, and it hasn't happened yet. So I decided I'd ask around.

C: Pretty nervy!

E: Uppity woman that I am! Sure - what do I care! Well, there seems to be a little rigamarole about that one - this one said that; that one said this, blah, blah, blah! Apparently, though, Lois was correctly informed - there are supposed to be a series of squares, but they never got around to doing the others because of town politics. Which figures.

C: Um-hum.

E: According to what I was told, some of the Korean War vets who are now in the ranks of the various social and political organizations in the town feel that they've heard enough about the Vietnam Vets. They keep asking, "What about us?"

C: Yup!

E: So, it has all come to a halt. So, there's one little square named for Bobby - and the other boys don't have theirs yet. Not that it's going to bother them, after all.

C: No.

E: It's just everyone else - the families, pesty me; not exactly "everybody." But, back to this cemetery marker -

C: I'll have to go looking for it.

E: It's in the upper part of the cemetery, right across from the Episcopal Church. I've only been there once, that Memorial Day in '84. Actually, I should find out where each of the graves is and visit them - especially after doing this paper. I've been to the Memorial in Washington dozens of times - no, that's not true - it's probably a half a dozen times.

C: It's more than I have! I plan to go again.

E: They've got the walkway laid out in such a way that you have to walk on it; the grassy area in front is cordoned off. There are recessed lights that reflect up on the Wall at night; it's quite beautiful. The guidebooks are posted on each end.

C: Yeah, when we were there, there was one table up as you were walking down from the Lincoln Memorial; and there were some Vietnam Vets there that had a petition they wanted you to sign.

E: Freeing the POW/MIAS?

C: I guess. They didn't bother us. I was really, I was about ready to kill anybody at that point. But they were really good.

E: I've found that they tend not to bother you; they encourage you, but if you just walk past them, they don't come after you. They're all over the place now. It surprises me that the right-wing vets practically live at the Memorial - raising money to go back to 'Nam, freeing the POW/MIAS; and those were the guys who so protested the design and the color and the chronological order of the names! I thought the left-wing vets VVAW, Veterans for Peace, would make use of it; they seem to ignore it or pay it silent tribute. Strange. Anyway, there's a kiosk there now that has a computer, so you don't even have to look up names in the guide book. There are volunteers who'll make rubbings for you, so you don't have to do it yourself.

Which brings me to the newer memorial in Winthrop. Last year, a combination of forces got together and put a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the lobby of the high school. It was based on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington; each name was taken from a rubbing, framed separately, and they're in two columns on either side of a large photo of the Wall itself - it's shadows of people pointing, but you can't see faces or the specific name they're pointing to. The eight names were taken from the marker in the cemetery. However, one of those boys was not killed in Vietnam; he was killed in a car accident after he served in Vietnam; he had come home on leave, was reassigned, and was in a car accident at Camp Pendleton.

C: What was his name?

E: McRae, George McRae. He graduated in '69, if I remember correctly; that would make him a bit younger than you. His sister graduated with me; George was the youngest in his family. Somehow his name wound up on the cemetery marker. Again, I asked about that; how come you included this kid who really wasn't killed in Vietnam? I said, "How thoughtful of you." I think it's thoughtful. However, it turns out to have been an accident. One man thought George had died of wounds he suffered in Vietnam after he had been returned home; I told him he was misinformed. He was not pleased. Nevertheless, George is just as dead.

C: Yup!

E: His sister is convinced that if there had been no war in Vietnam, although he might have died in a car accident, it wouldn't have been under those circumstances.

C: That's right. Everyone, in that sense, every name should be there.

E: That's my opinion! Maureen asked me if anyone from the other families felt that George's name shouldn't be there; I told her that no one had said anything like that - and if someone is offended, that's their problem!

C: Right.

E: Anyway, no one from the families has; everyone seems to be of the same opinion - it's a fine gesture. I'm wondering about including two other boys - one died from a drug overdose; he served in Vietnam, came back, never seems to have got his life together, and died from an accidental overdose of drugs. The other one, I'm under the impression that he died from cancer; now, 35-year-old men don't just die from cancer.

C: No.

E: But one's who served in Vietnam probably died from the effects of Agent Orange.

C: Yes.

E: I am of the opinion that these names should be up there, too. But I'm finding that some people feel that you can't talk about them in the same way as you talk about the ones who died there. My claim is: this war is not over!

C: You're right about that.

E: It is not going to be over until every last one of us who remembers is dead. Those boys died from the War in Vietnam! That's my opinion.

C: But you're not going to find people jumping up and down enlisting in that cause. I'd have a hard time saying, "Well, why include this one who was killed in a car accident? He could have been out drunk." OK - so one died from a drug overdose; it's the same effect. I think that perhaps maybe they should word it differently - have a memorial to everyone who served there. Why just for the ones who died?

E: Well, that's part of the problem about memorials - in order to make a memorial

C: You've got to be dead! (Laughter)

E: Well, what you remember - the easiest group of names to focus on - are the ones who are dead. Are you going to have a list of two and a half million! This is supposed to be a memorial to the Vietnam Veterans, not the Dead Vietnam Veterans; but, the way to remember all the veterans

C: Is by the dead.

E: Yes, you are forced to focus on the ones who died; those who can't do anything for themselves anymore. We're the ones who have to remember them. I'd just like to add two more names to the one in Winthrop. I don't know that I'll succeed.

C: You know, when you think of it, though, the boy who died of the drug overdose. I don't know whether his family feels any shame because of the way he died, or if they've been able to deal with it - like, if he didn't go, then he wouldn't have had a drug problem. How much more is their pain by saying that if he had died in Vietnam, it would have been easier than his coming back and being screwed up. But I think those are questions our generation asks; I don't think they're questions that my parents would ever ask. They said, "My country, right or wrong. If they're going to send you to Southeast Asia, so what if you don't know where the hell it is; we'll stop Communism from coming into this country." Please! It's a line of bull that all of them got fed! If they came for my family, they would have gone willingly - like my brother did. We owe this country a lot. You go - you do it. My mother and I had problems later when she had the stroke. My father and both my brothers were dead; and I said, "Jesus, I wish Joey went to Canada!" And my mother said, "Don't ever say that in front of me again!" And I said, "Well, at least he'd be alive to help me with you!" (Laughter) "Don't tell me my son didn't *die* for something; don't tell me that people who went to Canada deserve to come back and live in this country again." I think a lot of them just closed their minds and don't think about it or don't want to think about it. I think the ones that do are very courageous; I'm not saying my mother isn't courageous

E: No.

C: But they're thinking more instead of closing their minds. But then, my mother had two sons die and a husband die, so -

E: Children aren't supposed to die before their parents do. Parents who've lost their sons in a war which no one could adequately explain, adequately defend while *it* was raging - and even fifteen years after it is over, still can't explain it those parents have to cling to something.

C: Oh, sure.

E: You mother's had to live - she's had to go on.

C: She believes there was a reason for him to die.

E: There are other people in the same situation who have said the same thing. "I would rather have him dead than have gone off to Canada." I asked my mother, who was never faced with this problem, "How can a mother say that? What can I say?" My mother said, "You can say nothing; don't try."

C: That's right.

E: She added, "She's saying that because she has to believe it; don't even try to break through her defenses."

C: When I was in college, Northeastern was a commuter college, and I was a very middle-class kid. There was a lot of SDS. And I had a friend - he was a friend then, I haven't seen him for years - who got arrested for trying to blow up the Cambridge Police station (Laughter).

E: That would be an improvement to Central Square!

C: I don't know. When you were that age and in college and everything is swirling around you, drugs were starting then - I never got involved with them, I never cared to - but there was an upheaval. No one cared whether you studied or not; I never protested, never went to a rally. A lot of it I did out of respect for my brother; I might have thought the war was wrong, but how could I explain myself back at the house. But later, I remember going into work the day Saigon fell and coming home and looking at the paper and saying, "That's it. Now I can admit my brother got it for nothing!" It was an internal battle. But, you're right; I'm his sister - not his mother. It's made me a complete pacifist. My son is three-and-a-half; he's not had guns, he's not had knives; he doesn't watch Saturday morning cartoons. My brother-in-law criticizes me, saying that's not the way life is - that's not reality. And I said, "This crap isn't reality!" My son may grow up to be the biggest Rambo ever - but it's not going to be from me.

E: It won't be because he was socialized that way. I think what you're doing is the right approach. What's his name?

C: Paul. Paul Logan Walsh.

E: You didn't want to name him for Joe?

C: I couldn't. When Paul was born - I had my father dead, my two brothers were dead - so how do you pick one of their names? So, I thought rather than naming him after someone who's dead, the Logan as a middle name covered it all.

E: Good idea. It's a nice, solid name, too.

C: Well, it isn't one of those God-awful ones! Then I probably wouldn't have done it. But this is easy.

E: Do you remember Joe in other ways?

C: I talk to my friends. Today when I was looking through some things, I didn't know if you wanted any of the stuff I had at home, my son was asking me what I was doing. I told him this was stuff that belonged to my brother, his Uncle Joey. "Well, what did he do?" "He flew a plane." "He flew a plane!" My son's been to Europe on the plane.

E: Oh, yes.

C: And I have pictures around the house, and I talk about him; I have to talk about my other brother. Because I don't want him not to know - like you say

E: So they don't slip through the cracks.

C: That's right. Especially since my husband's side is a little crazy. I don't want him to know I didn't have some too!

E: Weird family dynamics here.

C: Right. Oh, yes. Only in an Irish family. Both Irish.

E: Well, Cathy, I'm not sure what else I have to ask you.

C: I just think it's good you're doing this, and the reasons you're doing it. Nobody ever focused - it was like the Wall, it's names, not emotions; it isn't how it affected people. It still affects me, and will till the day I die; and in a lot of ways, it will affect my son because of it. And now my husband, I think he was 4-F or something - no, he had a high lottery number. This is my second husband. He said when he got to know me and heard the story, he felt very guilty that he didn't go. And I said, "But you shouldn't, really. If I was sitting beside you at that time, I would have been cheering for you to get a high lottery number like that! Nobody looks on people as cowards."

E: Most of the vets - ~~most~~ most of the vets I know think it's absurd that guys who didn't go feel guilty because they would rather say, "I wish I hadn't gone. I wouldn't wish that experience on anyone!"

C: Sure.

E: "I'm glad you didn't go. I wish I had been smart enough to figure out a way not to go myself. I didn't know till after." It

tends to be the Christopher Buckleys and the Dan Quayles of the world who keep trying to create another war somewhere else, which they won't go fight anyway!

C: That's right! They'll go into the National Guard again. Here we were - middle-class people - and the poor were even worse off than we were - at least my brother could delay because of college, which they could never have been able to do. Another thing I was thinking of: I was talking with a girlfriend about this. I have one niece at Georgetown and another one at Princeton; my nephew goes to Cornell. And I said, "Geez, when I was in high school, I never even considered going to any of those schools." My girlfriend said, "Don't forget, when we went to school, it was in the middle of Vietnam and you couldn't get into schools. They were making up colleges; they were springing up everywhere." So the competition to get into those places was rough.

E: Also, many of those schools didn't accept women at that time.

C: Women weren't allowed in yet, yes. I applied to Jackson - not Tufts! It doesn't exist anymore.

E: No, not anymore. But that also helps explain what was going in the anti-war movement. The guys who came back from Vietnam came back to a different world, as we said before. Schools had undergone a dramatic change. Every one of us in college in those days had to live with the whirlwind. My college roommate has said to me, "I've never been to a demonstration; I didn't use filthy language; I didn't wear dirty clothes; I didn't do drugs. The '60's washed right over me. At least between you and my sister, I knew it happened!" (Laughter) But she's wrong; she was affected - perhaps more than she ever believed or understood. The shredding of authority; the power of the experts; the music, clothing, movies - just imagine how that impacted on the Vietnam vets who returned to college!

C: One friend teased me about the sexual revolution because I got married right out of college to the person I was going with all through college. And my friend said, "You missed the whole sexual revolution!" And all of a sudden, I'm 35, divorced and going "Waaaah!"

E: Did you have children during that marriage?

C: No. And now there's AIDS. Well, that's my big crusade now. I have a friend who's son just died; he was a hemophiliac. I get very angry when people say, "Oh it's only gay people; it's only drug users."

E: That's garbage! TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF AT THIS POINT.

I also spoke with Sally Christiansen at the Alumni Relations Office at Ohio Wesleyan University. Sally provided me with information about Joe Logan's college activities; additionally, she said that she believed she knew an active alumnus who might have known Joe.

Sally called in late August to let me know that she spoke with the man she had mentioned earlier. He asked her to pass along two stories: He said that if he were to describe Joe Logan in one word, it would be plugger. Joe was on the soccer team, but he wasn't a starter. Nevertheless, he never missed a practice or a game. He was very goal-oriented. The 1963 Ohio Wesleyan soccer team won the NCAA championship. The NCAA has rules prohibiting freshmen from starting in championship games. Since the 1963 team had a number of freshmen on the team, Joe Logan had an opportunity to start the game. He worked very hard, and it was undoubtedly the highlight of his soccer career.

Additionally, this man and Joe Logan were in ROTC together. Joe was ranked an F-4 pilot, which was the best rating at the time. He was among the top 15 of his ROTC class..

I received a copy of the Report of Casualty regarding Joseph Patrick Logan, Jr., from the National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records). The section regarding casualty status reads: "Non-Battle - Death. DaNang AB, Quang Nam Province, RVN (03) (91); 29 May 68; Accidental ejection from military aircraft (Aircraft Commander); Date PCS Sea Tour Commenced: 10 Mar 68."

Joseph Michael Pignato

October 24, 1947 - November 6, 1968
(21 years, 13 days)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Washington, DC
Panel 39W - Line 29

Lance Corporal
Marine Corps

Winthrop High School
Class of 1966

Yearbook Caption:

"Joe is a lively, active guy. Last year he came to Winthrop from California. He enjoys cutting up in class, but he also likes hard work."

I had met Joe and Marlene Pignato at the dedication ceremony for the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial, as is indicated in the excerpt from my interview with Arky Cummings.

When I called to arrange an interview, they were both very enthusiastic about talking with me. They suggested that I drive to a store parking lot in Malden, call them, and Joe would come pick me up to take me to their house; they explained that their home is very hard to find. The Saturday before our scheduled interview, Marlene called me; she wanted to know if I eat veal. I told her that I do, and she explained that she was going to be making veal cacciatore for dinner on Monday and would I like to join them? She explained further that she and Joe eat early because of Joe's rigorous diabetic schedule; but they would have dinner on the table for me when I arrived. I was delighted at her thoughtfulness in asking, and I accepted her invitation.

Joe picked me up and took me to their home. They were right; I never would have found it! They live in the hills of Malden - most of the streets have no signs and many of the streets are one way. It was almost a maze. Dinner was set for me; as I ate, Joe and Marlene and I chatted. When I finished, Marlene served us all coffee, and we began the interview.

Joe didn't wait for a question to prompt him; he began immediately with a story that he wanted to be sure was included.

When we finished, Joe brought me back to my car and gave me directions to get back to Boston.

The Pignatos were very hospitable and generous. I felt very bad that their tape was the only one to cause a problem. The entire first side of the tape was fine; unfortunately, the second side did not record properly. A sound engineer told me that the second side was "stretched," which meant that all the voices recorded at a very fast speed and there was no way to correct it. I called the Pignatos immediately and explained my dilemma; I had to ask them if I could return. They were just terrific; they said of course I could come back - and they'd give me dinner again, and pick me up in the same place.

J: I was living on Shirley Street, right by Washington Avenue; I lived where Meyer Brill was.

I didn't know who Joey was going with at that time. He came in and he said, "I'm changing my religion." And I said, "Oh, you are. Well, what are you changing it to?" He said, "I'm going to take up the Jewish religion." And I said, "Well, that's fine as long as you're serious and it - and what is it?" He said, "Well, the girl I go with is Jewish." And I said, "There's only one thing I want to say to you. When it comes time for your sister to see you, and you've got a yarmulke on, I want you to explain to

her, you know, why you have the yarmulke." And that's as far as I went. I wasn't against him in any manner, shape - I never said, "No you don't, you're not going to." I said, "You tell your sister." And then, from then on, I never heard it again. But I really would have never bucked him on it.

E: How old was he when he told you that?

J: Sixteen, seventeen. Sixteen. Yeah, because they were in school together. But, yeah, I had to laugh. He said, "I want to change to the Jewish religion." I've never been against anybody, and I've always said it, even when I was seventeen-years-old in the service. I don't care what people believe in or don't believe in, as long as they believe in something. It was all right with me; I really didn't care. But I thought it was kind of a funny story.

E: That's great.

J: Being a Catholic, I've been brought up Catholic; he was brought up Catholic. And he came to me and said, "I'm going to change my religion." I looked at him and said, "What? What do you want to be?" He said, "I'm going to change to become Jewish." I said, "Well, you just explain to your sister. I don't want to have any doing with that. You tell her, and that'll be that." And they were quite serious until he went in the service. Then when he went in the service, she went to school up in Springfield and met the fellow she married, some Irish kid.

In fact, Joey went up and had a beef with him when he came home on leave. He drove up there. Another funny - I used to let him take my Mustang, I had a Mustang that was a standard shift one. And I got in the car one morning - and I can't move it! Trying to back it out, I said to him, "What did you do to the car?" "Oh, nothing." So I got back in it, and nothing! So I called the guy that did my work for me, and he came down and picked the car up. He said, "There's nothing too much wrong with the car. The gears are stripped." I said, "The gears are stripped!" He says, "Yeah. The young kids do speed shifting." When you speed shift, you go 90 miles an hour and you don't use the clutch. While you're speeding, you throw the thing into gear. "Apparently, your son missed, and he chewed up the gears on the foolish thing."

E: On what would now be a classic Mustang?

J: Oh, yeah, it'd be worth, oh yeah, a classic, if you held onto it. Sure. Be worth a few bucks today.

E: Those were beautiful cars; I loved those Mustangs.

J: Yeah. He was very clever. Joey was a smart kid. He knew when I got mad and when I didn't get mad. We did have a good

rapport between us. We, once in a while - he always had to be dressed; shirt - I'll bet I sent 15, 16, 18 shirts to the cleaners every week. He had to have a tie. Everything had to be just so. Shoes shined. Good clothes on, and everything. Always, always groomed.

E: Obsessive about combing his hair?

J: No, he didn't do that too much. See, he lived with his grandmother for a while. His mother had gotten married, she had remarried, and he was having trouble with her second husband. The guy was - I didn't know it at the time, I was telling my wife the other night - they were feeding him calcium and they were sticking him in the corner, sticking his hands out by the hour. And I went after him after I found out. Her mother went to her and told her she wanted Joey; and she gave him up. And her mother brought him up for me, because she knew I was on the Fire Department.

E: Crazy hours?

J: Yeah. She was right in Winthrop, and I could go any time I wanted to see him. Then he came to live with me; he said to me his aunt was going out to California, and he said to me, "I'm going out with my aunt." She had two boys. I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Well, I want to go out there with my aunt." And his aunt called me, and we talked about it, and she said, "I'll be more than glad to take him out there, and so forth and so on." So he went out to the coast with them for a couple of years, too.

E: How old was he then?

J: Fourteen.

E: But he came back?

J: Yeah. He was getting in hot water out there. I don't know what kind of hot water because nothing was said. I think he was getting tough. He had a super grandfather; his grandfather taught him how to read, by the time he was four years old, he could read. And with the reading, came the English, came the spelling, came the mathematics. Anything he touched, he was excellent at. In fact, when he went to the Chase School, where they've got the apartment house now

E: I know. I find that incredibly depressing - my grammar school is an apartment building!

J: Yeah. He went to the same place. Mr. Chase that was down there at the time, he'd go in and say, "He's two years advanced in English," or math, or whatever. His grandfather was very good with him, when he lived with his grandmother and grandfather. And

that, I think, helped him. But he was smart enough to be cozy enough - he didn't like school. In fact, I think Joey holds the record down there for the most days out of school; I'm almost positive he hit that two years in a row! I don't think anybody's ever caught him.

M: But he was so smart.

J: He was.

M: He was a very smart boy.

E: Could he keep up his grades?

J: Oh, yeah, any time he wanted to, he could keep the grades up.

E: So he didn't get held back because he was skipping school or goofing off?

J: Well, I think he got held back for skipping of the school because of the amount of days that he took off, not because of the marks. Who was the principal then?

E: Duplin.

J: Duplin! I talked to Duplin. Duplin was very good to me. Duplin said, "I know it's hard with you working for you and him; you go to work and your son's still in bed, right?" And they used to call down at the station. And I'd have go in the Fire Department car and go down the house. "Oh, I overslept, Dad." I said, "Well, come on, get up and go to school." No, it wasn't the marks; it was the amount of time. And Duplin did help me. Because they held him back the first time from graduating; and then that second year he told me, "I'm going to help you." He said, "He's no - he's not. " He really wasn't a dummy. The son of a gun could do it, if he just wanted to put his mind to it. When he took the exam to go into the Marine Corps, they offered him to go to Officer's Candidate School he got such a good mark. But he wouldn't take it. I said, "Why won't you take it?" He said, "No, I don't want to give them four years; I just want to go in, see if I can get some schooling, and come back out as soon as possible."

E: Let me ask you about some dates here. When did he get out of high school?

J: That's a good question. Let me think what year, '78?

M: '68?

J: '68. OK.

M: No, not '68.

J: No, he got out a year before that. I would think '67.

E: And he went right into the Marines?

J: No, he stayed out for a while. He shocked me, you know. I came home one night

M: He must have graduated in '67, because we got married in April and he was already in the Marines. Wait a minute.

J: He might have graduated in '66. Dates are awful with me.

M: I've got the yearbook upstairs.

E: OK - we can take a look at it later.

J: As far as dates, I'm awful. I can remember my children's birthdays, but that was about it. No, he was out about a year, I think, because he was parking cars down at the airport there for about a year. And then he came home one night and he said, "I went and joined the Marine Corps today." And he was just, he was 18 by then, because I couldn't stop him, and he knew it.

E: Did he say why?

J: I - no, but I think I know why. I said to her the other night. He had a friend of his, a kid he grew up with that got wounded over there, and because that kid got wounded over there in the Marine Corps, I think that's what he wanted to do. Go back over. I don't know whether he was going to win the war, or whatever. But I think that's the reason he went in. Because I said, "Do you know what you're doing? Do you have any idea what you've done, joining the Marine Corps? Why didn't you go in the Navy? Why didn't you - "because I was in the Navy during World War II. "I didn't want the Navy; I didn't want the Army; I want to go in the Marines." So, I think it was because his best buddy had gotten hurt over there.

E: Did the friend come back?

J: Yeah, the kid came back. This kid was in a platoon that was out at night - there were four guys in front of him that got killed, and he got it in the knees. Over there, when they had them over there and they were in combat, they couldn't load a gun; they had to wait till they got engaged, as they called it. They had to be shot at. Then they could put the ammunition in the gun. But, see, Joey was on a Marine tank. He got hit when they set up a perimeter; they were going to go out that night, and someone had to go around the tank while they were held up there. That's when he got killed. Like I say, yeah, he had a month to do, wasn't it?

M: No. He was supposed to come home in January, I think it was. And he was killed in November. I think it was January, Joe.

J: Two months. Anyway, his aunt got him home on an emergency leave in

M: In September.

J: September, what was it, Labor Day?

M: '68. Labor Day.

J: Labor Day. His grandfather had died, and the two aunts on the West Coast requested that he come home; they had to settle affairs with him. There really wasn't anything to settle; his grandfather didn't have anything. They gave him a 30-day leave. He came here just as they took him out of combat - same clothes, same everything on him. He was on that front porch, and he hadn't lived here with us, because we got married, he went in the service and then we bought the house. Well, I was telling you - he had a cab driver who kept saying, "This isn't a through-way street." And Joey said, "Apparently, it isn't. There must be stairs."

M: He didn't let us know he was coming home.

J: He just bombed in - well, see they took him from Vietnam and he flew into the Philippines to Clark Air Force Base; and then from there to San Francisco and then home. So. We were luckier than most, I suppose. We had him for a month. At least, that's the way I think of it. That maybe it was God's way.

M: It was funny when we heard the cab pull up, and Joe got out of the bedroom saying, "It's Joey; it's Joey; I know it's Joey!" And he was trying to get his pants on - he was trying to put two legs in one pant leg, and he's hopping up and down and he can't figure out what the problem is here! (Laughter)

E: A little excited.

J: Oh, yeah! I hadn't seen him - oh, my God, it must have been a year and a half. He went to school out at Pendleton after he left here; he was there probably 3 or 4 months, and then he was over there. Yeah, about 15 months since I had seen him.

E: Did he write?

J: Oh, yeah. We got letters from him; we've got letters of his in my locker at work. I've got tons of them upstairs. Yeah. I wrote to him about every three or four days. I'm not anything with writing, but I did - I wrote to him and my nephew. Yeah. He wrote. I had no problem with him writing.

E: What did he talk about in the letters; did he tell you about what was going on, what he did?

J: No, he, well, I asked him if he did any killing; and he said, "Oh, yeah." "Well, how many have you killed? Ten-15-20-what?" He laughed; he said, "No, Dad, it's about 119." And then he told me about a couple of times they had gone into the field with the tank; they found some Marines hung off trees, with their testicles and so forth stuck in their mouths. I guess that sort of stung him; I guess that's what made him mad enough. He wrote me the first time he ever saw someone dead - I still think I've got that letter. He said, "There was some Vietnamese, Viet Cong, laying by the side of the building down here; I went down to take a look. First time I've ever seen anybody dead." But he hadn't done that killing. When he was home, he told me about the amount that was involved. I don't know. He didn't drink much when he was here, but he used to go to my sister's - he was drinking a bit after he did that.

M: He had changed. When he came home for that leave, I thought he would just sleep and sleep and sleep, but

J: No, he woke up screaming.

M: Yeah.

J: More than once.

M: He was just so full of this nervous energy; he just couldn't sit still. He just had to go-go-go every minute. He just could not sit down and relax.

J: That's when he did the car wreck. When he was home on that leave. He'd drive me into Winthrop - I paint houses and so forth with my buddy for a sideline. And he'd drive me and my buddy out, and he'd say, "I'll take the car for the day~ Dad, OK?" And then when we'd come home at night, I'd ask, "Are you going off?" He'd say, "I'd like to use your car." "All right, go ahead, use the car." Most of the time he was pretty good.

M: He had an excellent sense of humor.

J: Yeah, excellent, excellent.

M: He came home with all his duffel bags and everything, and he just dumped everything all over the floor. He made all these big piles. Then he stepped over everything and said, "Gee, I hate to leave you with all this mess." And then he laughed. And then he picked them all up again. Then he had just one pair of civilian pants that fit him. He wasn't heavy

J: No, he wasn't. He wasn't as tall as me, either. He took after his mother. He wasn't that tall - he was about 5'10", 5'8", 5'9" - somewhere in there.

M: Yeah. He was going out on the first day, and this was in - at the time he came home, we were having Indian Summer, so it was too hot to turn the heat on, and I didn't have a dryer at the time. He said, "Do you think you could have these pants washed and ironed so I can wear them tonight?" I said, "Sure." So, I turned the heat up in the house, and it would be roasting, so I could put the pants on the radiator - iron them up. He'd wear them; come home - "Gee, do you think you could wash these pants so I could wear them tomorrow?" "Oh, sure." I'd wash them again.
(Laughter).

J: He was as neat as a pin, always.

M: Oh, yeah.

J: Always, always, always. Always. He really was. He must have got that from his grandfather, too.

E: It must have been awful being in Vietnam where you couldn't be clean for two minutes in a row.

J: Yeah.

M: Yeah. It affected him. The things he brought home - the smell of the jungle was just terrible.

J: He wrote me one time, he said, "Dad, we've bought a duck - the company - and we're going to raise it and then we're going to have it some night." "Great," I wrote back.

M: They were saving it for Christmas, I think. For Christmas dinner.

J: Whatever. And about a month later, he wrote back and said, "Dad, you know that duck we bought, and everything? Well, someone scooped it on us!" (Laughter) "We found, we found." "

M: He was mad.

J: "We found the feathers!"

M: They were going to have him for Thanksgiving.

J: Whatever they were going to do; they were going to have him one day.

M: But they might have changed their minds after the duck got all grown up.

J: Yeah, they were funny, or he was funny with it.

E: Can you see a bunch of Marines cooking a duck?

M: Right!

J: Of course, if you're eating K-rations, you know,

E: Well, that's true

J: The duck, the duck

E: They would eat anything, I suppose

J: The duck would go - someone would gut it and then they'd cook it.

E: Maybe someone else got the feathers off it. Well. I know Joey was a Lance Corporal.

J: Right.

E: So, that means promotions - he liked life in the Marines?

J: Right.

E: It was good to him; he was good to it?

J: Yeah, he liked the Marines. Yeah, well, he said, to me, "I've really learned how to pay attention to my mother and father."

M: It taught him discipline.

J: The other reason he went in the Marine Corps. The first one I thought was for the boy, his buddy - and then I got talking with him. He wanted to show his mother that he could make it.

M: She never paid any attention to him.

J: No, she never did; she never paid any attention to him.

M: He called her before he went in the service and wanted to meet with her before he left.

J: She didn't have any time for him.

M: She met him someplace for a cup of coffee; I guess that was it.

J: Yeah - nothing; no time.

E: Joey's got a sister, I know.

J: Half-sister.

E: Oh, a half-sister.

J: Yeah.

E: Your daughter (addressing Marlene)?

J: No.

M: No.

J: My second wife.

M: I'm his third wife.

E: OK.

J: They're cheaper by the dozen (Laughter). Isn't that what they say? If you don't like one, they're like streetcars - you missed one, you catch another.

E: Uh, great. So, they didn't grow up together?

J: Just maybe about a year that I had them together. That was just before he decided that he wanted to go with his aunt. Yeah, about a year that they were together. Because the rest of the time, he was with his grandmother; but I took the little one with me all the time to go see him.

E: I just wanted to know what he was like with a younger sibling.

J: Oh, he was like all kids. If things went for his sister, I was too much for her. As long as he got what he wanted, then it was all smiles. But they got along - not perfect, but they got along.

M: There was a big age difference.

J: Oh, yeah, between the two of them. Of course, Joanne knew, being the youngest, that if she played her cards right, that it would probably go in her favor.

E: Plus, she's a girl.

J: Yeah. But she didn't want - I've seen worse, let me put it to you that way.

M: I think he was so much older than she was, you know, all big brothers think their little sisters are a pain in the neck. But I think in his heart, he certainly had very good feelings towards her.

J: Oh, yeah. Towards Joanne? Yeah.

M: But just the idea of, you know, my pesky little sister - as all children do.

E: What did he like to do when he wasn't in school or avoiding school? What did he do when he avoided school?

J: I think he was out with the girls. (Laughter)

E: A ladies' man!

J: Yes.

E: Sure, anyone who spent that much time dressing and concerned about his clothes wasn't doing it for teenage boys.

J: He was a pretty good-looking kid, and I think he knew it.

M: He loved to dance.

J: Yeah, dance, sing. He tried singing out on the West Coast with a quartet, I guess, or something. I never knew that till he told me that. Yeah, dance. I think just about - he had a couple of kids that he grew up with that were bad dudes, and I think they got in a little mischief along the way. But they never got caught - that was the important thing.

E: You didn't have to go up to East Boston District Court and bail him out?

J: No.

E: That's good. So, he didn't go into the service because he got a choice of jail or Vietnam?

J: Oh, no, no, no, no.

M: No.

E: Because that did happen. It doesn't seem to have happened as much in New England; it did happen in small towns in

J: Well, they give you a choice.

M: I've heard about people in, at that time

E: Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri

M: Yes.

J: His buddy Chris Nowell, was the kid he grew up with.

E: Oh, I went to school with Chris's older brother Carlton.

J: Carl, sure. Carl's down in Florida.

E: He's a cop or a sheriff or something.

J: Yes. Last day he left here, I talked to him. But anyway, Chris was just the opposite of Carlton; Chris would rob your eyes out of your head. Chris was a bad dude. Him and Joey, they were like this (holds up crossed fingers) for awhile. In fact, Chris's Dad lost the house; he sold the house to bail him out. Every time, he used to say to the judge, "Well, he's going to go into the Marine Corps, within two weeks." And the judge would say - he did that three times, and got away with it. And he never went in. Never went in the service. But he wound up in prison. And that's what straightened him out. And he got out of prison.

E: No more trouble?

J: Well, apparently, they frightened him in there. They more than frightened him. They probably did a number on him and whacked him around and what have you. And he, he got the message. But he had some dummy that was living up there that was selling narcotics at the time; the guy had two or three

M: This wasn't Joey.

E: No, no - he's still talking about Chris.

J: Chris, Chris - after the father died. They guy wouldn't pay him rent, or nothing. They had to go up there and get him out - the police, that is. I'm sure that they got into a little hot water along the way; but I never knew. Most of the cops were very good to me. If they saw him, they'd take him up to me.

M: But he never did had things

E: No, no

M: He never stole or held up places or things like that.

J: No, the worst thing

M: He drank on the beach

E: I think everyone drank on the beach!

J: He liked his beer. I left at 4:30 to go into work. I always, i always went in early to relieve a guy; and at 5:30 a cop named Bobby Oliver came up and had him lying in the back of the car. I had left him an hour earlier with nothing! So the cop said to me, "Now, don't you hurt that kid." I said, "i ain't going to hurt him." I did give him a shot in the bum. He was moaning. I said, "You son of a gun. Do you ever see me embarrass you in your lifetime? Have you ever had a cop come to you and say your father's stinking drunk or that we've got him locked up?" He said, "No." "Well, you sort of embarrassed me." But I thought I was being smart, see - I was going to play the psychology game. And we got talking about having a beer or something. So I said to him, "Look, you're 17 years old; and I know you're having some beers. It's OK if you have one or two, but don't go crazy with it." Well, I think that was the wrong thing to say to him, because within an hour after we had the conversation, there he was. But not too often, really, I really haven't had, I really never had that much bad with him.

I really didn't use a lot of force on him, or anything. I think twice; one time I got mad at him because he wouldn't tell me what I asked him, and I give him a backhand. And twice I booted him in the fanny. That's all he ever went through with me in his whole lifetime. It was.

Do you remember the night I told you - we were just going out. I left her about 1:30, she lived here in Malden, and I got home about 2:00. I got home, and the poor kid's got a towel wrapped around his hand - he's holding his hand up. I said, "What's the matter?" He's crying. I said, "What's the matter, Joey?" He said, "Well, I got in a fight with a kid down the center; and I swung and the kid ducked, and I hit the pole. And my hand-" I had to rush him over to the Mass. General to the Emergency Room.

E: Anything broken?

J: No, it was just bruised. But puffed up with it.

E: Well, at least the Marines taught him how to fight.

J: Oh, yeah. I'm sure. Afterwards.

E: Did you go to the graduation when he finished boot camp? Several of the families told me about doing that.

