

## From Vietnam to Iraq: When will they ever learn?



**BARB GUY**

The Vietnam War did end. Back then, we thought it never would.

People might not like how it started, how we fought it, why we were there, or that, in the end, we lost. But they would be hard-pressed, 30 years later, to say we should have stuck around. I don't know anyone who wishes it had lasted longer.

I've been thinking about the Vietnam War lately, that war that began years before I was born and finally ended a month before my 15th birthday. President Nixon said it was winding down in 1969; we left in 1975.

Last spring, President Bush said the Iraq war will still be raging when "future presidents" take office. Does he understand we're planning on him being president until 2009? I'd like to see the man clean up his own mess.

Surely he was watching when five American presidents in turn put their imprimaturs on Vietnam (and it on them). When Bush glibly uses a phrase like "future presidents" about Iraq, I go apoplectic.

I saw the film "The U.S. vs. John Lennon" the other night. The independent documentary tells the story of Lennon's opposition to the Vietnam War and how he worked for peace through his music and other artistic endeavors.

Lennon infuriated President Nixon and the sinister FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, by singing about a worldwide human community and love. He had billboards put up in 11 world capitals proclaiming, WAR IS OVER! IF YOU WANT IT.

Nixon and Hoover responded by trying to have him deported.

Lennon wrote the song that became the national anthem of the anti-war movement, "Give Peace a Chance." When a clueless reporter inquired how he felt about American protesters singing it, he retorted, "It was written specifically for them. I'm glad they sing it and I'll sing it with them."

President Bush's outlandish rush to invade Iraq - even though they did not attack us on Sept. 11 -

and his sleepy hibernation now that we're there, are frustrating and eerily familiar to those of us old enough to remember the war the Vietnamese people named the American War. (Surely by now the Iraqis have named their war for us, too.)

President Bush's contrivance to attack Iraq is finally catching up with him. As he continues to stammer about staying the course, saying he only needs the support of his wife and his dog, Bush's former supporters are concerned about his judgment.

We've already lost more members of the news media in this war than in Vietnam or World War II. No matter how many Americans die, no matter how many Iraqi innocents get killed, Bush just snuggles further into his warm cave for a long nap until 2009 when the first of who knows how many future presidents will at last be called upon to atone for his sins.

Midterm elections are only two weeks away. Everyone is waiting to see if the senators and representatives who rubber-stamped George Bush's war will win their bids for re-election. It's looking like several may not. Perhaps one or both houses of Congress will become controlled by the Democrats. Not that Democrats are blameless in this war; I've seen my heroes on both

# The Salt Lake Tribune

sides of the aisle tarnished over  
Iraq.

I'm hoping for some miracles on  
Election Day, miracles that might  
lead to a more intelligent,  
nuanced, noble foreign policy.  
I'd like us to focus on peace,  
mutual respect and reverence for  
humanity. I wish we could be  
known as a nation of fair-minded  
people.

It would be nice to be viewed as  
a world leader and not a bully,  
rational rather than delusional,  
charitable instead of torturous.  
What if we were skilled  
diplomats, people who go to  
every length and exhaust every  
peaceful possibility before ever  
considering going to war?

You may say I'm a dreamer but  
I'm not the only one.

---

*BARB GUY is a regular contributor to  
these pages. © Salt Lake Tribune.*