

The Vietnam War and Anti-War Protests:

The Parallels Between University of Oregon Student Protests, and One  
Veteran's Experience as the Result of President Johnson's Entanglements with  
the War (1962-1969)

A Research Paper

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Classified as an "American Tragedy" and "an immeasurable" mistake by the United States, the Vietnam War lives on in history existing as a labyrinth of political decisions and a set of enigmatic motivations. Spanning six presidencies, involvement with Vietnam began during President Truman's years in office and continued through to the Nixon years; but it is most heavily associated with John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson's presidencies. The damage created by the war is indefinite and may never be fully estimated. With reexamination it is becoming clearer that Vietnam may have been a war the United States did not need to fight. The late 60's and early 70's is a decade marked by revolution, protests, and chaos. It was the decade of civil rights, the emergence of New Left approaches, feminist movements, and anti-war protests. Associated with leading the anti-war movement were university students; the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon in particular, has been marked by its anti-war activity and student protests during that time. Though students are most heavily linked to the protests, there was a strong anti-war sentiment shared by soldiers in Vietnam as well. The stories of veteran protests is often overshadowed by campus activity during the turbulent time; however, there are many parallels between student protests and soldier protests.

Directly following the war and existing still today, is a feeling of betrayal. Veterans feel betrayed by the anti-war sentiment, and many American citizens who were opposed to the war still harbor those furious emotions. During the war there was often a separation between the United States citizens and the soldiers. Many saw the soldiers as supporters of the war, when in reality, a majority were opposed to U.S. involvement in Vietnam. By examining U of O protests and the experiences of one veteran, a commonality is revealed. The historical context of the Vietnam War and the entanglement of President Johnson with Vietnam provided motivation for the anti-war sentiment. It becomes evident that the foundation of the protests was the

disparity of the protesters and the helplessness of the situation.

Specifically, U of O student protests and the stories of Vietnam veteran Frank Flowers, illuminate the similarities between student and soldier protests.

On the relatively small campus of U of O, the messages of student leaders and protestors could not be ignored. One of the most important resources for examining student protests were the articles featured in The Oregon Daily Emerald. The paper was one of the most widely distributed and influential news sources on campus because it covered campus issues, and was written and researched by students. With regards to the Vietnam War, the two main issues covered in The Emerald were events involving the ROTC and the radical aspects of the anti-war protests.

Until 1971 The Emerald was not an independent paper from the University.

Thus, there were restrictions on printable material for the reporters. The goal of the paper was to publish factual articles with limited biases; the paper would not be used as a tool to further personal interests. Throughout the years of 1968-1970, saturating a majority of the paper were Vietnam related articles. Several articles discussed demands made by the student body with regards to the anti-war protests. Students felt that the administration and faculty should take a stance on the war and voice their opinions in support of the protestors. Robert D. Clark presented several speeches to the student body addressing the necessity of civil obedience and cooperation between the student body and the administration. Approaching the fall term of 1968, U of O was undergoing a drastic transformation in both its campus life, and the individuals who occupied it.

During that same time period, Frank Flowers was residing in his birth town of Boston, Massachusetts. Having grown up in a big city, Frank felt exposed to the national news, but uninterested. He concludes that "I preferred not pay attention to the war, I had friends that were enlisting and

people would talk about it on occasion. However, in the beginning no one really discussed it in that great of detail, not like the Iraq War today." Frank's naivety to America's involvement in Vietnam could be expected. The nation was blind-sighted by the war; efforts by the administration and lack of media coverage kept military action hidden until the late 60's. The intervention in Vietnam was a rapid and unforeseen event that caught the United States off guard. Many people still today, are unaware of disregarded lessons the U.S. should have learned from, in order to prevent such a horrific war.

As far back as 1765, Vietnam was an interest to France for various reasons, one being the expansion of Christianity. Catholicism left permanent imprints in Vietnam, decades later a majority of the communist groups that ruled Vietnam were led by devout, radical Catholics. And although the Vietnamese embraced the new religion, by the end of the seventeenth century the French saw no hope in remaining involved in Vietnam economic or political affairs...not until a few decades later. In 1787 "France was tottering on the brink of bankruptcy, and Louis XVI, an indecisive man, initially rejected the idea of a costly expedition to Asia...but finally outlined a precise military plan for conquest of Vietnam." France failed to conquer Vietnam despite several decades of fighting, and as a result, the "acts of incredible brutality, opened Vietnam to Western ideas that, along with the violence and repression and humiliation, rekindled Vietnamese nationalism." This newfound nationalism ultimately created the greatest obstacle between American and Vietnamese correspondence. Americans greatly underestimated the determination the Vietnamese had towards defending their nation and protecting itself from intruders. Commenting on France's failures with Vietnam, Frank reiterates, "that we should have learned from France's mistakes. If they couldn't do it, we shouldn't have thought we could dominate over there. If we had paid attention and learned vicariously, we would not

have followed in their footsteps." America attempted to be a police force mediating all of the world's problems, and the struggle with Vietnam proved to be too great of a challenge.