J: No, no, I didn't go to that. When he - the night he left, and from my own experiences, well, he was over there with Marcy at South Station. I brought him a couple of subs. They were leaving at 11:00 o'clock at night. He said, "What are these for?" I said, "You'll find out. Three or four hours out of here, you'll find out what they're for." Because when I went, nobody knew anything; and they took us up to Sampson, New York, and we got in at 5:00 o'clock in the morning, this is from 10:00 at night; and

we were starving; nobody had candy bars, nobody had anything. And they started to run us through the process at 5:00 in the morning. So, I guess he enjoyed that. Yeah. Plus, I took Marcy home from there. Any time he ever showed up, I was picking him up at the airport. When he got out of boot camp, I had a friend of mine up at the airport - the airport wasn't like it is now. I ran into this friend of mine and he said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "I'm waiting for my kid to come in from Lejune." He said, "Come on." Took me through the door where they were coming in. But you can't do that today.

E: No.

J: The other thing was everything was on the main deck.

E: I remember we used to go over there on Saturday nights when we didn't have anything else to do. Just wander around.

J: Right. The airport is a very fascinating place. It's like a train station.

E: We didn't know from train stations! (Laughter)

J: Or bus stations. No, well. But they're all very interesting; you find all kinds of characters laying around those places. And you have to be careful that you don't wind up, you know, in their clutches or something. But - any time he came or went, if it wasn't too late, I'd have Joanne with me. It would drive him crazy. The last - when he got through with that special leave, we were going out to the airport, and I said, "Joey, you're going to miss this flight." "Dad," he says, "the Marine Corps isn't like it used to be; I'm telling you, don't get upset; don't get worried." Well, we had - he missed the flight, had to get him on another one. Didn't faze him. Nothing. "Don't worry about it, Dad. Everything is super."

E: What was the worst they could do to him - send him to Vietnam?

J: Send him back - yeah! Yeah!

E: When he returned after that leave, did he go back to the same unit?

J: Yes. Yeah. He had to go back and finish that month and

M: Till January; I think it was January he would have been done.

E: But it was all the same unit?

J: Oh, yeah, yeah. He went back to the same unit. I guess he had been all over - he'd been up to the DMZ and he was in that

heavy fighting for Hue, but I don't know where he was; he wasn't in Hue, but everything was happening around that country. Sure, he saw his share of whatever he had to see or whatever came his way.

E: According to the records that the Pentagon sent me, that I asked for

J: I never, I've never sent for any

E: Well, I just asked for the documentation about all the boys from Winthrop; and they sent me this fascinating document that you need 37 magnifying glasses to read. It's all little, teeny, tiny numbers

J: Yeah, small, tiny print.

E: In code.

J: Oh.

E: And then you have to figure out the codes.

J: Oh, is that how they do it?

E: Oh, yes. I'll show it to you. He was in one of the heaviest areas - one of the heavy battle areas; the worst of the fighting in '67, '68 and '69. At the time that he died

J: November, '68.

E: Yes, November 6, 1968. There are coincidences upon coincidences. The first boy from Winthrop to die in Vietnam was Paul Brugman.

J: Yes, he got electrocuted.

E: He died on November 6, 1967.

J: Yeah, I knew that.

M: You did?

J: Yeah, well, he's buried right across from Joey.

E: Six boys from Winthrop died in that one 366-day period.

M. Oh, my.

J: He didn't have a father or a mother, I don't think. The grandmother or somebody brought him up. He was tough to handle. But when he'd come up to the Fire House, he was all right. And

then he went in the Marine Corps, electricity school. That's how he got it. They were stretching wire or something; and he was up on a pole and he grabbed the hot wire. But, it don't matter how you died!

M: No.

E: No, not at all.

J: If he wasn't there, he probably never would have -

E: Last year, when we talked at the dedication ceremony for the Memorial, I told you - again, coincidences - that when Donna Reilly had asked me to start verifying the panels and line numbers from the Washington Vietnam Veterans Memorial, I was stunned that Joey's name appeared one line above the name of a friend of mine - a college buddy, not someone from Winthrop. And then we talked about my friend, whose nickname was Pigpen, but whose given name was Duncan, Duncan Sleigh, who I thought was Joey's lieutenant.

J: I didn't know Sleigh was his lieutenant. His mother and father sent us an invite to go out to their house; very fine people. He got his head blown off.

M: They came - in fact, a policeman came to the door a night or two after Joey was killed. We have an unlisted phone number, and he wanted to know if we were the parents of (sobbed)

J: Take it easy. Mr. Sleigh was a good attorney, a big corporate attorney.

M: They couldn't find our number, so they called the Malden Police Department - and they looked it up and

J: They had them come over here

M: He came right to the door. And they gave us the Sleigh's number, their phone number, and we called them. And we went over to see them. They were very nice.

J: There were three kids killed that day. One kid was Peterson or Patterson, from Quincy.

E: And Joey and Duncan. There must have been more than just the three, but those must have been the three from this area.

J: From here, oh, yes! I don't mean, I don't mean from anywhere else. I mean from this area.

E: Did the whole tank go up?

J: He was - no, no, no. He was doing Perimeter duty. They had the tank parked.

E: Oh, they were guarding it!

M: Someone fell asleep.

J: They were guarding it before they made their run the next morning. And he got his with a rocket propelled grenade in the stomach, I guess. From the stomach down, I guess, was gone. As I understand it, you get about 10 seconds with one of those. Thank God, really, if you're going to get hit, that's the way to do it. Get it over with, I suppose. It's easy for me to say. But I didn't know - they told me there was a Lieutenant Sullivan that was an officer. They sent me home the change he had in his pocket; they sent me that money. That's who they mentioned - I didn't know, and I know Mr.

E: Duncan was a Second Lieutenant

J: No, I didn't know that, because Mr. Sleight said he was having over the three guests

E: I'm just making a guess because they were all in the same day

J: All in the same day

M: But I thought they said that in addition

J: And in the same area

M: But I thought it was a different area

E: That could be; I'm just guessing. The way they've lined up the names on the Memorial is they put them in alphabetic order

M: By the day

E: Yes, by the day

J: By the day they were killed

E: And so the names would appear in alphabetical order on the same day, and within the same battle I think. I just thought they were together, somehow.

J: Whatever. His mother and father were telling us that he didn't even have to go, because they knew someone that was an Under Secretary of the Navy - which is true. His father said, "All I had to do was call the friend, and he could have been.
" He said, "But my son. "

E: He wanted to go.

J: Yes, he wanted to go; he wanted to get out there.

E: I knew him in college, in 1966, when he was a junior in college. He was in the same fraternity as the guy I was going with. And the guy I was going with was also going into the Marines

J: Going in anyway.

E: They were going to Officer's Candidate School. I was pleading with them not to go. Here they were, graduating from Dartmouth

J: Right.

E: There were ways they could have avoided it.

J: Got out of it. Sure they could have, and a lot of them did.

E: But these two wouldn't do it. That's been part of the controversy about the war, of course, that the boys who could avoid it, for the most part, did; and the boys who couldn't

J: And the ones who couldn't avoid it, got hooked.

M: Right.

E: The boys like Joey.

J: They got hooked

E: They went. In this case

J: Yeah, the Dad - they were fine people; they invited us out to the house in Marblehead. They were very, very nice to us, extremely comfortable.

E: What about Winthrop people? I know you weren't living in Winthrop any more, but

J: No, we were here. Well, all of them were great. All the guys on the Fire Department, they were super. People that knew him and me were very good. I didn't get any bad reaction from anybody saying, "Oh, your kid was in Vietnam, and he shouldn't be there." Or any of that. They were all very good as far as I could see. I had no problems.

E: Did you hear from the families of the other boys who had been killed?

M: No, Duncan's family was the only one.

J: I never heard from any one.

E: I actually meant the families of the Winthrop boys.

J: Oh, no.

E: The Countaways, the Belchers, the Logans

J: No.

M: Well, Lois

J: Well, I knew Lois Belcher. She lived across - Joey and young Bobby lived across the street from one another.

M: I think she called, Joe, didn't she?

J: She went to the wake. But the others, no.

E: You didn't know them?

J: Well, I didn't. I didn't know - I had heard of Mrs. Countaway and knew that he was a member down the Elks and so forth.

E: The MacNeils?

J: Yeah, I got to know them afterwards, the MacNeils. After everything was over. And that McRae girl; I've known Maureen for years. I didn't know her brother was killed. Maureen I've known for years.

E: So have I. I went to high school with her, too.

J: Did you, with Maureen? Oh, she was a hot ticket, that one. Down at that beach corner. She's always been as big as she is. There were two or three of them as big as her. Nobody'd buck her. She was funny; good sense of humor.

E: Her hair is all white now.

J: Yeah. That's the one we ran into up in New Hampshire with the kids.

M: In the store?

J: No. Up in Manchester, when we went to the park there. Remember the movie, the theater they had, and we were waiting to go in?

M: Yeah?

J: Up in Manchester and I talked to a girl, a big, husky girl

M: Canobie Lake, you mean?

J: Canobie Lake, yeah.

M: Oh.

J: And the theater they had there for the kids, we were waiting to in there, the show hadn't started or something.

M: I don't really

E: She is something.

J: Yes, she is.

E: We had quite a class! {Laughter}

J: Well, listen. Everybody (laugh), everybody has quite a class.

M: If everybody was the same, it would be boring!

E: We were saying that before; were you in the car with us?

J: We said that in the car, coming up. (Laughter all around)

E: Really! That's a direct quote!

J: I just hope some of this is doing the job.

E: It's very helpful.

J: Like I say, he lived with his grandmother. I used to go almost every night, pretty close to every night. And I'd take him down to Delby's and he'd have his ice cream. Oh, he used to go crazy - he had a few freckles across his nose, and I'd call him "Howdy Doody."

M: Yes.

J: In here, across his nose. So one day, he said, "Daddy, would you please stop calling me Howdy Doody!" And I said, "OK." That was that. Yeah, I used to call him "Howdy Doody."

M: When he was home on that leave, Joe was working one night, and Joey had gone out and came back. I don't know what time it was because I was asleep. And he came upstairs and woke me up and he said, "You've got to get up; I've got Chinese food." Well, he had Chinese food enough for 50 people! And he used to like to watch the horror movies. Do you remember the program, they used to have a little, it was like a light bulb, it was the horror shows at night.

J: At about 2:00 in the morning they used to come on.
(Telephone rings. Joe said, "Let me get that.")

M: I can't think of the name of it; he used to love to watch those. And I'm half asleep, and he got me up and saidf "You've got to get up and have Chinese food with me; gotta watch the movies." He used to love Franco American; Joe told me how much he loved Franco American. So when he got home, the next morning, I went out and bought I don't know how many cans of Franco American. He never ate a bit of it.

E: Probably reminded him of C-rations.

M: I don't know, but he didn't touch it. In fact, he ate very little when he was home. He was just so nervous and tense and so forth; he just wouldn't sit still for two minutes.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE A

When I spoke with the Pignatos about setting up this second session, I asked if I could see Joey's high school yearbook. As the second tape begins, we are talking about Joey's yearbook.

J: I have no idea about the yearbook - the only thing we've got is a 1970 book, and I think they gave it to us because of the memorial - see, the names are up in the trees, so it looks like it says the White memorial, the other names are up above it. So that's why I think we got it in 1970. I have fill idea where Joey's is.

M: No, it doesn't say the White memorial, honey; that's the only name that shows against the monument. See, up here, here's Joey. But White is the only one that really shows because it's against a lighter background. And that was given to us by - we don't even really know.

J: We don't remember who gave it to us.

M: But I was going through that, and I was looking for Joey's picture, and I said, "How come his picture's not here?" Of course, it couldn't be - that's the one I always thought was his.

J: Then I thought it was my daughter's, because there's no picture in there. My daughter wouldn't accept her diploma; she was one of the renegades. I could have

M: But there was ten years between them. So, then, when I opened it up and I looked at this, and you could see the names - and I thought, oh, someone gave that to us.

J: Yeah, someone gave it to us. The same with his clothes. My son was a dresser. All those years, every week I'd send about 20 shirts to the cleaners; he'd come home and put a new one on.

M: I remember clothes. Because of the shirts and pants I did up for him.

J: But I have no idea where the yearbook is.

M: Our minds are a blank - no idea where it is. I've looked through the attic. But, this is something I found in this book - this is a 1972 book. I made a photo of this in work today. Matt Flaherty had written this little story or whatever you want to call it. Underneath there is another one, written by Ed Quinn; I don't think that was for Joey - I kind of hope it wasn't.

J: No. I don't think it was.

M: Here it says, "Reflections, Spring 1972. A literary magazine of the students of Winthrop High School."

E: Matt Flaherty was a friend of Joey's?

M: I didn't know him. I met him once, but I didn't know him. But he must have been quite a bit younger than Joey. Because this is dated 1972.

J: Yeah, he was bit younger. His brother Bobby was Joey's friend, really. He went to Vietnam, I think.

E: Was he the friend that was wounded?

J: He might very well have been.

M: You know, it could be at the time we might have just thrown everything out.

J: Unless we gave it to his girlfriend, gave it to Marcy. But she graduated the same year, so she would have had to have her own.

M: There was probably a box of things, but I just don't, can't see what we did with it.

E: Joanne doesn't have it?

J: No.

M: No.

J: Unless he left it was his grandmother; and who knows where it might have wound up!

E: Well, thank you for this story.

J: Maybe it'll help, too. You're welcome to it.

JOEY

A few years ago I knew this guy quite well. His name was Joey Pignado (sic). He was a tall slim guy with dark hair and eyes. We were really close friends but then Joey had to join the service. He became a marine and was sent to Parris Island for boot-camp. From boot-camp: Joey went straight to Viet Nam. He wrote often telling me the things he was involved in. He was working with nerve gas, but this was all he could tell me about that part of his job. A year passed and Joey's letters kept coming until they suddenly stopped. No letters now for about three weeks. I started to get nervous and concerned for Joey's welfare.

One Saturday the door bell rang and who's there but Joey! He looked a bit different. Short hair and a mustache really made a change in his appearance. He was home on leave for a few days. He told me that they took him out of the infantry working with nerve gas and put him in the regular infantry. He stayed there and was doing really great. He loved it.

Last Saturday a different letter came. Joey was killed in action.

Matt Flaherty

E: At this point, what I'd like to talk with you about are the memorials in Winthrop. This spontaneous one from someone who knew Joey really fits right in! What can you tell me about the marker at the cemetery?

J: That - some guy named Russo called me twice; I don't remember his first name. He had asked me my thoughts - where it should be, what it should be, whatever; in fact, he called me at the station; someone had told him I was a fireman. I talked to him; I told him that I thought the names should be up at the Town Hall, the monument at the Town Hall. Only because somebody that's been in this town - or like you, you moved out of town, how many of us have moved from their original town - they'll come into town, and they're going to look at the Town Hall. Now if there's somebody that's come into the town are they going to go out of their way to go down to the cemetery, get out of their car, walk around - that's very unlikely. So, I thought it should go right on the stone at Town Hall. But, that was the ingredient they gave me - the money, they only had so much money to work with. What's the difference what you have to work with? You still have to have those names chiseled in there, no matter where you put it.

E: Right. No matter what you put it on.

J: Right! The memorial up there, Town Hall, that was my thought. But I didn't care. It had gone on so long that it didn't really matter to me. I got to the point where I didn't really care. I had got to the point where it had been so long that I didn't really care whether they did anything or not. I know I had my own feelings - things I did, had to do, still do, to relax me over it - and I didn't care.

E: I should back-track a little and ask you if you've been to the Memorial in Washington?

J: Yes.

M: Yes.

E: What do you think of that?

M: I thought it was - it was unusual. When I first saw it, as you walk in, I-I didn't like it. Then, the more we looked at it (crying) - I thought it was nice.

J: Not me - I liked it right off. Right from the start.

M: Yeah. I didn't when I first walked in, I just - it was so different. It wasn't something I was used to seeing.

J: Well, the black onyx there

M: It wasn't quite what I expected.

J: That the girl used, it stands out. There's no question that it stands out.

M: Yeah. Yeah. After I really looked at it, then I did appreciate it. But at first glance, I didn't. It just - I don't know - it just gave me an odd feeling.

J: That was another deal, because if that thing didn't get the money by soliciting, it wouldn't have been up there. So I was happy that somebody had done something. But it took too long to do it.

E: Was anyone in touch with you about it? Were you asked to contribute to the Memorial?

J: No. I got a letter for the one in Boston, they're supposed to be putting on the Common.

E: There's been a lot of talk for years but no action.

J: Now they're talking about it going to go in Charlestown.

E: I've heard Worcester. There have been two corporations trying to find a site and work out details and raise the money and hold a design competition - and both have gone under; they've accomplished nothing that I know of.

J: That's the only one - they didn't really ask me for a donation, but what I remember is getting something that said they would maybe like a donation if they got going on it.

M: Oh, you're talking about the Boston one?

E: Well, I meant the one in Washington.

M: Oh.

J: No, I never got anything about the original one.

E: I got a number of letters in the very early days, late '79 and early '80. I was probably on every mailing list in the world! The idea just grabbed me; I thought: This is fabulous! I knew it was late, but I figured better late than never. And I loved the idea that vets were doing it; in fact, I probably would have loathed the idea of the government doing it!

J: Right. Certainly.

E: They were simply asking for \$20 per name. And I knew three boys whose names would be up there - so I sent them \$20. Then, sometime later, I got another letter with a progress report and a request for another donation. So, I sent them another \$40 - I figured \$20 for each of the three boys I knew personally; my three names, instead of "My Three Sons!" And I felt that I was part of it, something the whole world could see and admire - and remember. I just loved it from the moment I first saw the design. I thought it was a monumental work of art! Then, when I finally saw it myself - I was overwhelmed. I tell everyone to go visit it. Everyone.

J: I thought it was beautiful. She didn't

M: When we entered the area there, there were of course a lot of people; and looking off in the distance, I just - it wasn't what I expected. I don't know what I did expect, but that wasn't it.

E: Certainly. It's unlike other monuments.

M: But as you got up close and you could really see it, then I thought it was very impressive.

J: Well, there's two parts to it. The other part comes in from the other end. Joey's not too far from the Lincoln Memorial. I think he's eight or ten slabs in, isn't he?

M: I don't remember - I just know it's very close; Lincoln looks down over your shoulder - at least that's how you feel. I remember seeing the Lincoln Memorial there, and his name was down here.

J: I remember when the guys that were putting the money together started bickering. One didn't like the Chinese girl, the other didn't like blac~, another one didn't like the lettering.

M: You're always going to have controversy.

J: Oh, sure!

M: You're never going to have everyone agree.

J: I understand that - but to me, it looked all right. I suppose they could have put anything up and I would have liked it!

E: They're very interesting men. Jan Scruggs, the one who thought up the idea in the first place, he's now a friend of mine. He wasn't then - I didn't know him then. We've talked a lot about memorials and how things get done in this country. He has said that if he knew at the beginning that he need to raise \$10 million, and about some of the shenanigans that eventually happened, he probably never would have done it. Each step in the process was a new experience.

M: We watched the movie on television about it. Now, how accurate that was, I don't know.

E: It wasn't far off, really; they got it pretty much the way it was. Although neither Jan nor his wife look like the actors who portrayed them. The scenes about the organization and how they divided up the work and what happened in those smoke-filled rooms did happen; even that bit when the black general got fed up and exclaimed "If another person says black is the color of shame, they're going to have to answer to me!" - well, they captured the atmosphere of what happened. Those things did happen.

J: Oh, sure they happened.

E: They were outrageous in terms of getting it accomplished.

J: What that bickering cost them!

E: In the end, I guess it didn't matter. They got it done, after all! They've had practically nothing but praise since it was dedicated. Some people don't like it, it's true. But, they were never going to like anything, even after they added the quotations and the statue and the flagpole in order to make it more like other memorials. It confused and frightened a lot of people. There is no glory in it. It's sad and reflective and contemplative - not characteristics of the American public on the whole.

J: No. I guess some wouldn't ever care for it.

E: I think some of them think the only proper monument is to wipe out the entire country of Vietnam - go back and refight it, like Rambo.

J: You can't do that.

E: Well, that's their problem, anyway. I think the Memorial makes you bring a part of yourself to it; it doesn't tell you what to think. That's part of what makes it so special, to me.

M: Yes.

J: Yeah, it is.

E: Jan and I have talked about the names that will never be included - Agent Orange victims, for example, and

J: Yeah.

E: or suicide, drugs, single-car accidents. Jan said it would have to be 5 times its size - and it would scare the daylights out of everyone!

M: Oh, sure.

J: The average person would be frightened by that, oh, yes.

E: It will never happen, of course.

J: Had to be a lot of drugs over there. Had to be. The strain they put those kids under, they couldn't do anything but take drugs so they wouldn't know what the hell was going on.

E: They were very easy to get.

J: Yeah, but they, as I said the last time when we had conversation here, I got a couple of letters from Joey and I know through a couple of his friends that when you engaged the enemy, the Americans couldn't put a clip in their rifle. In that tank that Joey was on, they couldn't, they couldn't load the 90 millimeter gun, the cannon, they couldn't load it until they engaged the enemy.

E: Yes, I remember your telling me that.

J: His friend was sixth in his platoon; the first four guys in front of him got killed and he got hit in the knee because they couldn't put any rounds in their guns until they engaged, you know. You stick them out there. Like Joey always wanted me to get him a gun; I tried to get him one. He wanted me to get him a .38, but I couldn't find one; nobody'd sell me one. He said, "Dad, I need a .38" - this was when he came home for that leave. I went to gun dealers, and everything. I'm one of the stupid ones; I don't know where to get them. He said he had a .45, but those have a tendency to raise up; but a .38 is nice and easy and comfortable - pump 'em in and pump 'em out. But they put a lot of

roadblocks in front of the kids. That's why I think a lot of them - some of them went in for the joy of it - but I'm sure a lot of them took drugs because they were under pressure. I'm sure I would have done the same thing.

E: It's a way to cope with what you've seen and done, a way to forget. Who wants to remember what they were doing over there!

J: Right.

E: They weren't exactly fighting "The Good War" over there.

J: No. Well, we didn't fight the good war, either. We did things over there that should have never been done. But, they were also doing to Americans - I think I told you I got a letter from Joey where he said, "Dad, we just went out to get a platoon of Marines, and they were all dead. They've mutilated the bodies, stuck things in their mouths." And they had to pick them up. And that's what made a lot of them go wacky. Like that one, Calley, the lieutenant that got stuck because of killing kids. Joey told me they would take little ones and split their behinds and stick explosives in and have the kids walk into a compound, so you'd blow them up. So, you know, they were doing things like that to their own - they didn't - life don't mean that much to them there, apparently.

E: It was a very weird war.

J: Yeah, it really was. Well, they asked for it. The French couldn't handle it; the French knew enough to get out of there. I can see these vets saying they don't want to see their sons fighting in Nicaragua; they don't want to see that! What the hell! They want to put the pressure on them, get the money away from them. Just like they want to - just like everything else, they open up so much, they give them the money, they give them whatever they want - and that's the end of the ballgame. Some rich cat is making a lot of money. The poor people and the middle-class people, like you said, like Mr. Sleigh there, he told me, he said, "No way did my son have to go in that war. The Under-secretary of the Navy was a personal friend. My boy didn't even have to go in there." But he went on in - and you know what happened; you knew him.

E: Yes, I know; I know he didn't have to go at all.

J: But, that's the way it works. You can holler all you want - a lot of the politicians, they're not sending their own kids, they are going to send my kid! And they're going to send everybody else's kids. They could have won that war just hitting the dikes over there. They could have blown those water dikes up and knocked them out - the Vietnamese wouldn't have known what hit them! But they wouldn't do it. And why? Because somebody was

making money. Wars are a big money proposition. You and I may laugh at that - but the big fat cats get rich over war.

E: No, I don't laugh at it; I'm appalled by it.

J: Well - and there's no way to change it. There's no way to change it! Because they make it where they do all the talking, all the rhetoric is between them and the people they're arguing with, and then they want to turn the power on them - the only thing that's making any sense now is a lot of the small countries are standing up to us, making us look like dummies. We're not, and you know it and I know it; but it's just the case that I think they've learned a little bit of a lesson by not wanting to go right in and squish them all the time. Who knows! You don't want to see young kids killed. I don't, anyway! I don't.

E: The Vietnam vets I've got to know are mostly anti-war vets. Most became anti-war after

J: After they served. Right.

E: Yes. They saw what was going on, and they tried to stop it when they came back. They didn't want to see any more boys die.

J: No way!

E: And, of course, the people in authority didn't listen to them! When they threw their medals back on the steps of the Capitol, back in 1971, the American public began to pay attention. A lot of them now say that they'll take kids to Canada themselves rather than allow them to be dragged off to El Salvador or Nicaragua.

J: But they won't do it!

E: I think some of them will.

J: Some might, some might. That's what I keep saying.

E: It's the only way it will work.

J: Yeah. If I had a shot - I'd run them up to Canada. But, deep down in my heart

E: You think they won't?

J: No. You'll get a few, and you'll get a few that have got all the cream. They stayed out of the war, they stayed up there, they had jobs when they came back and they got top jobs. That bit about Veteran's Preference - that's garbage.

E: Well, we have a Vice President [J. Danforth Quayle] right now who certainly did his duty during Vietnam.

J: Rah! I say this: There are a lot of kids who are still gung-ho on doing their duty to their country.

E: Oh, sure. I have no objections on that score; I just want

M: The only thing is somebody's got to defend the country.

J: Oh, yeah. Sure. And you can't let everybody step on you. But, like the war in Vietnam - Johnson lied to the public when he said at the Gulf of Tonkin they hit a destroyer of ours and sunk it. They did no such thing! They didn't have a navy big enough to blow the bottle cap off a Pepsi Cola bottle! So, OK, he just lied; and then he got everybody all riled up, all the Representatives and the Senators, and they went and declared war.

E: Except that they didn't actually ever declare war. They never declared war.

J: No.

E: They gave Johnson permission to do what he thought necessary.

J: To use whatever means he wanted to use and any amount of force that he wanted to use. Yeah, you're right. They didn't declare war.

E: Technically, it wasn't a war because of that. I'm sure that's a great comfort to all the parents! It doesn't make anyone feel better.

M: It doesn't have to have the name war to be war.

J: The other thing is those kids came home and people looked at them funny; nothing, nobody appreciated their being over there. They didn't give them - I was in World War II. When we came home, they had brass bands, people lined up at the docks waiting for us.

E: But they went to and came back from Vietnam in a different way than you did in World War II.

J: Oh, yeah.

E: In Vietnam, they were sent in one at a time to separate units; and when their 365 days were up, they took them out and brought them home. They didn't go in as a cohesive group and come out

J: A little longer than 365 days; 13 months..

E: Right, the Marines went longer. The Army and the others were in for 365 days.

J: Because if it had been 365 days, it would have been even closer for Joey. He was about 60 days shy of coming home.

E: As people in a unit got killed, they were replaced by a new guy - who needed three months to figure out what the hell he was doing. In the meantime, the new kid could get killed because of what he didn't know, so they'd send another new one! The more seasoned ones knew what they were doing, and I'm sure, tried to look out for the new ones - teach them. But they wanted to stay alive, too. And once they really knew, their time was over and out they'd come! There were no units that had trained together and knew each other's strengths and weaknesses and how to cope with the others. It was learn as you do, try to stay alive, and once you have the necessary experience - it's time to go home! Very strange.

J: Sure, they flew them right in there. In World War II everything was done with transports and ships.

E: And you got to know the people you were with. And at the end, when you came home, you had time to be together, to talk about what you had seen and done, to think about it and what it all meant and what you wanted to do when you came home. What happened in Vietnam? They put you on a plane - one day you were in Vietnam, in the jungle, and 24 hours later, you were walking around a city's streets. And people were afraid of you! You've just come back from a place where killing was going on; maybe — have been doing the killing! No, it was not a well-thought out process - that in and of itself caused some of the problems. The people in charge thought they were doing the right thing, but it turned out not to be so.

J: I think I told you in the last tape - his aunts got him home for a week on Labor Day.

E: No - you said a month.

J: Was it, oh, yeah, a month, you're right; it was, yeah. It was a month. He got a month. But he had to make it up.

E: I think you said a 30-day leave.

J: It was a 30-day leave.

M: It didn't seem like that long.

J: Yeah. Joey - he had the car every night. I remember. Yeah. You're right; my memory didn't serve me correctly there. He had to make that month up, when he went back. And, like I told you before, I got talking with him. I said to him once, "How much killing have you done?" (Teary)

E: Well, that's what he was sent there to do.

J: Yeah. A whole lot of it (crying); tons of it (very softly). Anyway. I guess it didn't leave a good taste in your mouth.

E: No.

J: It was hard for them. And, like you say, he used to - you heard him screaming up there, didn't you?

M: What, honey?

J: When he was supposed to be sleeping?

M: Oh, yeah.

J: I never heard him.

M: He didn't sleep much.

J: Well, you learn not to sleep too soundly. And he told me he had killed over a hundred; in fact, he said about 130 or 135. And that was before he went back. And they did take him right out of combat in the field. He came home here, he had his combat outfit on. They flew him right into Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines - that's how they did it. One minute you could be walking around

M: And that would be hard to adjust to.

E: Of course.

M: That time he was home just on leave, he came home with all his stuff - it smelled of the jungle; that pillow and his uniforms.

J: Yeah, you could smell it. He couldn't smell it; they don't have a chance to take a bath every day.

M: No, I know, but just the jungle - it was-it was just such a damp, mildewy, horrible smell.

E: And you're expected to be able to deal with it; and you're what, 19, 20 years old?

J: Oh, yeah. They were very young. The younger, the better. The young will fight; they're quicker; their minds are easier to train.

E: But then think about what happened to them for the rest of their lives.

M: Oh, yeah.

J: But they don't care. The service doesn't care! They teach them how to kill. That's why a lot of them came home and wound up killing. I don't think they did it because they enjoyed it; I think they've done it, and if something doesn't go their way - they grab a gun.

E: Look, they were very important when they were 19. They had a responsibility; people were relying on them. People around them were dying. They were fighting to stay alive. They got back here and

J: And everybody turns on them.

E: The jungle hadn't really gone away - it was still in their heads, and they still had to survive. Live their lives. It's really no wonder at all that they've had readjustment problems.

J: Oh, not at all! Agent Orange, smoking whatever they smoked and whatever they took - it had to be a big factor over there.

E: It's because of that, what happened after they got home, that I'm hoping the memorial at the high school will have an impact on the teenage kids who see it.

J: I think it will! If they go in that front door - even if they don't know who those boys are - they're going to stop and look at it, and inquire. Somebody's going to know something, someone. What have we got on there - eight names?

E: Yes. I think it's an impressive memorial.

M: Yes.

J: Yes, it is. I think it's a nice wall. With the others - I didn't get angry, I got disgusted with them - not the school - but the town itself; it took them so long. Not for my kid - for every kid. It wasn't that they said, "Oh, your boy was a cut-up" - he was, he had his share of ups and downs, but they delayed on all of them, even Robert Belcher, and he was a good boy.

E: He was a good boy, but even Lois said, "He wasn't a saint."

J: Oh, no! He was a nice boy.

E: Yes, he was a nice boy.

J: We lived near each other, watched the boys grow up.

E: I've had an interesting experience recently. A week ago I spent time going to a history class at Winthrop High School. One of the teachers had invited me.

M: I remember your telling us you were going to do that.

E: Well, I did it. The teacher spent the entire week on the topic of Vietnam. He struck me as being a good teacher - very enthusiastic, colorful, interesting. He spent an entire period talking about the French involvement - he explained that if the students didn't understand about the French, they would never begin to understand about the Americans; then he showed them a piece of "Vietnam: A Television History," that reinforced what he had told them about the French involvement and Vietnamese history.

Then he spent an entire period discussing what happened in 1968 - and he got most of that horrid year squeezed in! The next period he talked about My Lai.

J: Yeah, that's the place I was thinking about.

E: He talked about the rules of war, using defoliants - what that meant for the people of Vietnam as well as for us and our soldiers when they came home; this got into a discussion about the use of nuclear weapons. I found it fascinating: several of them clearly believed that using nuclear weapons would have been the right thing to do - but when he asked them to vote, to raise their hands and be counted, not one of them would do it. I suspect that if one had got an arm off the desk, the rest would have followed.

J: No. They wouldn't want to raise their hands on that.

E: It was a very good experience for me. Now he doesn't get beyond the end of the war - there's nothing about the intervening years, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Agent Oranger Outreach Centers - none of that. But, these classes were held the last week of school, just before exams. He was very nice - he gave me some time at the end of the class on Friday to explain to the students who I am, what I was doing there. I talked about the memorial in the lobby of their school, told them I knew two of those boys, explained my idea or theory that the community owes it to the boys and to itself to remember them.

J: Yeah.

E: The kids were polite; they sat and smiled at me. And they didn't ask a single question. I was hoping for more, of course; but this is only the first time since the memorial was put up. Maybe next year there'll be more. Maybe next year. I-I don't know. But, I'm still hoping.

J: Absolutely. Of course, like you say, children - boys at that age might be involved in going into the service. So they wouldn't want to hear it. I think that's the big key. I think that is the big key. They want to live the dream life - which all of us do - we all want everything to go smoothly. It doesn't always go smoothly, but I think that's part of the problem.

M: I think part of it may be, too, it's like just about everything else in life, it can happen to somebody else, but it could never happen to you.

J: Never happen to you, right! That's the one thing - yeah, I used to say that. My kid? Never happen to him. Never. I couldn't believe it when they came after me. I had left here to go to work. I was down on Tileston Road, you know where Tileston Road is?

E: Give me an hour or so and I might remember!

J: It's down by the Pleasant Park Yacht Club.

E: Oh, OK. To the left. Sure.

J: Anyway, that's where they got me. The Captain and a priest, being a Catholic and all. I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe it!

M: But I think the young people themselves think that they're indestructible.

E: Oh that's true!

J: But they don't, they don't want to have to stick their life on the line, and rightly so.

M: Oh, no; but what I mean is, they don't think this could happen to them.

E: Of course.

M: It's something that happens to somebody else, but not to them.

J: Somebody else, not them.

M: If the situation comes up that they're faced with it, then they'll understand a lot better.

J: Well, yeah, they'll understand.

E: That's true - and it's probably too much to expect that they would

J: Well, you're not going to make them jump for joy. There are some kids that are very patriotic. But I think the train of thought right now is - let's have a good time, let's live our lives.

M: I think it's still the "Me Generation" to a degree - not as bad as it was, I don't think. But I think it's still there.

E: Well, that's what I had hoped, and I know it's what Donna Reilly and Huck Larsen had hoped - that the memorial would be used as a way to explain that boys who lived in this town died in a war that was so confused and so confused this country that we're still trying to resolve it - and that we all have to remember before we do it again.

J: Oh, yeah.

E: I'm not sure we've quite got to that point.

J: I don't think so, yet.

E: But that's what I'm hoping will come of this - and that's what I hope the families feel.

J: I know - the son of a Captain I work with just got out; he's been in about 8 years. I'd hate to see him - he just got married, he's got a family. I'd hate to see him have to go - because it is somebody I do know. Not that the other kids don't mean anything. It's just that I do know him. Or, a few kids from the town. No matter how or when they get hurt, they're still getting hurt for their country. It's not an easy thing to come about and then adjust to it. Think about selling all that stuff to the Ayatollah; and yet Reagan walked out of office without one thing against him! They should have hung him! They should have hung him and the others.

