

**Overlooked: Ted Yates, Bob Rogers,
and *Vietnam: It's a Mad War***

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**Submitted to the BEA History Division
Open Competition**

**AV Requirements—1/2" VHS Player,
Computer Link to Video Projector**

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Abstract: *In the summer of 1964, before the United States had committed hundreds of thousands of military troops to Southeast Asia, NBC News producer Ted Yates dispatched his associate, Robert F. Rogers, to South Vietnam to conduct documentary research on the region and the growing conflict. The product of these efforts was a prescient television documentary that foreshadowed the quagmire facing the United States. Vietnam: It's a Mad War aired 1 December 1964 and was narrated by Chet Huntley, written by Bob Rogers, and produced by Yates. Like other early journalism of that period, which seemed to recognize the perils long before politicians did, this program did not forestall the U. S. involvement in the war. It stands as a stunning benchmark, however, of what was known before the term "body bags" became part of our lexicon. It bears an uncanny resemblance to the better-known (and subsequent) film, Apocalypse Now. And it is recognized in broadcast history as part of the filmography of its producer-director, Ted Yates. Archival records, though, demonstrate that Vietnam: It's a Mad War was the vision of Yates's fellow documentarian, Bob Rogers. This paper presents that evidence and seeks to raise the visibility of Rogers as a subject worthy of more historical attention.*

Overlooked: Ted Yates, Bob Rogers, and *Vietnam: It's a Mad War*

In the weeks following the disasters in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania last September, evidence of American unity and patriotism appeared so widespread that some commentators proclaimed a definitive end to the leftover divisions from the Vietnam era. As American forces prepared to attack terrorist targets inside Afghanistan, national polls indicated strong support for an ongoing military response and a willingness to accept U. S. casualties. Again, embedded in the debate about whether to proceed into Afghanistan was discussion of “another Vietnam.” However, for the first time since the helicopters left the roof of the U. S. embassy in Saigon, Americans expressed their desire to embark on military intervention on foreign soil despite the lack of a known outcome, a well-defined purpose, or an exit strategy.

The Vietnam experience was such a watershed event in American society it has become a permanent referent in matters of military strategy and foreign policy, as well as many socially divisive national issues. The reasons are well documented: more than 58,000 U. S. soldiers killed; a decade of civil unrest; upheaval in media-government relations; and a generational and cultural fracture that replaced comity with disagreement. For a quarter-century in America, the rallying cry, as a result of Vietnam, was “never again.”

The fact that Americans dared to risk “another Vietnam” in Afghanistan is testament to their collective outrage over September 11, 2001. But that same fact also serves to quantify the measure of horror and grief associated with the Vietnam War. If the country had only known before sending troops to Southeast Asia what lay ahead, surely America would have taken a different course.

Among those who did know in advance—not only that the military effort would fail but also why—was a quiet documentary writer for NBC News named Robert F. Rogers, a protégé, drinking buddy, and partner of the better-known Ted Yates. Rogers saw the end from the beginning and predicted for NBC viewers why the U. S. mission in Vietnam would fail. He was not the only person to realize America was headed for trouble. But his forecast and visual portrayal were so accurate, his work merits historical attention—as an individual and also as a member of the NBC documentary unit led by Ted Yates. The purpose of this paper is to afford that attention by analyzing a documentary that foreshadowed the quagmire that became “Vietnam,” and by documenting, through archival research method, that the program was the vision of Bob Rogers.

The Fearless Ted Yates

Ted Yates was a producer for NBC News in the early 1960s. In collaboration with Stuart Schulberg, Yates produced *David Brinkley's Journal*, a half-hour weekly documentary and newsmagazine series that went on the air in October 1961 and lasted two years.¹ The production team then began a transition into a full-fledged documentary unit based in Washington, D.C. They produced a series of documentaries on domestic topics in 1964 and began to shift their focus to foreign affairs, with Yates emerging as the leader.

Ted Yates was a mythic figure. Crewmembers recall him as “all American”—there was nothing Old World about him. He was born in Sheridan, Wyoming in 1930. At age eighteen he was thrown while working as a rodeo rider and he broke his back. The event focused his career choices but did nothing to reduce his attraction to danger.