With the turmoil existing between France and Vietnam, President Roosevelt attempted to ease some of the conflict. But becoming involved in such an ancient battle simply led to deeper American involvement. By 1950 an announcement was given that if Indochina fell to Communism, then almost all other Asian nations would as well. The Truman administration was apprehensive about the threat, but became interested in the French, North and South Korea, and other Asian countries' conflicts. The United States had become infamous for underestimating the threat of other nations, and Vietnam proved to be another example of the overconfidence of America. The removed involvement with overseas turmoil continued through Eisenhower's presidency, and through Kennedy's. Eisenhower warned Kennedy to be aggressive and adamant about involvement with Vietnam. Instead Kennedy floundered between other international conflicts and was apprehensive about intervening in Vietnam, despite strong encouragement from advisors. During the early sixties, Kennedy continued drafting American soldiers, preparing for an unforeseen decade of war.

In the year 1962, Vietnam Veteran, Francis Flowers was just nineteen years of age and had become eligible for draft. By 1962 the draft was heavily underway and Frank was adamant about avoiding war. The Vietnam War was one of the first times in American history that such a devastatingly large mass of young males were called upon to defend their nation. At first only 19-25 year old males were eligible for draft, and as Frank remembers, it was typically only his lower class friends that were drafted first. While the draft began, Frank knew he was opposed to the war and did not want to go overseas to risk his life for a nation's cause that he did not support. He was able to receive

work deferment, permitted by the United States, which excused males from having to participate in the draft.

Typically only upper class men were able to receive this deferment because they were stereotypically the ones that were attending college, had respectable jobs, or had the financial power to avoid the draft. (For example, one friend of Frank's came from an extremely wealthy family. In order to avoid the draft his family sent him to live in Canada and avoid the war altogether. Those without such financial assistance were forced into the draft lottery). Though not from an extremely wealthy family, Frank was able to receive work deferment because he had found a job in Boston with Baird/Atomic, a company that built plane parts for the Spy U2 airplanes used in the Vietnam War. He felt very fortunate that he was able to avoid the draft, but because he easily received the deferment, the possibility of going to war did not seem overwhelming. The irony is that although Frank had not yet been drafted, he was still actively involved in the war by working for a company that directly supported the war.

As the war was underway, all turmoil of Vietnam was halted momentarily when Kennedy was assassinated. The horrific circumstances, in which the president was taken from his nation, made it hard for Americans to further criticize the work of one man who had just been murdered. And so the heat of the nation's problems was reassigned to Lyndon B. Johnson who inherited not only the presidency but also the negative portion of the Kennedy legacy. Johnson was in sole possession of the burden to please both the shaken nation and an administration that was by now, overly eager to intervene in a war beyond American comprehension. Thus, America had already become nonchalantly involved in Vietnam so withdrawal was no longer realistic; Johnson's only solution was to take some form of action. Yet the irony involved in the situation was that after Kennedy failed to take action, and in fact defied

his administrative suggestions, Johnson continued in his footsteps and avoided taking immediate presidential action.

Johnson was desperate to win over the nation and fulfill his presidential duties; therefore, he feared entering a war that might contradict his social legislation and efforts to assuage the country's turmoil and chaos that directly followed the assassination of Kennedy. Johnson "worried that the country as a whole would not rally behind the war and he feared that the support was wide but not deep, that if American people were asked to sacrifice their lives and money to any greater extent, they would turn on him." Johnson's fears were legitimate but he made the costly decision of ignoring his instincts, and instead of refusing to enter the United States in a war he believed would backfire, he concealed preliminary military action in Vietnam and the consensus to go to war.

Though it was not entirely Johnson's war, it was his direct presidency that launched and re-launched the United States into an international war. Frank comments on his observations of the war prior to being drafted: "I had several friends that had been drafted and had died within months of being overseas. I saw the nation slowly begin to realize that Vietnam was an inevitable loss and yet more and more young men were being sent over. How could the government not see that no matter how many men were fighting, we still would not 'win'?" Johnson recognized the inner conflict between northern and southern Vietnam and the necessity for South Vietnam to be supported by the United States in order to prevent communism and guerrilla tactics to be enforced by North Vietnam. The inner national conflict was simmering in 1941 as the French attempted to lend aid and support, only thickening the tension. Despite warning by the French, the United States entered the Vietnamese conflict and by 1965 the turmoil was approaching boiling point as American troops began bombing North Vietnam in retaliation

of their attacks on South Vietnam. The confusion within Vietnam only spread to the United States, with the continuation of student protests.

Analyzing the conflict between North and South Vietnam, the American administration relied heavily on the scheme to send aid to South Vietnam and build up retaliation against the Viet Cong in northern Vietnam. The administration relied heavily on the power of rhetoric, emphasizing the "domino-theory" and threat of communism to fuel the fear of the nation. They hoped a fearful nation would then support the administration's decisions to act. Troops entered Vietnam and with advice from Defense Secretary, Robert McNamara, ground and air forces were intensified. As a result on August 2, of 1964, Northern Vietnam torpedoes attacked the American military ship the Maddox in the Gulf of Tonkin. This attack shocked the United States who had not anticipated the preparedness of the North Vietnamese; two days after the incident, Johnson demanded bombing attacks on North Vietnam and requested authorization from Congress for complete power over the United States military in order to prevent future attacks.

This was a groundbreaking request from Johnson; no president had previously been granted power over the United States military for whatever means necessary to stop the spread or intensification of a current war effort.

