

# H-Diplo ESSAY 444

Essay Series on Learning the Scholar's Craft: Reflections of Historians and International Relations Scholars

24 June 2022

*"Becoming a Historian"*

<https://hdiplo.org/to/E444>

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I have often reflected that through some stroke of good fortune I drifted rather aimlessly into a career that has been rewarding and immensely satisfying.<sup>1</sup> As a student at Roanoke College, 1953-1957, I could have been a poster boy for the so-called Silent Generation: apolitical, devoid of ambition and sense of purpose, floating with an uncertain tide. I did not seek out a career counsellor—I'm not sure we had them in those days. I didn't explore different possibilities or talk to practitioners of various professions. I briefly considered law school, in part, I suspect, because that's what other history majors were doing and when people asked me what I wanted to do with my life I had to tell them something. In my defense, I knew I would go into the military after graduation and that gave me reason not to think too seriously about a career. Who knows, I might do twenty years in the service and retire at a young age. Some of my classmates actually did that.

I did ponder journalism. From high school days, I had enjoyed writing. I was also a sports fanatic, and I wrote articles for the sports' pages of both my high school and college newspapers. When Roanoke *Times* journalist, John Patterson, offered a course at the college, I jumped at it. It was an excellent class, and I visited the teacher once in the *Times*' newsroom. That visit was also important to me because it gave me the opportunity to spend quality time with an attractive journalism classmate I was briefly smitten with. We went there at night, and I must say that the hours worked by newspaper people did not especially appeal to me. The story I have since told is that I thought seriously of journalism as a career, but when I found out how little reporters were paid I turned toward academia.

Yet my drift toward academia and history had more direction than I might have admitted or even realized. I grew up in an academic family just minutes from the Virginia Tech (then Virginia Polytechnic Institute) campus in Blacksburg, Virginia. My father worked in agricultural extension and for a time coached wrestling. My mother had been a high school math teacher. The house was full of books, and I was an avid reader. I especially enjoyed history and historical novels. Even in the remote southwestern part of the state, history was omnipresent in Virginia, something we were surrounded by and yes even obsessed with. My fourth grade class in Virginia history was the most memorable of all my years as a pre-college student. And the textbook happened to be co-authored by a cousin of my mother. By contrast, my high school history classes were taught mostly by coaches and were singularly uninspiring.

That changed at Roanoke College when my world history prof, also a coach and a force of nature if ever there was one, changed my life. Homer Bast was a large man with inexhaustible energy, a booming voice, and a keen mind. Even at the ungodly hour of 8:00 a.m., he made history come alive and opened up all kinds of new worlds to a quite provincial small town boy. His classes were the best I had in college and led me to become a history major and perhaps even entertain the idea that I might emulate him and seek a career teaching history.

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Dr. John Carland, my former colleague and good friend, for first suggesting that I write something like this.

Under his tutelage, I also discovered the excitement of historical research. I did a paper on William Pitt the Elder's grand strategy for the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) that required digging around in dusty, seldom used tomes in the college library, putting together complex material, drawing my own conclusions, and writing it up in intelligible style. To the dismay of many of my classmates, (some of whom sarcastically called me "Little Homer"), I enormously enjoyed that project. I discovered the joy of doing history. Mr. Bast (he never finished his Ph.D.) was also a highly successful track coach, the sort of person who took young people of modest ability and molded them into champions. His magic didn't work with me. I gave cross-country a try, found it far more taxing than I wanted, and dropped out. I must have been one of the few failures in his illustrious tenure as a coach.

My unexpectedly short stint in the Navy did nothing to change my tenuous career path. There was a ten-month gap between the time I graduated from college and enrolled in Navy Officer Candidate School. I supported myself during that time by working in the men's department at a local Sears' store and then as a teller in a Roanoke bank. Neither of those jobs was sufficiently exciting to spark thoughts of a career. I passed the course at Navy OCS in Newport, RI, not without difficulty, but when I applied for flight training midway through the program the medical exam turned up a problem that ultimately disqualified me not only for flight but also for a commission. To fulfill my two-year military obligation, I remained in Newport as a clerk-typist in the Communications School, eventually achieving the rank of Yeoman Third Class. I also read some history, and had the opportunity to explore the rich history in surrounding New England. As my enlistment neared its end, I took steps to live out my (sort of) ambition by applying for graduate study in history at the University of Virginia, the only school I considered and the only school in my home state then offering a history Ph.D. I must confess that I had very little idea what I was getting into. But I was getting into something.