E: Instead, the English just knighted him.

J: Yeah. He should have been a knight, all right! But, who cares! That North is going to hang. [This interview took place after Oliver North's conviction, but prior to his sentencing.] Poindexter is going to get it, and Secord will too.

E: I just read that Secord got nailed for drunk driving again.

M: Yeah!

J: How do you explain to the families that lost those 260 Marines in the barracks that got blown up by Iranians. How do you tell those families that you were working for the good guys and selling the bad guys arms! And those guys in Lebanon all locked up and tucked away. They were all told to get out of there. They were all making big money teaching; they wouldn't accept it - they had to stay there. Now they're trapped. I can't feel as bad for them - I do feel bad for them - but I can't feel as bad as I do for these service guys that get clobbered!

E: Remember when the Iranian hostages were released? People went berserk welcoming them home - the yellow ribbons, passes to baseball parks, parades, book contracts. Well, let me tell you, the Vietnam vets were in shock! They said: "Wait a minute - these people were spies doing their job; the danger came with the territory. They're being treated as heroes - and we've been forgotten!" That was just as the Memorial was being built in Washington - it made a lot of those guys stand up and say, "I will not stand for this. This is not right."

M: "What about me?"

E: The timing of that whole episode was remarkable - Jimmy Carter got skunked! But, for our purposes, what the town of Winthrop remembers, what it is going to do, how you people feel about it - that's the gist of what I'm interested in.

J: That's about it. Of course, the town is no different than any other town in the country; they all took their good time about it because they didn't accept it. Not just Winthrop - everywhere - they didn't accept that war. 58,000 kids in that war.

E: 58,000 didn't come home; 58,132 names on the Wall.

J: Right.

E: About two-and-a-half million went.

J: Oh, I said went, but I meant killed. Good part of our young kids - we lost a good portion of our kids. It has to mean something somewhere along the way - even just in reproducing. Whatever. They were just children!

E: I think part of the explanation for why this has taken so long and why it is now happening is this age question. The age cohort, the baby boomers, the ones who went, the ones who protested, the ones who were just here - we are now at a point in our lives where we can make some things happen. We want to remember, and we're doing some things about it.

M: I'd like to say one thing.

E: By all means.

M: You know you said before about the effect on the families, and that (crying) Oh.

J: If you have to say it, go ahead.

E: We're patient.

M: You wonder, you know, what would he have been like now? What would he have looked like? You think - would he be bald or fat, would he have got married, what would his wife be like, would they have children, what would they be like? It's been taken away. It not only takes away a son - it takes away the daughter-in-law; it takes away the grandchildren.

J: It's the whole ball of wax.

E: After an amputation, your nerve endings don't know the limb isn't there, so you still feel pain; that's called phantom pain. You've just described it in personal terms - you think about what could have been, you imagine what your life would be like - but there isn't a life.

M: No, it stopped there! It's not fair!

J: It's the same thing as asking, "Why?" You can ask until Doomsday. But all we can do is remember.

E: Indeed, remember, and do what we can to make it not ever happen again. Well, I thank you again for your time. You've been great!

I received a copy of the Report of Casualty regarding Joseph Michael Pignato from the National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records). The section regarding casualty reads: "Battle - KIA. Died 6 Nov 68 in Quang Nam Province (03) Republic of Vietnam as a result of multiple fragmentation wounds to the body from a hostile grenade while in a defensive position; Date Arrived RVN 22 Dec 67."

Edmund Lambert MacNeil III

November 16, 1944 - May 2, 1971
(26 years, 5 months, 16 days)

Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Washington, DC
Panel 3W - Line 22

Staff Sergeant
Army

Winthrop High School
Class of 1963

Yearbook Caption:

Projection Club 1,2,3; Chorus 1,2,3;
Football 1,2; Track 1,2,3; Senior Play; Stage Crew 2,3
"Where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

I had known Eddie MacNeil in high school; he was in the class ahead of mine. When I came home for Christmas vacation during my freshman year at college, a friend asked me if I would double-date with her and her boyfriend; my date was Eddie MacNeil. I remember that we went to see Goldfinger at the Music Hall in Boston (it is now the Wang Center for the Performing Arts).

I had met Stephanie MacNeil during the dedication ceremony for the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial in May, 1988; I did not meet Duke MacNeil at that time, although he was also present. I wrote to the MacNeils to ask for an interview with them; Stephanie called me and said they would be eager to talk with me.

Before the date of my interview with the MacNeils, I received a phone call from Ellen MacNeil Campbell, Ed's sister. She was quite concerned about my motive for writing about her brother. I went to her store, Cat Country, at Quincy Market, after work that day to assure her that I have legitimate academic and personal reasons for this project. She had been particularly concerned that I might be a high school student doing a "disease of the week" report. Once she learned that I had known Eddie and was writing a Master's Thesis, she was relieved. We spent several hours talking, and she withdrew her objections. I had hoped to interview Ellen for this project, but we've been unable to arrange time to do so.

When I spoke with Stephanie about arranging my interview with her and Duke, we managed to have a good laugh at my expense. I simply could not remember where their street is - and the MacNeils live in my hometown! Winthrop is a peninsula jutting into the Atlantic northeast of Boston; there are only two access roads - one through East Boston and one through Revere. The MacNeils live on Revere Street. Logic would dictate that Revere Street is the name of the road that leads to Revere, but I just blanked out and felt very foolish.

Stephanie told me that she and Duke wanted to take me out to dinner before we began the interview. While we were at a local restaurant, she asked me if it was an awkward situation. I said that, to the contrary, it gave all of us time to relax with one another and to adjust to each other's speech patterns and ways of speaking. She and Duke were pleased with my explanation.

After dinner, we returned to their home for a lengthy interview.

E: It is Wednesday, June 7th, and I am with Stephanie and Duke MacNeil. We are going to talk about Eddie - although that's what I call him; you refer to him as Edmund or Ed.

S: Depending on what he had done at the time.

E: Aha! I see. What I'd like to know is what Eddie was like when he was a kid, what he liked to do, what he was interested in, how the family dreamed for him, how he dreamed for himself. Tell me about Eddie and the MacNeils.

S: It's hard to know what to start off with.

D: Well, you have to start off with me and the war.

S: OK.

D: I mean, our lives have been directly connected with the military. Her father was a sea captain; my father was in the Army for something like 38 years or so; and I was brought up that way.

S: Let's get up to when Ed was born.

D: Well, anyway

E: Oh, yes, background like that is good.

D: I was over in Germany when Ed was born.

E: World War II was still going on?

S: Oh, yes.

D: Yes, the war was still going on.

S: I was living downstairs in this house, in a small apartment. They shipped him over. I was pregnant then.

D: But I didn't get the telegram until December, so I didn't really know until then, a month later.

S: You got that female letter that hadn't been photographed.

D: I got that in the mail, later. They told me it was a female.

E: So you thought you were the Daddy of a little girl?

D: They didn't photograph it; they sent me the original, and I still have it. And then sometime after that I got a telegram telling me that it was a boy. Well, anyway,

E: When did you first see him?

D: It was just a matter of correspondence back and forth. There was no way really of knowing what was going on back here. Everything I heard was a month old anyway. And then my father came over; he was there during the war, too.

E: He was?

D: Yeah. He came over with the Military Police because he was too old for combat. And he was in Belgium when I was in Germany.

S: We first went there the day Ed was one year and ten days old. He had never taken a step towards anyone without holding on. And he knew who Daddy was because I'd say, "Who's the Daddy-Father?" Remember that, Duke? I had Duke's picture out, and I'd say, "Who's the Daddy-Father?" And the moment Ed saw Duke, he walked to him without any help. We had been living here with my parents, and they didn't need a baby around, so I wanted to get over to Germany, out of here, as soon as I could.

D: I used to carry him around on my shoulders all the time. We lived in an orange crate.

E: Pardon?

D: Our kitchen was an orange crate, when we were in Texas.

S: We had orange crates in front of the house; and the bedroom was way down the hall, and you came up here to the kitchen and the bathroom. It was really awful. Dusty and hot.

E: How long did you stay in Texas?

D: Six months. Six months, and I was on my way back to Europe.

E: When was this?

S: Gosh, I should have looked up all those dates.

E: Oh, that's OK. Really.

D: Well, it was 1946.

S: It was 1946, and you went over in August of '46. Ed and I came over in January of '47, on the General Thomas H. Barry, which was one cattle scow! It was the most deplorable vessel! And we were ten days crossing the Atlantic. Ed was sick with tonsillitis almost the entire time; he was in the dispensary. And we got into a storm in the North Atlantic. Oh, my God, Ellen, it was horrible! It was just so bad that the ship would go down hard, and it would come up and water would wash up over the superstructure. And all I could think of was - thank God I'm not carrying the baby! He was a big boy; but I needed one hand for the ship and one hand for myself - and then hope! A lot of people just couldn't walk around very much. At that same time, my father was bringing an ocean-going tug with five barges down to Trinidad;

and three of the barges sank and they had to cut the other two loose because the weight of them in the water was going to pull down the tug. So, here's my mother listening to the radio -

E: Oh, God!

S: And her only daughter and grandson and her husband were out on different parts of the Atlantic. Well, we got to Bremerhaven, and his whole life opened up.

D: I picked you up in a jeep, didn't I?

S: We were taken by bus down to the hotel, and friends brought us to the house. We had a five-room duplex. It was so

D: No hot water.

S: No hot water.

D: Just cold water. I scrounged around in the war dumps and I found a boiler; and I rigged it up and put it in the house, and we had hot water.

E: Great! You must have been popular.

D: Yeah. Well, it was the only house on the whole street that had hot water.

S: It was a bad time for kids over there, because of the bombings. All around us, all around us

D: There were bombs all over the place.

E: Unexploded bombs?

D: Yes.

S: Oh, Bremen had been badly bombed, especially down by the waterfront.

D: Absolutely.

S: And there were warehouses where there was all this knocked-out equipment from everywhere - America, Russia, England, France, India.

D: Right in our backyard.

S: And we used to walk around out there, and there were unexploded bombs everywhere.

E: You weren't living on an organized base?

S: No, it was a neighborhood.

D: Oh, no, it was just regular housing. The Germans moved out, and we took over.

S: That winter was a terrible, terrible winter.

D: Twenty-three hundred died of the cold and starvation that winter.

E: In that one town?

S: They were bombed out of their homes, and they had little gardens near the autobahn, and they were living out there.

There was a Bremen's Women's Club - all officers and enlisted men's wives - God forbid they should breathe the same air! And we used to go out in a 3/4-ton truck and deliver sugar and flour and coffee to these people; and they couldn't believe that we would do that. And they lived in these little rude huts out near their gardens. There was a beautiful little child - I'll never forget her - beautiful little kid with the long braids

D: These are just garden plots, you know.

E: Yes, like Victory Gardens; I understand.

S: She had bright red cheeks.

D: Yes, they had these little wooden shacks, and that's where they went out to live when the city was bombed.

S: And this little child - I asked for her the next month when we went out with the products. And she had died! The American kids were pretty well sequestered, so to speak, because the drinking water, the milk, we got food from Argentina.

D: A lot of those dairy products came out of Denmark.

S: Yes. Eggs - you'd open an egg and you could smell it all over the house. It's a wonder we survived at all! My God! And the children.

D: A can of Campbell's Soup was a delicacy, believe me. It was.

E: Oh, I believe you. Was there a place to take the children, like a nursery school?

S: No.

D: No. But we used to run Christmas parties for the German kids. All the GI's and all the dependents - everybody'd all get together and people would send stuff over from the States, toys.

S: There was a country club.

D: We'd have these parties, and they'd have a Santa Claus and everything, and all the German kids were invited - they'd be given little goodies and presents. And here, the year before that we were fighting them.

E: What about school?

D: But Ed used to mix right in with them.

E: So he learned German?

D: Twice! Twice he learned German. He spoke it fluently. All he had to play with were German kids.

S: I'm thinking about school.

D: As a matter of fact

S: Wait a minute, Duke. When we were in Stuttgart, he started first grade.

D: Well, when we were in Bremen, Ed - he and I used to go out all the time. And when he'd play, he'd play in a burned-out tank. I have pictures of that burned-out tank. The kids played in those things, climbing all over the place.

S: In '49 I think, school. We have a picture of him. It must have been in Stuttgart.

D: He was born in '44.

S: I can't remember the dates. I used to know all these things.

D: When did you come back?

S: We got there in January of '47; he was 2 years and 2 months. So. In '50 we were here. The picture of the school was in Stuttgart. The first grade must have been here.

E: The Highlands School?

S: Yes, although it's now the Dalrymple School. Mr. Blanford said, "This is your son, Stephanie? Well!"

D: By that time he was speaking German.

S: He also spoke English.

D: I know, but he spoke more German than English.

E: I assume he lost the German.

S: Sure because there was no one he could talk it to in school.

D: But he learned it again when we went back.

E: By then you had Ellen?

S: Ellen was born nine months and twenty minutes after we arrived in Stuttgart.

E: (Burst of laughter)

S: There were seven of us pregnant on the same block.

E: Was there something in the water?

S: Yes, I think there was! We used to go down to the club, and all the guys used to say, "Well, here they come; boomp-boomp-boomp." She was born on the 8th of May in 1953, '52, '53. She has really gotten ticked off at me. I remember when we had gone back to Germany - she was born in '53, God forgive me!

D: And then Edmund came down with polio.

S: He was 6 when she was born. [Ed was born on November 16, 1944; therefore, he was 8-1/2 on May 8, 1953 when his sister Ellen was born.]

D: Spinal polio.

E: He got polio in Germany?

S: In Germany. American kids were coming in and brought it over. The first one to have it was on leave from Germany in Italy; and he died. Ed woke up one morning, and he was vomiting.

D: Oh, he was really sick.

S: And we took him to the infirmary. In one way the therapy strengthened him.

E: I'll say! I remember him as an outstanding athlete.

D: You know the strange part of this is when he was in the hospital recovering, he was taking care of other kids.

S: There was a kid whose back was badly affected, and he couldn't move. He'd cough and he couldn't get the phlegm out. And Ed would get out bed and hold his head.

E: How old was he?

S: He was 8, 8-1/2. And there was a sick general there; and he died. It was a terrible time.

E: It was only a couple of years later that Salk developed the vaccine, and we never had to deal with that horror again.

S: Do you remember those days?

E: Sure. I remember kids getting polio, and people being afraid to swim in pools. Every summer, the fear would be present.

D: Oh, yeah.

E: Of course, we didn't have swimming pools here in Winthrop, but no one knew what was going to happen. And then, all of a sudden, there was a vaccine or a magic drink, and no one ever got polio again! It was a technological miracle.

D: Well, we traveled a lot after that.

S: We found out that our housekeeper - God forbid I should be without a housekeeper! - we all had them, they were like government issue. This woman was a little bit of a thing; she came down out of Silesia; her husband had been marched out to the woods by the Russians; she heard machine-gun fire, and she left. So we got Emmy. Edmund used to give her a rough time, because she didn't know how to say anything to him in English at all; and she couldn't discipline him because she didn't know him; he used to give her a run for her money. But when I had Ellen, she fell in love with that child. The housekeepers used to take - this flock of seven - each one had "their" baby; "my" baby does this and "my" baby does that. Edmund had a black friend. Now at this time it was not stylish to have a black friend. Emmy came in the living room one day to announce someone at the door. She said, "Is ein shwartz kinder hier" I said, "Invite him in."

D: That's: "There's a black kid, child, here."

E: Yes, I know enough Yiddish to understand that

S: So, the black kid came in - who was better-mannered than the Southern white kids next door were.

E: I assume this kid's father was also in the service?

S: Yes, he was a Captain or a Major. Ed used to play in their house. It was a fine family. One Halloween, the kids had all gone out. Ed was all dressed up, I think, as a pirate. The doorbell rang, and the lights chose that time to go out in the hall. You'd turn on the light, and there was a timer on it, and it would give you time to get your key out and get into the house. I heard footsteps coming up the stairs, and I opened up the door and all I could see was blackness - and a set of teeth and eyeballs. And I said, "Oh, Captain!" Whatever his name is, I've forgotten. I remember the teeth and eyeballs! That's a terrible memory, but it was funny as hell because it was black out there; and he was black. One night at the Officer's Club, my dear, there was a party; there were no reservations - you sat wherever. So, we were sitting here, and in came the black couple and we asked them to sit with us. We were chewed out, and we chewed out back! I don't brag about things like that, but by God, they stood there

D: We never drew any lines; we taught our kids to be colorblind.

S: He was second in command - I don't know if I knew that at the time. But, however, it just didn't seem right to leave them by themselves. And here I've got a housekeeper who was so damned

D: Well, we didn't have that problem, and we were not going to carry on like that.

S: Now, Ed was in the second grade there.

D: And my father and mother were over there. We used to go and visit them. We were in Stuttgart and they were down in Issleim; and when we were in Bremen, my father and mother were in Bracha, forty miles north of us! Imagine that.

S: And do you know how wonderful that was - a mother-in-law! An older woman, because we were all young women on our own. And Viola was a lot of fun. She was one of the biggest black-marketeers God ever created. She was a - people wanted something, and she would pay these people coffee, cigarettes, sugar

D: Everyone was doing it.

S: And these people profited by it. She got some beautiful pieces of porcelain, and she just thought that was great. And, of course, to be able to see her grandchildren was great.

D: And then Edmund got sick. Remember? We went up to see my father and mother, and he had this terrible, terrible cold. And I put him in the jeep and wrapped him all up; we took him all the way down and all the way over to the hospital, in the middle of winter. Yeah, that was that throat business again. That's when we had his tonsils out in Bremen, do you remember that?

S: That was so awful! He'd wake up and his tonsils were swollen. People blamed the weather - before they found out about what caused air pollution - heavy fog coming in, the factories and all. And that would come over Bremen. And here, this kid's had a weakness in the throat. I'd go down to the dispensary, and I'd get him World War II lozenges, and we'd be sent to the hospital, on that damned M-6.

D: Forty miles!

S: One time after another. My poor little boy.

E: So he had his tonsils taken out there?

D: In Bremen, yeah. I had given the hospital a generator; a German Army generator that was in good shape. I thought - what were we going to do with it; so I gave it to the German hospital. That was their emergency power for surgery. Now the people at the American hospital wouldn't take out his tonsils.

S: I'll tell the story, Duke, if you don't mind, because I remember the awful story.

D: Anyway, I called up the hospital

S: The Bremerhaven Hospital wouldn't operate on him because it wasn't life-threatening. They didn't have an eye, ear, nose and throat person there. They wanted to send us down to Munich, but they didn't want him on the overnight train going down the length of Germany because he'd get too sick again. So, unbeknownst to this little German doctor, we were sent to him as if we had just heard about him. And would he please take out Ed's tonsils, which he did without benefit of anesthetic. The American doctor - it was terrible to do that to a child. But that was the way they did it. "Ve are der Master Race und ve vill hold de bowl! Dis is a gud boy. Jah." The American doctor came to the house immediately following the surgery; he was followed by the German doctor who caused the American doctor to leap like a big bobbing bird into the downstairs lavatory and stand there like a statue without creaking the floor until the German doctor left. So, he was well looked after, and he did {pause}

E: Recover?

S: Recover.

D: And he never had trouble with his tonsils again.

S: Well, he didn't have any after that. Can you imagine, surgery with no anesthetic?

E: I prefer not to think about that. It reminds me of the Civil War.

D: Well, in those days, people didn't think about what the military people and their families had to go through. There we were, bringing Edmund up, and I'm still performing my duties; and Steffi has to be home with the bags packed in case the Russians attack. And she has to know where to go, what bus to get on and what to do with the kids. And for all intents and purposes, I was not going to see them again until it was all over. That's how it was.

S: We were supposed to get out of Bremen. And we were all supposed to have a week's supply of food.

D: Whenever I went on maneuvers, I never knew if I was going to see them again. We never knew.

E: That's a fun way to grow up!

D: Yeah. But, you know, the kids didn't know.

E: No, but you did.

S: Yeah, I had

D: Actually, we had a tough time over there. It was very hard and frightening.

E: Sure, I understand that to the kids, that would be normal. It's all they know, that's their life. They would adjust.

D: But now you're beginning to see how Edmund, what kind of a life Edmund had, and how he was brought up in the military.

E: Sure. What rank did you hold by then?

D: I was a commissioned officer.

S: A First Lieutenant.

D: That's a commissioned officer, Steff, in case you don't know.

S: No! We made a lot of friends there. We just got an invitation a few weeks ago to go to a 50th wedding anniversary of a woman we knew, a couple we knew, in Bremen; couldn't believe it!

D: So, another thing is that when people used to get together, and we'd have a party - man, they have parties! We met an English couple while we were there, too, and we still correspond with them; they've been here a couple of times to visit us.

E: That's wonderful.

S: And Edmund went to Sunday School.

E: In Germany?

S: I think

E: At a Lutheran Church school?

S: If anybody hears this tape, they'll think I'm a very narrow-minded person. But everywhere there was a chaplain, he was a Southern Baptist. I am not Southern, and I'm not Baptist. I could have gone; and I just used that as an excuse not to go. I didn't like some of the Southern Baptist's service

D: Well, chaplains

S: I didn't like their outlooks on life. I never met anybody like them, and we were in the South three times. They just spoke out of both sides of their mouth at once. Your landlady - your landLORD - comes home from church, and he's mouthing all these platitudes; and you walk by him, and he pats your butt. Now, this does not add up to a nice feeling. I did not like hearing that blacks should sit - I didn't know at the time that white people didn't sit in the back of the bus. I thought down into Mississippi, Louisiana, those places, but not Kentucky. And I was going over to Indiana, for God-knows-what reason, and I was pregnant with Edmund, very protective, and a little black lady came up to me and she said, "White lady, you get down in the front of the bus where you belong." I didn't know this was the way it was there. Completely ignorant, I suppose; but I came from here, and my idea of the South was not Kentucky so much as further down. Of course, I was only 20 at the time, so you have to forgive me.

But I couldn't believe how they talk about blacks - "They're all right in their place," and things like that. And I've never forgotten this. But when we came back here, Ed started to go to church, because my mother - we came back here again; we were always coming back here. My poor mother - we came back with two kids. And my mother decided it was high time the kids started going to church. So, they went to church. He was in the choir; that's when he met Bobby Belcher; they were both in the choir. They carried the cross. It was very - they were very religious kids. And they were nice kids. By going to church, they were nice! (Laughter) They were on the football team, and Ed was in Boy Scouts. Oh, God, what was it, Camp Nyan?

E: I was not a Boy Scout (Laughter); well, not that kind of boy scout!

S: I should have known! No. We'd go up there to see this child. Do you remember the yucky color of the Boy Scout uniform? Yuck khaki? Well, you'd go up there, and the minute you got out of the car, the dust settles on your face, teeth; and here comes this brown child that has features that are recognizable. And he wants to come home; he hates it there. The kids have short-sheeted his bed. He smells like a swamp - down wind, please! He can tie a couple of knots, however. If he touched you, you'd fall over backwards because he smelled like a polecat.

D: But all the kids loved him, though. Where are we now? What year are we in?

E: I don't know. Did he go for the whole summer?

D: Oh, no. A week or something.

E: I got shipped to camp for the whole summer.

D: There were other kids that would want to go up there, too. Ed had a lot of fun playing around here. He used to play football in the back yard. I used to take him fishing. We'd rent a boat and go out fishing. My daughter - we'd put her on the helm, and the only thing she could do was make it go in a circle.

E: (Laughter) But she was only a little girl!

D: Oh, no, she could do it. But Ed became a stamp collector. What else did he like to do? He used to build model airplanes. And coins. I'd send him coins from everyplace I went.

E: Sure.

D: I still have his collections of everything.

S: When we were in Stuttgart, there was this wonderful place that Duke took him. There were dinosaur relics.

D: Oh, the slate pits! Down on the way to Munich.

S: Yes, yes. And up in the attic, there are trilobites.

E: Which are?

D: One of the oldest forms of life in the sea.

E: In fossilized form?

S: Yes.

E: You mean, you could just pick them up?

S: Yes, in the middle of Germany.

D: That slate had plants in it; there's another one up there with like a little baby crocodile in it. He had that big circular shell, like a snail. Great big thing.

S: Yes. Where are these things?

D: In the attic!

S: The attic is 30 feet by 30 feet!

D: Honey, I don't know. I don't even know where the Korean bell is that I brought home.

S: I know where the Korean bell is!

D: Why don't you go get it? Bring it down and show it to Ellen?

S: Sure I will, and I'll never be heard of again!

D: You put it away; and I haven't seen it for years.

S: That was a good thing for Ed to go to. Ellen had just been born, and the nose was a little out of joint. And Duke took Ed with that Southern kid next door, little darling - what was his name, Birdie, Richie, Birdie Mains?

D: Oh, I don't know; I've forgotten.

S: Well, they'd go down, that was good. It's a wonderful thing to do.

E: Apparently all children are fascinated by dinosaurs. When he can actually get fossils

D: They'd just pull them right out of the slate pits.

E: I think that's exciting!

S: There were seashells in there! Right in the middle of Germany!

E: Well, the sea had been there millions of years earlier, leaving all that stuff behind.

D: We'd just dig them out of the back yard, out of the clay.

E: Did he keep up that interest later?

D: Oh, yes, he did.

S: Oh, God, there are books up there now with dinosaurs, Tyrannosaurus Rex.

D: He was always picking up shells on the beach.

S: Oh, the boxes of shells up there. He loved that stuff.

D: Let's see. He was, yeah, that's right, too. Where are we now, anyway?

E: Well, we're sort of approaching high school. No one did anything in junior high!

D: Well, Ed was on the football team.

S: Along with Bobby Belcher.

D: Yes. And I taught Ed how to scuba dive.

E: In the ocean? Here?

D: Yes. He was a certified scuba diver.

E: Brr, shiver, cold! I remember that he was a runner.

S: Yes.

D: Yes. He liked, what do you call it, that ju-jitsu stuff? What do you call it?

E: Karate?

D: Karate! Oh, and the sandwiches he used to make! He'd take a slice of bread, and he'd put sardines, peanut butter, marshmallow, olives; he'd look around and find sliced pineapples - anything! Anything he could find, he'd make a sandwich. And he'd have that with a glass of milk. And he always picked up a cup with two fingers, remember that? Always picked up a cup with two fingers, just these two (demonstrates with index and middle fingers together), and his thumb. Like that! Always.

E: How-how could he eat something like that?

D: He put it away!

S: To show off, and to how me. I was a tough mother. I have to tell you that.

D: Sardines and peanut butter! That was a common thing.

E: My boss would love that!

D: And he could eat like a horse. Boy, he could really put the chow away.

E: Well, he was a good-sized, strong kid.

D: Oh, he sure was. He broke the record at Fort Devens for sit-ups.

S: He was very well coordinated. There used to be a tree down there about where that second car is in the back yard. And one day he was doing somersaults; and he slammed into the tree. I told him I had meant to knock that tree down some time ago. He was quite upset about that.

D: How about the night you sent him down to bring the cat in?

S: He didn't want to do it. He grumbled.

D: "All right, OK!" He went downstairs, roamed around under the porch - and picked up this skunk. (Laughter) Well!

E: Did he bring it in?

S: No.

D: They scrubbed him with tomato juice, rubbed him with salt. Oh, they were doing everything. He had to take all his clothes off.

S: It was not his finest hour.

D: No, not his finest hour.

E: How old was he?

S: Oh, he must have been about 17.

E: Oh, God! (Everyone laughing.)

D: Oh, when he was 17 he went off to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. Went through the whole course out there.

S: And we thought he was going to go in the Navy; because my father had gone to sea, and his grandfather.

D: But he went to college, instead.

S: Oh, yeah.

D: He took up flying while he was in college. He flew around Braintree somewhere.

E: Back up a second. What was at Great Lakes Naval; what did he do out there?

D: He was in the naval something-or-other, over at the Fargo Building.

S: I don't remember.

D: You've got the plaque right in there.

S: I know; I know the plaque.

D: There's a picture of him standing there in formation with the flag.

E: This was after high school?

S: Was it after or during?

D: I think he was still in - he might still have been in high school, yeah. Anyway, he went out there and went through the whole thing.

E: And decided he didn't want to be in the Navy?

D: And his class came out at the top of the line. I don't know - for some reason he didn't follow it up. Probably because my father was Army, and I was Army, and my father's father was Army.

S: This put a terrible burden on him because he had to go, too, because his own father, his grandfather. My father was in uniform; my grandfather was in the Navy. He had to go in. If he hadn't gone in, he couldn't have lived with himself. So, it was, he was bound to go in the service. However,

D: Well, when you talk about that, you have to talk about my mother, too, because she was a ship-builder, a welder, at the Boston Navy Shipyard during World War II. And another thing about Edmund, Edmund was always hurting himself. It was always something.

E: But he was such a good athlete!

D: He was always breaking something, cutting something.

E: Unbelievable!

D: His nose.

E: You're kidding?

S: I remember once seeing bone.

E: Never mind, I don't think I want to know; I'm not good at stuff like that!

S: When we came back in 1950, we went down to Fort Knox; and we lived in a very stark project.

D: We lived in a hole-in-the-wall down there. Oh, gee! And there Edmund came down with appendicitis.

S: And he spent Christmas at the hospital at Fort Knox. The Christmas Star was tied on with a condom.

E: Oh!

S: I will never forget going into that room!

E: They took his appendix out?

S: Yes. He wasn't an infant; they put him in a regular ward.

D: Remember, we were all packed to go home for Christmas. We were going to drive home.

E: Good timing, Ed!

D: Gee, the next morning, oh, he was really in pain. I pressed down on his stomach and let go, and he went, "Ohhhhhhhhhhh!" That's it! He's got appendicitis. Bingo. Into the hospital.

S: He was gone all day, all day.

E: Appendicitis is one thing; but you said he broke things - did he break his arm, his leg?

S: If there was a gnat on the floor, he would fall over it.

D: He would trip over it! He had broken ribs - he had broken ribs before we even knew he had broken ribs. He just was a son-of-a-gun about it. He wasn't strapped up - nothing. He just let it go.

S: Every time he'd go out, I'd be afraid to ask.

E: In addition to the kinds of collections he had, and these accidents

S: He was a klutz.

E: How was he as a student? Was he interested in school?

D: I remember one time he was the Clown of the Class.

S: That was down in Kentucky.

D: I was not pleased. So I took him down the cellar, and I gave him a licking. He didn't do it anymore. And his marks started to come up unbelievable. He was just fooling around for the class.

S: No, he wasn't a top-level student.

E: But he didn't cause any real problems?

D: No.

S: My God, when we think of the time

D: I even remember one time when he had a fight

S: Well, the fact was that he was seven! I, of course, yelled at him a lot; telling him, "Pick that up; put that away." I didn't like him very much sometimes (very softly, almost a gasp).

E: Most people think they are going to be perfect parents, with perfect children, but it's not possible. And you can dislike someone but still love them.

S: It's just - so many things to do with the way I was raised. I was supposed to be like my Mom; she was old fashioned. I'd sit out there and listen to really good music - this was during the war - there was really good music, good musicians, good bands, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, the Dorseys

E: The big band stuff, sure.

S: Well, she wanted me to play Beethoven and listen to Bach, and all the dour, serious music. I was not into the classics; I had a mental block about them. And I decided that if I ever married and had children, I wasn't going to take the enjoyment of music away from them. And yet, I; well, Ed liked to listen to his music, rock, the Beatles. But, this was outside the house, because my mother and I were on his case.

E: What did he do when you argued, disagreed? Did he conceal things from you, or would he just smile, listen and walk away?

S: You know that awful punishment that kids have to take - go to your room! Of course, he'd go up there, and he'd have his own radio, and

D: Well, Edmund was very active at church.

S: Yes, he really enjoyed that. It was important to him. He and Bob Belcher were together with that.

D: He used to go on all the maneuvers with me. I used to take him right out to the field with me, with the troops.

E: You were stationed here at Ft. Banks?

D: Yes.

E: That was convenient.

S: Then he got his warrant, and he went to Korea; and I came back here with the two kids!

E: Was that during the Korean War?

S: It was the occupation.

D: It was 18 months I was over there. We were on combat status all the time.

S: When did you get out of the Army, 1960?

D: '53.

S: 1960! In 1953 we were still in Germany.

D: 1954 I was in Korea.

S: When did your father die?

D: 1960.

S: That's when you go out of the service.

D: We aren't talking about when I got out; we're talking about when I was in Korea.

S: Whenever it was you were there.

D: He was always asking me for an Army jacket.

E: OK. He got out of high school in 1963. Did he have any particular girlfriend?

D: One of his girlfriends just directed a movie.

S: Wanda Rohm.

D: Wanda Rohm.

E: What kind of a movie is this?

S: Oh, it was in the Transcript a few weeks ago, and I meant to cut it out. Now, when he was in high school - this was the era of the girls starting to call the fellas. Now, Mum wasn't used to this! I would pick up the phone, and I'd hear, "Is Edmund there?"

D: And we'd say, "Ed, it's a girl! Aand we always knew who everybody was - he'd talk to them right here.

S: Ellen and I were sitting on the porch once, getting ready to go out. And Ed and this girl and another couple came up on the porch, and the girl said, "Hi." Not, "How do you do?" He had been talking about her beautiful blue eyes and her lovely black hair - her hair was dyed and she had on a ton of mascara. Ellen took a dislike to her on sight because she didn't say, "How do you do?" to the mother. We said to Ed the next day, "Hey, you don't know what you've got there!" He couldn't believe it. He dated a lot of girls, and he fell in love a lot of times. When Wanda left, he was crushed. He was always interested in girls in the arts and ballet. Wanda lived on River Road; she was a beautiful girl. We used to call up there at 11 o'clock, and the father would answer; and we would ask if he had a boarder there named Edmund, please send him on his way because there was school and all. Which added to Ed's love of Mum, the First Sergeant! But, she moved away; they went out to the mid-West, Chicago; and Ed sat there and cried - he couldn't believe it.

E: How old was he?

S: Sixteen, seventeen; that terrible age.

E: Well, you really believe the world had ended when something like that happens to you at that age.

D: He loved playing with kids. Oh, he loved kids! Oh, God, he would play all day long with the kids in the neighborhood. Throwing a ball, having a great time playing baseball.

S: The girl downstairs got married; so we had a couple with a baby. Her younger sister was one of Ed's first girlfriends. That car - out there, the '53 Chevy - I used to drive - he was too young to drive - so I would drive him down to Point Shirley, pick up this girl - first time I ever saw her, her blonde hair came all the way down to her waist - and I'd drive them to the movie; and either I'd go home and come back to get them, or I'd sit way-way-up in the back someplace, and then drive them home. And when this girl asked if she could live here, or her boyfriend could live here, waiting for them to get married - I couldn't believe it. She was coming back into my life! I could remember her all

the way through the stages of her life. I ran into her in the Center one day; she had a couple of boys and a lovely little red-headed girl; and she was with her sister, Ann.

D: I think I saw her in the coffee shop this morning.

S: I ran into Ann in the Center one day, and she said, "The next time you write to Edmund in Vietnam, you tell him I am divorced; I am available." And I said, "Yes, I will tell him." Two days later, there was a knock at the door - oh! Oh, she came to the house with the most wonderful chicken you ever had in your life! (Very sad, very soft, almost overwhelmed)

E: Let's not get that far yet.

