



# PATRIOTISM

— A N D —

# THE PUTNEY SCHOOL

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PATRIOTISM is a word much bandied about since September 11, 2001. A patriot used to be someone who simply, “loves, supports and defends his or her country and its interests,” according to the *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary*. The second definition now reads, “a U.S. Army antiaircraft missile launched from a tracked vehicle with radar and computer guidance.” Notions of individual patriotism seem to have gone equally ballistic. ★ Patriotism is an odd topic for the *Putney Post*. Many Putney alumni, some faculty, past faculty and current students are not Americans. Many more are, but have lived outside of the U.S. for most of their lives. Perhaps you were shocked upon seeing an American flag on the cover—or relieved when you saw the detail shot on the back cover and realized it was a sculpture. It seems there are people in this country who would like to exclude iconoclasts and other such undesirables from any definition of patriotism. ★ Number six of Carmelita Hinton’s eight founding principles of The Putney School reads, “To combat prejudices caused by differences in economic, political, racial, and religious backgrounds; to strive for a world outlook, putting oneself in others’ places, no matter how far away or how remote.” So where does patriotism fit? Can you love your country as much as you love the whole world and still be a patriot? ★ Nobody has a short answer. But it is a fine excuse for inspiring some of our more widely experienced alumni and faculty to share their opinions. Herewith, you will find essays, a poem, a reprint of a *New York Times* story by Tim Weiner ’73 and a movie review of Errol ’65 Morris’ Oscar-winning documentary, *Fog of War*; for no better reason than the need for something to be said. Eric Westervelt ’86 will write something for us eventually. He’s had his hands full, broadcasting reports on National Public Radio from Iraq, since the invasion began. ★ Color photography teacher, Pete Guenther ’80, provides the flag images found throughout this section. They’re from a collection of “found flags,” currently on display in the alumni art show in the Michael S. Currier Center gallery. Come see them in color. ★

## 21st Century Patriotism / *Janet Thompson Keep '38*



I HAVE A FRIEND AND NEIGHBOR, a distinguished Sudanese political exile and Arabic scholar in his 50s, who for ten years has been teaching and counseling troubled urban Black youngsters mandated by the courts to the Berkshire Farm School, not far from where I live.

One day I asked him, "Why?" And he told me this story.

Years ago, from the multicultural safety of the University of Hawaii, where he received two advanced degrees in his field, he returned home for a brief visit to his tribal extended family, Moro Christians in southern Sudan.

One of his aging uncles took him aside and said, "What have you done for the children?"

My friend was puzzled. A painful ancestral memory slowly unfolded: Many years ago, several of his great-great uncles had been yanked from their childhood homes and carried off into slavery in America.

The near-illiterate uncle persisted. "You must find them. You must care for these children." Their souls can not rest in peace, was the message.

A light went on. For my friend it was a wake-up call. The visit home changed his life direction.

To me, my friend is a true 21st century patriot in our community, given his deep love of his adopted country, who participates fully in its democratic institutions, and has a passion to eliminate violence in the lives of its least citizens and help them find a future while he spreads knowledge of the wider world that undergirds his consciousness.

I began to wonder how much The Putney School had been the wake-up call for me and all of us in the early classes, molding our worldview in those difficult times. "Think globally, act locally," the well-known mantra of the peace and social justice community, jumps to mind as I wrestle with these broad concepts as they relate to patriotism and citizenship today. Did it all start for me, way back, when I arrived at Putney in 1935?

We were about 50 boys and girls with 20 faculty and staff. Most of us had been yanked out of an urban culture to lead, as Mrs. H. hoped, simple lives as part of a rural Vermont community during the Great Depression. Teachers and students, we came together from all over, several as refugees from occupied Europe.