"What the hell were they thinking?" was Frank's response to the news. He continued: "I immediately knew that the Tonkin Resolution would not result in anything but more losses of American lives and an even greater disappointment in the war effort with Vietnam. The only thing that scares me is if future presidents make the same request and it is granted again. This failure should be remembered so it can't occur again." Johnson was granted his request and the power to have complete access and control over American military forces was labeled the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. But "the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and accompanying air strikes against the North had clearly not produced the anticipated effect in South Vietnam...these measures failed to induce greater



political cohesion in the faltering Saigon regime." Although Johnson had been granted his request of military power, the gift had not been as powerful as anticipated and so just "three weeks after Tonkin, the Joint Chiefs pushed for 'an accelerated program of actions' against the north". Tonkin only increased the confusion and outrage that surrounded Johnson.

Immediately after the Tonkin Resolution, which was designed for intense and immediate action, Johnson claimed that "the proper answer to those advocating immediate and extensive action against the North was that we should not do this until our side could defend itself in the streets of Saigon...with a weak and wobbly situation it would be unwise to attack until we could stabilize our base." Once again Johnson's caution and insecurities as President made people question his ulterior motives, interpreting Vietnam action as "prerequisite of strengthening a political base...a calculation for advantage in his campaign for re-election."

After the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution the Viet Cong united and intensified their desire for victory more than ever. By 1966 Johnson had sent over three hundred thousand troops in Vietnam where the war seemed hopeless and never ending. As more information filtered through the United States about Kennedy fallacies, mainly his inability to commit to a war effort in Vietnam, and undesirable decisions being activated by Johnson's administration, the war effort turned negative. As Frank recalls, "the extreme anti-war sentiment and student protests began after the Gulf of Tonkin, it was the event that caught the attention of the nation". The end of 1966 tragically divided the United States over the issue of supporting the war. Violent riots began to surface throughout the nation, and an anti-war sentiment was embraced. The administration was devastated by the new anti-war stand that many Americans enveloped, which drastically contradicted the pro-war majority that existed just months prior. Despite LBJ's efforts to minimize his recent decisions to intensify and widen the U.S. effort in Vietnam, public and congressional

opposition to his policy had increased, along with the fevered pitch of student protests.

Prior to American entry into Vietnam, the Viet Cong was under the Ngo Dinh Diem regime. Diem along with Ngo Dinh Nhu led the communist nation. The initial motivation for United States intervention in Vietnam was to overthrow the Diem regime. In 1960 the two Vietnamese leaders were captured by American military personnel and brutally murdered. As a result Ho Chi Minh rose to power to lead the Viet Cong. (International relations were so unsuccessful at this time that Johnson announced he was not entering in another election. The nation was shocked that he would not run for another presidency; however, his successor would prove to be equally unprepared. It was nearing the end of 1969 when President Richard Nixon had taken office, that the United States government received an ultimatum from Minh demanding an end to American intervention and overriding Nixon's previous ultimatum. "Nixon's diplomatic attacks had no effect...having relied on military pressure to bring a quick and decisive end to the war, he suddenly found himself without a policy." ) With a unified Viet Cong, America's ability to dominate Vietnam was becoming less and less realistic.

Historian George C. Herring summarized Johnson's mistakes as: "he had disregarded the advice he did not want to hear in favor of a policy based on the pursuit of his own political fortunes and his beloved domestic programs." It was not a war that America wanted to be held responsible for. As the war continued it became more evident that it was a hopeless military effort and a feat that the nation could not overcome. Rather than a victory, which the United States had anticipated, the Vietnam War would loom overhead for decades to follow as a guilty conscious of failed administrative actions and the inescapable insecurities of one man.

When Johnson was inaugurated he inherited decades worth of American problems preceding his presidency. He was determined to maintain national support for

his actions above all other concerns. "In this period, (he) show (ed) a preference for steps that would remain non-committing to combat," which coincided with the national sentiment. Johnson was the exemplary example of the power of rhetoric. Johnson relied on his rhetoric to either assuage the criticism of the nation, or to unite the nation behind the necessity of the war. But Johnson could not continue to please his public forever; in his last desperate attempts to regain power, he "ordered that contingency planning for pressures against North Vietnam should be speeded up. The impelling force behind the Administration's desire to step up the action during this period was its recognition of the steady deterioration in the positions of the pro-American governments in Laos and South Vietnam, and the corresponding weakening of the United States hold on both these countries." The reality finally hit Johnson by the beginning of 1968 that the war was not going to be won.

Rather than surrendering to America's weakness, Johnson "quietly and without fanfare, re-launched the United States its longest, most frustrating, and most divisive war. Johnson thus took the nation into war in Vietnam by indirection and dissimulation." The Vietnam War was approaching a decade worth of fighting and yet Johnson remained adamant with his desperate attempts to conceal military action from the citizens of the United States, as well as his refusal to cooperate with his advisors. The American public was awakening to the absurdities of continuing the war but "by this time Johnson recognized that achievement of U.S. objectives in Vietnam would require a sustained and costly commitment, he refused to submit his policies to public or congressional debate." The president was desperate to prove to himself and to the nation that he was capable of leading the country and winning an international war by himself. Already battling massive insecurities and self-doubt, having to confide in advisors and accept other administrators' advice and opinions, would only weaken Johnson's confidence.

And so allowing others to help him with his diplomatic decisions was seen as a weakness and an unthinkable measure to be taken.