I gravitated as naturally toward military/diplomatic history as I had toward history itself. Growing up in World War II and my time in the Navy had sparked an interest in things martial. I enrolled at UVA for the fall semester of 1960 just as the presidential contest between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon was heating up. The Cold War was escalating toward the terror of the Cuban missile crisis. During the presidential campaign, each candidate tried to outdo the other in vowing toughness. I had persuaded myself that history was essential for understanding the dangerous new world we lived in. Naively, I sometimes fancied that my study of history might contribute in some way to better understanding of the problems we faced.

At that time the UVA history faculty was quite small, no more than ten full-time professors (all men, of course). There was no specialist in diplomatic or military history and no course in either of those sub-fields. I took a quite conventional list of classes the first year: Colonial Virginia; eighteenth-century England; America from the Revolution to the Civil War; and twentieth-century United States. Where possible, within the confines of these courses, I did reading and research projects focusing on diplomacy and warfare. In the modern US course, for example, I wrote a paper on the preparedness movement of 1916. That led to an M.A. thesis on the same subject and a 1964 article in the *Journal of Southern History*.<sup>2</sup> In a US history seminar my second year, I gave a class report on the neutrality acts of the 1930s. That produced a paper comparing American "neutralism" with the Cold War neutralism of nations like India, Egypt, and Yugoslavia. The teacher of that class was sufficiently impressed that he urged me to submit it to the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. It was turned down—my first rejection—but I was flattered to have been encouraged to submit in the first place.

That teacher, Dr. Edward E. Younger, became my adviser. Mr. Younger (UVA profs were then referred to as "mister") was a native of Arkansas and got his Ph.D. at George Washington University (sometimes looked down upon by his Ivy League colleagues). He wrote one book in his career, a biography of John Kasson, Iowa politician and late nineteenth century diplomat.<sup>3</sup> At UVA, he taught courses and advised doctoral students on a great range of topics including Virginia history,

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<sup>2</sup> George C. Herring, Jr., "James Hay and the Preparedness Controversy, 1915-1916," *Journal of Southern History*, XXX (November, 1964), 383-404.

<sup>3</sup> Edward E. Younger, *John A. Kasson: Politics and Diplomacy* (Iowa City: Iowa State Historical Society, 1955).

modern US history, and diplomatic history. He was soft spoken and deliberate in his choice of words. He attracted an enormous following of graduate students and directed countless dissertations, many of them later published. He cared deeply for his students, sought to cultivate in them the highest professional standards, and skillfully guided them through the labyrinth of doctoral study. His office door was always open. I still vividly recall one occasion during my fourth year at UVA when I was prepared to chuck it all (for what reason I cannot for the life of me remember). I don't recall what he said either, but in minutes he had swayed me from a rash decision and back in the library. He was a role model for all of us in the art of mentorship.

"Easy Ed," as we called him, also sent me in another direction that had implications for my later career. As a diplomatic historian, I wanted a sub-field in a non-US-European area. I tried Latin America, but the professor who taught those courses refused to admit graduate students who did not read Spanish. Mr. Younger suggested that I might try South Asia, then being taught by a new faculty member. That fitted nicely with my interest in neutrality and neutralism. I took two history and two political science courses dealing with the area. I immensely enjoyed this exposure to new and different cultures, and actually published two articles based on my study of the history of India in a journal put together by UVA graduate students.<sup>4</sup>

Selection of a dissertation topic is one of the most important choices a doctoral student makes, and in my case it was all but done for me. With the benefit of outside funds, the history department had created a fellowship named for Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., a Virginian, captain of industry in the 1930s, administrator of the lend-lease program, 1941-1943, and, for a brief period in 1944-1945, Secretary of State. Stettinius had close ties with the University from his student days there and had been its Rector (president) for a short time. His voluminous papers had been deposited in the library. The task of the Stettinius Fellow was to help organize and process these papers and write a dissertation based on them. My predecessor, Tom Campbell, later a professor at Florida State University, had written his dissertation and a subsequent book on Stettinius's role in founding the United Nations.<sup>5</sup> I took the obvious second choice, lend-lease.