S: No!

E: Eddie's graduated from high school. Then what, since he apparently decided he didn't like the Navy?

D: He decided to go to Northeastern. He was working in Bedford, in the publications department up there. Making good money. He gave that up and went to school.

S: He didn't like it, I remember. He couldn't stand it. He felt like a number.

E: He left before he graduated?

S: Yes.

E: Did he want to go someplace else?

S: He went in the Army.

D: He went in, I can't remember when. He became an instructor, is what he became!

S: Oh, yeah!

D: He became a D.I. But he was at the medical school, and he was teaching medical classes down there, too. But he was already, he had a couple of years of - what do you call it? That exercise thing he used to do?

E: Gymnastics?

D: No.

S: You're not talking karate?

D: No. When you're going to become a coach, and all that stuff.

E: Kinesiology.

D: No, no; we went all through that stuff. What do you call that course that they take.

S: He was a D.I.

D: I'm talking about college, Stephanie.

S: Oh, gymnast.

D: No.

S: Bouvier.

E: Physical Education!

D: Phys. Ed. That's it!

E: We're really doing ok here!

D: He used that going into all that medical stuff. So, when he went into the Army - he signed up, he wasn't drafted - he was Regular Army; he signed up. And then he went to school. And when he came out of the school, he did so damned well, they just pulled him right out of the school, gave him a promotion and made him an instructor at the school. He stayed there, what, two years?

S: He was there just long enough for us to think he wasn't going to be shipped to Vietnam.

D: They wanted him to go for OCS. The next thing he knew - bingo! He was going to Vietnam. He only had six more months to do in the service.

S: He met a girl - so what else is new! In Texas.

E: Was she in the service?

D: She was a nurse.

E: Army nurse?

D: No.

S: No. He started going to the Lutheran Church in Texas, and he was in the choir. And he met this girl. Her parents - he was in their home so much; they were very, very proud of him. They were going to get married. And Ed broke up because, I do believe, he

could not live in Texas and she did not want to leave Texas. I don't remember the sequence - if they broke up when he was in Vietnam or prior to his going.

D: No, we never knew the details.

S: I know he was heartbroken; we have her picture in the pictures in the attic. I don't remember the sequence.

D: So when he announced that he was becoming engaged to Penny, and he was coming home to get married

S: This old girlfriend had appeared on the scene.

E: Wait, he was in Vietnam, has broken up with the girl he was going to marry from Texas, and then he's going to marry this old girlfriend.

D: I guess they always kept in touch.

S: She was a girl that used to summer down on Bowdoin Street. I believe he met her down on the Wall - which was another place I never wanted him to go because it was called "the longest bar in the world!" And God knows what went on there! His crowd befriended the cops; they used to bring down a cooler and put it on top of the car. And the cops - the MDC cops - would take the popcorn and pass it around. He used to jump off that damned wall; you know, right up here at the end - he'd jump off into the waves. God! He'd catch the current. And there was a big, black MDC cop; very big.

E: I remember him!

S: Do you? What was his name?

E: I have no idea. They didn't have names other than Officer Ogre, or Sergeant Scary. He was one of the motorcycle cops - he drove a Harley; big motorcycle. He must have been over 6'5" - 300 pounds!

S: Yes, that's the one. Well, he walked up to Ed one day and Ed thought he was going to be incarcerated. But all he wanted to know was if jumping off the wall into the waves was hard. "Oh, yes; oh, yes. Terribly hard." "That's what I thought."

E: That was a long way down, that jump! Like Acapulco.

S: Oh, yes, a long way. If you didn't time it right with those waves, you'd be in awful trouble. And here's Ed himself going off to the damned war! But, to get back to love - I think he loved being in love. Does that make sense?

D: Yes. He used to write poetry, too, you know.

S: Almost macabre. Very preoccupied with death.

D: A lot of pieces. He wrote about being in Vietnam. He believed in his country. He really meant that.

S: I think he tried.

D: No, he believed in what his country was doing, and he said that he would continue to do his duty - that kind of thing.

S: He believed in that to a point.

D: He used to sign his letters with a peace sign.

S: Oh, God, everyone did.

D: I didn't

S: You were too old for that!

D: But you said everybody. (Holds both hands up, making the "V for Victory" or "Peace" sign.)

S: Nixon did that!

D: No! I'm talking about the circle with the chicken scratch in it.

S: Well, he'd go to places like Phu Cai in a helicopter.

E: After the way Bobby got killed, Eddie would fly around in a helicopter?

D: Yeah, that was his job. He was a medic.

S: Ed went into the service in March of '68, and Bobby was killed in April. I remember him calling up from basic, and I didn't want to tell him; but he must have been able to hear something in my voice, because he said, "What's happened?" "Bobby's dead." "What happened?" "Helicopters crashed." And he called Lois, and he came home for the service.

D: Their birthdays are only two or three days or weeks apart. And they lost their lives within a few weeks - very close.

E: How long was he in Vietnam before he was killed?

D: He extended.

S: Wait a minute, Duke. He went in August of

D: He was due to come home in January, and he extended for six months.

E: So he wasn't going to marry this Penny?

D: He was coming home to marry Penny.

E: But why did he extend, then?

S: Because he

D: I don't know why. He extended because he believed in what he was doing. That's what he said to me. He said, I said, I told him, "Come home. Your time *is* up. Come home." And he wrote me a letter, and he said, "I know how you feel, but, you know, I believe in my country, and I think that I'm doing the right thing, and I hope you'll understand. And that's the reason why I've extended for six months."

S: With all due respect, he was due home in March. He signed up in March. He extended to the 20th of July. The last thing

D: I've got it circled on my

S: His belongings that came back from Vietnam had his personal calendar with the 20th of July circled. He was a medic flying around to these various areas, treating the Americans and the Vietnamese children. And one day on the beach in Danang, a helicopter came in and landed in the surf. The warrant officer died in his arms; and he wanted to come home - he had **had** it. He had just seen too much.

D: They couldn't save the guy's life; his lungs were filled.

S: Did you ever see a picture I love of Ed with the children?

E: I'd love to see it, but you can show it to me later. Don't forget - I knew Eddie; I know what he looks like. I have had to ask other people to show me pictures so I'll have a sense of them - but I knew Eddie and Bobby well. You'll show it to me afterwards.

S: Yes.

E: I called the National Archives and Records Administration to get the most thorough information I could about the boys from Winthrop who were killed in Vietnam. They sent me a fascinating document; it's all coded, so you need to figure out with the code guide that they sent along what each teeny, tiny number refers to -

which column is which. It tells name, age, where they were from, the area in which they died, marital status, circumstances of their deaths.

D: Why in code?

E: Otherwise it would take up too much room per page. They do explain the code. It's got 146 characters across the page, each space is numbered - well, in order to find the piece you're looking for, you have to do the numbering for the column. But it is there. For Ed, it says that he received a posthumous promotion.

D: Yes, he did.

E: Could you tell me about that? I'm really fascinated by that.

D: Well, that's automatic.

S: You get bumped off, you get promoted.

E: But you don't automatically get promoted because you've been killed!

D: Yes, you do.

E: Well, why didn't the others? The other ones that were killed in combat, that is? Three of the seven boys from Winthrop are listed as killed in combat, and Ed is one of them. The other two boys were not promoted posthumously.

D: Really? Hmmmm.

E: Was it, perhaps, at a point when

D: It could be that he was ready to be promoted, he was the next one

E: So they awarded it to him.

S: That could very well be.

E: I thought that was unique; certainly among the seven here, it is unique. Remarkably enough, four out of the seven from Winthrop were killed in accidents.

S: And only three in combat.

D: Is there anything there about how he was killed?

E: Yes, it says, "Hostile - Killed; by other explosive device," which means not artillery, rocket, mortar or bomb.

S: A land mine.

E: Oh, a land mine.

D: Well, I have the whole story, complete.

E: Can you tell me?

D: It took me nine months to get it.

E: Nine months? That's terrible.

D: I've got it all typed upstairs; I'll go get it. It took us nine months, and my being in the military is the only reason why I got it all. They didn't tell us anything. So I started writing; and, as I said, it took me nine months. You can see from that, the whole situation - where it happened, where he was, everything.

Mr. MacNeil handed me several pages of documents, including a hand-drawn map of the area outside of Danang, a copy of Ed's orders transferring him to Vietnam, the memorial service held in Vietnam for the five men killed on May 2, a list of 88 soldiers killed or missing in Vietnam during the first week in May 1971, and the report which he prepared describing the events of Ed's death. The following is Mr. MacNeil's report:

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS - 1 May 71 (SATURDAY)

Da Nang, Camp Hoa Long - 84th Eng'r. Bn.

Cloudy with rain all night, my son (Battalion Medic) was on duty as charge of quarters - as medic he was not allowed to sleep and was required to remain at the Battalion Aid Station. Our last letter from him was dated 28 April, and it arrived before we were notified of his death. He told us he was ready to come home.

During the night the culvert (see layout) was partially destroyed and plans were made and orders were issued by Capt. Cordon of "B" company to form a repair detail leaving shortly before 11 **A.M.**, 2 May 71. Having been up all night my son went along as medic rather than detail someone else. It was to be a routine assignment or what he, by this time after countless similar details, thought it would be.

The detail arrived shortly before noon and proceeded to inspect damage. It was first necessary to scout the area **with a** trained dog, who because of the constant rain during the night, detected nothing out of the ordinary.

First to enter the crater was Capt. Cordon while the others stood at the rim as indicated. The dog handler returned the dog to the truck and tied him there. He returned to the group. One member asked for a match which no one had. He then proceeded back to the truck driver and they were all joking

about his having to hike back just to light a cigarette. It was almost immediately upon his lighting a cigarette that the second detonation occurred. All five were killed instantly. As far as I know the boy who needed the light had just turned to make a remark when it happened. His name remains unknown and to his day, I've been told he is undergoing treatment for shock. Medics on duty at camp rushed to the scene as soon as the news arrived.

Four days later the culvert was repaired. It seems that after the first detonation at night, the cong came back and buried a second mine in the lip of the first crater. The rain settled out the rubble and covered the control wires with mud. The cong knowing a repair crew would come out waited and from some vantage point, on a nearby hill, they detonated the second mine by wire control.

My boy was 26, regular army, and coming home to get married. His departure date was in March but much against our will, he extended for four additional months as he felt he had something to contribute.

Being a military man, I've been 100% behind the bombing and when they stopped the first time, I knew then and there we would be fighting all over again. Bombing stopped WWII - bombing settled Korea, and for the sake of those still fighting our battles - the bombing, if continued, will stop this one.

Enclosed you will find a layout and a copy of the church service conducted on 4 May 71 for our sons.

E: Why did it take nine months for you to find all this out?
It's a straightforward story.

D: Because I had to write to anyone and everyone that I could write to and convince to write me back. Finally, finally, there was a thing in the Winthrop paper where this guy was welcoming letters from anyone who wanted to write to him. The address was my son's address, the unit he had been with. So I wrote to this kid. And he wrote right back and he said, "Sure, sure, I remember Eddie. We met in the shower one time." And from there, it developed into this story. And everything else that I got. He was going out to take some pictures, and then they found out about what he was doing, and they shifted him - he was due to leave in ten days, and they shipped him out the next day.

E: But there's no point to any kind of cover-up.

D: No one would answer me. His Commanding Officer wouldn't answer me; the First Sergeant wouldn't answer my letters; nobody would answer anything. They probably had so many inquiries, and this just added to it. Oh, and I wrote to the families of each of those who were killed - and this guy wrote back that his wife was a mental case. She wouldn't believe that her son was dead. I sat right at that kitchen table, right there, and went all over it. I wrote to him and said, "I'm retired, this is my address, this is my phone number. I can give you all kinds of information, if you want it; if you don't want it, just don't bother to write back. I know what it's like to have to go without knowing." And I got a

letter back; as a matter of fact, I still have the few letters. So, I sent all this information to him; and he wrote back and said that as a result of my letter to him, his wife snapped out of it and that she believed that that was her son, and things were much better now that she had heard from somebody.

E: I can well imagine that.

D: The family is that commissioned officer in that group of five that was killed. Catholics. I found out they had written to his mother and told her what happened, but they never sent anything to anybody else. One of these kids was only there one day. One day!

E: I've heard stories like that from various vets.

D: And there was another kid that was in the group, and they sent his body bag to the parents and no one claimed it. Wouldn't have anything to do with it.

S: What happened with some of the others here in town?

E: Well, Edie Countaway told me that the Marine who came to their door sort of cowered a bit, and they asked him what was the matter; he told them, "Well, sometimes people take a swing at me." It's out of anguish, of course, not out of a hatred for that person.

S: The man who came here was a Captain.

D: Steffi kept it to herself all day; she never called me at work. Oh, I'm going to tell you something: the weekend that we lost Edmund, I was ill. I mean, I really didn't know what was wrong with me - I had a terrible headache; I was, it was just terrible. I felt awful. I couldn't sleep. I just stood in front of that window, walking up and down until the sun appeared. And I never connected anything - you know - because we didn't know. It was a sickness that I never had before. At that time, it didn't really mean much to me; but I'm looking out the window and I'm wondering what, what's wrong, and I'd lie down and I couldn't get rid of the headache; and I was just miserable all over. But I went to work. And when I came home, Stephanie told me that we lost Edmund. Now, you can take that for what it's worth, but that's how I felt. I don't think I slept the whole week; I know I didn't sleep, because I was at the airport when he arrived.

E: How soon was his body sent home?

D: He was home the following Friday; and I hadn't slept at all. I was walking the floor all night long, back and forth. And then we went through that weekend of the funeral. I still hadn't slept. I was over at the church at night, and here; I tried to

sleep, but you can't, really; you just sit there. But then it was all over with. I fell asleep in the rocking chair, didn't I, Steff? I think I just fell asleep in the rocking chair, and they left me alone. But I went a whole week without any sleep. Walking back and forth in these few rooms down here.

E: Did the families of the other boys come to pay their respects? Did they call you?

D: I don't remember.

S: Lois, of course. But I don't remember others. Maybe they were at the church. I remember a lot of things that happened at the church. Our minister, Bob Mackie, he suggested we have a wake at the church because Edmund had been an active member, an acolyte and in the choir. (Overcome with emotion, Stephanie left the room saying, "I'll be back.")

D: This is as bad today as it was 18 years ago.

E: I understand. (Pause until Stephanie returned.)

S: There was one damned woman who came over here; her son was in Vietnam - and I had to tell her that her son was all right!

E: You had to comfort her?

S: Yes. She was sitting right there with her back to the window; and I was thinking of putting her right through the glass! "Do you think he's all right; do you think he's all right?" I got fairly annoyed with her. And a couple of people escorted her to the door, because they could see I was getting very upset. I didn't want her son to die, but I wanted her off my back! She came to Ed's wake. Then I thought we had a professional mourner - you've heard of the Irish screamers that go to the wakes and howl?

E: Yes.

S: Well, it did seem like one of these guys who goes through the obituaries and says, "Oh, that's local; I think I'll drop in." So he did.

E: And MacNeil's a good Irish name!

S: Yes! But why is it at the Episcopal Church, I wonder?

E: Let's see; there's an "A" instead of just "MC," I suppose.

D: It is actually "MC."

S: Well, he came down the aisle; Duke was at the top of the church, and I couldn't get back up to him. I was more than half-way down; never could get up the aisle. And he came down, and he said, "Well, my dear, it was the will of God." Arrgh! "Don't you tell me any such thing in a house of God!" I turned around and marched through the crowd. I don't know how many people came after me - it was as if I had struck him. He'd never been told such a thing in his life. The things people say. It's just that I try not to think it's the will of God; I really, it never, I don't believe that. I won't believe He chooses in that way. He sure broke me up for a while. There were people who'd come to comfort me - and they'd need comforting. It was so hard. And so I hid in the remains of this dark cloud. It was a Friday when his body came home.

D: I helped unload his body.

S: I know, Duke, but I'm telling what I remember. A nice looking couple and a young girl came in; I didn't think at that time that this was the girl he was going to marry.

D: She never did marry.

S: Eighteen years.

E: Is she still in touch with you?

S: No, no, but we hear about her.

D: We have her phone number, **we** can talk. I have talked to her, a couple of times. But her mother is now very ill.

S: It's, the reason for - she had the most obnoxious New Jersey accent, honest to God!

D: She did.

S: I don't know how Ed ever could have tolerated it! It grated, scratched. Maybe he shuddered a lot, I don't know.

D: Ed had a job lined up. Up on the North Shore. He was going to be a paramedic in some kind of a medical center or something on the North Shore. They had offered him a good job and good salary, so he had something to come home to. But while, while he was in Vietnam, I told him that he should go to Australia and take a break.

E: R&R?

D: Yeah. So I sent him some money, and he went. The last I heard was when it came time for him to get out of the service, whatever, he was going to go back to Australia.

E: Ooops. Maybe it wasn't such a good idea to send him there for R&R then.

D: Anything to get him out of there - I don't care, anything to get him out of Vietnam. I got him out of there for two weeks. He loved it in Australia.

E: I'm sure.

D: He loved the people.

E: Is that one of the places you had been to?

D: No, I never went to Australia. I've been to a lot of places but I never got there.

E: The next set of questions I have revolve around what you have done for these past 18 years since Ed died. How have you gone on? What have you done? How do you deal with the loss of your son? How do you continue to live your lives?

D: Well, for one thing, we still talk about Ed like he's still around. We haven't forgotten Ed at all. We often say, "Well, would Ed have done this?" Or, "Eddie used to do that."

S: Oh, yes.

D: We talk to other people about Ed, just like he might be sitting right here.

S: That sounds as if you're really wacked out!

E: No, no.

D: Not at all. I'm telling you, I have conversations with him.

S: Oh, come on, Duke.

D: So do you, Steffi! I haven't for a while now. But in the dead of night, I've had a lot of conversations with him! And he's had things to say to me! Or appeared to be things that he's saying to me.

E: That's not unheard-of; it really is not.

D: I know it sounds, you know

S: The first thing you have to do, I found out, is not to whimper and whine in public. You put on a very thick front, so when people say, "Oh, how are you dear?" You say, "Fine, thank you. How are you?" I learned that when I first went back

to church - and stopped because I couldn't stand the sympathy I got. And I was mad as hell at God! I couldn't understand any justification. I felt terrible anger, sorrow. Bob Mackie and I used to talk about it a lot. He was good and helpful.

D: Remember when we got this letter from Washington? They were going to name a hospital after Ed. Remember that?

S: No.

D: I still have the letters upstairs. Remember the guy that wrote us the letter?

S: We got some letters about so many things.

D: It was a Lieutenant that was over there at the same time Ed was there. And he was with the American Legion down in Washington, and they were building a new hospital; and because of Ed's activity over there - he was helping people who were having narcotics problems and whatever

S: Was he looking for money?

D: No.

S: Why did we go along with it?

D: Well, we waited for something to develop. But I told him, I talked to him on the phone

S: I remember someone wanting a tremendous donation of some description.

D: I told him on the phone, I said, "You know as well as I do, they're not going to name a hospital in Virginia after Edmund. Not when they have the sons of Virginia down there."

E: It's certainly a nice gesture.

D: We've got these documents, all signed by the Commander of the Legion Post and the Adjutant of the Legion Post, and all that.

S: I do remember that now.

E: Can we go back for a minute. In the hospital in Vietnam, Ed was treating American soldiers who had narcotics addictions?

D: Yes.

E: Do you think he would have done that when he got home? In an Outreach Center?

D: Yes.

S: Yes.

E: Yes, of course he would; I would expect that from Eddie.

D: Not only that, he used to have to go down and check the girls out, the local girls.

E: How much did he hate that?

S: Are you kidding me?

D: It's right in his letters. He'd have to go check out these places.

S: A stamp of approval?

D: Something like that. I don't know what he did to them.

E: I would guess make sure the girls didn't have VD, or treat them if they did.

D: That's what he was doing; that was part of his job.

S: Oh, really!

D: It's in his letters! And I've read his letters a dozen times.

S: Checking out brothels!

D: Well, that's one

S: What a wonderful thing!

D: Well, he had an orphanage he was taking care of over there, too.

S: May I tell you the name of it? The Orphanage of the Painted Tiger. That's the photograph I want to show you; may I now?

E: Certainly.

D: He was constantly sending home for stuff to give the kids. In one picture, he said, "Here I am with my adopted son." I'd love to find out who that kid was. The kid was about 9 or 10 years old.

E: No name?

D: No, but in back of him is the sign with the name of the orphanage. You know how things run through your head - you try to find it out. (Stephanie returned with a black and white photo of Ed with about 8 young Vietnamese children swarming around him.) Let me look at that. We used to send him all the ingredients for spaghetti, and he used to cook it in the tent. The garlic and the olive oil and the cans of tomatoes. He'd make this spaghetti, and everybody would go crazy about it. Ed was a good cook.

E: That's nice. Now, let me jump ahead a few years. The memorial at Winthrop High School was done at the request of a teacher who wanted the School Committee to remember the boys from Winthrop who died in Vietnam, and specifically to have it in the high school to use as a teaching device, as an inspiration, as a community reflection. And we will find out sometime in the future if that actually happens. How do you feel about it? How do you feel about a public monument to the boys who died?

S: I think that is really a great monument which you have there. It's just, it's simple, it's indoors and chances are it won't be vandalized.

D: Do you know where the other monument is?

E: I know there's one in the cemetery.

D: Behind a tree.

S: The Korean kids are on one side of it.

D: The Korean names are on the back side of it, between it and the tree! It's terrible!

E: I called Norman Gill

S: Oh, and what did he say?

E: I asked him whose idea it was, and he said

S: "Do you like it?"

D: I know the name of the guy

E: He said the American Legion proposed the idea to the town and the town approved it, and then they did it. He wasn't very clear about details. I asked why it has Vietnam dead on one side and Korean dead on the other. I told him that I thought it was grand that they had done anything; after all, it is a lot of years after Korea, and I didn't want to criticize. He said something about time - they sort of ran out of time, and they wanted to put up some sort of monument.

D: Have you seen it?

E: Yes, on Memorial Day, 1984, when they dedicated it.

D: Along side of it is a little stone for the Fire Department.

S: The Firemen's stone has been there for years.

D: I know that, Steffi; they put it right next to it.

E: Well, then I asked him how was it that a boy who was not killed in Vietnam was listed on this monument; I told him I thought it was a very thoughtful gesture to have included this other boy, by the way. He said, "What are you talking about?"

D: Steffi knows this.

E: I said, "George McRae." He said, "No, he was killed in Vietnam." Then he said, "No, no, no, I'm sorry, no. He died of wounds he sustained after he got brought home." I said, "Mr. Gill, I don't know where you heard that story, but it is not true. George McRae died in a car accident at Camp Pendleton, California, after he had completed his tour in Vietnam and had a month's leave at home. He was being sent on to another assignment." He said, "What?" And I told him, "I got that straight from George's sister, whom I have known for close to 40 years, and I believe her!" Then I added, "But, including George really was a nice gesture. I am really impressed that the town thought to include a boy who had served in Vietnam and was killed later."

D: Yes.

E: I thought it had been a grand gesture. It turned out to be an accident. They did mean to do it. So I said, "Gee, that's too bad. I was going to ask about including two other boys who also served in Vietnam and died later: one died from complications brought about by Agent Orange and the other died from drugs. I think they should be included, too."

S: They are?

E: I'm not a doctor, mind you, but young men shouldn't die from cancer at the age of 35 - well, my guess is that if you've been to Vietnam and die from cancer, the reason is Agent Orange. That was Dennis Case.

S: Dennis Case! Excuse me. A dreamboat. Julia, his mother. Yes, yes. I remember when he died. Is his father still alive?

E: I don't have any idea. I don't know anything about the family. I'm just saying that my guess is Dennis died from complications caused by Agent Orange.

S: Yeah.

E: You don't need to be the proverbial rocket scientist to figure that out. And the other boy, who died from a drug overdose, "an accidental ingestion of drugs of unknown origin" - that's what it says on his death certificate - he served in Vietnam, came back, had a drug problem, cleaned himself up somewhat, according to the grapevine, but still used drugs and alcohol, and then died. My claim is: it's only two more names; they should be included on the Winthrop memorial. They are boys from this town who served and died. Like lots of others who aren't on any memorials. Hell, we've already got George McRae up there! It's still nice, even if it was a mistake or from faulty information - but put the other two up there! But, I'm not certain what to do about it.

D: Well, the thing would have to include any others who've died since then.

E: I agree, but these are the only two that I've heard about. So it could be done for them.

S: Who was this boy?

E: Richie, Richard Yates. He and Dennis are the only two that I know of who died subsequent to their tours and from anything related to that damned war!

S: When I saw George McRae's name on that memorial in the cemetery, I was stunned. I had no idea where this name came from. Who is it? How come we don't know about this? Why didn't we read it in the Transcript? I wanted to find out. And I had reason to call Norman Gill about Ed's name being misspelled. Ed's name seems to be misspelled a lot. Norman Gill swore, practically on the old Bible, that that would be rectified. I would call him up, to tell you the truth, because I was ticked off! For God's sake, spell his name right! Is that asking so much? I think it's spelled E D M O N D.

D: Yeah

S: Instead of E D M O N D. Oh, the man said we can fix it! I don't think anybody went near it.

D: Not only that, but they said that they double-checked with us about the spelling. Nobody ever did.

S: It was a lot of hogwash! He has since left town; I'd like to think I was definitely responsible. He's a nice man!

E: He told me that he knew who could answer my questions; he said, "I know whose idea it was. It was Warren Pepper. You ask him."

D: That's right!

E: I said that I knew he was going to be speaking on Memorial Day, which was the next Monday. So, I thought I'd attend the ceremonies and track this Mr. Pepper down after he speaks. How far could he get, after all? I've got to be a lot younger than he is, so I can get to him before he gets away. And that is just what I did! I might as well have stayed in bed!

S: What did you ask him?

E: I introduced myself and told him I had just spoken with Norman Gill on the previous Friday. I explained a little about my thesis and said I was curious about the marker in the cemetery. I asked him, "Why aren't there two monuments: one for the Korean War dead and a separate one for the Vietnam War dead?" He replied that there's a lot of politics involved.

D: Oh!

E: I said, "Excuse me? What do you mean? These are dead boys from this town that we're talking about. We're not talking about the policies that got us into either of those wars. No one is mad at the dead boys after all! Everyone thinks they're important."

He told me, "The people in power in town are mostly Korean War age, and they just sort of got sick of listening to all this stuff about the poor Vietnam vets." So I just said, "Fine. Go do something about the Korean Vets. Make up for the 35 years lost time that they've been forgotten. Give them their own memorial." "No, no, no!" "OK," I said, moving on, "Mr. Gill also told me that you would know why there are eight names listed from the Vietnam War, since only seven of them were killed in Vietnam. The eighth was killed in a car accident in the United States." Mr. Pepper responded, "You'd have to ask Norman Gill about that." I explained, "Mr. Gill told me you supplied the name and the story - that this boy, George McRae, died of wounds he suffered after he returned home." His response was, "I don't know anything about it." At that point I said to myself - OK, it's hot, this is an older man, fine, you won't get anywhere. So my final exchange with him began by my saying, "I understand that the day the cemetery marker was dedicated, a square was named in honor of Robert Belcher. Mrs. Belcher was under the impression that there were going to be squares named for the other seven as well; but there was just the one for Bobby. She has been wondering what

happened to the others, because she was told that - and she wasn't sure why Bobby was singled out. Mr. Gill told me that Mrs. Belcher was correct; she had been told there would be others. Can you explain it for me?" Mr. Pepper repeated his tale of the local Korean War vets who have been disturbed by the emphasis placed on the Vietnam Veterans. He added, "Subsequently they will be doing it. Every couple of years, we'll name another square for one of these boys." I asked, "Have you named another square since you dedicated Robert Belcher Square?" He said, "I don't think so." And I said, "Well, that was in 1984; that's five years ago - two more could have been done keeping to your schedule; there are still seven more names!" And that concluded my interchange with Mr. Warren Pepper.

S: You know, I never heard that!

D: I never did either.

S: I figured, Bobby Belcher - very prominent family in town. I think I may have said "Hmmp!" to myself, but it didn't bother me; there was no reason that it should. They were a prominent family in the town in politics, religion, old homesteaders here. I wasn't going to get into a snit. Do you know Claire Rupp?

E: Yes, sure; I went to school with Diane.

S: Claire is on the Winthrop Beautification Committee. There was a spot available for some sort of a name plate; she said let's put Edmund's name on something. The way it came to pass is at Brother's Restaurant one August morning, I was relieved of one hundred bucks for said plaque by Claire Rupp.

D: A hundred and a half, wasn't it?

S: Fifty dollars the month following, for care and maintenance of said monument to our son.

E: Where is this monument?

S: It has not come to pass.

E: When did she relieve you of this money?

S: Last August; almost a year. I have given yea unto the Winthrop Beautification Committee one hundred and fifty smackeroots that has not yielded anything fruitful.

E: Where is this supposed to be?

S: Up in the Highlands Park. I don't know what part of the park it's going to be, but there is a flagpole with a brick fence around it.

D: It's like a wall.

S: Yes, around the flagpole. And I don't know whether a ferret or a rabbit came by one night and scratched a place in front of it; but it's entirely surrounded by grass except for this one spot. So, I'm thinking, maybe, well, something soon. When I go out for a walk in the morning, I go by to see if anybody's set something down there. Duke saw Claire and said that we are a little bent out of shape that the plaque hasn't been forthcoming. And Frank Costantino, who is in charge, is very busy - which he is; they go around and do all this stuff. But \$150, which doesn't matter all that much. I'd just like to see it.

D: It's the principle of the thing.

E: It most certainly is!

S: Damn right it is!

E: I think it's nervery to make you pay for it. I really do!

S: Claire Rupp could stand up to Jacob or any of the old prophets and say, "You owe money." And she'd smile. She's like that.

[Late in the summer of 1989, a brass plaque with Ed's name on it was attached to the decorative fence surrounding the flagpole in Highlands Park. The MacNeils were told that "since it was so long after the fact, there would be no public ceremony."]

D: There was a lot of money donated for Ed. We thought we'd contact the high school and set up a scholarship. I called up, and I told the guy on the phone that I had this money and I'd like to set it up as a scholarship. He said, "Who do you think is going to administer this thing; we haven't got time to do this."

S: You must have been talking to a janitor.

D: No, no. I was talking to one of the big wheels over there. So I thought, OK; so we gave it to the church for a camp fund.

S: Bobby Belcher got a scholarship named for him.

D: I know. Right after that, they started the Belcher Scholarship.

S: The Belcher Scholarship started right after Bobby died.

D: Are you sure?

S: I'm positive.

D: Well, all right. Anyway, whatever it was, they refused me. "We just don't have the time to administer anything like that."

E: But that's outrageous! This town can use all the scholarship money made available. He could have told you how the other scholarship is done, and you could have done exactly the same thing. Bobby's goes through Dollars for Scholars; they administer it. That's all the guy needed to tell you!

D: The guy was either the Assistant Principal or the Principal. That was the name that was given to me to call there.

S: Well, through the church a lot of kids got sent to camp.

E: I bet Eddie would like that better.

S: Oh, sure he would. It was over \$1,000 eighteen years ago.

D: And then they wanted us to wipe it out and spend it on something else.

S: Oh, yes.

D: We wouldn't go along with that at all.

S: I said no; and they were very surprised anybody would tell them no.

D: Somebody said to Ellen, "What would you do if the money was given to you?" And Ellen said, "I'd spend it!" And they asked her, "Why would you spend it?" "Because Edmund would want me to spend it!" That was her answer. And I would say that that's exactly what Edmund would want her to do with it.

E: I'll say! The memorial at the high school apparently has struck a responsive chord in visitors.

S: I'm so glad it's there.

D: What kind of comments?

E: I've been told that salesmen often just stand and look at it for a few moments. And recruiters have told various people that it's the most moving memorial they have seen.

S: It's the simplicity of it.

E: Well, of course I stole the entire idea from my friend Jan Scruggs. He and his organization spent years raising money and having that huge design competition, and then they finally built it - and I just stole it! But, I think that's OK.

S: He's the one who thought it up?

E: Yes. He thought up the idea of creating a memorial that would include the names of all the Americans who died during the Vietnam War; the names were what was important to him.

S: You know Duke has gone down to Washington to see it.

E: No, I didn't know that.

S: When was it? Last year?

D: November, a year ago.

E: I was there at that time too.

D: I went over to the Arlington Cemetery too. I went to Lee's mansion and the Kennedys' graves.

E: Labor Day Weekend in 1984 I was in Washington on business. I went to the Wall, the memorial. From there, I went to Arlington - I hadn't ever been inside Arlington before then. I went to the Tomb of the Unknowns and to the Kennedys' gravesites, but I didn't go inside the Lee mansion.

D: I walked it.

E: I'd like to go back and spend more time there. I had never wanted to go to the graves of the Kennedys; too emotional for me. But there I was at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the tears are just falling off my face. I figured, what the hell, if I'm already crying in public like that, I might as well go over to Arlington and keep crying. It couldn't be any more emotional for me. After all, I worked for Bobby Kennedy - I campaigned for him. But I knew three of the people on that Wall!

D: Have you gone again?

E: Oh, yes. Each time I'm in Washington, I make certain I go to the Wall.

D: There were certain things about the monument that I did not know. For example, I was standing there with some civilians who were all speaking German. I'm standing there, listening to them, while their guide was telling them all about the monument. He was telling them what the symbols were in front of each name.

E: Oh, sure; killed or missing in action.

D: Now, there's no signs anywhere telling you what those symbols mean. I had to listen to foreigners before I knew what was going on. I called my friend over and told him what I had overheard.

E: The symbols are explained in one of the brochures you can pick up at the Information booth. That's how I found out. I've tried to take pictures of the names of the boys I knew - Bobby, Eddie and a friend I knew in college. Eddie's name is too far up for me to get; I wound up with the sun reflecting off the Wall.

D: You could do it from the top, leaning over.

E: I might try that, if I go in nice weather.

D: They've got a ladder, too, that they'll put up for you.

E: Yes, but I'm terrified of heights. I know they'll take the picture for you; but I've always wanted to do it myself. That matters to me.

S: You know, you're always treated differently when you've lost a child.

D: Even people that know that you lost your son; they know, but they've forgotten. And in conversation they'll say, "Oh, yeah; I forgot all about that."

S: And you realize that people aren't sure what to say or how to treat you so they don't say anything - and that hurts. But then, there are times when people don't realize in talking about their own children and singing their praises they can hurt you, too. They don't mean to, and there's no solution. It just hurts, sometimes either way.

E: Well, the world isn't supposed to work that way; you aren't supposed to outlive your children. It frightens people. Is there anything else you want to say?

D: Well, Ed was always doing things for people, and that's what happened to him in the end. He was just going to cover for someone for a couple of hours so that guy didn't have to go out. Ed was always like that. He was always helping everybody.

S: Then why did he give me such a hard time about taking out the garbage?

D: He didn't like to take out the garbage. He didn't like to cut dandelions in the back yard, either, but he used to cut baskets full.

S: How have we done?

E: You've done great!

D: I hope we've helped you a little.