Johnson continued to "mislead the nation as to the significance of the steps he was taking. To avoid 'undue excitement' and to make his decisions more palatable to potential waverers, he and his aides issued dire warnings that failure to act decisively would result in playing into the hands of those who wanted to take drastic measures." Johnson wanted to fear those in opposition into supporting his decisions. If Americans did not want involvement in Vietnam than Johnson propagandized that if Americans did not support intervening now, then it would be too late and more horrific and devastating events would take place.

Americans were not falling for Johnson's tactics however, and in hindsight of the war, American intervention with Vietnam has been criticized with the charge that "America was disinterested in the threat of Communism and that internationally the United States approached the danger of Vietnam surrendering to Communist upheaval nonchalantly". In other words, the claims that America was fighting an international war to prevent the spread of communism were falsified with the allegations that more scandalous motives were the true catalysts of U.S. intervention.

The United States only "created an artificial, externally sustained states that lacked any substantial indigenous foundation." It was the result of troop intervention failing, that Johnson enlisted more help of American troops as well as Allied forces. From an increased seventy-five thousand troops to an estimated one hundred and thirty-five thousand troops, power over the Vietnamese was only projected to last a year until the end of 1965, by which more aide would be required. This pitiful realization summarized the hopelessness of Johnson's situation and the circumstances that the United States had been led into. Having immersed American troops into Vietnam, as the years progressed and war defeats did not proclaim a "winner", Johnson

reacted to the problem by simply sending more help into the situation and prolonging the embarrassing conclusion that this was a battle of victims and no successes.

Johnson's involvement with the war epitomized the guilt and troubling conscious that Vietnam was an American mistake. As it had been pointed out, "the President's resounding triumph in the Tonkin Gulf affair brought enormous, if still hidden, costs...Johnson's victory in Congress may have encouraged him to take the legislators lightly in making future policy decisions on Vietnam." "While drastically expanding its military operation in Vietnam, the United States also grappled with what many had always regarded as the central problem-construction of a viable South Vietnamese nation." As the close of 1968 demonstrated, the year of battle ended "with deadlock on the battlefield and in diplomatic councils." Johnson's attempts at conquering Vietnam proved ineffective and the only immediate outcome of American intervention in Vietnam was drastic loss of lives, and the completion of the nation's longest war.

Johnson's desperate need to find acceptance in the White House, penetrated into all of his presidential actions, which is demonstrated yet again in the release of "The Consensus to Bomb North Vietnam" in the end of 1964. "The administration consensus on bombing came at the height of the Presidential election contest between President Johnson and Senator Barry Goldwater, whose advocacy of full-scale air attacks on North Vietnam had become a major issue." It was a known fact that Johnson was apprehensive towards entering a full-scale war.

As the war continued Frank worked for Baird/Atomic and attended college. In 1967, the United States attempted to draft him once again. This time he was able to receive a temporary college deferment. Ordinarily only wealthier white, Anglo-Saxon males were able to receive the college deferment as Frank remembers. But because he was already twenty-four and had a few connections

in Boston, he was able to dodge the draft. The unusual thing about the Vietnam War was that the United States fought for so many years, that there was such an unreal amount of troops that were called upon. Frank was of course afraid of the possibility of having to enter the war; however, he had avoided the draft for so long that he was confident that his luck would continue to protect him.

American involvement in an international war was a threatening thought for the President Johnson, but the more lucid reality was that Johnson was willing to come dangerously close to committing to a war if it resulted in presidential guarantees. The Gulf of Tonkin Affair depicted Johnson's disparity in maintaining power and pleasing both the public and the government. Many of the previous military tactics were concealed from the Senate and Congress leaving them "completely unaware of what was contemplated as President Johnson went on to win a landslide election against his opponent that he portrayed as a reckless war adventurer." This was a cheap attack considering the absent-minded approach that Johnson embodied when analyzing the threat of Vietnam. Johnson was walking the fine line between making promises to the government and to the public. It was when the two collided that America floundered in an unprecedented war that would shake the nation's security for decades to follow.

By the end of 1967 it had become impossible for Johnson to avoid commitment to Vietnam. All deferment plans were withdrawn, and all American males between 19-25 were heavily drafted. The United States government attempted to draft Frank yet again. In order to be drafted all soldiers needed to receive a physical from their local induction center. Frank knew that if he did not receive his physical then he could not be drafted. Therefore, exhibiting his strong anti-war stance, he moved from Boston to California. He devised a strategy where he successfully "hid" from the draft for the better portion of two additional years.

His scheme involved his two of his best friends who lived in Boston and in Florida while Frank was in California. The government would send Frank a letter requesting him to report to his local induction center to receive his physical. But he could not be cleared until his medical records were sent to the induction center where he was being inspected. And so, the government would send him a letter to California requesting he get his physical and he would return their letter stating he needed his medical records from Boston. Once the records arrived in California he would then send the letter to his friend in Florida who would pretend to be Frank and send a request to Boston asking for Frank's medical records to be sent to Florida. After the records were sent to Florida the same steps were taken only this time Frank's friend claimed to be him in Boston. It took anywhere from a several weeks up to a few months for all the official letters and records to be sent to the three locations; thus, Frank was able to live in California and remain out of the draft for two years.

But after two years Frank's good luck caught up with him and one final letter was sent to him classifying him as an "evasive individual". Therefore, though Frank was twenty-six years of age and technically unqualified to be drafted, the United States vetoed the age cutoff. Frank's whole plan was to dodge the draft until he was twenty-six and then he could no longer be drafted because of age requirements. The government acknowledged his plan and made an exception due to the circumstances.