Yates attended the University of Virginia for a year, worked a short time at NBC, then joined the marines and served in the Korean War. He returned to the network in 1952 as a

correspondent and producer and was often caught in dangerous situations. Yates was fired at by the North Vietnamese in Laos, stoned by communists in Sumatra, chased out of Cambodia, and, in Java, caught between rioting students and a charging palace guard, who bayoneted his driver in the mouth.²

In the summer of 1967, amidst rumors of war in the Middle East, NBC sent Yates's unit to cover the region. On Monday, June 5, the men were eating breakfast inside the Intercontinental Hotel when the Six-Day War erupted. Cameraman Richard "Jim" Norling recalls: "About 11:00 a.m. as I was looking out through the large plate glass windows, I suddenly saw a large plume of smoke and debris rising high above the city. It was strange—not a sound through the windows—just this single column of smoke. We all jumped up and ran outside. By this time it seemed that everything had hit the fan and we had a grandstand seat."³

Yates called to Norling, "Get the camera, I want to do a stand-up." Norling ran back to get the Arriflex and tripod while soundman Al Hoagland grabbed the Nagra.⁴ "We had just gotten back outside when bullets began to come in our direction," Norling remembers. "Ted and I were lying shoulder to shoulder with Al a few feet away to our left. The Israelis must have seen us [wearing khakis] and thought we were Jordanians, for the bullets began to fly around us thick and fast. Our only protection was a six-inch curb of the driveway." Fred Tepper, the lighting electrician, and associate producer Bob Rogers were pinned down behind a car in the driveway.

"I heard what sounded like a baseball bat hitting something," said Norling, "and Ted convulsed and slumped back down. I saw that he had taken a hit in the head."⁵ When the gunfire subsided, the crew dragged Yates into the hotel and onto a desk. The head wound was severe. A makeshift bandage was applied. With the help of a Jordanian soldier, Rogers flagged down an ambulance and rushed his partner to a nearby hospital. The bullet had entered Yates's forehead,

traveled down the back of his skull, and exited through his neck.⁶ The staff surgeon operated and Rogers called the crew to report on their partner's condition. But Ted Yates died that night.

As word spread of Yates's death, prominent figures from journalism, Academe, and government rose to honor his work, his character, and his courage.⁷ Because of the circumstances of his death, he holds a deserved place in broadcast history. But history is a continuum, and the story of Ted Yates does not end with his death. It was extended by the life and career of his partner, Bob Rogers.

Robert F. Rogers of Georgetown

Along with the grief attending a brush with death and the loss of a close friend that day in June 1967, Rogers inherited the leadership of Yates's documentary team. His role in creating documentary journalism for NBC News changed from writer and associate producer, to producer, executive producer, and eventually manager of *NBC White Papers*, before he died from cancer in September 1989 at age 58.

More good soldier than splashy general, more craftsman than showboat, Bob Rogers could cause a person to feel discomfort—not due to a caustic personality, in fact he had a friendly smile and manner and could be very charming. But because he was someone who did his homework, he was impatient with sloth and did not hide his displeasure. Rogers combined a passion for writing with military-like discipline and total immersion in his assignment, reflecting his study with the Jesuits at Georgetown University. An eight-year army veteran and Korean War paratrooper, Rogers was a willing member of the culture of network news that was spawned from the radio broadcasts of World War II and the rise of television journalism during the Cold War.

Although he was an exceptional producer and master at gaining access to sources and

forbidden places, above all, Bob Rogers thought of himself as a writer. He used the act of writing as a process for thinking. His papers disclose his methodology of planning and filming a documentary.⁸ He once said, "although filmmakers have the talent for making documentaries, writers have a leg up in organizing."⁹

Rogers is not regarded among the most well known documentary producers, but he should be.¹⁰ During his 28-year career at NBC News, he produced a body of insightful reports on American foreign policy, government agencies, and life styles. He twice won the Writers Guild Award for Best Documentary Script. He was the first journalist to win the Reserve Officers' Association Nathan Hale Award. He won a Columbia/Dupont Award; an Overseas Press Club Award for Best Television Reporting from Overseas; the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel; and the Ted Yates Memorial Award.