E: You've helped me a great deal. A very great deal. And I thank you very, very much.

I received a copy of the Report of Casualty regarding Edmund Lambert MacNeil III from the National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records). The section regarding casualty status reads: "Battle. KILLED in action in Vietnam 2 May 1971. SGT. Edmund L. MacNeil, III was promoted posthumously to grade of SSG E-6, AUS, as of 1 May 1971, under provisions of PL 680, 77th Congress, as amended. Pay grade shown in Item 5 is that of E-3 since additional pay is not involved. Commenced tour in Vietnam 19 July 1970."

George W. McRae

May 15, 1950 - July 25, 1971
(21 years, 2 months, 10 days)

Lance Corporal
Marine Corps

Winthrop High School
Class of 1969

Yearbook Caption:

"Point. Javelin. Lean and lanky.
All year 'round hockey player.
Just rotate."

I have known Maureen McRae Demers since the days when we attended the same grammar school; we were graduated from high school in the same class - 1964. I saw and spoke with her at the dedication ceremony for the Winthrop Vietnam Memorial..

When I called to ask her about allowing me to interview her for this project, she agreed; we set a date, and she gave me directions to her home in Revere. She called me on that day to cancel the appointment, and we set another date. I kept my fingers crossed that she wouldn't call at the last minute to cancel the second appointment - and she told me during the interview that she almost did.

After turning off the tape, we spent some time gossiping about our high school classmates and our up-coming 25th Reunion. She told me about her three daughters, and I told her what I've been doing.

Every once in a while, she'd remember something she felt she wanted to tell me about her brother George.

She remembered that the night before her wedding George broke his arm. He was to be an usher, and he had to split the seam of his rented tuxedo in order to accommodate the cast. She said it's funny now, but it certainly wasn't at the time.

She told me that she went through George's effects and found a photo album. Looking through it, she came across pictures of an atrocity; she told me that George and his patrol had come across this scene - she couldn't understand why they took pictures of it. She never looked further in the album; she never mentioned it to the rest of the family.

She said that the girl George had dated in high school eventually married the boy who didn't get into the Marines with George. Maureen ran into her a few years ago and recognized her. When she asked the young woman if her name was Barbara, the young woman said that she was now Sandra - she had changed her name because she couldn't cope with all that had happened in her past.

Maureen asked me if any of the other families objected to George's name being included on the Winthrop memorial since he wasn't killed in Vietnam. I told her that I had only spoken with one other family representative at this point - but I had heard no objections during the creation of the memorial.

She added that a friend who works at Winthrop Town Hall told her that sometime last summer a woman stopped into the office of the Veterans Agent and wanted to know why George's name wasn't included on the memorial. The woman did not leave her name. Dick Kennedy did not mention this story to me when I spoke with him.

Since we know that George's name is on both the memorial at Winthrop Cemetery and at the high school, we wonder if the woman was questioning why George's name is not on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

E: I am talking with Maureen McRae Demers, the sister of George McRae, whose name appears on the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Maureen and I have known each other for several hundred years (laughter) - we went to grammar school together at the Shirley Street School, now known as the Chase Condominium! (Laughter)

I would just like to ask you about your brother George - tell me what he was like, what life was like in the McRae family, how he wound up in the service, what he did, what happened when he died, how you were informed, and how the family has dealt with what happened.

M: OK, let's see now. George and I were very close because we were only, less than three years apart; my mother and father had two girls, and then there was 17 years in-between, then me, followed by George - so there was a closeness there.

E: He was the only boy?

M: He was the only boy. My mother had him when she was 42 - she wanted a son. Let's see, he was, naturally, spoiled (Laughter); the apple of their eye.

E: You're tall; was he tall? Dark?

M: (Crying) I knew I wasn't going to be able to do this.

E: It's OK.

M: Yeah, he was about 6'3" - he was a good kid. He and his friend Ronnie Walker decided they were going to enlist and serve in Vietnam.

E: This was after they got out of high school?

M: Yeah. He graduated in '69, and he went in in November '69. I think, as a matter of fact, it was recruiters coming to the high school and talking to them - they decided they did not want to get drafted into the Army, that they were going to be in the Marines. So, they went down and signed up for the Marines. Although, Ronnie didn't go in.

E: George got in, but Ronnie didn't?

M: Yeah. My mother and father were heart-broken; it was awful. My father had been in the Marine Reserves, because there was no

war at the time. So, George went in in November of '69. I'm trying to think. I was pregnant with my first-born; that's right, too, because he really wanted to see her. I had Michele in December of '69. He came home on leave, oh, it seems she was only a few months old; that was in '70. And he let us know he was going to be shipped to Vietnam. He went to Danang. He wrote home how depressing it was. I have all his letters (crying). I'm trying to think when he - he went to Vietnam in 1970; he was in Danang - as a matter of fact, I think it ended up being 9 months. And he was going to helicopter school, and he was counting the days until he was going to come home. He came home on his 21st birthday, May 15. And he hated it. He didn't want to go back. He went back on June 4. As a matter of fact, I was pregnant with my second one. He never saw Jackie. He was going to be her godfather (crying). I knew I didn't want to do this; I really didn't. I was going to call you up; I knew I wasn't going to be able to do this.

E: Do you want me to stop?

M: No. He was going to be my second daughter's godfather. So, when he left, it was June 4, and we were all at the airport - Michele, he was holding her; we have a lot of pictures. He gave me a big hug (crying) and said he didn't want to go back. He just was depressed; he couldn't even tell us what went on, he was so sad. So, that was in June of 1971; and he died July 25 (crying).

Let's see. It was a Sunday. My parents had just come home from church. Needless to say, the doorbell rang (crying); I was visiting with my husband and the baby at my in-laws; and they told my parents in the morning. I remember my father saying that they just pulled the blinds and cried for hours - I didn't get the call till 1:30 in the afternoon; and they had known since 10:30 A.M. My brother-in-law called me, telling me there had been an accident.

(Short Pause in tape while Jackie irons some clothes.)

I think it's hard, too, because I loved him. My mother passed away just before the Memorial - she loved him very much; and I didn't want my father to go through that, but naturally, he was glad he did. As you know, you worry about them now that they're at the age they are [Mr. McRae is now 81].

E: But they never stop being your parents.

M: Now, it's a reversal - you're taking care of them.

(Pause while Maureen got herself a glass of water.)

Jackie, whom you just met, looks like my brother. Oh, you didn't know him!

E: No.

M: Yeah, tall - skinny.

E: You remember what it was like in Winthrop High; if they were two classes younger than you, you didn't know them!

M: Oh, sure. But she does look like him.

E: What did he like to do?

M: Tease his sister! (Laughter) I don't know - things every kid likes to do. Have a good time. He had a girlfriend, they went to the prom; he bought his first car - as a matter of fact, my father had to sell it after that happened.

E: Did he play football or other sports?

M: Basketball. Football, I think he might have played; but he was never well-known for that. Basketball, he played. God, I'd have to get the yearbook out - I forget. He played basketball, too, in the service; they had a group that got together and played. He liked all the shows.

But, getting back to that day. My brother-in-law called me at my in-laws and said that George had been in an accident. And I said, "Little George," meaning my nephew, and he said, "No, your brother George." And I just knew. You may have noticed, I have the habit of wringing things (Maureen holds up a napkin she had been twisting). I was pregnant with Jackie, and it was a real hot day. I had a pair of shorts on, I'll never forget. I had worn a pair of maternity pants, and I brought shorts with me 'cause it was so hot - and by the time I got to Winthrop, I had those in shreds! I just knew - he didn't tell me, but I just knew what had happened.

He came home on his 21st birthday, and a month later (crying) - it would have been easier if he had died in Vietnam, because there would have been a reason! (Crying) But to go through that and come home; it just wouldn't be as hard to accept. It really was terrible (crying). His friend, Alan Stafford, he was in the Marines with him, from Mississippi; he was the guard that came home with him on the plane. The Marines told them - he's yours for as long as you want him; in other words, if my folks had wanted him for a month or whatever. He stayed for two weeks; wouldn't sleep in a bed; every night, would sleep on the floor never would sleep in George's room. I mean, he was really a nice, nice fellow.

We all sat in the back yard of my mother's house, waiting for the airplane (crying) to come in; she was, you know, down the Point - right near the airport. My husband and my brother-in-law went to the airport to make sure everything was fine.

He had gone to the movies to see "A Fistful of Dollars" with Clint Eastwood. It was the end of the month, and they had no money (Laughter). An on-coming car forced them off the road - he was thrown (crying) from the car; he died of head injuries. The

driver was fine, thank God; it was not his fault. They were forced off the road. He broke his collar bone; he was in the hospital for a while, and he wrote my mother a couple of times.

E: Did they ever find the person that forced them off the road?

M: Nope. It happened in Oceanside, California, which is right near Camp Pendleton. If he had died - to go through Vietnam, he didn't want to go back. It was awful, he just couldn't even tell us what went on. He told us a few things, and, I don't know, it was so -

E: He had a short life, it's true; did he have a good one?

M: I think he was happy.

E: He was loved.

M: Oh, everybody loved him. He had a good sense of humor. After I had Jackie, she looks just like him - well, if you saw him, you would know. I didn't want to have any more because every time I was pregnant - I lost my grandmother when I was pregnant with Michele; and then Jackie with my brother. But, I did - I had another girl; and when I was pregnant with Carolyn, my mother had a major heart attack at my sister's in Missouri. I was about 8 months along, so the doctor wouldn't let me fly out there. But, thank God, she had ten more years after that. I don't know (sigh).

George had a little cowboy suit, and I was dressed in a little cowgirl suit! (Laughter) And we were so ducky! We had a lot of laughs.

E: Maureen, when were you little?

M: 42 years ago! (laughter)

E: But you were always bigger than I was!

M: Yeah! Well, I was just shorter then. My whole family is tall, well, except for my mother - she wasn't that tall; now, they shrink as they get older.

E: True.

M: He had a lot of friends; they all came to the door, I guess word spread around Winthrop. They all came to the door, not believing what they heard. You hear that it happens to people, but never to somebody you know, not to your own family.

E: Until it finally does.

M: Yeah. He wrote every week, we always got letters. At first it wasn't that bad; I think when he first got there, he felt he was doing something for his country. It wasn't until they were there a few months, they saw what was going on and how useless and totally - it was; and what did it accomplish?

E: We lost 58,000 boys; I don't know how many Vietnamese. That country is a disaster; our country has not really recovered from it. But that leads us into the next section - when, years after the war was over, the undeclared war, Jan Scruggs and his little band of innocent fund-raisers built the Memorial in Washington, that has helped, I think.

M: I think so, too. It brings them all together. It wasn't a total - it was and it wasn't; it was a useless war.

E: And it was a waste of lives. But there is something important in remembering it and something important in remembering each one of the boys.

M: Like I said, if he didn't go into the service and to Vietnam, he wouldn't have been killed, because he wouldn't have been in California! People have said, "Well, it could have happened here." But it would have been a totally different circumstance.

E: Sure, it would have been a different story entirely. But because of the circumstances of his death, he was not on the Wall in Washington.

M: Right; you have to have died in Vietnam.

E: Actually, they call it the Combat Area; they count a couple of other things, but essentially, that's correct. But when the town of the Winthrop came to memorialize its sons, George — included; and rightfully so. When that marker got put into the cemetery, was the family notified? Did someone call you and say they were doing this?

M: I think my father got a letter; they were invited.

E: It was a Memorial Day ceremony.

M: Yes. Right. My father, I think, went; my mother didn't - she wasn't doing very well the last few years.

E: Well, a few more years went by, and the School Committee decided to install this new memorial in the high school.

M: Right.

E: And again, rightfully so, included George. And the family was invited to the ceremony. I know you were there, I saw you.

M: My father and my sister, too.

E: How did they feel?

M: (Sigh) They were glad, you know, that he was included. But, like me, they're not bitter; it's just (crying) I can't explain it; I just can't explain. I'm not bitter that he went in the Marines, but I just feel that if he didn't it wouldn't have happened. But as we all know, your destiny - it would have happened. I think my father was - he went, I was surprised. Not that he went, but - well, he was 79, this last year he was 80. I just didn't want to put him through it. He had just buried my mother. But he went, and I think he was proud. It was hard to get through it, because it opened up everything again. That's the hardest part.

E: Sure.

M: You would never ever forget - but when you don't talk about it, you're just, like, not there. Hasn't happened. And every day (crying), there's not a day that goes by that I don't think about him. He never lived! He was 21 - unmarried - never had children.

E: But he did live; he was a part of your life.

M: A big part, yeah.

E: And he was a part of the community, of the town. And he's remembered. And that's very important, it seems to me. And my guess is that's - maybe not in those words - but that's what your father feels.

M: Oh, yes; oh, definitely.

E: It's an honor, a sad honor.

M: Oh, definitely. It's marvelous. When Donna, Mrs. Reilly, came in - I work at the stationery store in Winthrop - and she came in and said, "I want to talk with you about your brother." She just startled me because, you know - I don't know what I thought! My brother! And then she explained what was going on, and I thought that was great - and she followed through - she wrote to the people in Washington, and I received a letter from them stating that the reason his name wasn't on the Wall was that he did not die in Vietnam. Hopefully, they say, that someday that they would like to include all these that were Vietnam related; in other words, a month or a year, even, or like you say, a couple of years - Agent Orange, you don't know. But in his case, I know that it wasn't a month that he was home from Vietnam.

E: Jan Scruggs is a friend of mine; he wasn't when he started this whole thing, but through doing work

M: Oh, that's nice; you've met him.

E: On other issues, I have met him and we've become friends.

M: That's great.

E: He has said that if every name gets put on there that's actually Vietnam related - for example, our classmates Richard Yates and Dennis Case - single-car accidents, drug problems, suicides - he said the numbers would scare the daylights out of everyone in the country. The Memorial would have to be five times its size.

M: I'm sure it would. To get back to my father, I remember when I first told him and he got the letter - I think it was in 1982 - about the Town Hall Square - no, maybe it was the cemetery.

E: The cemetery was '84; Town Hall Square may have been '82.

M: I remember him saying, "George wasn't killed in Vietnam; his name shouldn't be there." I don't think he's bitter, but, you know. I don't - which I myself have felt. Not that I didn't want it there, but why? Like you say, a car accident. It really wasn't, had nothing to do with Vietnam. Only, like Donna Reilly said, it was a month; he had just gotten home - he was still in the service of his country, still in the Marines.

E: If that accident had happened in Vietnam, he would have been included.

M: Right, that's what they said.

E: Of the eight names on the Winthrop memorial, only three of those boys were killed in combat - the others were killed in accidents.

M: One was electrocuted, I think.

E: Electrocuted, I don't know about that. One was a helicopter crash; one was an accidental homicide - the kid next to him fired off his gun and the boy was killed.

M: Which one was that?

E: Brugman, I think.

M: Brugman. My niece went to school with him. Yup, I remember him. I remember him! He was right near my brother's age, I think

because my niece and my brother were a few months apart. My mother and my sister were pregnant together.

E: Oy!

M: My sister and her husband went to dinner at my mother's to tell them how excited they were - they were having their first child. And my mother had them over to tell them that she was pregnant (Laughter)! Yeah, she was 42. She wanted a son so bad. She never was the same (crying).

E: No.

M: As a matter of fact, the doctor said she probably had a silent heart attack at that time - the scar tissue showed. Yeah. It's hard to bury your own child.

E: It isn't supposed to happen that way. We know that. It's hard enough the other way, when you know; but it isn't supposed to happen that way - boys aren't supposed to die like that.

M: No, but at least World War I and II - they were wars; boys went off to war.

E: It was understood why, mostly. No one ever understood Vietnam; that didn't make it any easier.

M: No. No. He had a terrible time; I mean, he was only home that month, but he couldn't even talk to my husband. He said you couldn't imagine what went on over there. He told us a few things - for what, what were these young kids going through that for? No other war was like that; those wars - you shot somebody, and that was it - they weren't tortured, and families and children killed. God! My God! No one has an answer for that (sigh). But, it's very hard. I was glad, you know, I'm glad to do this - but I knew I wasn't going to get through it too well.

E: You did OK.

M: (Laughter) Is there anything else that I didn't go over?

E: No, this is fine. Thank you.

CHAPTER IV

COMMENTARY

"...what a long, strange trip it's been. "
from "Truckin" by The Grateful Dead
Robert Hunter, Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh & Bob Weir

I was graduated from Winthrop (MA) High School in June of 1964; in August, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was approved by Congress, granting President Lyndon B. Johnson practically limitless authority to wage war in Vietnam; in September, I enrolled as a Freshman at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Many of my high school and college friends enlisted or were drafted to fight in the Vietnam War. I worked in opposition to the war and governmental intervention; simultaneously, I worked with and for returning veterans.

By the time I entered graduate school in 1985, I had already spent twenty years dealing with issues surrounding the Vietnam War. After the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, in 1982, two of the most poignant issues to surface into American consciousness was the emphasis on the "healing" aspects of The Wall and the new, honorable image of Vietnam veterans after so many years of their being either ignored or shunned.

I was fascinated that a public memorial could be the focus of so much new and renewed awareness of the men who fought in the Vietnam War. As Harry Haines explains:

The Memorial's profound meaning is not so much in how the dead are remembered by those of us who survived Vietnam at home or abroad, but in how that remembrance is used by power to explain - to justify - future sacrifices in future Vietnams.¹¹

W.D. Ehrhart, a teacher and writer "whose work interprets his Vietnam experience and integrates that experience into his post-traumatic existence"¹² has written:

¹¹Harry W. Haines, "'What Kind of War?': An Analysis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," CRITICAL STUDIES IN MASS COMMUNICATION, 3 (1986), 1-20; P. 17.

¹²Kali Tal, "The Farmer of Dreams: The Writings of W.D. Ehrhart," P. 54. Unpublished article. Used by permission of the author.

The Invasion of Grenada

I didn't want a monument,
not even one as sober as that
vast black wall of broken lives.
I didn't want a postage stamp,
I didn't want a road beside the Delaware
River with a sign proclaiming:
"Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway."

What I wanted was a simple recognition
of the limits of our power as a nation
to inflict our will on others.
What I wanted was an understanding
that the world is neither black-and-white
nor ours.

What I wanted
was an end to monuments.¹³

Bill Ehrhart acknowledges the profound difference in perspective between his reaction to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and that of the families of those whose names appear on it. The Memorial provides a public recognition of their private loss.

On the other hand, there are critics of the Memorial who think it is a "... black gash of sorrow"¹⁴ while still others see it as part of the revisionist trend that considers all American soldiers victims while discounting the "real" victims of the war - the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians as well as the dead Americans.

The Memorial stands as a reminder of "the inevitable cost in human"¹⁵ terms about the costs of war. Yet the Memorial allows and encourages each person who visits to bring forth individual feelings; it does not force one view on anyone. And, that is how it should be.

¹³W.D. Ehrhart, TO THOSE WHO HAVE GONE HOME TIRED: NEW & SELECTED POEMS OF W.D. EHRHART. NY: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1984, P. 71. Used by permission of the author.

¹⁴Tom Carhart, as quoted in Christopher Buckley, "The Wall," ESQUIRE, September 1985, P. 66.

¹⁵Charles L. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography," CRITICAL INQUIRY, Summer 1986, Vol. 12, No. 4, P. 711.

Throughout my course work in graduate school, I had hoped to write a thesis about the phenomenon of the memorabilia that people leave at the Memorial. This topic proved to be unfeasible. Fortunately, Dr. Irving Bartlett, Director of the American Civilization Program, suggested that I consider writing about the South Boston Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in case my original idea didn't work out. I thought about this subject, but I knew that it would be difficult for me to gain access to the South Boston community since I am an outsider. So, I adapted the idea; I decided I would, rather, write about the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

I then began calling the people with whom I had worked in the Spring of 1988 to create the local memorial; I explained to each of them about changing my thesis topic, and I asked if I could interview them for my new project. Everyone agreed.

In January and February of 1989, I interviewed six people involved with the creation and dedication of the Winthrop memorial (see "Background Interviews," Pp. 2-47, and Appendix B, Pp. 280-289). Once these interviews were completed, I wrote to and called relatives of seven of the eight young men whose names comprise the Winthrop memorial; I was unable to reach anyone related to the eighth person. I conducted these family interviews from March through June of 1989 (see "Names on the Wall," Pp. 48-212).

"When the legend becomes fact, print the legend."
from THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE

Oral History. I had completed a course entitled "American Women's Oral History," and learned about the theory and practice of oral history technique. Oral history is a method of creating a story that would not exist in any other way; its purpose is to preserve memories of ordinary people. "The important point is that oral histories provide access to private experience."¹⁶

I realized that the best way for me to write about the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial was to do oral history interviews because these are ordinary people whose lives would not be documented in history books. The people who created the memorial are involved with the Winthrop public school system; they conducted committee business on the telephone, they preserved no minutes. These people acted on an idea, and the only way to learn about the proposal and the follow-through was to ask them. The families of the young men whose names are on the memorial are also ordinary people; there would be public records of marriages, births and deaths - there might also be local newspaper accounts

¹⁶Susan H. Armitage, "The Next Step," FRONTIERS, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1983, P. 5.

of some special events in their lives, winning a track meet, for example - but not much else. Records such as these would not serve to explain how these young men lived nor how their families have coped with their deaths. The only solution there was also oral history interviews.

Of the fourteen people interviewed, I knew or had met nine of them previously. They all knew about my participation on the committee which created the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial; those who were present at the dedication ceremony heard me speak (see Appendix A, Pp. 276-279). I was certain they would open their doors to me.

Only Donna Reilly is someone with whom I have a social relationship, and that is mainly through her mother-in-law and two of her sisters-in-law (unless you also count attendance at high school reunions, at three of which I have seen Maureen McRae Demers over the past twenty-five years). At the dedication ceremony, I introduced myself to Marlene and Joe Pignato; Stephanie McNeil introduced herself to me. My family and I have known Lois Belcher and her family for more than thirty years, but I had not seen or spoken with Lois since 1984 and that was only for a moment. I met Huck Larsen and re-met Matt Boyle during the creation of the Winthrop memorial; although Matt taught at Winthrop High School when I was a student, I never had him as a teacher, and I was actually surprised that he remembered me. Arky Cummings, on the other hand, taught me in two math courses, and I have seen him from time to time at the home of mutual friends and at social events in Winthrop over the years. I assumed that those nine could provide me with introductions to the remaining five, and I was correct.

To the family members with whom I spoke, I was someone with whom they would be comfortable. They knew they could trust me with their stories. They knew that I not only cared about their sons and brothers in terms of this project but that I had actually known two of them. They knew that this project came from my heart as well as their own.

Guest speakers in my course on oral history stressed several things: community involvement; the use of non-verbal clues and responses; the use of mementoes; eliciting emotions; asking open-ended questions; not interrupting; not arguing; talking with only one person at a time; recording, transcribing, editing, reviewing, revising, re-editing, re-revising; making the tapes available along with the transcript. Oral history guidebooks stress creating a trusting relationship prior to the actual interview session(s); making the interview a quasi-monologue on the part of the storyteller; obtaining the broadest possible legal release; promising that the storyteller will be able to review and correct the transcript; practicing with the recording equipment and

bringing back-up provisions; engaging in small talk before asking probing questions; interviewing one person at a time; avoiding interruptions; not arguing.¹¹

A friend of mine once presented a paper which was entitled "Getting It Right By Doing It Wrong." I know this can be applied to my inconsistent application of proper oral history guidelines. This project is not truly a community effort, although the creation of the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial was; I drew on that effort and am adding to it after the fact. I talked with more than one person during two interview sessions. I did ask open-ended questions, but I also asked very specific ones as well. I did not establish trusting relationships prior to the actual interviews, since I relied on my knowing many of the people I was going to interview or their knowing my reputation because of my work regarding the memorial the previous year.

I did not return any interview to any storyteller for correction or revision for several reasons: (1) I obtained the broadest possible legal release from everyone I interviewed, giving me complete control of the information; (2) no one asked to see a copy of their transcript before the entire project was completed; (3) I was aware of how difficult, painful and emotional these interviews were for the family representatives, and I did not want to put them through another emotional wringer by having them read and edit what they had already said. I explained that this work would be read by my thesis advisor and committee; I also said I plan to give a copy of it to the Winthrop Public Library and to Winthrop High School; and I also promised to give each person a copy of the entire manuscript, not just their particular interview. Everyone concurred that was acceptable.

One person asked that I disguise a particular name that might come into that interview but then decided that such a precaution was unnecessary. Everyone wondered what would happen to the tapes, and I said that most oral history transcripts are accompanied by the tapes in order for later researchers to return to the original source material to prove that the transcript

¹⁷ Guest speakers in my oral history class included Ellen Nylan, Cambridge Oral History Center; Polly Kaufman, oral history project with black community women involved in the Boston desegregation effort; Eleanor Wachs, Curator of Exhibits, State Archives; Julia Perez, Women in the Military Conference; and Peggy Perri, Women Who Were in Vietnam.

Guidebooks include: Cullen Davis et. al., Eds., ORAL HISTORY: FROM TAPE TO TYPE, American Library Association, 1977. David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum (Eds.), ORAL HISTORY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ANTHOLOGY. Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History in cooperation with the Oral History Association, 1984.

represents the interviews correctly. Several people asked if I had to do that; when I said no, they asked that I not do so. They said they didn't mind anyone reading what they had to say, but they were bothered by the idea of someone's listening to them. My guess is that a printed version provides an additional layer of protection between the storyteller and the reader, whereas a listener has no barrier to the storyteller(s)'s direct emotions. I agreed not to provide the tapes with the manuscript; I have promised to return each tape to each storyteller.

I interviewed five people at their places of work - four in Winthrop public schools and one in Winthrop Town Hall; I interviewed one person in my office, after working hours; I spent the weekend at the home of one person; I was invited out to dinner with two people; I had dinner at the home of two others twice; and during all the other interviews, we drank coffee as we talked. During each occasion at someone's home, with one exception, we were interrupted by the telephone or by other people in the house. My equipment failed once; one side of one tape was "stretched" and unable to be transcribed (a professional sound engineer tried to retrieve the interview for me, but he was unable to do so), so I repeated the interview; I have included both sessions in this manuscript.

I transcribed each interview myself. Once I had a typed version, I edited only for grammar and to make sentences and paragraphs. Then I entered the material into a computer and printed-out each interview; I double-checked for spelling and spacing errors. I have left each interview intact, as verbatim transcripts. I considered omitting my questions in order to create seamless monologues, but I dismissed that approach because of the often non-chronological order of each story. That is, I tried to progress from childhood through high school years, into the service and then to the person's death, and from there to a discussion about how each family has coped during the intervening twenty years. But, the reminiscences jumped back and forth and commentary about what the storyteller thought at that historical point of time in the story as well as how they think now became entwined. Precise dates were often not remembered. As a result, I decided it would be easier to present the interviews as they happened. Additionally, in two instances, I spoke with two parents; sometimes one person would add a small bit to the other's comments, sometimes one wanted to tell a particular story, sometimes one became too emotional to continue so the other would carry on or change the focus to another story.

I had to ignore the oral history guideline which decrees that you should never interview more than one person at a time. There would have been no way to exclude one of the Pignatos or one of the McNeils from an interview session and then return to interview

the second person while excluding the first. Each partner gained strength from the other's presence; each partner provided emotional support for the other.

Certainly, one-person interviews are easier. No one else is present to amend the story being told; the interviewer doesn't have to be cognizant of two sets of body language or of the partners' interplay with one another. And, it is vastly easier to transcribe a one-person interview. In a two-person interview, the interviewer has to be attentive and fair to both storytellers simultaneously.

Prior to each interview, I explained that I would be asking mostly open-ended questions. For the "Background Interviews," I said I wanted to know why each person got involved and what they hoped the impact of the memorial would be. For the family members' interviews, I said I wanted to know about their son's or brother's place in the family, what the family was like, what the family hoped for the son or brother, how the family coped with the death, how they felt about the Winthrop memorial and what they hoped the impact of the memorial would be. Only Donna Reilly prepared extensive notes for her interview; essentially, she repeated the speech she made at the memorial's dedication ceremony and answered directed questions. Marlene Pignato also held a small piece of paper in her hands during our second interview, which served to remind her that she would "like to say one thing" (P. 277).

I certainly followed the suggested guideline about eliciting emotions from each storyteller. None of the guidelines I have read nor any of the guest speakers in my oral history class mentioned the necessity of having a large box of tissues on hand; fortunately, in the case of each family member, there was a supply within reach. I cried with them, and I did remember the instruction to be patient; I often just sat silently until each person became composed enough to continue. I had wanted to be sensitive and gentle, but I often felt guilty about making them remember and causing them to cry; but they reminded me that they cannot forget nor do they want to. They told me things they said they have never told anyone outside the family. They thanked me for asking and for providing the opportunity to share their memories. Since that is one of the primary goals of any oral history project, I feel that while I may have done some of the details wrong, I got the whole thing right.

Literature review. The body of literature about the Vietnam War seems to increase daily. There are military reviews from every branch of the armed services, historical overviews, personal memoirs and journals, novels, literary critiques, reportage, poems, collections of letters and photographs, as well as magazine and newspaper articles. Much of this material has

been produced by Vietnam veterans themselves. Some of these works critique American policy; others support it; some seem still to be fighting the war or offering ways to re-fight it to "win this time," as John Rambo pleads. Some of the books try to show how the author's perspective changed or didn't and why they now hold the correct position. Much of this is revisionist history; some of it is re-revisionist. It spans the political spectrum. The recently published accounts of the social movements of the 1960's - the civil rights, student, new left, women's and counterculture movements - often overlap within the time frame of the works about Vietnam.

Books based entirely or partially on oral history interviews include Rick Atkinson's THE LONG GRAY LINE; Mark Baker's NAM; Gloria Emerson's WINNERS & LOSERS; Peter Goldman & Tony Fuller's CHARLIE COMPANY; Sally Hayton-Reeva's VALIANT WOMEN IN WAR AND EXILE; Joe Klein's PAYBACK; Kathryn Marshall's IN THE COMBAT ZONE; Patience Mason's RECOVERING FROM THE WAR; Myra McPherson's LONG TIME PASSING; Al Santoli's EVERYTHING WE HAD; Neil Sheehan's A BRIGHT SHINING LIE; Wallace Terry's BLOODS; Keith Walker's A PIECE OF MY HEART; and Kim Willenson's THE BAD WAR (please see Bibliography for details).

While Atkinson, Emerson, Mason, McPherson and Sheehan use oral history interviews in their works, each author has done traditional historical research and interviews as well. Hayton-Reeva and Willenson use oral history interviews to present collections with a specific focus. The other works are oral history accounts of returned Vietnam veterans. Each work tends to make structured stories with a beginning, a middle and an end; often the device takes the form of a year's tour of duty in Vietnam, from innocence to disillusionment. Usually the most sentimental or savage events are described; the editor or compiler might add commentary for perspective. The books serve to fill in gaps in the more traditional texts and to make the wartime experience fresh and vivid for the reader. It is also a way for the storyteller to recover their own wartime roles. A close reading of these personal accounts forces hard questions about them, the storytellers, the armed forces and the culture which sent these people off to war.

As Susan Jeffords points out:

Collective personal accounts generally recall the most significant part of each individual's memory of the war - its atrocities, racial incidents, firefights, fear, gags, mistakes, sexual encounters, torture, and so on. Presented as they are out of context and in fragmented form, these micro-narratives are . . . held up for display as objects separated from the person who experienced them.

Experiences seem self-embodied; . . . they spring from nowhere and the reader is preoccupied with what will come next rather than with how or why they happened.¹⁸

Many of these storytellers display a continued belief in the Vietnam War as good American intentions gone awry; somehow our country could impose its sense of democratic values upon a small autocratic Asian nation because those in power defined what was real. Many storytellers identify themselves as victims of a long and diverse list of factors that include depictions of the treatment of American POW's, their own receptions on returning to America, the inequitable draft system, exposure to Agent Orange, constraints on their ability in the field, anti-war protesters, the women's movement, mistrust and outright betrayal by both the Vietnamese they were supposed to be defending and by the government which sent them to war in the first place.¹⁹ Some of the storytellers accept responsibility for what they did in Vietnam; many do not.

Many of the storytellers tell of buddies or patients who died in Vietnam and how the storyteller copes with her or his own survival; some of the works tell of visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington as a way of coming to grips with their memories. Goldman and Fuller did visit a few of the families of the Charlie Company men who did not survive; Klein's entire book is about five men who survived Vietnam, but it begins with a retrospective of the life and death of one of these five who was killed in a police shoot out in Hammond, Indiana, in 1981. Atkinson mentions the funerals of several of the West Point Class of 1966 who died in Vietnam; but he reserves extensive coverage to the family of one classmate who was killed in Korea in 1976.

The sub-title of Patience Mason's book, "A Woman's Guide to Helping Your Vietnam Vet, Your Family, and Yourself," is self-explanatory. Bobbie Ann Mason's IN COUNTRY is one popular work of fiction which deals with the family of a soldier killed in Vietnam as told through the search for information about him by the daughter who never knew him.

However, I have found no guides or oral histories that deal with the effect of veterans' death on their surviving parents, spouses, siblings, children or communities; this thesis is offered as an outlet for these missing voices to be added to the literature about the Vietnam War.

¹⁸Susan Jeffords, THE REMASCULINIZATION OF AMERICA: GENDER AND THE VIETNAM WAR. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989, P. 24.

¹⁹Jeffords, Pp. 121-125.

Pam West's staff at the National Park Service sent me photocopies of more than thirty articles (one of which was in German, for the November 1988 issues of GEO), mostly from special-interest or downright obscure publications, that deal with memorabilia left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I have found four articles in popular or academic journals that deal with the creation and meaning of the Memorial. Jan Scruggs and Joel Swerdlow tell Jan's first-person account in THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL: TO HEAL A NATION; John Wheeler writes about his involvement with the Memorial in TOUCHED WITH FIRE; and Rick Atkinson also relates Wheeler's involvement as well as that of his classmate Tom Carhart - who does not approve of the monument - in THE LONG GRAY LINE. In addition to these three books, Lydia Fish presents THE LAST FIREBASE: A GUIDE TO THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL, an 85-page soft-cover booklet which also tells the story of the Memorial's creation and includes details about how to locate a name, how to make a rubbing, where to write for a variety of purposes - from making corrections to making donations. Sal Lopes's photographic essay, THE WALL: IMAGES AND OFFERINGS FROM THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL, is a coffee-table sized book of vivid images (again, please see Bibliography for details).

A friend told me about VIETNAM WAR MEMORIALS by Jerry and Sandra Strait. This is a 226-page compilation of listings by state of existing, under construction and proposed Vietnam (Veterans) Memorials throughout the country; there are long descriptions of some of the memorials, and there are black-and-white photographs of some.

The Straits carefully list the organizations which provided information and printed their request for information.²⁰ Additionally, they write:

The individual monuments with photos and long descriptions are not necessarily the ones that we felt were the best, but the ones for which we were able to secure reasonably good photos and information. We listed every monument and location that we were able to confirm. For those communities having monuments that are not listed, we sincerely regret not being able to find them.²¹

Perhaps one day people will use this unique book as a guide for visiting Vietnam Veterans Memorial throughout the country, in the way that some people visit Civil War battle sites or major league baseball parks. While the Straits have not produced a scholarly

²⁰strait, P. xi.