Finally, when it seemed the war could not become any more hopeless, the Viet Cong attacked South Vietnam on January 30, 1968: Tet, the official new year of the Vietnamese. The Tet Offensive was a psychological victory for the Viet Cong and it "marked the watershed of the American effort. Henceforth, no matter how effective our actions, the prevalent strategy could no longer achieve its objectives within a period or with force levels politically acceptable to the American people...this made inevitable an eventual commitment

to a political solution and marked the beginning of the quest for a negotiated settlement." But a settlement was never reached, instead some argue it was the final blow marked by the Tet offensive, that forced withdrawal of American troops and the surrendering of America's involvement in the pitiful war effort.

Perhaps the most frustrating part of Frank Flowers' experience in the Vietnam War, was that it had become a hopeless and openly failed war effort. The public had become more informed of the overseas war effort and the losses of American lives. America's administration had expressed first over confidence, then somewhat embarrassed realizations that Vietnam was not a war that America would win. Yet even after Johnson resigned and admitted his failures, Frank was still sent into the war. In 1969 Frank reported to the Boston induction center where he received his physical at 9am and was held under federal arrest on the base, due to fear of flight. Then he was boarded onto a bus and driven to Georgia for a four-week boot camp. At five o'clock that same night he was allowed one phone call home where he told his mother he would not be home for dinner because he had been drafted into the Vietnam War and was in Georgia. Frank remembers that as soon as he mentioned Vietnam, his mother immediately became hysterical. Family friends of theirs had lost several young men in the war effort, and she knew that losing her son was a frightening option. The phone call would be the last conversation they would have for several years. Frank explained that once he was in the Vietnam jungle there was a strict radio silence that was enforced. This was because non-Viet Cong soldiers did not want their tank communication to be heard by Viet Cong soldiers, especially in ambush situations. Mail was also a rare occurrence because helicopters would transport mail into the jungle and simply drop packages of letters but it took up to several weeks to send or receive any form of communication from back home. For Frank, he would receive newspaper clippings from his best friend of the anti-war movements that were



occurring. Frank and his troop members chose to throw away the newspaper clippings and remain focused on surviving.

Once in Georgia, Frank attended the stereotypical boot camp of 4am wake up calls, five-mile morning runs, and intense military training for four weeks. Near the end of the four weeks he developed a sharp pain in his side where he could no longer stand in his squads. Frank had no respect for authority, he thus saw his refusal to abide my military law as an expression of his anti-war sentiment. For example, as he experience the pain in his side and stepped out of line, the head drill instructor asked if he had a profile, (a record of the physical each soldier received that would mention any medical problems), Frank said yes he had one, and turned sideways to show his physical profile. The drill instructor "went ballistic", and Frank's attitude problems were recorded in his war portfolio as he was shipped off to San Antonio Texas: Fort Sam Houston. A means for survival as well as a right he felt he had to express his opposition, Frank was punished several times for his lack of respect for the authorities. As Frank was receiving war training, President Johnson finally surrendered to his failures.

In the end of 1969, Johnson had officially resigned his power as President, and as lead dictator of the Vietnam involvement. The legacy was then passed on to Richard Nixon who continued American involvement in Vietnam into the early part of the 1970's when finally the United States was prepared, or rather embarrassingly forced, into surrendering and removing all troops. But it is within the juxtaposed years of 1968-1970 when the United States could not agree upon continuing the war effort in Vietnam or completely withdrawing troops, a majority of Frank Flowers' story and U of O student protests exists.

By the end of 1969, Frank was assigned to a training base in Texas. Texas was a much different environment; for two weeks the soldiers learned how to make a bed and took truck-driving lessons. In hindsight Frank cannot believe that,

"the only training we had was how to make a bed. We'd spend up to several hours a day either running, or folding in bed sheets. I knew this was not going to help me Vietnam; they wanted to create a low-key atmosphere". Then the last two weeks was medic training where Frank learned how to assess a wound and bandage a bleeding victim as quickly and efficiently as possible. (Eventually while in Vietnam, after being injured in the line of duty Frank became a medic. Frank witnessed one of his friends who was also medic, be attacked and killed by his own troop members because they wanted morphine so badly they had lost all sanity). "The first thing I did when I landed in Vietnam, was laid out all my morphine and pain killers and had my troops tank drive over them", recalls Frank.

After the eight weeks of various boot camps, the soldiers were given a quick vacation to return home and say goodbye to their families before they were to be sent to Vietnam. At this time Frank returned to Boston for a few days but was under such strict surveillance that he knew his reporting officer would find him too easily if he went home to South Boston. Frank was determined to avoid being sent to Vietnam, so instead of reaming in "Southie", he fled to New York where he stayed with his girlfriend and her family in Long Island. He failed to keep in contact with his managing officer, and thus Frank was labeled AWOL: absent without leave. Succumbing to the guilt that others were dying in Vietnam, and he was hiding only for the sake of himself, Frank reported to the Boston headquarters months after his required date. By winter of '69 Frank finally arrived in Vietnam where he suffered a gunshot wound in the line of duty and exposure to Agent Orange and malaria. After a few months in the troop hospital, he was transported to a new location further into the Vietnamese jungle where he became an official medic. When asked about back home, "I tried not to think about the anti-war protests happening, nor the separation many soldiers felt from their home. I wanted to only focus on surviving, and though I did protest as much as I could, some protests were

merely a strategy for survival. I was just lucky that they coincided." Frank did however realize, the irony in his anti-war protests being avoidance of violence, while many anti-war protests in the states involved excessive force and use of violence.