There was an easy affinity between Yates and Rogers. They were contemporaries and of the same ilk. Yates was born in 1930; Rogers on April 4, 1931, in Washington, D.C. Both went to college and served in Korea; Yates as a marine, Rogers an army paratrooper. Both men were known among their peers as courageous individuals, unafraid to face danger while gathering news. This camaraderie is evident from Rogers' early correspondence to Yates while on assignment in Vietnam: "As the saying goes I don't like getting shot at, I just like being around guys who don't mind getting shot at."¹¹

The Yates-Rogers documentary crew was a hard-working lot. Cameraman Jim Norling kept diaries of their shoots, beginning in 1965 through the 1980s, with frequent entries showing long overtime periods on successive days.¹² They traveled to dangerous, inhospitable places; often being shot at, threatened by contaminated water and the desperation of impoverished masses; occasionally forced to take up arms to be able to complete a story. Their ordinary jobs required

them to endure the hardships of a combat soldier, trekking around the world for weeks away from home and family. While it is cliché to glamorize foreign correspondents and producers, it would be wrong to downplay the true effort they expended and the risks they faced.

They were also a hard-drinking crew. Some would drink to escape the inhumanity they had seen; others for the atmosphere.¹³ Regardless of the previous evening's activities, Rogers was an early riser and often late to bed. Several of his letters and memos attest to his work ethic. He closed one letter to Yates with, "Regards to Stu, George, Judy, Margo. I'd write them a card but I'm too goddam sleepy. R."¹⁴ In another report to Yates about filming possibilities in Vietnam, he wrote, "There are some other vignettes which we can use but I'll go into those later. Early start in the morning."¹⁵

Several influences fueled Rogers' drive. One was a lifelong association with the military community. He was born and raised in Washington, D.C., where his father worked in a naval yard.¹⁶ After high school, Rogers attended the Citadel and successfully completed one year of study. But the experience lacked intellectual challenge.¹⁷

He continued college at Georgetown University, which determined the course of his life and work. Rogers belonged to the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, ROTC, and entered active duty as an army second lieutenant after graduation in 1953. He served 16 months in the Korean conflict, then three years in Europe working as a general's aide, doing a great deal of writing as part of his job.¹⁸ He achieved the rank of captain and could have led a military career. But although he had many close, high-ranking friends in the military, there were times he felt he was smarter than his superiors and believed his talents and intelligence could be put to better use outside the army.¹⁹ He left after eight years, in 1961, to become a free-lance writer.

The experience of studying under the Jesuits at Georgetown not only shaped Rogers'

approach to work, it was a guiding force until his death.²⁰ Education at Georgetown is rooted in the sixteenth century. It was introduced into the first Jesuit College for the laity at Messina, Italy in 1548 and is based on the Jesuit Code of Liberal Education, *ratio studiorum*.²¹ "Ratio," from the Latin, means "calculation" and "to reckon." "Studiorum" stems from *studium*—eagerness.

Of the three curricula offered to Georgetown students in the early 1950s, B.A., B.S., and B.S.S., Rogers pursued the latter, the bachelor of social science degree with a major in history and government. Through his involvement with these subjects, two other Georgetown characteristics also connected with Rogers. The first is an intertwining with American government. The Georgetown Seal bears striking resemblance to the Great Seal of the United States.²² The second Georgetown characteristic that fit Rogers' personality was a connection to the U. S. military. Select ROTC graduates from Georgetown were offered commissions on the same basis as graduates from the Military Academy at West Point.²³

Lois Stark, who was Rogers' assistant until being promoted to producer, explains that Rogers lived his work as "almost religious principle, that he had to glean the best call toward the truth and state it as succinctly and clearly as he could"²⁴:

[H]e often quoted the Jesuits and the way that they would so thoroughly investigate and study. And he was a paratrooper in his army experience. . . . so you're talking by nature about a man who . . . had the personal courage to think of using his life at a moment when the world was struggling toward something. . . . So the paratrooper part probably leads to his willingness to see his life as served within the fray. The Jesuit part I think carried that sense of intensive research, rigorous intensity toward a subject.²⁵

It was while he was in Korea, Rogers confessed, that he "got the Hemingway bug" and realized he wanted to write. Rogers submitted a literary piece to the Ad Schulberg Agency in New York.²⁶ Adeline Schulberg was the wife of Paramount motion picture mogul B. P. Schulberg.²⁷ Their son Budd was a screenwriter and producer and his younger brother, Stuart, was in TV. During WWII, Stuart Schulberg served in the Marine Corps and Office of Strategic Services. He later organized and headed a documentary film unit for the U. S. military government in West Germany. In 1949, Schulberg supervised some 200 documentary films.²⁸ In 1961, he went to work for Yates, who was producing *David Brinkley's Journal*.