That choice would shape the initial phase of my career. My dissertation focused on lend-lease as the first US foreign aid program. The Stettinius Papers provided superb raw material to work with, and the dissertation covered a lot of ground. Indeed, it ended up 487 pages long (to the mild disgruntlement of at least one faculty reader). I can't imagine what it must have cost me to have it typed! It dealt with lend-lease from its inception in 1941 to its termination in 1945, hailed the program as a "unique experiment" and "a bold departure" that ran against the grain of traditional American isolationism, and a powerful weapon of coalition warfare that enormously enhanced the military effectiveness of America's allies. Britain and the Soviet Union got the bulk of the aid, of course, but what I found especially interesting and significant was its use in other parts of the world. Lend-lease helped keep Turkey out of the Axis camp; it went directly to India, provoking tensions with that peoples' colonial master and America's major ally, Britain; with Chiang Kai-shek's China, there were huge problems of misuse—and non-use; lend-lease to Iran and other Middle East nations brought about the largest US diplomatic presence in that region to date. The program was generally popular at home, although there were frequent complaints of foreign waste. But, as the war neared an end, pressures mounted to terminate it at the time of victory. Not one minute into the postwar was the Congressional mantra. The dissertation contained a wealth of new material. Looking back on it later, I realized that it lacked a strong thesis and placement in the literature.

## II

My generation was lucky as well as silent. We were children during the worst of the Great Depression. Many of us were too young for the war in Korea and too old for Vietnam. Most important, we came of age in a booming economy. Those of us

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<sup>4</sup> Herring, Jr., "Military Origins of the Sepoy Mutiny," *Essays in History*, VIII (1962-1963), 27-46, and Herring, Jr., "Architect of Modern India: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the Integration of the Indian States," *Essays in History*, IX (1963-1964), 5-24.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas M. Campbell, *Masquerade Peace: America's UN Policy, 1943-1945* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1973).

who became academics entered the job market at a unique time when American universities and colleges were undergoing unprecedented expansion. My coming out party was at the American Historical Association meeting in Philadelphia in December 1964. I was not finished with the dissertation, but it was clear I would be by May. Those of us seeking positions had morning-to-night interviews with senior faculty hiring historians. It was exhausting, but exhilarating. I returned to Charlottesville buoyed by the certainty I would get a job, a rather important matter since there was a four-month old baby in the house.

I ended up at Ohio University, a choice that had huge implications for my future as a scholar. There were other opportunities. The University of Vermont made an offer, and I really liked the faculty and the campus. But Vermont seemed another planet for this provincial southern boy. It was very cold, and when I went for an interview in January a snowstorm nearly delayed my departure. UNC Chapel Hill seemed interested, but the chairman posed the bizarre idea of letting me and another young scholar teach survey classes for several years and compete for the diplomatic history position. The University of South Carolina appealed to me, why I don't remember, but I didn't get an interview, much less an offer.

Ohio University turned out to be an excellent choice. I was hired as a twentieth century US historian, but before I got there the diplomatic historian, Carl Parrini, left for Northern Illinois. Chairman George Lobdell readily agreed that I could have the foreign relations' slot. He then hired for the twentieth century position Alonzo M. Hamby, fresh out of the University of Missouri, who went on to have a distinguished career at OU. Lon and I were office mates. We became good friends. He played a crucial part in my development as a scholar.

During my first years at OU, I had to settle my family in a new location and help with the care of baby John, a dog, a house, and yard. I also had to prepare classes, the US survey and diplomatic history, a task that took more time than I could have imagined and absorbed most of my energy. There were committee meetings, faculty meetings, and consultations with undergraduate and graduate students. There was barely time to think about revising my dissertation. In retrospect, that was not all bad since being away from the material for a time helped me better see what needed to be done.