The generalization that student protests were violent on the U of O campus was the direct result of the protest coverage by the local newspaper. A majority of The Emerald's articles during 68-70 were devoted to campus protest activities that required administrative and/or police intervention. The two main events publicized were a sit-in at Johnson Hall and vandalism to the ROTC building. In reality it was not that all student protests were violent, but the ones that were arguably the most successful at receiving attention were ones that were disobedient. For example on April 22, 1970 vandalism and attacks were made on the ROTC building on campus. Police were requested and several students were arrested and obtained. Outraged that the administration did not support the causes of the student protests students felt inclined to reiterate their beliefs. Similarly, in an article entitled "Students take Johnson Hall", over three hundred students formed a sit-in at Johnson hall and vowed to remain there until administrators met their four demands. Demands were to "remove all Naval recruiters from campus, end ROTC, amnesty for individuals arrested as a result of last week's disturbances, and removal of all police from campus". Eventually President Clark and faculty advisors allowed the students to remain in protest as long as they adhered by the law. The points of interest in the article are the four demands made by the protestors, specifically the amnesty of protestors arrested the day before. As hypothesized, students reacted with more forms of protest and challenged the administration after protestors were punished, rather than having their causes deferred.

While tensions continued between the administration and the student body, on May 6, 1970 students scheduled a three-day strike. Opposed to

Nixon's expansion into Cambodia, students felt desperate to demonstrate their hatred for the war and for America's irresponsibility in acknowledging the anti-war movements. The article discussed motivation for the strike, protestors involved including ASUO member Ron Eachus, a Vietnam Veteran, Black Panther member, and a local Eugene policeman. Members at the strike meeting urged protestors to broaden their protest to the greater community. As students were protesting on campus, Frank was protesting in Vietnam. Frank's job was to ride in a helicopter scanning the top of the jungle looking for signs from wounded soldiers. Once victims were spotted he was lowered from the helicopter with nothing more than a medic kit and a few other supplies. The helicopter would either leave if there was imminent danger, (they were being shot at), or it would circle back around. On the ground Frank would assess the amount of casualties, find the victims that were still alive, bandage them quickly, and then strap them onto a bed that would be lifted into the air by the helicopter. He was then left in the jungle until another helicopter could return and find him; sometimes he was left there for several days. By the end of the war Frank's missions into the jungle would last between two to six weeks at a time. On occasion Frank's troop would be assigned "hot zone" pursuits. The troop would begin at point A and was supposed to travel to point E over a five-day period, stopping each day at each intermediate point, B, C, D. At each point they were to create a small clearing and set up their tanks in a semi-circle. The objective was that when the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese approached these areas the troop was to engage in open fire to ward/kill off the enemy. Because Frank knew the Viet Cong were not easily defeated, he convinced his troop to avoid the "hot zones". They would travel from point A to point E in a day and each night would radio headquarters claiming to be at point B, C, or D. Headquarters would believe them because the jungle was so thick that monitoring troop location was impossible by helicopters, their word had to be enough. And so

by defying his order, and honoring his anti-war beliefs, Frank demonstrated his own form of protest.

In a similar situation, Frank continued to defy authority. Soldiers were prohibited from wearing white t-shirts at all times, they had to wear colors that would blend into the Vietnam jungle. The mere rules of authority enraged Frank and so he continued to wear his white t-shirts while in the bases and in the medic hospitals. Also, upon returning from a week in the jungle, Frank limped onto base with his automatic strung to his back. He walked right past an officer of higher authority and did not salute. The officer stopped him and yelled at him demanding why a soldier would not respect his superiors. With the loaded automatic on his back Frank took it off and held it in his hands as he looked up at the officer and said he had just been at war for eight days and the last thing he needed to do was to salute an officer. Startled at the braveness of the soldier, the officer backed down and subordinately walked away. Through both his words and his actions, Frank's own rhetoric had an impact on the soldiers in his troop. He recognizes the effect of rhetoric and the importance it had on uniting protestors for their cause.

Within The Emerald articles, the power of rhetoric presented itself once again. In an interview with Gratin Kearns, Emerald editor from 1969-1970, he discussed his role on the paper and the standards to which he held himself and staff accountable. To begin, Kearns explained his motivation for working on the Emerald, "I wrote and did deskwork for the Emerald for a year, and ran for editor of the paper as a way to keep the editorship from going Republican and pro-administration (Nixon administration, that is)". Kearns saw himself as a student leader and used his role with The Emerald "to put the spotlight on the war, racism, and the larger issues of the day, in addition to providing the needed coverage of student and campus affairs". In his own words, the paper was a tool for extending his own political beliefs. It is no

surprise then that the anti-war sentiment of the paper staff and student body, would be intertwined with the paper's publications, and a contributing factor to the anti-war sentiment shared on campus.