²¹strait, P. 2.

or artistic work, it is one which adds a tantalizing morsel to the belated recognition of the losses incurred across this country during the Vietnam War.

A reporter for the "Winthrop Sun-Transcript" who interviewed me about my work with the committee which established the Winthrop memorial directed me to Laura Palmer's SHRAPNEL IN THE HEART: LETTERS AND REMEMBRANCES FROM THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL. This book consists of 238 pages, 115 of which include 30 photographs of the men to whom memorabilia has been left and about whom there are separate stories, as well as 85 pages of reproductions of pieces of memorabilia, some with and some without attribution; unfortunately, this allows Ms. Palmer fewer than five pages on average for her interviews and commentary. The section entitled "Dusty" is preceded by a poem dedicated to the eight women nurses who died in Vietnam written by "Dusty;" there are no photographs of the nurses; "Dusty" requested anonymity; and the interview/story is about "Dusty" herself rather than about the women whose names appear on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.²²

Ms. Palmer explains why she compiled this book but not how she traced the people whose stories she included. She simply states:

With determination, luck, and the help of librarians, priests, barbers, high schools, post offices, newspapers, historical societies, and long-distance operators, it is often possible to trace people who have left things there.²³

This advice may be beneficial to others interested in pursuing memorabilia or families of the people whose names are on the Memorial.

So far, I have commented on works that have been based partially or entirely on oral history interviews, one novel which deals with the effects of a veteran's death on the child he never knew, works about the building of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, one book which lists memorials around the country and one book which deals with memorabilia. There is one other, major work which I must mention: C.D.B. Bryan's FRIENDLY FIRE. This is a true story about the death of one soldier from Iowa and the pain suffered by his family in their search for answers about his death.

²²Laura Palmer, SHRAPNEL IN THE HEART: LETTERS AND REMEMBRANCES FROM THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL. NY: Random House, 1987, Pp. 124-131.

²³Palmer, Pp. xii-xiii.

Bryan states in his "Author's Note" that he used many sources for this work, including texts, official records, correspondence, journals, and that "all interviews with the major participants were tape recorded."²⁴ He writes about Michael Mullen's ancestors, his life and family, and about the two years following his death in Vietnam. During those two years, Michael's parents, Peg and Gene Mullen, became obsessed with discovering the truth about their son's death; they believed they were deliberately misinformed and that the Army perpetrated a cover-up of the incident.

Michael Mullen was killed in his sleep by U.S. Army artillery - called "friendly fire." Bryan became interested in Peg Mullen's highly publicized anti-war stance and her search for answers; in the end, he came to agree with the colonel in charge of Michael's unit:

It's a terrible thing that happened to Michael Mullen. . . a terrible, terrible tragedy. . . He was a very fine young man, and his death was a tremendous loss. It's terrible that any young man should lose his life in such a violent way. And I guess that is what your book is about. But it's an even more terrible thing that has happened to the Mullens themselves.²⁵

After trying once more to tell the Mullens that there was no deliberate effort to misinform them, there was no cover-up of the incident, rather what they perceived to be lies and concealment were attempts to spare them any further pain, Bryan states:

They, like their son, like the nation itself, had become casualties of the war. And my sadness lay in knowing nothing I could say or write could change that, just as nothing they could say or do could bring back their son.²⁶

In the two years after Michael's death, Peg Mullen became a celebrity, called upon by various anti-war organizations to speak at demonstrations. Many, many other heart-broken parents sought

²⁴C.D.B. Bryan, FRIENDLY FIRE. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1976, NY: P. ix.

²⁵Bryan, P. 363.

²⁶Bryan, P. 37.

her guidance. After one call for assistance, Peg asked Bryan, "How can I do anything for these people? How can I help them?"²⁷ Bryan responded,

You already have. . . You gave her [the woman who had just called] the names and phone numbers of people to call. That's all she wanted.²⁸

Gene Mullen wondered if they were crazy. He asked, "How long can we do this?"²⁹ Bryan couldn't answer him, but Peg added:

I thought to myself, 'My God, am I going to be doing this for the rest of my life'. I'm still angry! How in the hell can you live a lifetime of being angry?³⁰

A search for a way to answer Peg Mullen's shattering question led me to theoretical, psychological and practical works about death, grieving and mourning. A friend who lives in California sent me a pamphlet published by the AIDS Task Force entitled "When Someone You Love Dies," which counsels that "Mourning is a part of grieving that continues long after the person has died. Although the loved one is physically gone, feelings don't go away." Additionally, the brochure reminds people:

You may need to forgive yourself for all the things you could have done or would have done differently. It is perfectly understandable to let it out: a truly horrible thing has happened to you. The loss of a child is a real reason to be angry.

Realize you may also be mourning the dreams you had for the deceased. As a parent, it may be the hopes and dreams you had for the child.

You don't have any control over your memories. These feelings are a normal part of life and remind you that you still care for the person you have lost.

You cannot continue to live your life as if your loved one were still alive. This doesn't mean giving up your feelings. The task is to find ways to let the person live on in your memories. It is important to know that others remember, and this may help you survive the death of someone you love.

²⁷Bryan, P. 383.

²⁸Bryan, P. 383.

²⁹Bryan, P. 384.

³⁰Bryan, P. 384.

Philippe Aries's philosophical and historical lectures, translated and published as WESTERN ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH, describe the emergence and growth of cults dedicated to tombs and cemeteries as a way of "conferring upon the dead a sort of immortality."³¹ When people visited a tomb,

. . . they mediate there, that is to say they evoke the dead person and cultivate his memory. Thus it is a private cult, but also from its very origins, a public one.³²

But, Aries points out that in our time:

The point has even been reached at which . . . the choking back of sorrow, the forbidding of its public manifestation, the obligation to suffer alone and secretly, has aggravated the trauma stemming from the loss of a dear one. . . the death of a near relative is always deeply felt. A single person is missing for you, and the whole world is empty. But one no longer has the right to say so aloud.³³

Additionally, two of the works by the well-known Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, ON DEATH AND DYING and ON CHILDREN AND DEATH, provide assurances to those who have lost someone they love. In the earlier work, ON DEATH AND DYING, Kubler-Ross reminds us that:

If someone grieves, beats his chest, tears his hair, or refuses to eat, it is an attempt at self-punishment to avoid or reduce the anticipated punishment for the blame that he takes on the death of a loved one.

This grief, shame, and guilt are not very far removed from feelings of anger and rage. The process of grief always includes some qualities of anger. Since none of us likes to admit anger at a deceased person, these emotions are often disguised or repressed and prolong the period of grief or show up in other ways.³⁴

³¹Philippe Aries (Trans. Patricia M. Ranum), WESTERN ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH: FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE PRESENT. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, P. 72.

³²Aries, P. 73.

³³Aries, Pp. 91-92.

³⁴Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, ON DEATH AND DYING. NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1969, P. 4.

She adds later:

When we lose someone, especially when we have had little if any time to prepare ourselves, we are enraged, angry, in despair; we should be allowed to express those feelings.

Many relatives are preoccupied by memories and ruminate in fantasies, often even talk to the deceased as if he was still alive. It may be more frequently encountered in the days of war where death of a young person occurs elsewhere, although I believe a war always makes relatives more aware of the possibility of no return.³⁵

Fourteen years later, in ON CHILDREN AND DEATH, Kubler-Ross encourages parents to:

Talk to your child who died, if it helps you. Share with your child your progress and show that you can handle the windstorms of life.³⁶

Furthermore, she counsels parents:

. . . to deal with the guilts . . . the ifs . . . the absence of a final parting . . . being able to tell him verbally we loved him before he passed away. Did he suffer?. Does he survive beyond death? Is he lonely for us . . . sad?³⁷

A part of the grieving process is a need to get a sign 'of life' from our dead children. We want to touch them once more, see their smiles, hear their voices, but most of all we need to know that they are all right and not lonesome, as we are.³⁸

Addendum, I have listed an idiosyncratic Bibliography (Pp. 266-276), which reflect works of interest to me; it is not an inclusive list of material about the Vietnam War and its social aftermath. The works most directly relevant to my thesis are mentioned in this section. However, I want to make some additional comments.

³⁵Kubler-Ross, ON DEATH AND DYING, Pp. 156-157.

³⁶Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, ON CHILDREN AND DEATH. NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1983, Pp. 8-9.

³⁷Kubler-Ross, ON CHILDREN AND DEATH, P. 45.

³⁸Kubler-Ross, ON CHILDREN AND DEATH, P. 176.

As I read the various oral history collections cited, I realized I wanted to know the questions that were asked as well as what was omitted. This served to convince me to include interviews in their entirety.

C.D.B. Bryan's *FRIENDLY FIRE* is the only work of which I am aware that is about a family's coping with the death of a son in Vietnam. This book is obviously relevant to my thesis, even though the circumstances have changed dramatically - Bryan wrote two years after Michael Mullen's death, while the war was still being fought; whereas, I am writing almost twenty years after the last young man from Winthrop died and fifteen years after the war was over.

When Lois Belcher told me that she was provided information about her son's death,

later from a Mr. Bagley in Winthrop; he was very, very good about helping us because we just wanted to understand what had happened; he was an officer over there, a Marine, and he found out what had happened (Pp. 64-65),

and Duke MacNeil told me that it took him nine months to piece together the story of what happened to his son (Pp. 185-186), I was reminded of how Bryan explains apparent discrepancies in letters the Mullens received:

it was the Division's policy in situations involving casualties to have the Headquarters write and coordinate all letters sent to next of kin. The purpose for this policy was to ensure that no conflicting details were given, thereby sparing families the sort of anguish varying versions might cause.³⁹

Finally, I must point out that it was not until I had completed all of these interviews that I read Aries and Kubler-Ross and the AIDS pamphlet about death, dying, mourning and grieving. These books and pamphlet reassured me of what I believed to be common sense: namely, that each person's reactions to death are unique. In addition, these particular works suggest that survivors talk to the person who has died - which four of the storytellers interviewed here do; the experts reveal that this is perfectly normal behavior.

This literature review leads me to conclude that the stories told in this paper belong in the category of works about Vietnam. What is presented here are personal narratives by the families of veterans who died in the Vietnam War as well as commentary by members of the community which nurtured these families. This is uncharted social history of a community that has recognized the loss of particular people during a controversial war and what that loss means for the future. Further, it is specifically a work

³⁹Bryan, P. 350.

about why this local memorial was created and what its function is hoped to be; and it is a work which relates how each family remembers their own loss and how they have coped all these years. If these stories are neglected, they will be lost entirely, for the generation which gave birth to those who died in Vietnam is, itself, ageing and dying. In addition, these stories provide examples of how families and a community have dealt with death, loss, grieving, mourning and remembering.

A Brief History of Winthrop

"So raise up your voices,
Sing out loud and clear,
We're so proud of you Winthrop
And want the whole wide world to hear.
Our faith in your future
With God's help we'll not doubt,
There will always be a Winthrop,
Til the sands of time run out."
from "Winthrop by the Sea"⁴⁰

In order to understand why this community and these families feel the way they do, it is necessary to know about Winthrop and growing up in Winthrop in the 1950's and 1960's.

The town which is now called Winthrop was settled by English colonists at the same time the Massachusetts Bay Colony established Boston in 1630. There is no evidence that Native Americans occupied the area that the colonists called Pullin Point, even though there is evidence of bountiful deer herds in the area at the time. The first written record of Pullin Point appears on a map of the area in a document by William Wood called NEW ENGLAND PROSPECT, which was published in London in 1634. A house built in 1637 by Captain William Pierce became the home of Deane Winthrop, the younger son of John Winthrop, the first Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The house still stands and may be visited under the auspices of the Winthrop Improvement and Historical Association.⁴¹

⁴⁰Lyrics by Brendan J. Keenan; Music by Joe O'Hern. This song was written in 1952 for the centennial celebration of Winthrop's incorporation as a town.

⁴¹William H. Clark, THE HISTORY OF WINTHROP, MA, 1630-1952. Boston: E.L. Grimes Printing Company, 1952, Pp. 1-25; conversation with Laurence Pizer, Director, Pilgrim Society, Plymouth, MA, February 18, 1990.

In 1739, Chelsea broke away from Boston; in 1846, Revere broke away from Chelsea; and in 1852, Winthrop separated from Revere and incorporated as a town. These three communities, along with the City of Boston, constitute Suffolk County.

Winthrop lies due East of downtown Boston, about four road miles today; prior to 1966, it was within clear view of the Golden Dome of the State House - in the days when the skyline of Boston included only two "skyscrapers": the Custom House Tower and the old John Hancock Building with its weather-signal beacon. Winthrop is a peninsula, three-quarters of it is surrounded by ocean and harbor, while the remaining quarter is salt marsh. There are two ways to reach Winthrop by land - the causeway road from Revere or over the bridge at the Bell Isle Inlet. Two U.S. Army posts - Ft. Banks and Ft. Heath - existed in Winthrop; both closed in the early 1960's. The land at Fort Banks has become the site of a garden-apartment complex and senior citizen housing; most of the land at Fort Heath has become a high-rise apartment and condominium complex facing out over the expanse of the North Shore and the Atlantic.

Winthrop is, and has been for as long as anyone remembers, a town of homes; that is, a bedroom community. There is no industry. It does not have - and desperately does not want - the image of its closest neighbors: "tough" East Boston, "working class" Revere; "impoverished" Chelsea. The town enjoys its image of a little island of safety ensconced in Suffolk County; problems are "out there somewhere," not internal. "Things like that" - whatever THAT might currently be - "don't happen here" is a steady refrain from people in authority in the town; the residents like to believe it is true.

The population of Winthrop has remained essentially stable over 40 years. U.S. Census figures for 1950 show a total population of 19,496; for 1960, 20,303; and for 1980, 19,294. In 1950, there were 2,172 children younger than 5 - the oldest of the baby boomers; in 1960, there were 5,698 under 15; in 1980, there were 7,194 in the 16-35 age range. In 1960 there were 63 "nonwhite" residents; in 1980, 61 people were listed as Black and 103 of Spanish origin. There is no accurate breakdown of the population by religion, but the general perception is that the town is approximately one-third each Jewish, Catholic and Protestant.

Parents went to PTA meetings and led Cub Scout and Brownie and Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops; they took their children, or sent them when they were old enough, to clean beaches in the summer; they attended Town Meeting; they worried about urban renewal and airport expansion; they faithfully attended Parents' Night at the schools. Many of them hoped their children would go on to college; many just wanted their children to find good jobs. They taught their children to respect and obey authority figures; they believed the government knew better than they did.

Children practiced hiding under desks or in the corridors of schools during air-raid or atomic-bomb drills. Everyone wore poppies entwined around coat buttons on Veterans Day, which many people still referred to as Armistice Day. There was a huge parade to honor dead soldiers on Memorial Day, and everyone was given tiny flags to wave as veterans marched by. The town displayed a large fireworks exhibit on the Fourth of July. People listened carefully to President Kennedy say,

If freedom is to be saved, a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.⁴²

would be necessary for the new type of war which threatened.

There are 35 monuments dedicated either to individual soldiers or to entire wars in Winthrop, from a plaque in Town Hall honoring Winthrop men who died during the American Revolution to the brass marker in memory of Edmund MacNeil III, which was added to an already-existing flagpole in the summer of 1989 (See Stephanie and Edmund MacNeil, Pp. 396-398). Part of the reason for this emphasis on glorifying military history was the realization that

Winthrop being an island of homes completely surrounded by military objectives was certainly in a dangerous position should a real or even token attack be made by air or submarine.⁴³

It is easy to understand Winthrop's acceptance of a reverential attitude toward perpetuation of military preparedness - World War II was over, and America had succeeded in its self-imposed mission; the Cold War informed all areas of life; America, as the world's self-defined policeman, sought to contain, if not actually eliminate, Communism by making the world over in America's likeness; a former hero-general served two relatively peaceful terms as President; and a new, young and vibrant Catholic from Massachusetts, humiliated at the Bay of Pigs but successful against the Soviets in the Cuban Missile Crisis, was in office and inspiring the country with his dreams of a world-wide Peace Corps and an elite force of counter-insurgency warriors in Green Berets.

⁴²From John F. Kennedy's address to the graduating class of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, June 6, 1962. As quoted in Rick Atkinson, THE LONG GRAY LINE. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1989, P. 22.

⁴³Clark, p. 245-246.

This inherited wisdom was handed down at every opportunity and resulted in young people being taught to work hard, to concentrate on the task in front of them, to do what they were told and not to challenge the system. That was the legacy twenty-five years ago. The contemporary interviews that comprise this paper reveal the impact of those lessons.

Stories from the Community

"Vietnam remains a time, not a place for Americans at large; not a country but a decade of our lives."⁴⁴

Jim Hoagland

Reasons for memorializing. There is still no consensus regarding the "lessons of Vietnam." However, what is clear is that it is not possible to forget what was lost to individuals and to communities. Responsibility for memories of war is collective; it extends over time and obliges future generations to remember the past. As a result, community people created the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial in order to teach what they remember to their contemporaries as well as to the generations that follow - and the best way to do that is to have this memorial in the high school for use in the classroom as well as for anecdotal conversations.

Vietnam War Generation. Two of the community storytellers link their involvement with the creation of this memorial to their personal reflections of what the Vietnam War meant to them. Donna Segretti Reilly, Winthrop School Committeewoman, acted upon Lawrence (Huck) Larsen's suggestion to create a Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial in order to "recognize the connection between the past and the present and the whole historical significance of this" (P. 5). Donna "picked up where some school committee members failed to recognize the importance of such a memorial" (P. 6) for two reasons:

As far as any large, outside, national, international event or circumstance that affected my life personally - I can always say it was the Vietnam War. Specifically, every generation can say it had its defining moment, and for many of us who were the youth of the '60s, I feel very strongly that that moment was the Vietnam War (P. 6).

There's a second and personal reason that drew me so avidly into this project . . . That was having known a young man who never came back from the war (P. 7). It was very tragic news when I heard that he had been shot down in Vietnam. . I was very distressed to hear of his death. And that stayed with me (P. 7).

⁴⁴"What a McDonald's Could Do in Hanoi," THE WASHINGTON POST NATIONAL WEEKLY, March 19-25, 1990, P. 28; Jim Hoagland is an Associate Editor and Chief Foreign Correspondent for THE WASHINGTON POST.

Lawrence (Huck) Larsen, Computer Coordinator for the Winthrop Schools, wrote to the school committee (P. 18) urging the creation of a Vietnam Veterans Memorial to be placed in the high school because he:

. . . thought our youth at the school, the youth of the town, should be more aware of their past, particularly Vietnam, particularly those boys [those eight who are listed on the memorial] (P. 18) .

He pointed out that today's students:

. . . think that the Constitution runs the entire world; and maybe that's how we ended up over there [in Vietnam], with that feeling that our way of life is the way of life that everybody should be experiencing (P. 20). See, I'm not sure how much difference there is in our foreign policy (P. 20).

A third community voice from the Vietnam War generation is Bruce Ross, Chairman of the History/Social Studies Department at Winthrop High School. While Bruce did not participate in creating the memorial, he and his staff will most likely make use of it in their classrooms. When I interviewed him toward the end of the school year, he pointed out that in history classes, "We're struggling through this era [Vietnam] now. At least the wound is starting to be attended to" (P. 46).

These remarks show a generational concern about remembering those who served and died in Vietnam and responsibility for passing on that information to succeeding generations as well as an obligation not to isolate Vietnam from its historical context.

Expressions of community values. Each community storyteller offered an expression of what matters or what should matter to the community in reflecting upon the loss of young men in a controversial war.

In addressing the issue of creating a new memorial, Donna explained:

. . . the nation as a whole was slow in honoring its Vietnam Veterans and the nation, at the time, was torn on whether or not we should be even involved in the Vietnam Conflict, as it was called legally So, in essence, what we were trying to do as a committee was to do something special, perhaps a little late, but do something special for those eight young Winthrop men who died in Vietnam (P. 20)

She added that placing this new memorial in the high school is particularly appropriate because:

It seemed that many people did not know that there was a Vietnam Memorial in the upper section of the cemetery. This is a viable, visible monument. People could come, people could see (P. 15).

Huck would like to see the memorial help "personalize the curriculum" (P. 20):

. . . not necessarily saying that the person had served and died in Vietnam or whatnot and died for the country, but the fact that they have a personal bit about him (P. 19).

Arthur (Arky) Cummings, although not involved in creating or dedicating the memorial, enthusiastically supported the effort. Arky had taught six of the eight young men whose names are on the memorial; he knew two of the young men and their families particularly well. His comments about the Countaway family can be applied to the other families, as well:

. . . the effect that it has on a family - it's never, ever the same. Especially in these circumstances, and in this war. . . I guess it's another perspective on it, and this is a lot of years. But the disappointment, the caring, the wondering what if, what he would be - and the why of it all has not diminished; in fact, in many ways, it is stronger than I think 18 years ago (P. 25).

Arky added, in reference to my commenting that "children aren't supposed to die before their parents" (P. 25):

It's just not supposed to happen that way. And especially under the kind of situation that we're discussing - a war, one that there are so many questions about - the legality, the moral issue, the whole thing - our country, right or wrong (P. 25).

Matthew (Matt) Boyle also taught, or coached, the same six young men whom Arky Cummings knew. Matt pointed out:

This memorial says to the people who look at it: Hey, these kids were here; they were part of the school, the community - and it wasn't so long ago . . . (P. 39) . . .

We were trying to tell them that this was important to us; that the community should reflect on this - that it not only was just for the kids in this war era but mainly for the kids and anybody who forgot (P. 40).

Furthermore, he added that he hopes the memorial will be a focus for reflection:

I think that maybe the American nation learned something from a war, not what they thought they were going to learn, but maybe they learned something about people - their own people - and in how they went about addressing the war - that in the future, they will take the time, maybe, to use this as an example, to reflect on it (P. 40).

Bruce Ross explained that he and his staff will bring the topic of the memorial into the classroom, "where it's [conversations of an academic nature] controlled and we respond and react and research and discuss" (P. 41).

These remarks reveal the significance of loss to an entire community and how that community has gone about remembering people who died in the Vietnam War in a way that recognizes the dangers of romanticizing or sentimentalizing war itself.

Communing with the dead. Two storytellers spoke about communing with the dead as a way of expressing the importance of remembering them. Donna Reilly and I had discussed the issue of being a part of a community; Donna stressed:

Reality sets me straight to know, and know well, that this is my community, this is my community. I have children here, that's why I'm active in the School Committee. I'm elected by the populace here in the community, so this really is my home. But, the Vietnam War affected each and every person in every community throughout this nation. So, state borders really can't confine our feelings about a global issue of this nature. I just want to be keen to address that (P. 9) .

Donna told this poignant story in order to clarify what she meant:

Sometimes I'll go down to the cemetery, to visit my father-in-law's grave. . . . I will go to visit his grave, and I will say something to the effect, 'OK, Dad, you bring a message to my Dad,' who is buried in Calvary Cemetery in Pittsburgh. Now, I'm not quite able to go to Calvary Cemetery, and usually when I go to Pittsburgh with the kids and all the activities and friends and relatives that I want to see - well, on not too many occasions will I be able to visit his grave. So, it's a strange kind of situation. But I will kind of commune with my deceased father through my deceased father-in-law at the gravesite here in Winthrop. So, I don't think we can put boundaries on these kinds of things (P. 9).

Matt Boyle reminisced in particular about Bob Belcher:

To have these people taken away is, I suppose, as far as history is concerned, something we'll never be able to quite understand. Maybe it helps us grow stronger by realizing how fallible and fragile we all are, and how we can't really hang onto this. But Bob, to this day, will always be, have a special place with me. I lost a great deal when Bob went. I think the only positive thing now is that some of the things I do - silly things - I think Bob helps me out above, so that I've been successful because of, say, that type of intercession and others, I feel, he's helped the same way (Pp. 31-32).

These stories provide a glimpse into some of the ways in which people deal with the death of loved ones.

Stories from the Families

"We owe respect to the living;
to the dead we owe only the truth"

Voltaire

These are stories of ordinary Americans doing what they thought they were supposed to do. Simultaneously, these are stories of families disillusioned with the prevailing myths of American culture who now wonder about what was required of them.

The family members who tell their stories here are part of the tens of thousands who have become victims of the Vietnam War. They are the casualties who never got counted. These people reveal reservoirs of emotional strength and resilience despite irrevocable changes in each family. These stories show the war's far-reaching detrimental effects not only on the generation which fought the war but also on those left behind and on generations to follow.

These families cannot bury their experiences with their loved ones. Each struggles to survive the aftermath of the war in their individual ways in order to retain~ sense of normalcy. There has been no real end to anything having to do with the war for them. They wonder at what might have been; they have lost the version of the American dream they were led to expect would come true.

Views on military service and the Vietnam War. Every family member told a distinctive story about their sons' or brothers' enlisting in the service, about each family's response and about each family's feelings about the Vietnam War.

Reactions when sons/brothers entered the service. The families responded positively or negatively to the news that their sons or brothers had enlisted in the armed services. Those who behaved positively were the Logans and the MacNeils. Cathy Logan Walsh explained that her brother Joey:

was the apple of my father's eye . . . my brother Joey flew He was in Air Force ROTC in college. . . . That's all I knew - he wanted to fly When he got out [of college] he was a Second Lieutenant (P. 102).

Stephanie MacNeil told me they thought Eddie "was going to go in the Navy; because my father had gone to sea, and his grandfather" (P. 173); Duke MacNeil said, "for some reason he didn't follow it up. Probably because my father was Army, and I was Army, and my father's father was Army" (P. 174). Stephanie pointed out:

This put a terrible burden on him because he had to go, too, because his own father, his grandfather. My father was in uniform; my grandfather was in the Navy. He had to go in. If he hadn't gone in, he couldn't have lived with himself. So, it was, he was bound to go in the service (P. 174).

The other four families expressed negative feelings about their sons' and brother's joining the service. Lois Belcher said she:

Never thought he'd go into the service because he had a crossed valve in his heart, and always thought we were safe but that didn't work. He went into the Marines. Can't help but say I'm sorry! I wish there had been a problem, to a degree. But there wasn't (P. 63).

When Bob told her and her husband that he joined the Marine Corps, Lois "thought it was the end of my world. A very difficult time. His father had a hard time accepting it, and I did too" (P. 64).

Maureen McRae Demers remembers that her brother and his friends listened to:

recruiters coming to the high school and talking to them - they decided they did not want to get drafted So, they went down and signed up for the Marines. . . . My mother and father were heart-broken; it was awful (P. 205).

Edie Countaway told me a story about Jay's loving the military although she professed no idea as to why that was so. She said Jay would stand up and salute whenever he saw an American flag when the family was out driving in their convertible. She would admonish him not to stand in the car, but she could never stop him. She added that he insisted on attending every parade in town (P. 86). Edie explained that after Jay had completed a year-and-a-half of college, he came home and informed his parents that:

he had joined the Marines. We have no idea why, except, as I told you before, he just always seemed to be fascinated by the military. I, of course, was devastated by it; his father wished him the best of luck. He had a chance to go to school, for some reason he didn't want to do that - he wanted to be a grunt, which is your foot soldier in the Marines. . . . We were very proud of him (Pp. 87-88).

Joe Pignato said that Joey had been out of high school for about a year,

And then he came home one night and he said, 'I went and joined the Marine Corps today.' . . . And he was just, he was 18 by then, because I couldn't stop him, and he knew it. I think I know why. He had a friend of his, a kid he grew up with that got wounded over there, and because that kid got wounded over there in the Marine Corps, I think that's what he wanted to do. Go back over. I don't know whether he was going to win the war, or whatever. But I think that's the reason he went in. I think it was because his best buddy had gotten hurt over there (P. 122).

Later, Joe added:

The other reason he went in the Marine Corps. The first one I thought was for the boy, his buddy - and then I got talking with him. He wanted to show his mother that he could make it . . . she never paid any attention to him (P. 126).

These comments point out how American adults and institutions taught children to think, act and view the world in the early 1960's. The cultural messages - learning your place, blending in with peers, following the rules, believing images of stereotyped masculinity - constituted the strongest lessons the adult world and the school system could provide.

The Vietnam War: Thoughts Then and Now. The story-tellers explain their own opinions about the Vietnam War; they also occasionally explain an opposing view held by a spouse, a brother, a son or a parent. The breakdown can be seen in classic gender differences - men supported the war, women mostly did not. Those

who supported the war effort include Harold Belcher; as Lois reported, "Harold had strong feelings that if his son had to go, then they [other young, draft-age men] should go" (P. 70).

Maureen McRae Demers said of her brother:

I think when he first got there, he felt he was doing something for his country. It wasn't until they were there a few months, they saw what was going on and how useless. it was; and what did it accomplish? (P. 209).

Edie Countaway expressed her negative opinion and immediately added, "Jay himself did not feel that way" (P. 88).

Joe Pignato suggested, "They could have won that war just hitting the dikes over there. They could have blown those water dikes up and knocked them out - the Vietnamese wouldn't have known what hit them!" (P. 145).

The one woman who *is* reported to have supported the war, Grace Logan, once told her daughter, Cathy, "Don't tell me my son didn't die for something; don't tell me that people who went to Canada deserve to come back and live in this country again" (P. 304); Cathy added that her mother "believes there was a reason for him to die" (P. 112).

Duke MacNeil said that Eddie "believed in what his country was doing, and he said that he would continue to do his duty" (P. 182). Duke added that Eddie "extended because he believed in what he was doing" (P. 182). Additionally, in the report of Ed's death which Duke MacNeil pieced together and sent to the families of the other men who died with Ed, Duke wrote:

Being a military man, I've been 100% behind the bombing and when they stopped the first time, I knew then and there we would be fighting all over again. Bombing stopped WWII - bombing settled Korea, and for the sake of those still fighting our battles - the bombing, if continued, will stop this one (P. 186).

On the other hand, it is women who report that they never supported the war. The most outspoken is Lois Belcher, who said she "was saying to every young man that came in, every nephew that was getting to that age, 'Go to Canada!' I didn't want them to go to Vietnam" (P. 70). She also wanted to make clear how strong her feelings are by adding:

I'd like to say to you when you refer to it as a war, at that time remember it was being referred to as the Vietnam Era. Era in my mind being spelled e-r-r-o-r, and not e-r-a.

They didn't even dignify this thing that took 58,000 boys with the word war That was a very hard thing to deal with (P. 71).

Maureen McRae Demers plaintively asked, "For what, what were these young kids going through this for? ... No one has an answer for that" (P. 212).

Edie Countaway said, "I never really could accept - and I had feelings of dread the whole time he went in the Marines. I just had a feeling that he wasn't going to make it. Maybe this is something all parents feel" (P. 88). She added, "We felt, i felt, that we should never have been there" (P. 88).

Marlene Pignato echoed Lois Belcher when she pointed out, "It doesn't have to have the name war to be war" (P. 147).

Despite traditional gender differences, the two fathers to whom I spoke, who seem to have supported the war effort, also seem to have mixed opinions about it. Joe Pignato exclaimed:

Johnson lied to the public when he said at the Gulf of Tonkin they hit a destroyer of ours and sunk it. They did no such thing! They didn't have a navy big enough to blow the bottle cap off a Pepsi Cola bottle! So, OK, he just lied; and then he got everybody all riled up, all the Representatives and the Senators, and they went and declared war (P. 147).

Earlier, Joe had pointed out:

. . . the only thing that's making any sense now is a lot of the small countries are standing up to us, making us look like dummies. We're not . . . but it's just the case that I think they've learned a little bit of a lesson by not wanting to go right in and squish them all the time. Who knows! You don't want to see young kids killed. I don't anyway. I don't (P. 146).

Duke MacNeil told me that he wrote to Eddie, saying to him, "Come home. Your time is up. Come home" (P. 183) Additionally, he said that he wrote to Eddie and said

. . . he should go to Australia and take a break. So I sent him some money and he went. . . Anything to get him out of there - I don't care, anything to get him out of Vietnam. I got him out of there for two weeks (Pp. 189-190).

The women, except for Grace Logan and Stephanie MacNeil, express their opposition to the Vietnam War; the two fathers reveal ambivalent feelings about the war while maintaining strong support for their sons.

Monuments and Memorializing. I interviewed members of six families whose sons' or brothers' names are included on the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the marker at Winthrop Cemetery; five of those named are listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. Additionally, Robert Belcher is memorialized by having a town square and a high school scholarship named for him; Edmund MacNeil has his name on a brass plaque on a flagpole fence and a church-sponsored camp fund. The family members spoke about each of these monuments.

Reactions to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington. The families' reactions to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington can be seen as uncertainty turning toward admiration or as favorable. Edie Countaway said that she has never been to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, but:

I would love to go see it! It's just that I feel it might be a difficult thing to do, yet - in a way, I think we owe it, in a way we owe it to Jay to go. . . . We all have to do certain hard things that we particularly don't want to do. But I hear it's a beautiful memorial. It must really hit you when you see all those miles of names - and to think that each one of those names was a boy - or a nurse (Pp. 91-92) .

She added that:

this war for so many years, it was like a forgotten war. . . . The Memorial to me wa? a great thing . . . and hopefully we will be able to prevent other wars. . . . I'm repeating myself now, it must be really mind-boggling to see all those names (P. 92).

Edie described her first impression of the Memorial:

Now, when I've ever thought about a memorial, I've always thought of a statue of a soldier or something like that. And I thought, 'For crying out loud, that's that's horrible! Black marble and all those names.' And yet, the more I thought of it, the more I thought, 'Well, this is really more individualistic than some statue that doesn't look anything like any of the boys that might be, that died.' So, then I had a complete change of, change of mind. I said, 'It really is a beautiful memorial.' (P. 92).

Marlene and Joe Pignato describe very different first impression of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. Marlene said:

I thought it was - it was unusual. When I first saw it, as you walk in, I-I didn't like it. Then, the more we looked

at it (crying) - I thought it was nice . . . I didn't [like it] when I first walked in, I just - it was so different. It wasn't something I was used to seeing. After I really looked at it, then I did appreciate it. But at first glance, I didn't. It just - I don't know - it just gave me an odd feeling . . . When we entered the area there, there were of course a lot of people; and looking off in the distance, I just - it wasn't what I expected. I don't know what I did expect, but that wasn't it. But as you got up close and you could really see it, then I thought it was very impressive (Pp. 141-142).

However, the majority opinion about this unique monument was favorable from the start. Lois Belcher said:

I go, as I told you, twice a year usually. . . But I've never laid a note or anything there. It's a very moving thing (P. 74).

She added later that she was struck by:

the demeanor of the people. The first time we went was before they even had the walk; you know, it was all mud and everything like that. And that's a tribute. That's the unsung tribute. That's a lot of people who are trying to make up - it's a wonderful (crying) (P. 79).

Lois also said that watching the television movie about making the Vietnam Veterans Memorial "was a big help" (P. 74). She asked me to say to Jan Scruggs that she is:

. . . one of the millions, no thousands, of parents who is deeply grateful to him that he pursued his dream of getting that memorial built; it couldn't be more appropriate. It just couldn't be, with that black marble - seeing yourself - it just couldn't be more appropriate. Seeing yourself even as you're standing there (P. 83).