In the summer of 1966, I was able to do important research. OU gave me a modest research grant. I packed my family off to my wife Nancy's home in Roanoke, Virginia, and took a room at a boarding house on East Capitol Street for two months of research in the National Archives in the still classified but somewhat accessible files of the Foreign Economic Administration, successor to the Office of Lend-Lease Administration. It was a challenging experience. The head archivist was notably uncooperative and sometimes actually appeared to be obstructing our work. When I first arrived at the archives, I encountered another young researcher, a graduate student at Georgetown University. Horror of horrors, I learned that he too was working on lend-lease. For a time, as he later described it, we "walked around stiff-legged like two dogs that hadn't met."<sup>6</sup> We don't remember exactly how the ice was broken, but it turned out that my potential rival, Warren Kimball, was working on the passage of the lend-lease act up to March 11, 1941, exactly where I started. That revelation marked the beginning of a very special friendship that endures to the present. We finished the rest of the summer working at the archives during the day. Warren went home most nights, but I met other scholars in the archives and surrounding bars and generally had a great time. I also gathered great piles of invaluable research materials—still without any idea of whether they would be declassified for me and if so how I would actually use them.

At this point, fate interceded. While I was preparing and teaching my classes, attending meetings, and trying to keep my head above water, unbeknownst to me, a huge controversy was building that would have enormous implications for my scholarship. Lyndon Johnson sharply escalated the war in Vietnam in July 1965, just as I was settling into my new job. Even before then, opposition to the war had begun to emerge. Simultaneously, a spirited and often quite heated debate erupted among historians and intellectuals over the origins of the Cold War. "Revisionists," most prominently Gar Alperovitz, vigorously challenged the by then conventional wisdom that the Soviet Union was responsible for the Cold War.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Warren F. Kimball email to author, November 30, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965).

Alperovitz focused on the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, arguing that they were designed not simply to end the Pacific War but also to intimidate the USSR. Washington's actions, not those of the Kremlin, provoked the conflict that followed.

The Cold War controversy spread quickly to the historical profession. At meetings, the topic was a must, rooms were filled, and the discussions were often quite intense. Sometimes the sessions dragged overtime to get in all the questions and comments. I attended several of these sessions and became most excited. While focusing on the bomb, Alperovitz actually highlighted the Truman administration's abrupt stoppage of lend-lease to the Soviet Union on May 11, 1945, an act taken without warning or advance notice, as the central element of what he called a "strategy of an immediate showdown" aimed at "reducing or eliminating Soviet influence from Europe."<sup>8</sup> My dissertation had a chapter on lend-lease to Russia, and I was familiar with the events of early May. A huge debate was taking place on an important topic. And I could be a part of it!

Nineteen sixty seven was not a good year for me to join any debate. Classes and grading still demanded much of my time. A daughter, Lisa, was born in February. But for the next year or so I salvaged every spare minute I could, going back through my files, digging up what I could about the V-E Day incident and what happened before and after. That summer I retraced my steps to the Stettinius Papers, where I remembered a document that I thought could be an argument clincher. Sometimes late at night, I began carving out a draft. By the end of the year I had a paper to share with others.

This is where I learned the importance of professional contacts and networking. Mr. Younger had taught me a bit by urging me to send my preparedness article to Arthur Link, the eminent Wilson scholar. I was more than a bit intimidated. Me, a mere graduate student, writing to a renowned historian? But Link responded with a most encouraging note and a number of really good suggestions and proposed corrections.

The person who helped most with the lend-lease article was my office mate, Lon Hamby. Lon was himself an excellent critic, and he was working in the same area as I. He had done an M.A. at Columbia with the twentieth century US historian William Leuchtenburg. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Missouri with the young Harry Truman scholar, Richard Kirkendall. He readily agreed to tell his former teachers about my article and inquire if they were willing to look at it. I had met Raymond O'Connor of the University of Kansas during a trip to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. I told him what I was doing and he expressed eagerness to see it. He also offered to send it to his mentor, Thomas A. Bailey, author of the then best-selling diplomatic history textbook.<sup>9</sup>

The results were encouraging. Leuchtenburg liked the piece, and made numerous helpful suggestions for revision. Kirkendall, O'Connor, and Bailey praised the research and the argumentation. All saw it as a persuasive corrective to the revisionists.

I submitted it to the *Journal of American History*, and I can still vividly remember the moment when I learned the results. I had been to Columbus for the day, got back late in the afternoon, drove to my office, and opened the mailbox. There was a letter from the *JAH*. I hesitated, then popped it open and saw the acceptance. It would be hard to replicate the excitement of that moment.