In an editorial entitled "Our Side of the Story", a student activist challenged the idea that students are simply anarchists by nature and the protests were nothing more than adolescents misbehaving. The paper served as an opportunity for students to express their own rhetoric, to redirect against the administration, and on a larger scope, the nation's administration. The author stated that "perhaps we should discard the insanity and irresponsibility thesis and seek a more penetrating explanation...if we wish to merely react out of fear, as we have been, then we show the truth has no value to us, and if this is the case then we must admit that a university has no place in our society". The article discussed the ROTC building damage and the arrests of student protestors. He argued that the arrests were ludicrous, "seven people have been arrested because of the radical efforts...all have a 3.0 or higher grade point average and there are students in the honors college...they merely put their lives on the line for something they care about". Faculty began to recognize the urgency of supporting the students' efforts with regards to the protests.

Similar to the administration recognizing the desperation of the student protestors, was an unsaid cooperation amongst soldiers in Vietnam. As officers were fulfilling their term of duty, or more and more young men were being brutally murdered in Vietnam, new officers would be assigned to the troops; young officers, just graduating from the army schools, barely out of high school. At this time Frank was much older than the officers directing him. His maturity and prior experience in Vietnam, combined with his protest attitude, united the soldiers once again against the authority. Recalling one instance, a nineteen-year old fledgling officer wanted to raid a nearby "hot zone". He encouraged the troop to run in and take over the site, seeing that

there were Coca-Cola cans and "American" tokens. As the officer approached the cans and kicked one over, Frank ordered his troop to remain back and not to obey the officer's orders. Frank's experience had exposed him to traps by the Vietnamese. The Viet Cong would use Coke cans and other American items to create bombs and explosives, hoping the American soldiers would approach them and be tricked. Fortunately in this case there were no bombs, but after the officer realized Frank had more power over his troop than he did, the officer surrendered to the alliances already created within the soldiers. Both protesters back home as well as the soldiers were realizing in order to be successful in their protests, they must be united.

U of O faculty also acknowledged the necessity in uniting with the students on the anti-war issue. On May 3, 1970, an editorial was published stating the results of a vote by the faculty regarding the war. "With a strong voice vote, the University faculty took a stand against the United States involvement in the war in Indo-china", this vote was conducted outside MacArthur Court during a monthly faculty meeting led by President Clark. There were two main professors who spoke on behalf of the opposing sides, one was Professor Richard Noyes, who believed "students deserve to know what the collective faculty opinion is on an issue that has had such a great impact on University life." The only other professor to elaborate on his vote was Frank Lowenthal an assistant professor, who said "for the faculty to take a stand on the war would be 'embarking on a road that could lead to the destruction of academic freedom at this University'". By the end of the student protests, the faculty agreed with the students and struggled with their own challenges in separating their positions as academic leaders and active anti-war Americans.

By the end of the anti-war protests, the U of O students were able to unite the campus and gain the support of the faculty. Soldiers in Vietnam who were opposed to the war were also able to form alliances and support one

another in their efforts to protest the violence. What are overlooked often, is the similarities between the two forms of protest. Both the students and the soldiers were effected by the power of rhetoric, allowing their anti-war sentiment to be shaped, changed, and even determined by the rhetoric surrounding them from peers, media, and the administration. The protestors and student leaders of 1968-1970, adamantly tried to persuade the faculty, administration, and remaining sectors of the student population to join their cause. It was a juxtaposed time, violent and anarchic protests received the most media coverage and for protestors publicity was an overall goal. Thus, the news coverage of violent protests only encouraged a continuance of protests of the same, if not increased magnitude, resulting in a cycle that became out of control with regards to the Kent State shootings, a shooting at the EMU at U of O, a bombing in PLC, and ROTC vandalism. Likewise, the soldiers who were opposed to the war were juxtaposed between the two worlds of non-violence protests and a violent world of war. Reexamining this time period, history is revealing the similarities between the anti-war protests of both the students and the soldiers, both based on the desperation of the protesters and the helplessness of the time period. Had student protestors known the soldier protests that were occurring in Vietnam, and if the media coverage has been more accurate from the beginning, rather than the administration manipulating coverage with the power of rhetoric, perhaps the protests on campuses would have had a much different pattern. After the war Frank received several honorary awards including a Purple Heart. But he prefers not to be rewarded or praised for his efforts in the war. Due to the way the war has been recorded, and from the generalizations of the brutality of the war, many veterans do not feel the same intensity of honor that veterans from other wars share. Perhaps for the future, a new approach to remembering the Vietnam War is to illuminate the strong anti-war sentiment that was shared by the soldiers, connecting them to the nation's overall



anti-war protests rather than separating the two. The more research that is being conducted, the weaker generalizations of Vietnam become. The most important thing is that people continue to share their stories, and that students continue to remain interested in the turbulent time period. In the end, generalizations should be weighed in a skeptical manner; after all, a generalization is yet another example of the power of rhetoric.

Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History, the First Complete Account of Vietnam at War*, (The Viking Press, New York, 1983), p. 11. "In human terms at least, the war in Vietnam was a war that nobody won—a struggle between victims. Its origins were complex, its lessons disputed, its legacy still to be assessed by future generations. But whether a valid venture or a misguided endeavor, it was a tragedy of epic dimensions."

"The Truman administration first set America's course in Vietnam by supporting France's futile effort to reimpose its rule there as a barrier against Communism; then Eisenhower pledged the nation to South Vietnam's defense; John Kennedy and his aides deepened the American commitment by their complicity in a plot that led to the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem; Johnson sent in hundreds of thousands of American troops; Nixon and Kissinger, finally, made the concessions that led to the Communist victory they had for so long, and at such a high price, hoped to prevent." Ibid. Cover.