Vivid memories are not just what we did in class, but of our lives outside our farm on West Hill. A few glimpses: Having no large space of our own, we square-danced with our village neighbors at their Saturday night “socials.” We invited them to our Harvest Festivals as the farm began producing again. We trucked our plays and music programs to town halls across Windham County and our pigs and chickens and calves to 4-H fairs. We became friends with then-Lieutenant Governor George Aiken, our neighbor, through his passion for wildflowers. His children were our classmates. Sunday evenings, we discussed deep matters of the world and of the heart with Mrs. H. and visiting guests.

Though seemingly isolated in the countryside when times were difficult, we were fully in touch with a real America and the wider world beyond West Hill.

How does my friend’s story, my life at 1930s Putney and after, and the educational responsibilities of The Putney School today relate to the deeper issues of “patriotism” and the role of our nation in the troubled world of the 21st century?

I don’t recall our reciting the Pledge of Allegiance or saluting the flag each morning, as I had done in 6th grade at P.S. 160 in Washington, DC. We learned to live the words instead. Crucial values became more deeply embedded than rote repetition of a phrase.

A basic idea behind John Dewey’s concept of progressive education was learning by *doing*. Mrs. H., in her way, would paraphrase William James, whom she had studied at Bryn Mawr, “If you find yourself deeply stirred by what you read or see, it is harmful for you to let this emotion dissipate itself without action. DO SOMETHING!”

She could “think with her feet.” Early progressive educator Francis Parker wrote of “the challenge of making democracy work.” Longtime Putney head Ben Rockwell spoke of “the infinite value of every single human being.” From the earliest days, we began to dream of a better world, and developed a deep moral commitment to help build a dynamic and healthy America in a world at peace.

It all seems quite simple, in concept. We have come to see our beloved nation as one among many, truly “*e pluribus unum*” on our beleaguered planet. The hard part is standing strong and, out of love for our country, continuing to speak out for what we believe. ★

*Janet Thompson Keep '38 received the Martin Luther King Peacemaker Award from the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition in North Adams, Massachusetts last January. After The Putney School and Radcliffe College, Janet worked for the Office of Strategic Services as a research analyst and writer specializing in Asia. A licensed psychotherapist, Janet has worked more recently at the Counseling Center in the Berkshires and at the Berkshire Council on Alcoholism and Addictions, heading that agency's North Adams office. She has been a vocal opponent of U.S. military action in Iraq.*

# Standing Firm: Let's Not Forget That Freedom Comes at Great Cost More Often Than Not/*Stephen Tanner '40*



IN JUNE 1940, six hours before our final French class and one day before graduation, Hitler's troops stormed into Paris. We knew that war would be a fight to the finish with only one winner. In the war into which the class of 2004 will graduate, only one side will prevail and this current war could, like the Cold War, last for decades. We cannot go back to the status quo any more than we can give birth to our own grandmothers. Here are some other items to ponder:

Had Hitler or Stalin won, The Putney School and America as we knew it would no longer have existed. World War II confirmed that the freedoms we enjoy are far from free: Bud Whipple '40, Lynn Pitcher '41 and many of my college friends lost their lives in that war. The current war against terrorism reconfirms the costs of freedom, though total deaths in Iraq to date amount to only one percent of the casualties in three days at the Battle of Gettysburg.

During WWII and the Cold War, quite a few Putney graduates volunteered for military and government careers, including intelligence work. Hardened by international realities, their various opinions ought to be considered by Putneyites of more recent vintage. Here are some of my own views:

We live in an age of great progress in communication, medicine, armaments, etc., but with almost no progress in human behavior. Humans love espousing passionate causes and 9/11 split American public opinion down the middle by forcing each of us to lay our cards on the table—are you a liberal or are you a conservative? The war in Iraq also showed us which nations are our friends and which nations and organizations are pseudo-neutral, or else on the terrorists' side.

Outrageous propaganda attacks back and forth between left-leaning liberals and right-leaning conservatives are now multiplying as the presidential election approaches. (By definition, propaganda in itself is outrageous because it involves an artful selection of facts leading to a conclusion you would not reach if you knew all of the facts.)