Ad Schulberg suggested to Stuart that Rogers might be a good writer for NBC. Schulberg hired Rogers as a freelance in 1961. He became a permanent writer and associate producer in 1962. The military veterans Rogers, Yates, and Schulberg were kindred, creative spirits among a coterie that included film editor Desmond McElroy, cinematographers Richard Norling and Julian Townsend, lighting electricians Fred Tepper and Buddy Reed, soundmen Al Hoagland and Al Storey, unit manager Carl Robinson, and others who moved in and out of NBC projects. The unit also provided opportunities for several women in the documentary field, among them Lois Stark, Rhonda Schwartz, Naomi Spinrad, Peggy Rhoades, and Paula Banks.

Vietnam: It's a Mad War

In the summer of 1964, Ted Yates and the documentary unit were involved in a report about the travels of America's most famous explorers. While working on *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, Yates sent Rogers to Vietnam to research the growing conflict there. Later in the year, Yates joined Rogers in Vietnam with a film crew. The product of this venture was a documentary that aired on NBC News, 1 December 1964.

Vietnam: It's a Mad War ran a full hour on NBC. The closing credits list Robert Rogers as the writer and Ted Yates as the producer and director. Based on an analysis of archived documents, however, it is clear that *Vietnam: It's a Mad War* expresses the vision of Rogers. This conclusion does not suggest that Yates had falsely claimed credit for the report. It is common for field producers to do the legwork on behalf of their seniors. (David Lowe of CBS News, for instance, was the creator behind one of Murrow's most famous documentaries, *Harvest of Shame*.) The following disclosures do provide, though, a more complete historical record of a significant television document, and they reveal the creative, documentary genius of Robert F. Rogers.

Vietnam: It's a Mad War referred in advance to many of the charged phrases and ideas that would come to be associated with the war during the next ten years. These include:

- ? Intense focus on statistics and body counts by Pentagon briefers
- ? A failure to gain the "support and minds" of the Vietnamese
- ? The failure of the South Vietnamese military to follow the advice of U. S. officers
- ? The French experience and ultimate displacement from Vietnam
- ? Pacification, a U.S.-led effort to stabilize the South Vietnamese villages and nurture democracy as a device to thwart the Viet Cong control of locals
- ? Bullet hole-riddled U. S. aircraft lying in salvage areas and serving as evidence of technology's failure to convert military dominance into political victory
- ? Military river patrols and ritualistic killing of beasts of burden by Montagnard sects, foreshadowing Francis Ford Coppola's depictions in *Apocalypse Now*
- ? Soldiers pulling river boats through rice paddies, showing them up to their chins in muddy water, as later characterized in the Pete Seeger song, "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy," made controversial when CBS censored it from the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*

? And television scenes of dead bodies lying in muddy ditches and of bloodied, shell-shocked soldiers.

The program opens with the beauty of the Nha Trang beach on the South China Sea and ends with an ominous warning: "Theoretically the United States is in Vietnam to defend a free country. But, in fact, we are still trying to nurse one into existence." In between are seven segments of varying lengths: Saigon as a tourist destination; the contrast between the sophistication of military technology and the primitive life style of Vietnamese rice farmers; Pacification; Vietnamese hospital services and military training camps; river patrols looking for the elusive Viet Cong (VC); and two concluding segments that illustrate the poor living conditions for the Vietnamese and the mission of a U. S. combat air patrol team. The futility of the war effort was apparent in the documentary even before the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution certified America's commencement in the Vietnam era.