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Herring, "Lend-Lease to Russia," 94.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (Englewood: Prentice Hall: multiple editions).

The article appeared in the June 1969 issue paired with an article by another young scholar, Thomas Paterson, dealing with a similar topic: US refusal to provide the Soviet Union a loan for postwar reconstruction.<sup>10</sup>

My article argued that the decision to stop lend-lease to the Soviet Union after V-E Day was far more complicated than Alperovitz had allowed. To be sure, as the Red Army swept across Eastern Europe in 1944, some of President Franklin Roosevelt's top advisers urged using lend-lease as a weapon to influence Soviet behavior. Roosevelt said no. Since the beginning of the war, aid to the USSR had enjoyed a unique, unconditional status. The president refused to modify this policy in 1944, and it lasted until the end of the European war.

Aid to Russia—and other nations--*was* stopped shortly after V-E Day, and in the most clumsy and heavy-handed fashion. But it was not part of a pressure campaign. Congress had insisted that lend-lease not be extended into the postwar, and political exigencies thus compelled the new administration of President Harry S. Truman to stop aid to all nations, the USSR included. But with delicate negotiations then taking place in San Francisco on the structure of a United Nations' organization, Truman and his top advisers sought to terminate that aid "without any threat or any indication of political bargaining." In fact, the order was executed by lower level officials with undue zeal, some ships already at sea being turned around. And it naturally evoked sharp protests from Moscow. Recognizing its error, the administration took steps to repair the damage. Those ships that had been turned around reversed course once more. Ships that were loaded were sent on their way, and the loading of ships was completed. The stoppage of lend-lease to the Soviet Union was thus "a serious diplomatic blunder," I concluded, doing precisely what the administration sought not to do—give the impression that lend-lease was being used as a bargaining tool. But it was not "a decisive issue in the origins of the Cold War."<sup>11</sup> The article drew a lot of attention and would later be included in the Bobbs-Merrill Reprint Series in American History.<sup>12</sup>

There was a postscript. Leuchtenburg liked the article well enough to offer me a contract for a book in his Contemporary American History Series with Columbia University Press. That book, we agreed, should focus on lend-lease to the Soviet Union from 1941-1945. In the summer of 1969, I moved to the University of Kentucky. Before, during, and after that move, I threw together a short, really quite ragged, draft of a book. Leuchtenburg cut it to pieces in the most gentle and encouraging manner, and I would later joke that his comments had been longer than my draft. In fact, he taught me a great deal about how to write a book. I did it right the second time, and *Aid to Russia, 1941-1946: Strategy, Diplomacy, the Origins of the Cold War*, came out in 1972. It got good reviews and established itself as an important contribution in what came to be called the "post-revisionist" interpretation of the origins of the Cold War.<sup>13</sup>

### III

My road to Vietnam was a product of the events themselves and also of my teaching. Reaction to US escalation of the war was surprisingly sharp in a university which enrolled rapidly growing numbers of students, many of them from urban Ohio, and was located in a rural, Appalachian community. Protest grew steadily. The Ohio National Guard was posted just off

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<sup>10</sup> George C. Herring, Jr., "Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1945," *Journal of American History* LVI (June 1969), 93-114; Thomas G. Paterson, "The Abortive Loan to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War, 1943-1946," *Journal of American History*, 70-92.

<sup>11</sup> Herring, "Lend-Lease to Russia," 108.

<sup>12</sup> Herring, Jr., "Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War," Bobbs-Merrill Reprints, Second Series.

<sup>13</sup> Herring, *Aid to Russia: Strategy, Diplomacy, the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

campus in the spring of 1967 to deal with an uprising that, fortunately, never took place. In that memorable and especially volatile year of 1968, protests reached new heights and student radicals took over the administration building.