In a democracy, honorable and reasoned debate is encouraged, but, no matter who is president, vicious anti-administration invective and baseless conspiracy accusations do little more than deface America's image and energize America's enemies.

America's current firmness and willingness to sacrifice our lives and money to free other countries and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has not gone unnoticed at

the global level. Our firmness has enhanced our image and created positive repercussions in Libya, Pakistan, India and, seemingly, in North Korea as well. Forty nations have sent personnel to help quell terrorism and stabilize Iraq and Afghanistan. International cooperation among intelligence services has never been higher. In addition, we and our allies have found effective uses for money and espionage to ferret out terrorists and preemptively beat them to the punch. I received an AP email on March 4 saying, "Of the eight countries polled, a majority in the five countries—the United States, Canada, Mexico, Italy and Britain—say that even if no weapons of mass destruction are found in Iraq, there were other reasons to justify the war."

America slept complacently through the 1990s, preoccupied for two years by the O.J. Simpson affair, followed by two years of Monica Lewinsky, and one year of Gary Condit/Chandra Levy. Terrorists attacked us four times in that decade, but even that did not arouse us from our narcissistic, isolationist, self-satisfied dreamings. No wonder al-Qaeda mistakenly thought we were cowardly, decadent, unpatriotic paper tigers.

Islamic fundamentalists and Taliban-like groups believe we pose an intolerable threat to their family life, culture and religion because of our permissive mores regarding the disciplining of children, our allowing unmarried men and women to live together, our relaxed attitudes toward adultery, homosexuality, public drunkenness and even young women displaying bare navels. They loudly declare our lifestyle, films, TV, songs and literature to be an anathema and insult to Islam that must be combated before they contaminate Islam.

For Muslims with such strict, orthodox views, we win no brownie points for our billions of dollars in aid to Muslim countries, or for kicking the Russians out of Afghanistan. The war in Iraq has also revealed what al-Qaeda is all about as it tries to create havoc by killing hundreds of fellow Arab Muslims. My friends from Iran, Turkey and Iraq think if al-Qaeda has or can get an atom bomb, it would use it, probably before this November, with no qualms whatsoever.

I imagine Putney lacks highly educated Arabs and other Muslims qualified to explain past history, current events and predict the future. Fortunately, in my era, we had half a dozen German and Austrian refugees at Putney who, in general, predicted accurately what the Nazis would do.

I respect highly the training in independent thinking we all receive at Putney, and if Putney has not enough in-house expertise to fathom the war between the western world and Islamic extremists, I strongly recommend four books to help students, faculty and alumni distinguish truth from bunk. The books are: *A Study of History*, by British historiographer, Arnold Toynbee; *The Clash of Civilizations*, by the head of Harvard's political science department, Samuel Huntington; *What Went Wrong*, by a foremost scholar of Islamic history, Professor Emeritus Bernard Lewis of Princeton; and, lastly, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, by Fareed Zakaria. I submit that these books can help any Putneyite decide for him- or herself what, if any, macrocosmic role to play in achieving Putney's core goal of improving the world. ★

*Steve Tanner '40 intercepted, decoded and translated German short-distance/high-frequency radio messages near the front as a member of the Army Signal Corps during World War II. After the war, he returned to Yale to finish his studies and went on to do international intelligence work in the State Department as a Foreign Service officer. Lest you be misled, Steve admits that he's voted both Democrat and Republican. He has founded chamber music groups in Vermont and California and gives talks on foreign affairs when he's not writing funny books. His latest, *Tours de Farce*, should be published by the time you're reading this. Steve's the publisher, so to get your copy, contact him at [Sntann@aol.com](mailto:Sntann@aol.com).*

## A Broader View of 9/11/*Sydney Snyder*



*(Ed Note: Sydney Snyder, an S.I.T. grad and recent addition to our ESL faculty, read this story in Assembly last fall on the second anniversary of September 11, 2001.)*

HONESTLY, I FEEL NERVOUS speaking about such an emotional topic in front of a group where I don't feel quite safe yet. But I believe it is September 11th and the events that followed, including the attack on Afghanistan, the Bali bombings and the war in Iraq which have led me to Putney and are huge factors in the work that I do and my vision for the future. So, I want to share with you a little about my experience of these events.