Joe Pignato was particularly enthusiastic; contrasting his reaction to Marlene's, he said:

Not me - I liked it right off. Right from the start . . . The black onyx there. . . that the girl used, it stands out. There's no question that it stands out. That was another deal, because if that thing didn't get the money by soliciting, it wouldn't have been up there. So I was happy that somebody had done something. But it took too long to do it . . . I thought it was beautiful. She didn't . . . to me, it looked all right. I suppose they could have put anything up and I would have liked it! (Pp. 141-143) .

Cathy Logan Walsh told me that she went to see the Vietnam Veterans Memorial:

I went down right after the Wall was built in Washington; it didn't have the walkway or anything, it was just basically there. I just wanted to check to make sure my brother's name was on it. And I thought to myself when I saw it - there's 58,000 names on that, and nobody ever thinks that's just the least of it - there are parents, close family members, wives - and I don't think people really realize the effect that that war had on people (P. 104).

She added that although her mother has not been to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial:

I think she's glad I went. Just to make sure. You don't want (Laughter) - they have this big monument, and you don't want your name left off! (Laughter) (P. 107)

A statement prepared by the American Gold Star Mothers⁴⁵ in support of the winning design of the national Vietnam Veterans Memorial reminds us:

It used to be much simpler to build a monument. There is certainly no consensus yet about what cause might have been served by the Vietnam War.

But perhaps that is why the V-shaped, black granite lines merging gently with the sloping earth make the winning design seem a lasting and appropriate image of dignity and sadness. It conveys the only point about the war on which people may agree: that those who died should be remembered.⁴⁶

Reactions to Korean/Vietnam Memorial. Winthrop Cemetery. Most people expressed some disappointment about the cemetery marker, citing their dismay at the listing of those who died in Korea together with those who died in Vietnam; they wondered why there couldn't be separate monuments. Only Maureen McRae Demers did not complain about the combined list; however, she wondered at her brother's inclusion when, in fact, he did not die in Vietnam.

⁴⁵Please see the subsection "Public Treatment" under the section heading "Grief" (Pp. 483-484) for a brief discussion of American Gold Star Mothers.

⁴⁶ As reprinted in Jan C. Scruggs and Joel L. Swerdlow, THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL: TO HEAL A NATION. NY: Harper & Row, 1985; P. 72.

As she put it, she thinks her parents "were glad ... that he was included" (P. 210), although she remembers her father "saying, 'George wasn't killed in Vietnam; his name shouldn't be there.'" (P. 211) She added, "Not that I didn't want it there, but why?" (P. 211) .

Lois Belcher said:

. . . Then we got to the cemetery, and the list was on the other side of the Korean vets - and I realized how terribly unremembered all those boys were. For some reason, I thought they should have their own (P. 72).

Edie Countaway also was concerned about the marker in Winthrop Cemetery:

The only disturbing thing I found with that memorial was that the Korean boys were on the back, and then the tree was right there! I thought, 'Gee, if I was a parent of a boy that died in Korea, I don't think I would like that too well.' (P. 93).

She added, "It's so sad. I think the Korean War boys are still forgotten now. They're really not getting as much attention as Vietnam is finally getting" (P. 93).

Joe Pignato told me:

Some guy named Russo called me twice He had asked me my thoughts - where it should be, what it should be, whatever...I told him that I thought the names should be up at the Town Hall, the monument at the Town Hall.

But, that was the ingredient they gave me - the money, they only had so much money to work with. What's the difference what you have to work with? You still have to have those names chiseled in there, no matter where you put it. The memorial up there, Town Hall, that was my thought. But I didn't care. It had gone on so long that it didn't really matter to me. I got to the point where I didn't really care. I had got to the point where it had been so long that I didn't really care whether they did anything or not (P. 140) .

By the time I interviewed the MacNeils, I had spoken with both Norman Gill (Appendix E) and Warren Pepper (Appendix F) about the marker in Winthrop Cemetery. The MacNeils and I had a lengthy discussion about that monument as well as about my conversations with Mr. Gill and Mr. Pepper (Pp. 193-197). At one point, Stephanie said:

I had reason to call Norman Gill about Ed's name being misspelled. Ed's name seems to be misspelled a lot. Norman Gill swore, practically on the old Bible, that that would be rectified. I would call him up, to tell you the truth, because I was ticked off! For God's sake, spell his name right! Is that asking so much? I think it's spelled EDMOND Instead of EDMUND. Oh, the man said we can fix it! I don't think anybody went near it (P. 195).

Duke added, "Not only that, but they said that they double-checked with us about the spelling. Nobody ever did." (P. 195).

It is clear from these comments that the marker in Winthrop Cemetery is perceived by the family members as having been poorly planned and completed. Only Joe Pignato tells of being contacted for his opinion beforehand, and his suggestion was summarily dismissed. The MacNeils are indignant at the misspelling of their son's name. Lois Belcher and Edie Countaway expressed chagrin at having one monument for the dead of two wars. And Maureen McRae Demers wondered why her brother's name was included at all.

The story I was told by Norman Gill (Appendix E) and Warren Pepper (Appendix F) is incomplete, but it does reveal that an inadequate effort by the town and some of its organizations to memorialize local citizens who died in the Korean War and in the Vietnam War resulted in an insensitive, embarrassing, controversial monument.

Reactions to Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
Winthrop High School. There is no divided opinion on this memorial; all of the families are pleased and honored by the newest memorial tribute to their sons and brothers.

Lois Belcher said, "Oh, it is well, well done. It really is a tremendous memorial ... it just couldn't have been done better" (P. 77). She added later that the day of ceremony: " .. was something we could share in without sadness; that was something that had to do with our children" (P. 83).

Maureen McRae Demers said, "I think my father ... was proud. It was hard to get through it, because it opened up everything again. That's the hardest part. (P. 210

Joe Pignato said:

If they go in that front door - even if they don't know who those boys are - they're going to stop and look at it, and inquire. Somebody's going to know something, someone. What have we got on there - eight names?. . . I think it's a nice wall (P. 150).

Cathy Logan Walsh offered a suggestion, "I think that perhaps maybe they should word it differently - have a memorial to everyone who served there. Why just for the ones who died?" (P. 110).

Stephanie MacNeil said,

I think that is really a great monument which you have there. It's just, it's simple, it's indoors and chances are it won't be vandalized (P. 193).

Community Politics. Three controversial topics arose from the family interviews: favoritism, inclusion and criticism of the length of time it took for Vietnam veterans to be remembered. The MacNeils speak directly about the appearance of favoritism regarding various memorials; Joe Pignato points out differences in the ways the young men are remembered; and Lois Belcher comments on her self-conscious awareness of the emphasis that has been placed on remembering her son. Cathy Logan Walsh and Duke MacNeil comment about adding names to the local memorials at some later point, should the need arise. Joe Pignato suggested an explanation for the length of time it took for the Vietnam veterans to be remembered at all.

The issue of favoritism. After listening to my interpretation of the explanations offered by Mr. Gill and Mr. Pepper about naming squares around town for all the young men who died in Vietnam, as had been done in honor of Robert Belcher in 1984, Stephanie MacNeil said:

I figured, Bobby Belcher - very prominent family in town. I think I may have said, 'Hmmp!' to myself, but it didn't bother me; there was no reason that it should. They were a prominent family in the town in politics, religion, old homesteaders here. I wasn't going to get into a snit (P. 197).

The MacNeils also told me about their contributing \$150 in 1988 to the Winthrop Beautification Committee in order to have a plaque with Ed's name on it installed on a decorative flagpole in Highlands Park (Pp. 197-198).

In addition, Duke said:

There was a lot of money donated for Ed. We thought we'd contact the high school and set up a scholarship. I called up, and I told the guy on the phone that I had this money and I'd like to set it up as a scholarship. He said, 'Who do you think is going to administer this thing; we haven't got time to do this.' . . . Anyway, whatever it was, they refused me. 'We just don't have the time to administer anything like that.' (P. 198-199).

Stephanie said, "You must have been talking to a janitor" (P.198). Then she added, "Bobby Belcher got a scholarship named for him" (P. 198); Duke said, "I know. Right after that, they started the Belcher Scholarship" (P. 198); but Stephanie explained, "The Belcher Scholarship started right after Bobby died I'm positive" (P. 198). Duke said, "So we gave it to the church for a camp fund" (P. 198); Stephanie added that, "through the church a lot of kids got sent to camp" (P. 199) .

Joe Pignato said:

With the others [other memorials] - I didn't get angry, I got disgusted with them - not the school - but the town itself; it took them so long. Not for my kid - for every kid. It wasn't that they said, 'Oh, your boy was a cut-up' - he was, he had his share of ups and downs; but they delayed on all of them, even Robert Belcher, and he was a good boy... ..He was a nice boy (P. 150).

Lois Belcher said:

I was under the impression that there were going to be seven or eight of that same thing done that same day [town squares named for each of the eight young men]; and it was a great shock to me that that was not true. I had real bad feelings about it for all the other parents; their sons were just as dead. I was pleased for Robert. . . . But I was truly shocked because I thought it was going to be everybody - and it was hard for me to deal with that it was just Robert Belcher Square that year (P. 72).

Lois talked about another memorial in Robert's name:

Speaking of memories brings me back to Carol Dalrymple. Around the time that Robert was killed, she had received a legacy of some money from her grandmother. So she established the . . . Robert Belcher Scholarship, under the Dollars for Scholars program. Different boys who've gotten it I've heard from And that's a plaque in the high school the recipients have their names put on each year. It's quite a thing. I got a letter from Dollars for Scholars this year; I think the point of its being given is running out now without being refunded or something. But that was a really wonderful thing all these years (P. 76) .

She also reflected on "all the different references to Robert [at the dedication ceremony]. there again I was very conscious of the other parents. It took me a while to understand the origin of it" (P. 83).

It is true that the Belcher family dates back to early Winthrop history; a plaque in Town Hall which lists Winthrop residents who died in the American Revolution names a Belcher ancestor. The MacNeil family does not have a history dating back to the Revolutionary War. Can that truly be the difference and the explanation for why Bob Belcher appears to be the "favorite son" in terms of remembrance?

Bob Belcher was an outstanding athlete when he attended Winthrop High School; he was popular and active in school events; he is remembered fondly by his high school classmates and others. But the same can also be said of Eddie MacNeil: he was an outstanding athlete, popular and active in school events, and he is remembered by his high school classmates. It is true, as Arky Cummings said, that Bob Belcher and Eddie MacNeil were "mirror images" (P. 23).

Yet, Bob Belcher has a town square named for him and a scholarship which is awarded publicly each year at the high school commencement. On the other hand, Eddie MacNeil's parents had to provide the funding for a brass plaque to mark a flagpole in a local park in their son's honor, and they established a camp scholarship through their church when they received no assistance about creating a high school scholarship in Eddie's memory.

Joe Logan did not attend Winthrop High School; his family moved to Winthrop after he had already begun college, so it is easy to understand why he isn't well remembered. John White, also, is not remembered. Paul Brugman is remembered, but only minimally - and in his case, the "grapevine" got the story of his death wrong; whether that was by design or accident is unknown.

However, Jay Countaway, Joey Pignato and George McRae were graduated from Winthrop High School; they have friends who still live in the town. Joe Pignato's self-deprecating remark that Joey was "a cut-up" and that Robert Belcher was "a good boy" isn't sufficient to explain the differences.

Is it possible that the difference relates in some way to the manner of each young man's death? Eddie MacNeil, Jay Countaway and Joey Pignato died in combat; the others did not. If the way each young man died is the clue, then the three who died in combat would be valorized since death in combat is what is expected from war. Or, perhaps in this case, the reverse is true; that is, death by accident in war is more significant because less expected. But that explanation doesn't really make sense.

In fact, the issue of favoritism never makes sense. It is, simply, a fact in Winthrop that due to some perceived status differential and the vagaries of memory, Bob Belcher is memorialized in more public ways than the other young men who died in Vietnam.

Including the names of everyone who served in Vietnam. Cathy Logan Walsh suggests that "every name should be there" (P. 110) regardless of the circumstances of their death - drugs, Agent Orange, a car accident after they returned home; but, she adds, "I think those are questions our generation asks; I don't think they're questions that my parents would ever ask" (P. 111).

Duke MacNeil concurred with Cathy Walsh regarding adding names to the local memorials; he pointed out, "Well, the thing would have to include any others who've died since then" (P. 195).

George McRae's name was included by error on the combined Korean/Vietnam War marker in Winthrop Cemetery in 1984; four years later, George's name was included by design on the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the high school. At least two other Winthrop High School graduates died from causes that are perceived to be as a result of service in Vietnam - that of drug abuse and Agent Orange. It would not be difficult to add these names to the memorial; nor would it be very difficult to make a list of the names of all Winthrop citizens who served in Vietnam and place that list next to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. However, there is no effort being made to do either.

Criticism of memorializing process. Joe Pignato pointed out: . . . **we** lo. . . we lost

Of course, the town is no different than any other town in the country; they all took their good time about it because they didn't accept it. Not just Winthrop - everywhere - they didn't accept that war . . . we lost a . good portion of our kids. It has to mean something somewhere along the way - even just in reproducing. Whatever. They were just children! (P. 154).

Although all the families are pleased that their sons and brothers are remembered, Joe Pignato was the only one who criticized the length of time it took for the town - and the nation - to remember those who died in Vietnam.

Grief: Our culture provides two - conflicting - models for mourning; one expects that grief should be unabashedly expressed, while the other expects swift resolution. These family members ultimately reveal several characteristic responses: they have defied society's stoical standards by grieving for many years after the death of their loved ones; they have been isolated when they desperately needed to talk; they continue to feel the urgency to share their thoughts and feelings, to keep alive the memories they have, and they clearly appreciate the opportunity to talk about these memories. Each family member ultimately understands that the loss of their sons or brothers is a burden they will carry for the rest of their lives.

Dealing with atrocities. One of the most difficult issues that all Americans had to deal with regarding the Vietnam War was atrocities. We all wanted the My Lai story to be an aberration; sadly, we have learned that it was not. Two family members mention atrocities in relation to a brother or a son; a third family member discusses this issue more generally in relation to returned Vietnam veterans

During an unrecorded part of our interview, Maureen McRae Demers:

told me that she went through George's effects and found a photo album. Looking through it, she came across pictures of an atrocity; she told me that George and his patrol had come across this scene - she couldn't understand why they took pictures of it. She never looked further in the album; she never mentioned it to the rest of the family (P. 204).

Finding photographs of an atrocity, closing the album and never mentioning it reveals dealing with the issue by avoiding it. Yet, Maureen had to have dealt with it in some way since she offered the explanation "that George and his patrol had come across this scene" (P. 204). She could only know that if she had asked George about it; whatever he told her, "she couldn't understand why they took pictures of it" (P. 204) - an attitude which many people would undoubtedly share with her.

Joe Pignato, on the other hand, not only asked his son how many people he had killed (Pp. 124, 148), but also discussed atrocities with him. Joe told me that Joey wrote about finding "some Marines hung off trees, with their testicles and so forth stuck in their mouths" (P. 124) and how "they would take little ones and split their behinds and stick explosives in and have the kids walk into a compound, so you'd blow them up" (P. 145). Joe added that Joey "didn't drink much when he was here, but he used to go to my sister's" and "he woke up screaming" (P. 124); Marlene pointed out that Joey "had changed" (P. 124).

Joe, who fought in World War II, acknowledges that "We did things over there [in Vietnam] that should never have been done. But, they were also doing to Americans" (P. 257). This is another way to cope with knowledge of atrocities - by accepting them on both sides under the circumstances of war and by realizing that knowledge of atrocities would cause changes in a young soldier.

Lois Belcher, who explained that Bob "wasn't a front-line infantryman. . . . But he had to do, well, I'm sure he had to fire his gun many times, but I don't have any instances of that" (Pp. 67-68), said thoughtfully about returned Vietnam veterans:

. . . it's the ones who are walking around with these horrible remembrances - and how can you not have any self-pity - and we just don't, no matter how much we think we understand, we don't. We didn't go through it; we didn't have to run bayonets through a child; we didn't have to destroy grandparents (P. 73).

When stories of atrocities in Vietnam first began circulating, the American response was simple denial - these things couldn't have happened, or they were greatly exaggerated. Because of this attitude, there was minimal coverage by American media of the International War Crimes Tribunal, held in Denmark, from November 20 to December 1, 1967; as a result, we remained unknowledgeable.

A later American response was rationalization - war is hell after all; a related response was - they do it to our guys, so they deserve it back. After it became impossible to ignore knowledge about the massacre at My Lai, the Wright Institute in Berkeley, California, conducted a survey in December of 1969, to study American response to alleged American war crimes. The survey concluded that the two most common responses were: (1) it didn't happen and (2) they deserved it; a third common response was: it was a one-time thing, it couldn't happen again, it was an accident.⁴⁷

Lois is right; ~ don't know from our own experience; but Vietnam veterans do. And many of them have tried to tell the rest of us about it - in their books, memoirs, films, reportage and at their own "Winter Soldier Investigation" hearings in 1970. The rest of us can only learn from them.

Looking at letters and photographs. There are photographs of each young man on display in each of the homes I visited; Cathy Logan Walsh, whom I interviewed in my office, told me that she has "pictures around the house" (P. 113). Each family has kept possessions belonging to their sons or brothers, but they act differently toward these items.

Lois Belcher simply said, "I haven't been able to pull his letters out to re-read. I still have them all. I'm sort of chicken on that!" (P. 67). Maureen McRae Demers said, she, too, has "all his letters" (P. 206).

However, it is apparent that more people continue to re-read their son's letters. Edie Countaway, Joe Pignato and Duke MacNeil were quite comfortable quoting from letters, which must be very familiar to them.

⁴⁷Erwin Knoll and Judith Nies McFadden (Eds.), WAR CRIMES AND THE AMERICAN CONSCIENCE. NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970; pp. 106-127.

Edie quoted one letter in which "Jay kept telling us over and over, 'It'll be OK'" (P. 88). In another letter, Jay explained to her why he didn't want to visit his minister, who was in Southeast Asia; Edie quoted Jay as writing, "Right now, I'm acting like an animal. . . . My language isn't very nice. I don't dare go over to see him" (P. 98).

Joe Pignato said, "We got letters from him; we've got letters of his in my locker at work. I've got tons of them upstairs" (P. 124). Joe quoted from some of the letters; for example, Joey wrote to his father about the "first time I've ever seen anybody dead" (P. 124). Joe also quoted an amusing couple of letters Joey wrote about his company's having "bought a duck . . . and we're going to raise it and then we're going to have it some night" but later Joey wrote saying, "We found the feathers!" (P. 125).

Stephanie MacNeil seemed to be familiar with the contents of Eddie's letters; she pointed out that "his personal calendar with the 20th of July circled" was included in the personal effects returned to them after Eddie's death and that "he wanted to come home - he had had it. He had just seen too much" (P. 183). However, it is Duke MacNeil who said simply he has read Eddie's "letters a dozen times" (P. 192).

Public Treatment. As much as they may have wanted to remain secluded from encounters with people from outside their families, most storyteller mentioned at least one difficult experience resulting from public treatment after their death of their sons. The dignity of these storytellers shines through the re-telling of these episodes.

Lois Belcher explained:

I can remember going down to the Center in the time following Robert's death, and I could see people corning at me sometimes who'd cross the street; it was because it was too painful for them to address me. Some days I'd say, 'Thank God,' and other days I'd think, 'Hey, he lived; we have to talk about him.' They lived, they were part of life, they were your heart's love, and you can't not talk about them (P. 69).

She also told about attending the dedication ceremony for the high school memorial with a niece and nephew, but she didn't inform other relatives or close family friends because:

. . . who am I to say, 'Would you come to this ceremony, twenty years later?' . . . It didn't occur to me that I had supporters . . . It was just something I had to go through!. . . you were focused in on 'Let me get through this with some dignity.' (P. 77).

Edie Countaway said:

It took me seven years to believe it . . . up until this point, I couldn't talk about him at all. And after that, it seemed like it was all I could talk about. And it was kind of embarrassing to my friends because they didn't want me to-to-to be upset, yet, I seemed to have this need to talk about Jay constantly, as if I was afraid I'd lose him in my mind, I guess. . And now I think I'm on an even keel, where I can talk about him and I can not talk about him. I mean, most of the time I can talk about him without completely breaking down (Pp. 90-91).

Joe Pignato said about Winthrop residents:

Well, all of them were great. All the guys on the Fire Department, they were super. People that knew him and me were very good. I didn't get any bad reaction from anybody saying, 'Oh, your kid was in Vietnam, and he shouldn't be there.' Or any of that. They were all very good as far as I could see. I had no problems (P. 135).

Stephanie MacNeil told me about someone approaching her at the church:

. he said, 'Well, my dear, it was the will of God.' Aargh! 'Don't you tell me any such thing in a house of God!' I turned around and marched through the crowd The things people say. It's just that I try not to think it's the will of God; I really, it never, I don't believe that. I won't believe he chooses in that way. He sure broke me up for a while. There were people who'd come to comfort me - and they'd need comforting. It was so hard. And so I hid in the remains of this dark cloud (P. 189).

Stephanie then added:

The first thing you have to do, I found out, is not to whimper and whine in public. You put on a very thick front, so when people say, 'Oh, how are you, you dear?' You say, 'Fine, thank you. How are you?' I learned that when I first went back to church - and stopped because I couldn't stand the sympathy I got. And I was mad as hell at God! I couldn't understand any justification. I felt terrible anger, sorrow. Bob Mackie [the MacNeil's minister] and I used to talk about it a lot. He was good and helpful (Pp. 190-191).

Stephanie pointed out, "You know, you're always treated differently when you've lost a child" (P. 201). Duke added, "Even

people that know that you lost your son; they know, but they've forgotten" (P. 201). Stephanie then said:

And you realize that people aren't sure what to say or how to treat you so they don't say anything - and that hurts. But then, there are times when people don't realize in talking about their own children and singing their praises they can hurt you, too. They don't mean to, and there's no solution. It just hurts, sometimes either way (P. 201)

Consolation. As with loss, people seek and receive consolation in many ways. Here we shall look at three patterns that emerged from these interviews.

Where did they turn? There were several ways these families could turn: internally, exemplified by the Logan family and Harold Belcher; outside the family to friends, reported by Lois Belcher and Edie Countaway; outside the family to an existing support group, recalled in anecdotes by Lois Belcher, Edie Countaway and Cathy Logan Walsh. Another choice, that is relying on the family, must be inferred through the entirety of the interviews with the Pignatos and the MacNeils. People who live through a tragedy change; successful resolution of any trauma requires the ability to recall the event while being able to think about and carry on with other matters. Silence appears to have brought additional pain to the Logan family and Harold Belcher. All the others have persevered.

Internal silence. Cathy Logan Walsh explained:

Thinking about it, what we did after, how it affected the family - my father never mentioned my brother's name again; he never called him Joe. He'd say 'your brother' to me, or 'your son' to my mother. I think the toughest thing was that no one talked to anyone else (Crying). My father was all alone in his hurt, and my mother was in her hurt, and I was the only kid at home. My other brother was away at school. So, you don't do anything to shake the boat or upset anybody, so you didn't talk about it (P. 104).

Outside the family, to friends. Lois Belcher, on the other hand, said:

Mr. Belcher and I had a very hard time talking about him together, but we each could talk to other people; by the grace of God, we had that capability. It was just too painful to talk to the other parents. I don't know if the others got together, but Harold and I didn't. Not that when we saw each other we, there wasn't an unspoken sympathy going between us, empathy, sympathy; but, no, we didn't form a group . . . And you can't not talk about it if you're going

to survive. You just can't carry a load of guilt, can't carry blame, and you can't blame other people. I seemed to sense in my Harold that he even blamed other young men of the same age for being alive. And that was very difficult, and it ate at him; and that type of bitterness and everything even contributed to his cancer. I've often felt that a person under extreme emotional distress is a primary target for whatever cancer is within your body, which I think it is, that we all have inside, and something triggers it; it triggered his. He could never, could never let loose of his grief, and it gnawed at him (Pp. 69-70).

Edie Countaway, like Lois Belcher, had said that she and John couldn't talk to one another about their loss, but they each could talk to others; she wondered if that happened to other families as well (P. 87).

Outside the family, to an organized support group.

American Gold Star Mothers, Inc., has been in existence since January 5, 1929; it began as an organization of mothers whose sons or daughters were killed in World War I. It has since been expanded to include mothers whose sons or daughters died in the line of duty in the armed forces during World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam hostilities, or in other strategic areas. It seeks to inspire patriotism and a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; assist veterans and their dependents with claims made to the Veterans Administration; perpetuate the memory of individuals who died in our wars; promote peace and good will for the United States and all other nations.

A blue star was used as the representation of each person in the military during World War I. A gold star was superimposed upon the blue star as people were killed in combat or died of their wounds or disease. The idea of the Gold Star was the honor and glory accorded the person and his family for his supreme sacrifice rather than the sense of personal loss which would be represented by mourning symbols.⁴⁸

Lois Belcher said, "I never became a Gold Star Mother; it just wasn't, wasn't my way" (P. 69).

Edie Countaway said:

I went with Gracie [Grace Logan, mother of Joseph Logan and Cathleen Logan Walsh] to a Gold Star Mothers' meeting once. No, it wasn't any solace. I think the reason why is it was too soon for us . . . at the time it was too close. And we found it, we couldn't handle it (P. 96).

⁴⁸American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.: HISTORY 1984. A 12-page pamphlet sent to me by the organization. 2128 Leroy Place, Washington, DC 20008; 202-265-0991.

Cathy Logan Walsh said:

. my mother has told me that when they [her mother and Edie Countaway] went to the Gold Star Mothers, shortly thereafter she got some hate mail. So that would have turned her off against any group She assumed that the only way that they could have gotten her name was through that organization. Now, i told her that I'm not sure that's true, because names are published in the newspaper; but my mother directly thinks there's a connection Stuff like, you know, 'Your son killed innocent children; it's good he's dead.' Things like that. . . . But I don't recall her getting it; but she wouldn't have told me anyway, so. But there wasn't really any support (P. 106).

American Gold Star Mothers is a highly patriotic organization which promotes the idea that "the glory of death should be emphasized rather than its sadness."⁴⁹ It is understandable that these women found no comfort in such an organization so soon after the loss of their sons.

What might have been. Each family member expressed feelings about what might have been - if their sons or brothers had come home from Vietnam, or, in the case of George McRae, if he had been killed in Vietnam.

Lois Belcher said Bob:

. would have been a person who deqlt with people; he was very people oriented. What he would have become if he had come through this is a matter of conjecture, of course, but he would have been, *i feel*. - the gut feeling of all parents - that it would have been as a teacher, a coach, a social worker, or maybe even if he'd gone into the clergy, he'd have been a minister. Very hard, very hard, of course, to tell. Because who knows in what condition he would have come home if he did survive? I think of all the sad human beings who haven't been able to cope with life - with the drugs and drinking or whatever.- that could have been Robert. I sure hope not, but it could have happened (P. 62).

Maureen McRae Demers said:

It would have been easier if he had died in Vietnam, because there would have been a reason! But to go through that and come home; it just wouldn't be as hard to accept. It was really terrible (P. 207).

⁴⁹American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.: HISTORY 1984; P. 7.

She added:

Like I said, if he didn't go into the service and to Vietnam, he wouldn't have been killed, because he wouldn't have been in California! People have said, 'Well, it could have happened here.' But it would have been a totally different circumstance I'm not bitter that he went in the Marines, but I just feel that if he didn't it wouldn't have happened. But as we all know, you destiny - it would have happened (Pp. 209-210).

Edie Countaway told me during an unrecorded part of our conversation that "she wished he had been hurt worse and then he never would have had to go back" (P. 87). Later she said:

If Jay had come back - how he would have reacted to the way his country, the people in his country, were being. I think it would have been a very difficult thing for him to handle because I know he had lost quite a few of his buddies. But it must be hard to come back and have people almost spit on you - and you know that there have been people who gave up their lives for you. It's got to be hard, very difficult thing to take (Choked up).

I'll never know how he would have reacted. But no wonder the boys have come back having problems. . . . You really, you really sometimes begin to wonder about the policies of your own country (Pp. 93-94).

Marlene Pignato said:

I'd like to say one thing You know you said before about the effect on the families, and that (crying). Oh. You wonder, you know, what would he have been like now? What would he have looked like? You think - would he be bald or fat, would he have got married, what would his wife be like, would they have children, what would they be like? It's been taken away. It not only takes away a son it takes away the daughter-in-law; it takes away the grandchildren. it stopped there! It's not fair! (P.154-155) .

Joe added, "It's the whole ball of wax It's the same thing as asking, 'Why?' You can ask until Doomsday. But all we can do is remember" (P. 155) .

Cathy Logan Walsh explained:

I never went away to school like I wanted to. So your lives were affected in little, different ways that you'll never put back together; and you'll never know what difference it would have made (P. 105).

She added:

I never protested, never went to a rally. A lot of it I did out of respect for my brother; I might have thought the war was wrong, but how could I explain myself back at the house. But later, I remember going into work the day Saigon fell and coming home and looking at the paper and saying, 'That's it. Now I can admit my brother got it for nothing!' It was an internal battle. But, you're right; I'm his sister - not his mother. It's made me a complete pacifist. My son is three-and-a-half; he's not had guns, he's not had knives; he doesn't watch Saturday morning cartoons. . my son may grow up to be the biggest Rambo ever - but it's not going to be from me (P. 112).

Duke MacNeil said that "Ed had a job lined up. Up on the North Shore. He was going to be a paramedic in some kind of a medical center or something on the North Shore" (P. 1~9). When I asked Duke and Stephanie if they thought Eddie would have continued to work with addicted soldiers upon returning home, they both said yes (Pp. 191-192). Later, after telling me about money donated in Eddie's name to a church fund to send children to camp, Duke said:

Somebody said to Ellen [Ellen MacNeil Campbell, the MacNeils' daughter], 'What would you do if the money was given to you?' And Ellen said, 'I'd spend it! ' And they asked her, 'Why would you spend it?' 'Because Edmund would want me to spend it!' That was her answer. And I would say that that's exactly what Edmund would want her to do with it (P. 199).

It is clear from these remarks that the loss of their sons and brothers continues to affect these families. These young men remain integral parts of their families.

Acceptance. No family ever "gets over" the death of a son or a sibling. Eventually, however, there is acceptance. One form is spiritual; Lois Belcher and Duke MacNeil tell stories of "talking with" or "hearing from" their deceased sons. The other way is a family-oriented approach.

Spiritual experiences. Lois Belcher told me "another remembrance of Robert. It was something that helped me go on and hope" (P. 73). The summer after Bob died, Lois brought her daughter, Beverly, to Nantucket for a summer job; Lois told me that:

We assured her we wanted her to enjoy the summer; we were being macho brave and forced to go on with life. Yet dying because she was going to leave us, and we wouldn't have

her And then I left here and came back, very sad; here I was going to be three months without her. I was really sad. I was standing out on the deck, and it was raining hard as we were coming into Wood's Hole. . . . All of a sudden, a big shaft of sun came out - and Robert spoke to me. He said, 'Mom, it's all right to be sad. But don't be so sad.' Just like that! And that's been a very helpful thing to me because of my believing in the continuity of the spirit that was the person when they were here in this form as a human being. It was a real big help. (Very teary and emotional.) (P. 73) .

Joe Pignato said, "We were luckier than most, I suppose. We had him [home] for a month. At least, that's the way I think of it. That maybe it was God's way" (P. 123).

Duke MacNeil told me:

the weekend that we lost Edmund, I was ill. I mean, I really didn't know what was wrong with me - I had a terrible headache; I was, it was just terrible. I felt awful. I couldn't sleep. I just stood in front of that window, walking up and down until the sun appeared. And I never connected anything - you know - because we didn't know. It was a sickness that I never had before. At that time, it didn't really mean much to me; but I'm looking out the window and I'm wondering what, what's wrong, and I'd lie down and I couldn't get rid of the headache; and I was just miserable all over. But I went to work. And when I came home, Stephanie told me that we lost Edmund. Now, you can take that for what it's worth, but that's how I felt (P. 187).

Additionally, the MacNeils had a dialogue that Elisabeth Kubler-Ross would encourage:

D: Well, for one thing, we still talk about Ed like he's still around. We haven't forgotten Ed at all. We often say, 'Well, would Ed have done this?' Or, 'Eddie used to do that.'

S: Oh, yes.

D: We talk to other people about Ed, just like he might be sitting right here.

S: That sounds as if you're really wacked out!

D: Not at all. I'm telling you, I have conversations with him.

S: Oh, come on, Duke.

D: So do you, Steffi! I haven't for a while now. But in the dead of night, I've had a lot of conversations with him! And he's had things to say to me! Or appeared to be things that he's saying to me.. (P. 190).

Living on in another generation. Additionally, most family member told stories which can be understood as family-oriented.

Lois Belcher said "Yes, I relive a lot of Robert in my grandson (P. 82). I commented, "That must be warm and comforting to you." And she responded simply: "Yes, very comforting. Yes" (P. 82) .

Maureen McRae Demers emphasized that her second daughter, Jackie, "looks just like" George (Pp. 206, 207, 208). She added, "You would never ever forget . . . there's not a day that goes by that I don't think about him" (P. 210). She pointed out that her parents "were glad. . . that he was included" on the two Winthrop memorials (P. 210).

Eddie Countaway told me that:

. . . to us, Jay will always be a, I can't say a living person, he was a living being; but we will talk about things and say, 'Remember when Jay did that?'. . . there's a lot of loss . . . he was with us for at least, say eighteen years . . . you can't shut that, you can't shut, I don't think you should shut it out. It's part of your life. Now I know that both of my daughters - my grandchildren know all about Jay - what happened to him. As a matter of fact, Ryan had written an essay on 'What the Flag Means to Me' - and in it he had mentioned his Uncle Jay. That's a good thing (crying). He's living in a younger generation again It's a heritage to be proud of (P. 95).

Cathy Logan Walsh spoke about the ways she remembers her brother Joe:

I talk to my friends. Today when I was looking through some things, I didn't know if you wanted any of the stuff I had at home, my son was asking me what I was doing. I told him this was stuff that belonged to my brother, his Uncle Joey. 'Well, what did he do?' 'He flew a plane.' 'He flew a plane!' My son's been to Europe on the plane And I have pictures around the house, and I talk about him; I have to talk about my other brother. Because I don't want him not to know. . . . I just think it's good you're doing this, and the reasons you're doing it. Nobody ever focused - it was like the Wall, it's names, not emotions; it isn't how it affected people. It still affects me, and will till the day I die; and in a lot of ways, it will affect my son because of it (P. 113) .

Personal Reflections

"Unless we remember we cannot understand."

E. M. Forster

Approximately three million young American men served in the military during the Vietnam War. The society that organized and financed the war only briefly supported it. Civic and patriotic virtue was not questioned in the early years of America's participation; it was only later that America's presence was questioned - in Congress and in the streets. As the war raged on and military funerals were held in small towns across the nation, the culture which had supported the war changed.

The Puritan roots of the nation worked towards stifling both change and freedom of expression. Yet, criticism of one's country is not an anti-American activity; it is a democratic responsibility. Criticism of the Vietnam War questioned the leadership of this country, although it was often interpreted as criticism of the young Americans who went there. Edward R. Murrow said in his "See It Now" expose of Senator Joseph McCarthy, "We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We cannot defend freedom abroad while denying it at home." This aptly describes what did happen in America while the Vietnam War was being fought.