Rogers' Letters to Yates: While in Vietnam, Rogers communicated to Yates by letter and attached lengthy field reports on his findings. He also lobbied his superior for a promotion:

Ted: . . . I'm enclosing rough notes. More later. . . . If you get tied up [producing] Lewis & Clark and decide you want to be bona-fide producer and decide you want to come out [to Vietnam] simply for story conference and let me direct this one, would be eternally grateful. . . . Love the atmosphere, and the guys. Baldwin has got me scheduled for my first jump from a chopper tomorrow AM. Anyway if you let me do it, I guarantee you first rate show, or I'll hang up jock. . . . R.²⁹

Rogers did not get his wish. But, as the attached script analysis indicates, Yates directed the documentary according to Rogers' vision. Each segment contains either language or locations and story angles originating in Rogers' notes to Yates. The highlighted phrases in the attached

Appendix show the many correlations; these are a few of the most significant of Rogers' observations. (The citations for the following quotes are posted in the Appendix.)

After witnessing the carefully orchestrated Saigon tours and promotion of the fine French life style available to local officials and American travelers, and also seeing the reality of combat in areas outside Saigon, Rogers writes to Yates: "This [segment on Saigon culture] . . . will say something important about these sort of wars we get ourselves into where in effect we end up supporting the old guard, the fat cats, who lead the same old good life, getting richer than ever before on our pump-priming of the economy and black marketing, while outside of the glittering island of Saigon, the peasantry are getting their asses blown off by both us and the VC." Segment One, on the Saigon tourist industry, juxtaposes the harsh reality of combat in the field with the posh life style of the Saigonese.

Rogers was keenly aware of France's experience and influence in Vietnam. He also had a sharp eye for visual details that would serve as powerful metaphors for documentary concepts. He tells Yates: "[F]or the lead-in to any French sequence can get tremendous mood bit from the French military cemetery outside Saigon. I'm amazed none of the other specials used it instead of all that crappy stock footage. With a funeral time Marseillaise over it 30 seconds of film will tell the whole story of the doomed French effort here. [There is] a large white monument inscribed LA REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE A TOUS CEUX QUI SONT TOMBES SOUS SES DRAPEUX [The French Republic to all those who died under the flag]."

After seeing the frivolity of the Moulin Rouge, a French nightclub, complete with frilly can-can dancers, the program cuts to stunning pictures of row upon row of tombstones that simultaneously represent the human cost to France in trying to defeat the North Vietnamese and the fate awaiting the United States if the country's politicians plunge into war.

In another example of Rogers' early awareness of America's failure to grasp the nature of Vietnamese society, he alerts Yates to the clash of cultures between the United States and Vietnamese: "American success types can't succeed in VN, the very qualities which make them a success in US only emphasize the Collission [sic] of Cultures." In Segment Two of the televised report, Rogers refines his thoughts in one of the most powerful passages of his script: "Despite the jet scream of modern war, just across the canal, life goes on in the paddies as it has for a thousand years. American helicopters cannot win the war in Vietnam without the support of these people in the paddies. But it's one of the contradictions of the war that the peasant, who is the key to its outcome, and who suffers most from it, still has no real commitment to it."

Rogers discovered the Montagnard natives of the central highlands of South Vietnam. Again he realizes their importance to the country's political history—as allies of the French in their fight against the North but also as sworn enemies of the South Vietnamese. Rogers also appreciates their value as television journalism, due to their visually primitive life style, and as a counterpoint to the typical photo opportunities arranged by U. S. dignitaries when they travel to Vietnam to show their support for the cause. He reports to Yates: "They have exotic villages, fantastic bronze bands, and drink like fish. Rhather [sic] than have the Army set us up in some tame village near Pleiku of the sort shown to visiting congressmen and MCNamara, Claude can set up a real Montagnard bash in a village near the plantation. All we have to do is buy them a cow (\$50) to be slaughtered for the feast."

The sights and sounds appearing in Segment Three closely resemble Rogers' notes on the Montagnards, especially the eerie tone of the bronze instruments. The ritualistic slaughter of a water buffalo calls to mind the scene from *Apocalypse Now* in which the Montagnards also hack to death a roped cow, although the fictional account is more violent and dramatic in its filming and

editing. Rogers also tells Yates about a Marlon Brando/Kurtz-like character who lives with the Montagnards in secluded and odd circumstances. Although Claude Salvaire does not appear in the documentary, Rogers' description of him resembles the fictional Kurtz, (though not as whacked out mentally), and the bizarre fantasy world that Coppola created.