On September 9th, 2001, I arrived home to Washington State after a year in Indonesia. I came home for a three-week visit with my family and the wedding of a friend. On September 11th, I awoke to a muted television set filled with images of a plane barreling into a building. How many times since then have we been shown that image?

Muslim terrorists were almost immediately named—a Koran left behind in a rented car. I lay awake those first few nights trying to sort out the meaning, somehow feeling that Indonesia felt a lot closer to me than New York.

A few of my Indonesian graduate students e-mailed, asking if I thought it was a Jewish conspiracy designed to make the Arabs look bad. No Jews were killed in the attack that day they wrote. At least that is what their media was telling them.

I went to the public library in my small hometown and overheard two women, decked in red, white and blue, speaking to each other. "I definitely wouldn't go to Indonesia right now." One said to the other. "It isn't safe." Or at least that is what our media was telling them.

"Come back, come back," wrote my friends and colleagues. Yogyakarta is safe. You'll be safe. But pictures of Bush were being burned in front of the U.S. embassy in Jakarta and the U.S. State Department wouldn't let me go back. "Wait," they told me. And I waited. I waited for the attack on Afghanistan. I waited for the beginning of Ramadan. And while I waited the patriotism mounted. The hatred and divisiveness mounted too.

A man wearing a turban in Arizona was beaten. I thought about my gentle Muslim boyfriend and what it might be like for him if he were in the U.S. right now—and for those Muslims, Arabs, or other foreigners who might look Muslim or Arab that were here now and were afraid. The world became divided into Good and Evil—With Us or Against Us. I felt as though I was a small child watching Saturday morning cartoons with the superheroes and the evildoers fighting for control. I kept wondering which group was mine. “You don’t seem to like America very much,” a friend said to me. I tried to explain that the very things I loved most about the U.S., the diversity and the freedom to say and do what we believe, were the very things that were being destroyed.

Finally, I was allowed to return to my home in Indonesia. I arrived just before Idul Fitri, the celebration marking the end of Ramadan. What I found in Indonesia was that, just as some of us in the U.S. were angry at what the American government was doing in the name of security and democracy, many there were angry that violence was being used in the name of Islam. Jihad, a term all too familiar to us now, means a struggle in the name of God. Jihad can be a woman giving birth. Jihad can be a man working in a rice field to feed his family. Jihad can be someone educating sex workers about AIDS. Now, however, to much of the world, jihad conjures up images of violence and extremism. Not too long ago, I sat in a classroom with an Indonesian colleague and he told our students about the Not In Our Name movement and how many Americans wanted to work to end the violence of war and make clear that the current U.S. administration’s policy was not supported by us. He explained that such work had to occur in Islam too. Moderate Muslims must join together because violence in the name of religion must not be tolerated.

Since that moment, I have realized that we must all work together to bridge, and then cross, boundaries. Cultural differences can be so incredibly challenging, but until we strive to really understand one another—until we are not afraid to take a risk and sit with the person who is different from us and share our pizza or their felafel, chipati, or nasi goreng—the violence is always going to win. Some days the challenge of the hate and power that we are facing overwhelms me, but then I see a Korean student and an American student washing dishes side by side, and I am hopeful. ★

## Fog of War: A Film Review/*Lorne W.S. Johnson*

MANY VIEWERS of Errol '65 Morris' *Fog of War* will come seeking answers to the Vietnam era and carrying a great deal of baggage. Vietnam shaped a generation in this country. It shattered our naivete—that we were always on the right side, that our leaders were fair minded and candid, and that the world all wished to be just like us. The war produced a backlash against government, authority, and even society as a concept, which affects our daily lives today at a variety of levels. For this reason I suspect that many will be struck (or disappointed) by two departures in the film. First, Robert McNamara's cinematic stature as a star is remarkable. Second, the most perceptive aspects of the film are not about Vietnam at all, as both Morris and McNamara are well aware.

