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Voices Remembered—The Story of Sergeant Richard Brokaw

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Sergeant Brokaw's Story

Vietnam Veteran Sergeant Richard Brokaw served in the United States Army during a turbulent period of the latter 20th century. Like many born in the post-WWII years, he entered the service desiring to do his patriotic duty, but the complexities of the Vietnam Era forever changed him and his nation. Framed by the larger Cold War between the United States and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies, Vietnam exemplified the struggle for ideological and strategic global dominance. The nebulous aims of policy leaders compounded by increasing numbers of dead and wounded, and a divisive military draft, moved young people, especially college students, to directly resist. For the men and women who joined the military as volunteers or as draftees, the social changes in the United

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, marked for 'the people of West Berlin,' Americans, and the rest of the world, the fall of a Russian threat and the end of the Cold War. From the end of World War II until 1989, Russia and her allies were a constant threat to democratic nations and instilled fear in American citizens. The Iron Curtain was drawn across Europe, systematically closing all communication lines with the Western world. Winston Churchill coined the phrase in a speech on March 5, 1946 to the American people about the relationship between America and her allies and Russia: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. . .around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another. . .but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow." Winston Churchill went on to call all Democratic nations to unify against the tyranny and war that communism threatened to bring to the rest of the world.

Life After the War



China and Vietnam

Throughout the Cold War China was a communist nation, an ally of Russia, and an enemy of the United States. Just as the rise of the Soviet Union drew the Iron Curtain across Europe, the rise of China onto the world stage drew the Bamboo Curtain was also raised across Asia. Mao Zedong gained power in 1949 and modernized China enough that it was on the Western World's radar of potential threats. North Vietnamese troops were aided by the China's allies, Russia, and, like the Russians, the Chinese were also interested in helping the spread of Communism in other Asian countries. The United States was concerned that the Chinese would mobilize their army into the Vietnam conflict. In the book *China and the World Since 1945* Chi-Kwan Mark explains the state of China during the American escalation of the Vietnam War: "In the course of the 'long 1964,' the Lyndon Johnson administration gradually escalated the war in Vietnam, which culminated in the July 1965 decision to commit American ground troops to South Vietnam. In response to the US escalation, China increased its military and economic assistance to North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF) in the South." Johnson's decision to deploy a greater number of troops to Vietnam was seen as a potential threat to the Chinese government and military. The Morse code that Brokaw intercepted from the Chinese military was to determine whether the Chinese armies were mobilized against the South Vietnamese and the United States of America.

Abstract

States added to the burdens of their military service. Most performed their duties to the best of their abilities to uphold and defend the United States Constitution. Regardless of their political beliefs or feelings about Vietnam, they did their duty with honor and integrity. Sergeant Richard Brokaw was one of those persons. While not serving directly in Vietnam, he performed valuable intelligence work as it pertained to data collection against America's other Cold War rival: China. As a significant ally of North Vietnam, China's actions had significant consequences for U.S. personnel in Vietnam. This project, based on personal interviews, recounts the experiences, and contributions, of Vietnam Era Veteran Sergeant Richard Brokaw.

Introduction

Through this time of the Cold War, the United States was involved in various conflicts to stop the spread of communism. The United States waged military campaigns against the Russians and other communist nations on continents other than Europe. The building of the Berlin Wall (1953), a conflict in Guatemala (1954), and confrontation in Afghanistan (1979), are all examples of United States military and Russian military confrontations. The Vietnam War, however, is probably the most infamous war in recent history. The draft that ensued throughout this conflict caused opposition and violent riots within the United States. Americans were not happy with the conflict and the unity of American citizens in WWI and WWII was not the case for Vietnam. The widespread opposition to the war led to the ill treatment of returning veterans who fought in the jungles of Vietnam.

Gulf of Tonkin Incident



Above: Map of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident
Washington D.C. initiated air raids in response to the attack, even though intelligence on the mission was unclear if the attack was real or not. Johnson used this incident to gain congressional support for the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution," which deployed troops to "deploy regression in Southeast Asia." The incident captured the attention of the press and the American people.

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