Lanier, John. "Coalition States Charges", *The Oregon Daily Emerald*.

1970

Press Releases, Robert D. Clark, (1970) Presidential Files. Robert D. Clark Papers, coll. 285, Division of Special Collection and University Archives; University of Oregon, Eugene, 97403

Frank Flowers

Ibid. pp. 14-15. " The American involvement in Vietnam was not a quagmire into which the United States stumbled blindly, even less the result of a conspiracy perpetrated by a cabal of warmonger in the White House, Pentagon, or the State Department. Nor was the nation's slide into the Vietnam War predetermined by historical forces beyond the control of mortals."

Ibid. p. 55. "In 1787, Monsignor Pierre Joseph Georges Pigneau de Behaine, bishop of Adran, returned to France after two decades of extraordinary adventures in a remote Asian island, Vietnam, then known to Europe as Cochinchina...though he welcomed lavish indulgence, Pigneau had a deeper purpose. He had come to France to lobby for an ambitious scheme-the creation, under French auspices, of a Christian empire in Asia."

Ibid. p. 63

Ibid. p. 88

"When we landed in Vietnam we were told that by the first sign of opposition the Viet Cong would retreat. Like hell they did...the first encounter we had we fired in the air as a warning, and we ended up engaging in a six-hour open fire battle. They lied to us so that we would not be afraid to challenge the enemy and fight. After that we avoided battles as much as possible." Frank Flowers

Frank Flowers

Frank recalls that judges in the local Boston area often allowed tickets, violations, and legal charges to be reduced or dropped if men volunteered to sign up for the armed forces. Frank Flowers. Interview: Lake Oswego, OR; March 26, 2005. 503-697-7863

Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam*, (University of California Press, 1994), p. 22

Interview: Francis Flowers

The Tonkin Gulf Resolution; 1964. <http://www.luminet.net/~tgort/tonkin.htm>

Interview: Frank Flowers

"Indeed, during the weeks following the Tonkin actions, quite the opposite obtained on all fronts. Commanders became increasingly intent on shifting responsibility for the fighting to the United States; antiwar sentiment and support for a neutralist solution grew; and only an alchemist could have found any upsurge of morale within the regime." Kahin, George McT. *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam*, (New York, NY, 1979), p. 236

Ibid. p. 236

Ibid. p. 239

Ibid. "Lyndon Johnson's unwillingness to permit the war's extension to the North unless and until the Saigon government demonstrated greater political viability and military effectiveness posed a major problem for his civilian

and military advisers who favored escalation. They saw their efforts seriously undercut..." pp. 240, 260

Interview: Frank Flowers.

Herring, George C. America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975, (McGraw-Hill Inc., New York, NY, 1996), pp. 150-151

Ibid. p. 333. "Johnson thought that he would be able to control the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. That belief, based on the strategy of graduated pressure and McNamara's confident assurances, proved in dramatic fashion to be false. If the president was surprised by the consequences of his decisions between November 1963 to July 1965, he should not have been so."

Ibid. p. 334-335. "The war in Vietnam was not lost in the field, nor was it lost on the front pages of the New York Times or on the college campuses. It was lost in Washington, D.C., even before Americans assumed sole responsibility for the fighting in 1965 and before they realized the country was at war...it was human failure, arrogance, weakness, lying in the pursuit of self-interest, and, above all, the abdication of responsibility to the American people."

The Pentagon Papers, "The New York Times", Bantam Books, 1971. p. 246.

Ibid. p. 249

McMaster, H.R. *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, The Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam*, (New York, NY, 1997)  
p. 48

Ibid. p. 194

Ibid. p. 106

Ibid. p. 30. Because of the attack on America's reaction to Communism, "economic factors were never a paramount importance in influencing American policy toward Vietnam; indeed, except in an indirect strategic sense, they played no significant part at all."

Ibid. p. 33

Ibid. p. 127

Ibid. p. 173

Ibid. p. 241

*The Pentagon Papers*, "The New York Times", Bantam Books, 1971. p. 319-320

*A Short History of the Vietnam War*, (Indiana University Press, 1978), p.  
25

Schandler, Herbert Y. *The Unmasking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1977), p. 350

Frank Flowers.

Frank Flowers: while conducting this interview I learned more about malaria. Out of the three strands, my father was infected by two. He thought for several days that he was going to die, and because someone suffering from malaria is extremely dehydrated, I came to the realization that that is why my father emphasizes drinking water so much. At every meal and throughout my life water has been strongly emphasized. It was remarkable to see the lasting effects of Vietnam on his life, and the impact it has had on mine.

Frank Flowers.

Lanier, John. "Students take Johnson Hall", The Oregon Daily Emerald, April 23, 1970

Lanier, John. "Students Call 3-Day Strike", The Oregon Daily Emerald, May 6, 1970

Gratin Kearns, Internet Interview, February 9, 2005. Editor of The Oregon Daily Emerald, 1969-1970.

"Our Side of the Story" The Oregon Daily Emerald, April 20, 1970

"Some officers were shot by their own troops when they turned their back on them. The soldiers knew the ropes of Vietnam because they had been there a lot longer and they were not about to be killed by some over-zealous young officer who wanted to prove his capability and earn some badges". Frank Flowers

Eals, Clay, and Pearl Bakken, "Faculty Votes Against War", The Oregon Daily Emerald, May 3, 1970