The film opens with McNamara picking up an interview in mid-sentence with an aside. "You'll just have to fix it, because I won't go back. I know exactly what I wanted to say next . . ." Immediately, the camera, the sound crew, and the audience are drawn to him in rapt attention. The essence of this image is repeated in a 1960s documentary clip where McNamara strides to a press conference podium, plunges into his material, and abruptly withdraws to check the sound, the television crews, and the sight lines. McNamara responds to the media intensely, and that makes possible a film, which is essentially a monologue by an octogenarian shown in innumerable, tightly-cropped shots of his time-worn visage.

*Fog of War* is a collaboration between McNamara and Morris to get at the disturbing realities of decision making and the follies of governing, which (as Thucydides noted) "are very likely to repeat themselves." The film presents "Eleven Lessons from McNamara's Life" which provide a useful focus for viewing the film in real time, but which is less useful for viewing the film as a whole. The greatness of both men's visions comes from refusing to plunge into the specifics of the Vietnam era without setting that era into the worldview of the nation in general and Robert McNamara in particular. While my generation was shaped by Vietnam, McNamara was shaped by the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the Cold War. These were all profoundly disturbing and real events exerting enormous emotional force on the individuals who lived through them. Robert McNamara struggled through the depression and emerged as a "whiz-kid" in the use of statistical analysis made possible through the use of the IBM mechanical sorting machine, that is, the computer.

McNamara left his post at Harvard to form an Army Air Corps strategic think tank, and this new technology (skillfully analyzed by the technocrats and used to develop war strategy, largely by General Curtis Le May) had a significant, even dramatic effect, on the war in both theaters of operation. Readers of *Catch-22* will certainly find Yossarian aboard the many aborted B-24 missions in McNamara's analysis of heavy bombing in the European theater of operations. But it is his candid analysis of the B-29 bombing of Japan that should unnerve Americans not thoroughly familiar with the Pacific theater. U.S. planes firebombed not just Tokyo, but 67 Japanese cities before unleashing the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The film individually names each Japanese city and its appalling percentage of destruction while pairing it with an American city of comparative population. In the 1940s such brutality was readily accepted, and even praised as necessary conduct in war, or at least of a war of that nature. War, or at least the Vietnam War, would look very different to the public in the 1960s.

In "Lesson 1: Empathize with your Enemy," McNamara examines the Cuban missile crisis and our incredibly close brush with all-out nuclear exchange, including tributes to President Kennedy and Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson. Here he experiences a split with General Le May who appears to have been looking for an excuse to deal with the Russians once and for all. This lesson is two sided. On one hand, the United States came out of the crisis looking firm without being reckless. On the other, the country came closer to a nuclear war than anyone (including Le May) had any idea of at the time. Both these ideas are of profound importance to McNamara.

As the film shifts into Vietnam following an interlude at Ford Motors (with special emphasis on seat belts and small cars), McNamara juxtaposes Thompson's insight into Khrushchev's psyche with the Le May principle of overwhelming force. He is clear about Washington's virtually complete misread of Hanoi, and his comparison of the scale of Operation Rolling Thunder with heavy bombing in WWII, while hard to grasp in a single viewing, is truly a glimpse into the abyss. He searched for a technocrat's answer, while distrusting escalation. The goals are remote, and vision obscured by the "fog of war." While he never says so, it is likely that McNamara was utterly unprepared for the anger and derision that would be directed at him.