One of the reasons the culture changed was due to the perception of differences between the Vietnam War and other wars in which Americans had fought. Significantly, the Vietnam War was fought primarily by the lower classes; middle-and upper-middle class young men, for the most part, made use of the college deferment system or medical rationales to avoid the draft, until the lottery system was instituted. James Fallows made this point dramatically when he wrote, in words suitable for application to young men from Winthrop as well, "... the boys from Chelsea... walked through the examination room like so many cattle off to slaughter."⁵⁰ Additionally, the lack of fixed and articulated goals for winning, such as taking and holding specific territory, resulted in the evolution of the "body count" system; merely counting dead bodies, presumably the enemy, became the measure for victory. Furthermore, American forces did not win this war. As a result, the country was numbed by the failure of national leadership and the defeat of American intervention; it has been slow to recover, to understand the meaning of this war which deeply divided us from one another and to deal with the aftermath of what occurred.

To help explain how some Americans found the strength to oppose the Vietnam War while the vast array of political and civic organizations were committed to fighting that war, I point to two notable speeches, the importance and influence of which became clearer as opposition to the war grew.

⁵⁰James Fallows, "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?" reprinted in THE WOUNDED GENERATION, P. 18.

The first was given by Paul Potter on April 17, 1965, at a rally held in front of the Washington Monument to a crowd estimated at 20-25,000 people. Potter, outgoing president of Students for a Democratic Society, said:

.. Most of us grew up thinking that the United States was a strong but humble nation, that involved itself in world affairs only reluctantly, that respected the integrity of other nations and systems, and that engaged in wars only as a last resort.

The further we explore the reality of what this country is doing and planning in Vietnam, the more we are driven toward the conclusion of Senator Morse [Wayne L. Morse, U.S. Senator from Oregon. Morse and Ernest Gruening, U.S. Senator from Alaska, were the only two Senators to vote against Lyndon Johnson's Tonkin Gulf Resolution in August, 1964.] that the United States may well be the greatest threat to peace in the world today. That is a terrible and bitter insight for people who grew up as we did. . . .

How can anyone be surprised that people who have had total war waged on themselves and their culture rebel in increasing numbers against that tyranny? . . . And still our only response to rebellion is more vigorous repression, more merciless opposition to the social and cultural institutions which sustain dignity and the will to resist.

Not even the President can say that this is a war to defend the freedom of the Vietnamese people. Perhaps what the President means when he speaks of freedom is the freedom of the American people. . . .

What in fact has the war done for freedom in America? It has led to even more vigorous governmental efforts to control information, manipulate the press and pressure and persuade the public through distorted or downright dishonest documents. How much more of Mr. Johnson's freedom can we stand? How much freedom will be left in this country if there is a major war in Asia? By what weird logic can it be said that the freedom of one people can only be maintained by crushing another? ..

But the war goes on; the freedom to conduct that war depends on the dehumanization not only of Vietnamese people but of Americans as well; it depends on the construction of a system of premises and thinking that insulates the President and his advisors thoroughly and completely from the human consequences of the decisions they make. . . . ⁵¹

⁵¹Paul Potter, "Speech to the April 17, 1965, March on Washington," as reprinted in Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Albert, THE SIXTIES PAPERS: DOCUMENTS OF A REBELLIOUS DECADE. NY: Praeger Publications, 1984; Pp. 218-225.

The second speech was delivered by Carl Ogelsby on November 27, 1965, at the end of a Thanksgiving Weekend March and Rally in Washington, to a group estimated at 25-50,000 people. Ogelsby, president of Students for a Democratic Society at that time, said:

Since it is a very bad war, we acquire the habit of thinking it must be caused by very bad men. They are not moral monsters.

They are all honorable men.

They are all liberals.

To understand the war, then, it seems necessary to take a closer look at this American liberalism. Maybe we are in for some surprises.

What the National Liberation Front is fighting in Vietnam is a complex and vicious war. This war is also a revolution. And this is a fact which all our intricate official denials will never change.

But it doesn't make any difference to our leaders anyway. Their aim in Vietnam is really much simpler than this implies. It is to safeguard what they take to be American interests around the world against revolution or revolutionary change, which they always call Communism. There is simply no such thing, now, for us, as a just revolution. We have lost that mysterious social desire for human equity that from time to time has given us genuine moral drive.

Some will (say) that I overdraw the matter. and some will (say) that I sound mighty anti-American. To these I say: Don't blame *me* for *that*! Blame those who mouthed my liberal values and broke my American heart.⁵²

This paper is concerned with repercussions derived from the Vietnam War: the creation of the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1988, including the reasons these particular people wanted this memorial as well as their hopes for it; the community's sense of loss from the Vietnam War and its ways of dealing with that issue; and the thoughts and feelings of six families whose sons or brothers are listed on the memorial.

"The personal is political" - the women's movement slogan - has become accepted truth and a way for each of us relate our private lives to public affairs. In this way, history, usually considered the chronicle of famous people's lives or sagas of war and conquest, can be understood as memory as well. As William Faulkner once said, "History isn't wasi it is;" as a result, we resurrect the past constantly, erect monuments to it and keep it alive in order to remember who we are.

⁵²As quoted in Nancy Zaroulis & Gerald Sullivan, WHO SPOKE UP? AMERICAN PROTEST AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM, 1963-1975. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1984; Pp. 65-66.

Since memories are subject to metamorphoses over the years, these interviews combine the actual experiences of the people involved with how they have incorporated their thoughts regarding the subsequent two decades. What actually happened may not be as important as what individuals thought was happening at the time. The past doesn't go away; it is always there, and it talks to the future.

These eight young men enlisted in three branches of the military - five joined the Marine Corps (one was a Private; three became Lance Corporals and the other, a Corporal); two joined the Army (one was a Specialist 4th Class and the other one was posthumously promoted to Staff Sergeant); one was a 1st Lieutenant in the Air Force. One was born in 1943; one, in 1944; one in 1945; four, in 1947; one, in 1950. Five were Roman Catholic; two, Episcopalian; one, Baptist. Six are known to have graduated from high school - one each in the Class of 1960, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966 and 1969. At the time of their deaths, three were 20 years old; two were 21; one was 22; one was 24; one was 26. The least time served in Vietnam was 2-1/2 months; the longest, 19 months; the average time "in country" was 9.43 months. One of them was graduated from college, in 1965; three of the others attended college but either withdrew or flunked out; four of them never attended college. One died in 1967; five, in 1968; two, in 1971. Three died in combat; three died in accidents. Seven died in Vietnam; one died in the United States. Seven are named on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

The personal narratives which form the heart of this paper reverberate with the voices of the families of these young men. These stories provide us with information essential to our understanding of the world around us. Our obligation to participating in community life, in other words, what we think we owe others, reveals itself in this joining of "public history and private memories, the narratives by which we fashion our lives."⁵³

The timeless anguish of these people is impervious to resolution. They have struggled with the tension of the survivor's need to tell what happened to them with the drive to protect the dignity and memory of the dead. They loved their sons and brothers, and they have been angry; but they have learned that love does not end with death.

For my part, I have discovered that the most important reason for undertaking this project is to let the families and the community know that, as THE TALMUD reminds us: To live in the hearts you leave behind is not to die.

⁵³Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Murder She Wrote: A Review of BECAUSE IT IS BITTER AND BECAUSE IT IS MY HEART by Joyce Carol Oates," THE NATION, Vol. 251, No. 1, July 2, 1990, P. 28.

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APPENDIX A
Ellen Pinzur's Speech at Dedication Ceremony
for Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Sunday, May 22, 1988

I am Ellen Pinzur. I am here today on behalf of the Winthrop High School Class of 1964 to explain to you how this memorial tribute has taken place.

I was in Washington, DC, in late November; as part of my visit, I went to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I had been to the Memorial in 1984 and was deeply moved by my experience there. On this second trip, I was prepared to make a rubbing of the name of my friend and highschool classmate, Bob Belcher. The temperature that day was 0 degrees; the wind chill factor made it feel like 20 below. So, instead of making the rubbing myself, I asked one of the volunteers to do it for me. About 10 days later, I received the rubbing; I then had it mounted and framed. When that was done, I hung it in my apartment.

I had this plaque made so that I could bring it to a meeting planned for early 1989 - that of my highschool class 25th reunion committee. I expected to show the plaque and suggest that we, as the Class of '64, give it to the high school in memory of Bob Belcher. My classmates, I was sure, would unanimously agree that we wanted to mark our celebration by remembering our classmate who would never be with us, but who is still a part of us all.

Simultaneously, as you have heard, the School Committee had agreed to erect a memorial at the high school dedicated to the Winthrop residents who had died during the Vietnam War.

Coincidentally, Donna Reilly and I attended a party together. We did what people who have not seen each other in a long time will do - we talked about what we've each been doing. I spoke about my recent trip to Washington, my high school reunion plans, and the plaque we hoped to give to the school. Donna informed me that she had become a member of the School Committee and asked if I would be willing to make a presentation to the School Committee, with the idea in mind that their already-approved memorial idea and the anticipated Class of '64 gift could be conjoined. Today's presentation is the result of that collaboration.

Donna also asked me to speak to you about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and I am pleased to do so. There are many books and articles that describe the Memorial; I have relied on several sources - as well as on conversations with friends and on

my own perceptions; but mostly I am indebted to Charles Griswold's article, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall," from CRITICAL INQUIRY, University of Chicago Press, Summer 1986, Volume 12, No. 4, Pages 688-719.

The Memorial is set on the Mall in Washington, in Constitution Garden. At the west end of the area sits the Lincoln Memorial, and opposite it at the east end is the Capitol Building. Bisecting the area is the White House to the north and the Jefferson Memorial to the south. The center of the Mall, in essence, is the towering Washington Monument. (Griswold, 691)

The word monument derives from the Latin MONERE, which means not just to "remind," but also to "admonish," "warn," "advise," and "instruct." (Griswold, 691)

With these words in mind, the organizers of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund raised \$10 million, all from private donations, and opened a design competition for the Memorial. The criteria for the design were:

That the design:

1. Be reflective and contemplative in character;
2. Be harmonious with its site and surroundings;
3. Provide for the inscription of the names of the more than 58,000 who gave their lives or remain missing.
4. Make no political statement about the war; and
5. Occupy up to 2 acres of land.

The fund received 1,421 designs. The jurors, comprised of seven internationally-known architects and one writer/design critic, unanimously recommended the design submitted by Maya Ying Lin, a Yale University undergraduate.

Remember: This is a Memorial to the Vietnam Veterans, not to the Vietnam War. It honors everyone who served there, without qualification. (Griswold, 708)

You come into the memorial gently: You see a few names whose order is not immediately apparent; then you see more names; then, many more. The slowness of your exposure is merciful - for initial surprise turns to shock as you realize what you are looking at: the 58,132 names of those Americans, women and men, who died or who are missing in action as a result of this war. (Griswold, 706)

The logical beginning of the monument is at neither of the two points at which you necessarily enter its space, but at the point at which the two ends meet. The rows of names begin at the intersection of the two walls, at the top of the right-hand wall, and follow each other - panel after panel after panel - to the eastern tip of that wall, which points to the Washington Monument. The sequence resumes at the western tip, which points to the Lincoln Memorial, and terminates at the bottom of the left-hand intersecting wall. The peculiar way in which the Memorial begins and ends, with the names of the first and last Americans to die in Vietnam, reminds us of the sacrifice of so many individuals. The Memorial invites us to contemplate the inevitable cost in human terms. It suggests honor without glory. We see in front of our eyes the chronology of this war marked by the deaths of individuals. A visitor searching for one name is forced to read many other names, so paying attention once again to individuals. (Griswold, 709)

When people find the name they are looking for, they touch it, caress it, remembering. You see this ritual repeated over and over. It is often followed by another ritual - the tracing of the name onto a piece of paper; these are called rubbings. The paper is then carefully preserved and taken home. The marks of the dead left in stone become treasured signatures for the living. Because the polished black granite functions as a mirror, the person contemplating the Memorial cannot help seeing themselves looking at the names. The dead and the living thus meet, and history is once again alive. (Griswold, 711)

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial has become a place not only to honor but to communicate with the dead. Materials are left behind at this monument in a process that is simply not replicated at any other public monuments in America. Many people see a similarity with what visitors at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem do: leave messages to God tucked into the ancient crevices. The rite of remembrance at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial began when a man asked the construction workers if he could drop his brother's Purple Heart into the concrete; he saluted as it slid from sight. Since the Memorial was dedicated, more than 6 thousand similar salutes have occurred. This memorabilia includes letters, statements, poetry, photographs; dog tags, combat boots, boonie hats, and medals of all kinds - from St. Christopher's medals to the Congressional Medal of Honor. The array also includes Bibles, bumper stickers, Buddhas, a book of Jewish prayers for the dead, countless POW/MIA bracelets, teddy bears, flags, dollar bills, coins and cans of C-rations. All of this material is collected now by the National Park Service; it is brought to the Museum and Archeological Regional Storage facility (MARS), where scholars, writers and researchers are attempting to catalogue, preserve and analyze this unprecedented outpouring of gifts.

Next Sunday, May 29, at 9:00 P.M., NBC Television will broadcast a dramatization of the struggle to create the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It is called TO HEAL A NATION, and it is based on Jan Scruggs' dream and efforts to bring the Memorial to fruition.

Earlier this month the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was vandalized; scratches were found across one of the larger panels. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund has posted a reward for information about this desecration, and they are seeking donations for the necessary repair work.

To the Vietnam Veterans in the audience: Welcome Home. The Winthrop High School Class of 1964 appreciates the opportunity to have helped Winthrop bring a part of the Memorial home to us.

APPENDIX B

Interview with Richard Kennedy
February 14, 1989

E: I am doing research for a Master's Thesis, and I've chosen as my topic the Winthrop Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I have come to you for answers to some questions that will be helpful to me for background information.

D: Oh, sure.

E: One question is about the memorial marker that is at the Winthrop Cemetery. I know that it has eight names on it, and I was wondering if you could tell me where the names came from - who provided the information?

D: I think that the Department of Defense furnished the names, mostly they would have sent the telegrams to the next of kin and notified the Veteran's Agent here in the Town Hall. This is where the - most of - all the names came from, with the exception of this Edward Cordeau. I don't know where he came from; he was listed, but he actually was living in Everett, although he was born in Winthrop.

E: So his name didn't get included?

D: No, he is memorialized on the Everett list: They corrected it.

E: What about McRae? I understand that he was killed when he came back to the United States.

D: He was on furlough from Vietnam; he was killed in an automobile accident in California - either San Diego or San Francisco, one or the other. He is memorialized on the monument in Washington.

E: No, he isn't.

D: He isn't?

E: No.

D: I thought he was.

E: No, that's what's interesting; he isn't. And I'm wondering how his name got included on the marker here in the cemetery, which is what Donna Reilly used to make the list of names for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the High School.

D: Well, actually he was a Vietnam casualty. He was in the service, and even though he wasn't killed by enemy action, I think he should be memorialized.

E: Oh, there's no question about that. But the Memorial in Washington includes the names of people who were killed in

D: In action

E: In what they called the Combat Area

D: The Combat Zone, yeah.

E: And that included Cambodia and Laos and some coastal areas. It also eventually included some people who died from the wounds they suffered, even if they died later in the States. But something like a car accident, even though the young man was still in the service

D: Isn't considered

E: Well, he was killed in the States in an accident, not from a combat-suffered wound, so they didn't count it. I just wondered who decided that it was important to include him on the Winthrop memorial. He was a Winthrop boy, he was in the service, and he did die during the Vietnam era

D: When an accident like that happened - and if he made application for benefits from the V.A., he would be considered. Now, if that same accident had happened in Vietnam, his name would have been included on the memorial?

E: Yes, the way I understand the guidelines.

D: It's kind of unfair - it just happened; he was back home, he was in the wrong place at the right time.

E: Yeah.

D: Now I thought he was memorialized - although I don't see the line and panel numbers under his name~ but I thought he was.

E: No.

D: Gee.

E: But it is thoughtful that Winthrop included him on its own memorials, even though they didn't have to - by the Department of Defense guidelines for the Washington memorial.

D: Well, we like the V.A.

E: They did do their best, after all; there are 58,000+ names on that memorial. Well, that tells me a little about George McRae. Now, at the time that the cemetery marker was put into place, one of the town squares - an intersection, was dedicated to the memory of Robert Belcher.

D: That's right.

E: How did that come about?

D: I think the American Legion Post brought it up. Bobby's home was just around the corner. It's right up at the Lincoln Street intersection, right by the hospital. His mother was living in the old homestead at that time; I mean, I think she was. Well, this square - Bobby certainly deserved to be memorialized. I think it was the American Legion Post 146.

E: I'll give them a call, too. I wonder if there is anything at all that you can tell me about any of these boys, above and beyond what I know. I went to high school with some of them. Since they've been dead for 20 years or so

D: Bobby's mother lives down the Cape.

E: Yes.

D: Paul Brugman's mother and father are living at 86 Bartlett Road. Joseph Pignato's parents are at 42 Main Street. That's all I have on any of them, that are still living in Winthrop.

E: As the Veteran's Agent, you don't have any dealings with the families any more?

D: No, no.

E: Any contact would have ended with the dispersal of a death benefit, I guess?

D: Unless the mother or the father were alone and they made application for death benefits here. But I've only been here 5 years; they would have been in touch with my predecessor. For the most part, these parents have either moved or they're pretty well fixed, and they don't need help from the Veterans Services.

E: That's nice, in a way.

D: Yeah, it really is. Of course, most of these people, if the mother or father were in need or were dependents, they would be getting dependency claims from the Veteran's Administration.

E: Still?

D: Oh, yes. It would run at about the veteran's service pay, which would now be between \$500 and \$1,000 per month, depending on the rank the veteran held.

E: Oh, my,

D: And that would go on until the parents died. And of course, if they had any children - but these were all young kids when they died.

E: Yes, they were all young kids, all single, no children. No.

D: But the parents would be entitled to aid from the V.A.

E: I was unaware of that.

D: That aid could be really almost enough to live on - well, not now. With their Social Security, it could be enough for them to get on.

E: Interesting. Let me ask you about two young men whose names do not appear on the Winthrop memorial: Dennis Case and Richard Yates. You don't know those names?

D: No.

E: Dennis graduated from high school with me in 1964; I don't know which branch of the service he was in, but he served in Vietnam. He came home. Finished college, got married, got divorced; and he died in 1981. His obituary said that he died from cancer and he was a veteran of the Vietnam Conflict. I don't know if he was buried in Winthrop - he wasn't living here at the time, although his family may have been.

D: Let me check the graves records. Do you have any idea of his date of birth or what branch of the service?

E: No, just that he died in October 1981 - I don't know the date. And he was graduated from Winthrop High School in 1964. I suppose someone at the high school could check on his birth date.

D: Oh, yeah. And I can check through the V.A., through people who used to work for me. We'll find out.

E: That would be great. You see, I've always assumed, the way the obituary was phrased, "Died from cancer; veteran of the Vietnam Conflict" - well, I put two and two together and came up with

D: Agent Orange.

E: Yes. Thirty-five year old men don't die like that - it's got to be Agent Orange!

D: Is the wife aware of this?

E: Well, they were divorced before he died.

D: Any children?

E: No, not that I know of.

D: Because they would be entitled to benefits, something.

E: It's haunted me. I remember Dennis quite vividly; he was a terrific young man, and I lost touch with him after high school. His death shocked me. I wondered when the memorial got put together why Dennis wasn't included. It seemed to me that this George McRae was there, and Dennis should be there, too. I didn't push for it, and I guess I was the only one who could have.

D: Yes.

E: But I know that Agent Orange is a touchy subject for a lot of people.

D: Yes. But there's money there.

E: I don't know if there's anyone to collect it.

D: It's peculiar; I've never heard of him. But I'll find out.

E: And there's another classmate of mine. Richard Yates.

D: With a name like Richard, he should be all right.

D: With a name like Richard, he should be all right.

E: Yes, I figure Richards, Michaels and Roberts!

D: Well, was this boy born in Winthrop?

E: Oh, I don't know. He was graduated from Winthrop High School in 1964, same year as Bobby Belcher and Dennis Case - and me. We certainly had our share of this burden. A lot of the early baby-boomers died in that war.

D: Umhmmm.

E: Anyway, again, I'm curious. Richard died before 1974, I know that. My guess is that it was somewhere between '68 and '73. In Florida, by the way.

D: We can find out. We can get him on the computer from the V.A. and get some information. All we need is his date of birth.

E: Which I don't have, but the high school will.

D: Yes, they will.

E: Oh, great! If you don't mind a little detective work on my behalf.

D: No - I'd be glad to do it!

E: This will probably be even more touchy than an Agent Orange case. From what I remember, Richie developed a drug problem in Vietnam.

D: That happened.

E: Yes. I gathered that he cleaned himself up, but still did drugs - barbiturates, alcohol. He was found face down in a beanbag chair at a party - asphyxiated, I suppose, with drugs being the contributing factor.

D: Still, he served in Vietnam - and the social effects of that war - well, he was from Winthrop, too. I'll see what I can find out.

E: Terrific! Now, could you tell me about this office - what do you do?

D: This actually is a sort of an aid office. After the Civil War, if a veteran went on welfare, he lost his citizenship. So, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts started this Soldiers and Sailors Relief. No veteran should be on welfare; he should be getting his money from Veterans Services. We pay them an amount that's set up by the Welfare Budget, and we pay them with town money. A year later, we get 75% of that money back and the town just puts in 25 cents on the dollar.

E: And you get this money back from whom?

D: The State.

E: And what about the big Veteran's Administration, the Federal one?

D: That's quite separate. This is absolutely different.

E: And it's only in Massachusetts?

D: No, there are about 12 or 15 states that have this, sort of, but it's not very well - well, it's a pretty well-kept secret. Unless the veteran is aware that we're here. Actually it's a stop-gap. Between putting in your application to the V.A. for the big stuff and having to live until you do get that. At one time it was 6-8-10 weeks; now it's 16-18-20 weeks. Some of them are on the rolls for the rest of their lives. We set them up with - I wouldn't say something to live on, that's just about to eke out a living. If they can't get hospitalization from the V.A., we'll supply it, we will pay for the hospitalization.

E: Do you provide any kind of social services and counselling?

D: No, they would go to the V.A. for that. Of course the widow and children are part of that. If the widow isn't able to - see, you have a gray area between the time the child, the orphan that's left, becomes 18 and the wife, widow, becomes 62; this is where we come in. The benefits aren't great, and the benefits provided would be better from the Welfare Department than they would be from us.

E: But my guess is the attitude is better here.

D: Yeah, I certainly think so.

E: You're right; it's a well-kept secret! (Laughter)

D: Although there's a Veterans Agent for every town in the Commonwealth, or if it's little towns, there may be a district office. The man who preceded me here is down on the Cape now, and he's working for five towns. But of course, that's more summer - he has the older veteran down there. But when the young man who's come down there to be a waiter loses his job, he's got somebody to go to in the summer.

E: Very interesting. And you said it dates from the Civil War?

D: Yes, the Civil War.

E: It's enlightening, considering. I assume that you have to keep abreast of what's going on in the V.A.?

D: Oh, yes. In fact, I just came back from a conference down the Cape where they brought us right up to date on what is happening. The Director of the V.A. in Boston was there; he spoke about what he thinks is going to happen, because of course the V.A. is now Cabinet level.

E: Will that help?

D: Well, he certainly thinks so. What they need, what they're talking about is money - they don't have the money now. They're trying to cut back on what they do have; people are in and they're trying to get them out. But one of the worst of the latest crises is the homeless vets. If a homeless vet walked in here right now, I would have to get him a place before I went home. The Chelsea Soldier's Home does have 15 or 20 beds where the homeless can come at 4 o'clock, get a shower, have dinner and a bed; and then by 8 o'clock, he has his breakfast and he's gone.

E: That's like the Long Island Shelter. It's simply an overnight place. Not a solution to a festering problem.

D: That's right.

E: Chelsea Soldier's Home. I used to dance there on Christmas Eve every year. My dance instructor brought us there - we'd put on a big show in the auditorium and then we'd go into the various wards. I always thought it was a good thing to do.

D: Yes, it was.

E: We were told how important it was for us to contribute in some way, and it was a way for little kids to do something special.

D: Another thing they really need is an Alzheimer's ward. You see these poor souls go straight down hill. I don't know if we had this or we didn't have it years ago - somebody would just say, "Oh, he's getting senile." But this, this is really bad! They don't even know you. Men whom I've known for 30-40 years, and they don't know who I am. Nobody's there - you don't know where they are. And the big thing is they cry. I can take a woman's tears; but a man - oohh. They just sit there and talk about 40-50 years ago. It kills me. I'm ready to cry with them. We have to do something. These people and the homeless, it's a tragedy.

E: Yes, it's very sad. And sometimes crying is all that you can do.

D: Well, I'll get to these two for you - I'll do something, and get back to you.

E: Great. Thank you for everything.

Letter from Dick Kennedy
March 1, 1989

Dear Ellen:

Here is all the scoop I have been able to get on the two veterans:

Dennis Guy CASE born July 21, 1946, died October 3, 1981, buried in Winthrop Cemetery - Lot 5015 Shamrock Path. Applied for education benefits from Veterans Administration under C-27 015 685. The case file was retired to the Waltham Records center in December 1981. Attached is paper clipping; I think it was from the Winthrop Transcript.

Dennis G. Case of Folly Pond Road, Beverly, passed away on Saturday, October 3, 1981, at the Mass. General Hospital after a long illness at the age of 35.

He was born in Cambridge, and lived in Winthrop, where he graduated from the Winthrop School system, and was employed as an Engineer for Norfolk Electric Company.

He was a late Army Veteran of the Vietnam Conflict, holding the rank of Sargent (sic).

He was the devoted son of Guy M. and Julia A. (Adamowica) Case, and brother of Ronald C. Case of North Andover, and Gerald Case of Lynn.

The Funeral was held from the Maurice W. Kirby Home, Inc., 210 Winthrop Street, Tuesday, October 6, at 8:15.

A Funeral Mass was sung in the Church at St. John The Evangelist at 9:00.

Interment followed in Winthrop Cemetery.

Richard Alan YATES born September 17, 1945, died December 23, 1973, entered service January 31, 1964 (was graduated from Winthrop High School June 11, 1964), discharged from service February 3, 1967. C# 25 553 453 was issued in his name but no record of any benefits paid.

If I can help any other way please let me know.

Sincerely,

(signed)
Dick Kennedy

APPENDIX C

Richard Alan Yates

September 17, 1945 - December 23, 1973
(28 years, 3 months, 6 days)

Winthrop High School
Class of 1964

Yearbook Caption:

Art Committee 1; Science Club 1; Fudge Drive Captain 3
"We'll see him under the spotlights."

The following information was sent to me by Dick Kennedy:

Richard Alan YATES born September 17, 1945, died December 23, 1973, entered service January 31, 1964 (was graduated from Winthrop High School June 11, 1964), discharged from service February 3, 1967. C# 25 553 453 was issued in his name but no record of any benefits paid.

I decided that I should acquire death certificates to have for the record. I called the Florida Bureau of Vital Statistics in Tallahassee and was referred to an office in Jacksonville; I called the Jacksonville number. I explained that I wanted a copy of a death certificate of someone who had died in Florida; I gave the name and the date but I could not provide them with the county in Florida. I was told that they required a check for \$4, and they would appreciate having a stamped, self-addressed envelope. I was also told that they would not be able to provide me with a cause of death unless I could prove I was a relative. I explained that I am doing research for a Master's Thesis and needed this information for my files. I was told that unless I obtained a court order, the law in Florida prohibited a death certificate with the cause of death on it to be obtained by anyone other than a relative.

Nevertheless, I sent a \$4 check and a letter explaining why I wanted the information to the Florida Office of Vital Statistics. Within a week, I received a certified copy of Richie Yates' death certificate - with cause of death indicated. My guess is that whoever read my letter decided to break the rules on my behalf; and I am grateful to my anonymous bureaucrat.

Richie's Certificate of Death, State File No. 73-089975, states that the immediate cause of death was "drug overdose of unknown etiology;" probably an "accident;" and the nature of the injury occurred as a result of "ingested overdose of drug."

I have been unable to find anyone who knows where Richie's family is. The last address I could find dated from the time of Richie's death in 1973; the family is no longer at that address nor anywhere else in the town to which they had moved. I made no effort to find Richie's widow at her last known address in Florida, since that was also at the time of Richie's death, sixteen years ago.

Since I am also currently working on the 25th reunion of my high school class, I've asked that people try to get information for me through inquiries of Richie's high school friends. No one has reported any success.

APPENDIX D

Dennis Guy case

July 21, 1946 - October 3, 1981
(35 years, 2 months, 12 days)

Winthrop High School
Class of 1964

Yearbook caption:

Gymnastics 3
He'll build the bridges men will walk upon.

Dick Kennedy sent me the following information:

Dennis Guy CASE born July 21, 1946, died October 3, 1981, buried in Winthrop Cemetery - Lot 5015 Shamrock Path. Applied for education benefits from Veterans Administration under C-27 015 685. The case file was retired to the Waltham Records center in December 1981. Attached is paper clipping; I think it was from the Winthrop Transcript.

Dennis G. Case of Folly Pond Road, Beverly, passed away on Saturday, October 3, 1981, at the Mass. General Hospital after a long illness at the age of 35.

He was born in Cambridge, and lived in Winthrop, where he graduated from the Winthrop School system, and was employed as an Engineer for Norfolk Electric Company.

He was a late Army Veteran of the Vietnam Conflict, holding the rank of Sargent (sic).

He was the devoted son of Guy M. and Julia A. (Adamowica) Case, and brother of Ronald C. Case of North Andover, and Gerald Case of Lynn.

The Funeral was held from the Maurice W. Kirby Home, Inc., 210 Winthrop Street, Tuesday, October 6, at 8:15.

A Funeral Mass was sung in the Church at St. John The Evangelist at 9:00.

Interment followed in Winthrop Cemetery.

I went to the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to obtain Dennis Case's death certificate. All that was required by the Registry was the name and date of death and \$6; I paid in cash and waited approximately 25 minutes. I was handed a certified copy of Dennis Case's "Standard Certificate of Death," Registered Number 07170. It states the cause of death as:

Immediate cause (a) Fungal Septicemia (interval between onset and death - days);

Due to or as a consequence of (b) Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (interval between onset and death - 3 years.

APPENDIX E

Conversation with Norman Gill
May 26, 1989

Mr. Gill was the Veterans Agent in Winthrop and the former head of the American Legion Post 146. He is now the Veterans Agent for five towns on Cape Cod (508-432-1083/1084).

I asked him why the marker in the cemetery has Korean and Vietnam War dead together. He said that various proposals were submitted to the Board of Selectmen and through other groups; because of funding constraints, it was decided to put the names on the same marker.

I asked him how George McRae's name came to be included. He said that the names were submitted by different people; someone must have known about George. He suggested I ask Warren Pepper who told them that George had been medevacked out of Vietnam and died from wounds sustained in combat. I told him that George was killed in a car accident at Camp Pendleton, after he served in Vietnam. He said he not only didn't know that, but he doesn't think the name would have been included if that had come out at the time.

I asked about Robert Belcher Square. He said Lois remembered correctly; she was told that this would be the first of many such squares. But the rest haven't ever happened. Mr. Gill feels that the reasons for this are that although there has been a resurgence of interest in the boys who served in Vietnam, that those who served in Korea feel neglected. And that Korean War vets question all this emphasis on Vietnam vets. It's town politics, he said. The naming of a square doesn't cost very much money; but the pressure is on to refrain from emphasizing Vietnam. Partly because of the politics of that particular war. He said it's still a difficult question. The Korean War vets in power, those in authority, are cooling the emphasis. Nothing gets done.

I asked him about Dennis Case. He said Dennis died from septicemia. I asked about Agent Orange. He said it's possible that dioxin poisoning could cause that. I suggested that Dennis and Richie Yates should also be remembered; Mr. Gill, like Dick Kennedy, agreed - but said it wouldn't happen; too scary a proposition for people to think about.

He wished me well. Was delighted to hear about this project. Sends his regards to everyone I've spoken with. Said Warren Pepper would remember any details I needed. He added that since legislative delegations no longer have a high percentage of veterans, this serves to play down funding for memorials, benefits, etc.

APPENDIX F

Conversation with Warren Pepper

May 29, 1989

When the Memorial Day services were completed, I approached Warren Pepper. I introduced myself and told him that I had just spoken with Norman Gill on the previous Friday. I explained a little about my thesis and said I was curious about the marker in the upper part of the cemetery.

E: Why aren't there two monuments; one for the Korean War dead and a separate one for the Vietnam War dead?

W: There's a lot of politics involved.

E: Excuse me? What do you mean? These are dead boys from this town that we're talking about. We're not talking about the policies that got us into either of those wars. No one is mad at the dead boys after all! Everyone thinks they're important.

W: The people in power in town are mostly Korean War age, and they just sort of got sick of listening to all this stuff about the poor Vietnam vets.

E: Fine. Go do something about the Korean Vets. Make up for 35 years lost time that they've been forgotten. Give them their own memorial.

W: No, no, no.

E: OK. Mr. Gill also told me that you would know why there are eight names listed from the Vietnam War, since only seven of them were killed in Vietnam. The eighth was killed in a car accident in the United States.

W: You'd have to ask Norman Gill about that.

E: Mr. Gill told me you supplied the name and the story - that this boy, George McRae, died of wounds he suffered after he returned home.

W: I don't know anything about that.

E: I understand that the day the cemetery marker was dedicated, a square was named in honor of Robert Belcher. Mrs. Belcher was under the impression that there were going to be squares named for the other seven as well; but there was just the one for Bobby.

She has been wondering what happened to the others, because she was told that - and she wasn't sure why Bobby was singled out. Mr. Gill told me that Mrs. Belcher was correct; she had been told there would be others. Can you explain it for me?

W: Well, those Korean War vets in town weren't pleased with all the emphasis put on the Vietnam vets. Subsequently, they will be doing it. Every couple of years, we'll name another square for one of these boys.

E: Have you named another square since you dedicated Robert Belcher Square?

W: I don't think so.

E: Well, that was five years ago - two more could have been done keeping to your schedule; there are still seven more names.

APPENDIX G

Dates of Interviews and Conversations

January 21, 1989	Donna Segretti Reilly
February 2, 1989	Lawrence Larsen
February 2, 1989	Arthur Cummings
February 14, 1989	Richard Kennedy
February 14, 1989	Matthew Boyle
February 14, 1989	Bruce Ross
March 3, 1989	Lois Belcher
March 23, 1989	Maureen McRae Demers
April 1, 1989	Edith Countaway
April 28, 1989	Elizabeth (Mrs. John) Brugman
May 8, 1989	Marlene & Joseph Pignato
May 26, 1989	Norman Gill
May 29, 1989	Warren Pepper
June 5, 1989	Cathleen Logan Walsh
June 7, 1989	Stephanie & Edmund MacNeil
June 19, 1989	Marlene & Joseph Pignato