Surging student curiosity about the war and my own growing concern prompted me to educate myself. My senior colleague, John Cady, was one of the few people in America who could legitimately claim expertise on Southeast Asia. He was a wonderful teacher, a mentor for junior faculty, and an engaging conversationalist. In private discussions and impromptu “seminars,” he offered the sort of expertise for the expanding war in Indochina that could not be found even in the best newspapers. Indeed, knowing even a little bit about the origins of the war in the 1945 Vietnamese revolution against France made it impossible to accept uncritically the position set forth by the US government. Another source of my early education was a graduate student who did an excellent seminar paper on the early years of the war that, like Cady’s insights, further opened my eyes. It also pointed me to the invaluable works of journalist Bernard Fall and to the path-breaking book just published by Cornell scholars George M. Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, that significantly expanded my knowledge of the war.<sup>14</sup>

Compared to OU, the University of Kentucky seemed an oasis of quietude when I arrived in 1969, but my Vietnam education continued there. Students considered history “cool” in those days. My main classes, US history since 1945 and American diplomatic history, drew large numbers, brought forth keen student interest, and evoked often searching questions. More and more Vietnam veterans enrolled at UK in the early 70s. Because of my interest in the war, I increasingly served as a sounding board for some of those who hesitated to talk openly about their experiences but were going through all kinds of personal struggles and sometimes sought a listener. These students introduced me to some of the realities of the war that could not then be found in books.

During these years, my view of the war developed through stages: from ignorance and acquiescence in 1965 to limited knowledge and rising skepticism to fuller understanding, outright opposition and growing anger that American leaders stubbornly persisted in trying to salvage their credibility at huge cost to our country and to Vietnam itself. By the early 70s, I participated in protests, although I was never comfortable with the rhetoric of antiwar leaders. I was never a “hawk” on the war. For a time I was what I once jokingly called a “flaming centrist.” More and more, I was a dove.

In the spring of 1973, despite some concern expressed by the department chairman that it was too early, I taught a course on the Vietnam War that must have been among the first offered nationwide. This class paralleled the signing of the US-North Vietnamese peace agreement in March and the end of the American phase of the war. It was an undergraduate research seminar, but I cannot recall topics that the students wrote about. I do know that I used the *New York Times* edition of the *Pentagon Papers* as one of the “texts.”<sup>15</sup> I also remember that, of the twenty or so students, some had served in the war, some had protested, and several had done both. Not surprisingly, the class discussions were lively.

During its last years, the war in Vietnam became for me a research interest as well as a subject for the classroom. The more I learned, the more I wanted to know. As the end of the war neared in 1974, I became intrigued with the idea of treating it as history, of giving it a beginning and an end and trying to answer the sort of questions historians ask. In 1974, I wrote a short, article-length study for Forum Press’s series of pamphlets for the classroom. It was published in 1976 and was titled “Vietnam: An American Ordeal,” an embarrassingly ethnocentric title.<sup>16</sup> The excitement of that experience and the pamphlet’s widespread use in college classes encouraged my interest in writing a book-length history. It was a tough sell at

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Bernard B. Fall, *Street without Joy: Indochina at War* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1961), and Fall, *The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis* (Westport: Praeger, 1963); George M. Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (New York: Dial, 1967).

<sup>15</sup> Neil Sheehan et al, *The Pentagon Papers as Published by the New York Times* (New York, 1971).

<sup>16</sup> Herring, “Vietnam: An American Ordeal,” *The Forum Series* (Arlington Heights: Forum Press, 1976) 1-16.

first, but I managed to persuade Professor Robert Divine of the University of Texas to give me a contract for a book on Vietnam in his *America in Crisis* series, a highly regarded collection of books on the American wars. With a full year's leave in 1975-1976, I eagerly ploughed into research for the book that would be titled *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* and would be published in 1979.<sup>17</sup>

## IV

I can honestly affirm that my career far exceeded the vague and modest ambitions I brought to graduate school. I had no idea of the hard work that would be required or the frustrations I would incur. Yet I found that work over the years enjoyable and richly rewarding. I experienced great excitement in digging through archives in search of documents that would fill out my story and validate my arguments. I had always enjoyed writing, and that enthusiasm carried over into graduate school and beyond, even though the task was much more complicated and at times even onerous and the finished products in most cases much longer than I could have imagined. I never deviated from my interest in military and diplomatic history. From the start, I saw myself writing on subjects related to contemporary affairs. With effort on my part, considerable luck in terms of timing, love and support from friends and family, encouragement and assistance from colleagues and friends, and friends, and invaluable help from archivists in locating documents, I realized my dream, although not, perhaps, in the way I had expected.

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<sup>17</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: John Wiley, 1979).