It is customary to view such explanations by public figures as self-serving, and no doubt they are. Still, McNamara opens the film with the basic premise that Vietnam was a catastrophic mistake. The fire bombing of Japan and the Cuban Missile Crisis are not intended to justify Vietnam, but to provide a context for understanding what happened. On the home front, McNamara pays due respect to Norman Morrison, the Quaker who protested the war via self-immolation outside McNamara's office. His ambivalence about escalation in Vietnam under both Kennedy and Johnson is certainly interesting (and the taped conversations between McNamara and both presidents make his discomfort with the situation downright palpable), but it is his role as a "company man" which is, to me, most telling. Robert McNamara grew up in an age when loyalty to leaders was not viewed as merely expected, but as essential to a functional society. And that, he was. He weeps in recalling Kennedy's death, and lied valiantly for the Johnson administration even as he privately opposed its policy. While this is certainly McNamara's take on events, it is also a take well worth considering.

We now tend to assume that because there were so many wrong decisions about Vietnam that there must have inherently been right decisions as well. *Fog of War* takes us at least a step away from such naïve foolishness and a step closer to the reality that leadership is a treacherous business often turning on its participants. Vietnam undid Lyndon Johnson's presidency. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, of course, followed Johnson and McNamara into the quagmire of Indochina (and it would be difficult to imagine four more diverse U.S. politicians).

Errol Morris conceives his film with the skill of a master craftsman. He has a marvelous sense of the eccentric in crafting the visuals to the film. There is much pastiche or war footage, and the visual does not always correspond obviously to the theme or even time period of the voice-over. Still, as the film progresses, it makes more and more sense. Late in the narrative is an extended shot of two men sitting under a plane and winching a rather large bomb into the fuselage. The languid manner of their progress amid the "fog of war" is remarkable in its portrayal of both the senseless and purposeful. Morris collaborates with McNamara, but nowhere does he show more finesse than when he delineates the limits of his collaboration. In one shot, McNamara refers to the personal stress of the Vietnam period, and the tensions it produced in his own family, adding "But I'm not going to talk about my family." The pause following is profound for both men. In the epilogue, Morris presses McNamara for a verdict. Morris says in summation, "So you're damned if you do, and damned if you don't?" McNamara answers, "That's right, but I'd rather be damned if I don't."

*Fog of War* raises far more questions than it answers, but they are important questions. If Morris and McNamara compel us to rethink the Vietnam experience and the nature of leadership, we will be better citizens for it, whatever conclusions we may draw. ★

*Errol Morris '65, won an Academy Award for best documentary (long format) for Fog of War. Lorne Johnson is The Putney School's history chair and, obviously, a man who knows his historical facts and circumstances. We are grateful to both of them for helping to enlighten the rest of us.*

## At 14, a Liberian War Veteran Dreams of Finding a Way Home/*Tim Weiner '73*



“THE WAR CAME before the rains in 2000,” Dukuly Togbah remembered. “I was 10 years old.”

Dukuly is a smart, tough country boy from the northern hills. He was one among the thousands of child soldiers who have fought this nation’s grisly battles for 14 years.

He is 14 himself, born on Independence Day, July 26. His story is the story of Liberia. When he was in the first grade he started to fight with rebel forces and, when captured, he was forced on pain of death to fight for the government. He survived it all by the skin of his teeth.

With the chance that the war may be dying down now, Dukuly (pronounced Due-CLAY) has been out of combat almost three weeks, and lives in a shelter run by a Catholic charity here in Paynesville, on the outskirts of Monrovia, where he is learning to read and write. He stands about 5 feet 2 inches and weighs perhaps 100 pounds.

Three years and four months ago, he was taken from his village, Kambolahun, in Lofa County, near the borders of Sierra Leone and Guinea, by the rebel group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, known as L.U.R.D., who overran his village.

What happened to his family is unknown; it is very possible that they are among the 600,000 refugees among Liberia’s population of three million.

The rebels tried to overthrow President Charles G. Taylor, himself a former warlord who fought his way to power on the backs of battalions of child soldiers, who seldom lack for weaponry.

Mr. Taylor, who left power on August 11, 2003 under indictment for war crimes in Sierra Leone, did not invent the practice of using children in combat. But he did introduce the phenomenon to Liberia. Perhaps 10,000 children remain mobilized among government forces and the rebels. All the main factions used what they call Small Boy Units, sometimes abducting children, sometimes luring them with the promise of the glory of war. Dr. Peter Coleman, the Liberian minister of health and social welfare, said of the child soldiers, “In some areas they are 40 to 50 percent of the fighting force. Young people with arms has become a way of life.” Dr. Coleman said there were no social services or public health facilities in the nation to treat or rehabilitate the thousands of child soldiers. Dukuly spoke vividly and dispassionately in English of his experience. By comparison, some of his youthful colleagues are so traumatized by the experience that they can hardly speak.

“I can remember I used to play with my friends, and sometimes we would go in the bush and set traps to catch meat,” he said. “But since the war I can’t see my friends.”

"The first time I saw fighting I was 10 years old," he said. "It was dissidents and government. The dissidents were four or five in the village by the time the sun come up. They shot up my home and we all run in the bush. My parents, everybody run away, me too. I started running and they opened up firing. They captured me."

"So now I can't see my family," he said. "So I followed the people."

"I fought with L.U.R.D. in the bush," he said, learning to fire an AK-47, walking point, winning a battlefield commission and a nom de guerre. "I was the deputy commander of the Small Boy Unit under General Iron Jacket. They call me Quick to Fire. Iron Jacket gave me that name."

Iron Jacket's Small Boy Unit was about 100 strong, Dukuly said, and the rebel force under the general grew to about 2,000, including many women and girls abducted from villages to cook rice, catch fish and serve the men and boys. Babies were born in the bush.

The rebel force slowly fought its way south through Lofa County, battling government troops in at least four major engagements and countless skirmishes during the next three years, destroying villages and displacing tens of thousands of people in the process.

Liberia's government-run radio station reported late tonight that major fighting had broken out in Bong County, in the heart of the nation. The station broadcast unconfirmed reports that rebels had killed hundreds of civilians in recent days.

Many of Iron Jacket's troops used magic and ritual to protect them in battle. They called it medicine. They wore spent bullets as amulets and rubbed powders on their chests to shield their hearts from harm. They put on women's wigs to transubstantiate their bodies, to turn into someone else, to leave their physical beings and strengthen their spirits.

They also used cocaine for courage. The only psychiatrist in Liberia, Dr. Edward Grant, said drug abuse added to the horrors of war there. "These children are the most dangerous segment of the fighting machine," he said. "They have been used to commit atrocities under the influence of drugs." "I can't lie on myself," Dukuly said. "I used to take it. It made me brave. Iron Jacket used to give me it. You take it in your nose or you smoke it in your grass. I used to feel brave. I used to get the mind to fire the gun. Sometimes we take it when we relaxing, but most of the time we take it in battle.

"Sometimes Iron Jacket would give me some kind of white chalk to rub on my body so the bullets can't touch me," he continued. "But I never used to like it. When I go on the battlefield, front-line troop, I can pray to God. When I come back, I can tell God thank you. I had my Bible in my pocket. I don't know how to read. But every time I go on the front line, I would knock it on my head, put it in my pocket and go.

"Sometimes the medicine my friends use, when the rocket come in, it can pick them up so the rocket can't do nothing to them," Dukuly said. "And when the bullet come, it just bounce off them. My best medicine was the drug—that drug called cocaine."

Tons of cocaine arrived in Liberia in the 1990s, government officials here said. They said war made the borders porous and turned the nation's ports into transshipment points for international smugglers of drugs and weapons.

Good fortune was also with Dukuly, along with guns and drugs.

"The reason I survive?" he said. "Because sometimes when we go into villages and my friends be beating and tying the people, I say, 'Y'all stop.' And sometimes when we get rice, I can divide it, give them one, two cup of rice. That put good luck behind me."

“Most of my best friends, they were killed,” he said. “My friends who used to call me Quick to Fire. We used to wrestle together. But we ourselves, we also killed plenty. When they killed my friends and I feeling bad, Iron Jacket would tell me, my boy, that’s war. You got to be brave.”

In June, the L.U.R.D. forces fought their way to the edge of Monrovia. Then began the three major battles between the rebels and Mr. Taylor’s forces known here as World War One, World War Two and World War Three.

“I fought World War One,” Dukuly said. “We attack, we retreat. World War Two, the fighting were not easy. Too hard. The government come with plenty force. Iron Jacket, everybody leave. They leave me behind when government forces come back. I hid in an old car. And then they capture me.”

“They caught me and tied me,” he continued. “They wanted to kill me, but one general saved my life. To prove myself to the general, Sweet Candy, to prove I was a man, I had to fight. I fought one month for government forces against my people. I wanted to run away, to go to my men. If I go, they kill me.

“I feeling bad,” Dukuly said. “I killing people’s forces, fighting my brothers, killing my brothers. But I had no choice. Many, many days I did not want to go fight, but if I did not, they would kill me.”

Then came World War Three. “The last fighting, the L.U.R.D. men bring all the jungle mortars,” Dukuly said. “They attack from all over. They killing us.”

In the final days of World War Three, Dukuly ran for his life and found shelter with the Catholic charity, Don Bosco Homes.

A visitor at the shelter asked him what the fighting was all about. “I must say, I don’t know,” Dukuly said.

“Our commander used to say we going to kill Charles Taylor,” he said. “For me, I just used to take the drug and in my head I know the government troop, that my enemy, so anytime I see them, I fire.”

“Now I want to fight no more,” Dukuly said. “I’m thinking about my people. I want to go to school. When I go to school, I want to be a teacher. I want to go back home.” ★

*This story originally appeared in an August 2003 issue of the New York Times. It’s reprinted here with the author’s permission.*

*Tim Weiner ’73 spent what he calls his “summer vacation” in Liberia last year. If you read his piece on Afghanistan in the Spring 2002 issue of the Putney Post, you’ll know that he’s good at getting on the ground level of war stories and presenting them on a human scale. After 23 years in Mexico, Tim is returning to live in New York City. He says, “I’m going to swap houses one week each summer with Marti Straus ’73 up on Dusty Ridge Road [in Putney] so my girls will get a taste of the green leafy world.”*

## Attempt/*Harry Bauld*

Yesterday Lizzy said,  
*Dad, read something that isn't so depressing.*  
That seems depressingly easy to do, or try:  
we are not at war, you and I.  
At least, it's easy to see no war touches me.  
Take a Sunday like today, with no paper, no TV:  
where's the war?  
I woke late to a blue sky (no war there),  
sang flat some Cole Porter while I washed up, (no war)  
shaved and smelled of vetiver and watched  
spring row its little dinghy through March's stubborn chop (no war),  
the air lighting on the back of my neck like a wren, (no war)  
went into town and bought a few tubes of glitter  
and some ziplock plastic bags (don't ask),  
couldn't find the right mask (certainly no war),  
walked happily in love through the warm driz—zle  
on Main Street (no war on any Main Street),  
ran into Bill and Lena, and Helen who runs the theater (no war),  
*ATE* well all day: in the morning oatmeal  
and blueberries (in March!), a bit of maple syrup,  
a macaroon in the Brattleboro afternoon, (no war)  
and later, home in the bright clean kitchen,  
some lettuce tender as a cat's ear  
grown by Mike Collins in the next town where there is no war,  
a plate of fusilli corkscrewed with some roasted peppers and Italian blue cheese.  
But then there was the loaf of semolina bread  
I lifted like a newborn out of the oven,  
a kylix from a kiln.  
When I cut it open (too soon)  
a gasp of steam escaped like a suppressed thought,  
the sudden apparition of someone faraway I do not know  
and with whom I am not, am not, am not at war. ★

*Harry Bauld, English chair, left for Spain to help chaperone the March Break orchestra trip four days after terrorist bombs claimed 200 lives in a Madrid subway. He wrote Attempt one year ago, as the United States of America began invading Iraq, and read it to us in Assembly.*