Referring to Claude Salvaire, who runs one of the world's largest tea plantations, Rogers tells Yates: "Employs between 1500 and 1800 Montagnards depending on the season. When I drove out there the Army insisted I go with two machine-gun jeeps full of MPs as escort, and there sits Claude in the middle of the forest drinking Scotch Whiskey. . . . the mere existence of he and his colleagues living in the forest without arms and fortifications and driving roads where Americans venture seldom and nervously and never without the required force of 3 vehicles with an automatic weapon in each, is an interesting facet of this Alice-in Wonderland war over here."

In his letters to Yates about village outposts and Pacification, Rogers introduces Captain Tu, a scrappy Vietnamese soldier, his ragtag bunch of dead-end kid bodyguards, and psychological warfare, which includes performances by folk dancing girls. The entire description forms the basis for Segment Four. He also went to explore a Special Forces camp at An Long in the Mekong Delta and suggested to Yates they shoot a sequence there, which they did for Segment Five: "The special forces camp at An Long on the banks of the Mekong way up on the Cambodian border has just about everything we need. Anyway it's the best one I've seen."

Even Segment Six, in which Yates appears on camera interviewing a U. S. captain is based on Rogers' suggestion: "There are several sequences we should do in the Delta: I spent some time with a River assault group, these are motley collections of landing craft, gunboats, and armed launches which patrol the rivers and canals in the vast delta." This segment, which also has the flavor of Coppola's fictional river trip, depicts views of armed patrol boats motoring past shore, of

boats passing the shoreline, and machine-gun bursts directed at unseen enemy forces.

In the closing segment, we hear from a group of pilots operating out of the Soctrang Airstrip, including Captains Hamner, Camel, and Nye, and Major Levinson, all of whom are mentioned in Rogers' notes: "Soctrang Airstrip: This is the forward US airstrip in the delta, a chopper company a medical evac outfit, and some T-28s . . . the best thing about Soctrang is the Dawn Patrol-Tomorrow We Die atmosphere of the club. These guys sing, drink and relax hard and we might get some good dialogue." When Yates arrived with the camera crew, much of the final segment that he shot consisted of the dialogue of these four pilots, seated around a table at the Officers' Club drinking fifteen-cent beer and talking about the war.

Rogers' Ability To Write to Picture

Although Rogers' field notes validate his contribution to the content of *Vietnam: It's a Mad War*, they cannot show the power of Rogers' ability to blend word and image when writing a documentary script. This requires viewing the actual program, which demonstrates the significance of his creative talents goes beyond the personal dispatches to Yates. Reuven Frank, who was an executive in the NBC News division when Rogers was hired and supervised him directly on several occasions, singled out Bob Rogers as someone who had the ability to write to picture better than many other documentarians or news producers of his era.³⁰

Some examples are subtle. The helicopter unit was known as the Soctrang Tigers. And in the scene of the Saigon tour through the zoo, one of the featured animals was a Bengal tiger—which is shown in a cage, suggesting the confinement or restrictions to U. S. military forces in the mission.

When narrator Chet Huntley refers to South Vietnamese President Diem's death, the text

reads, “Diem’s murder was officially described as accidental suicide, a phrase which illustrates the Vietnamese talent for rationalizing away unpleasant facts.” At the same time, the pictures show a ravenous school of carp gobbling up bits of bread being dropped from a bridge by a band of tourists, implying the locals will eat any information that is fed to them.

During the conclusion, over pictures of damaged U. S. helicopters in a salvage yard, the soundtrack, which was edited by Desmond McElroy, crossfades from the Officers’ Club American jazz band to an echo of a French can-can tune played earlier, and back to the jazz song, implying America was transitioning into the French and facing the same fate.

In other parts of the script, such as Segment Two, Rogers’ writing takes television journalism to the highest level, as he summarizes the problems in Vietnam for the United States military and for the Vietnamese peasant. He depicts not only the plight of the poor rice farmers, who are stuck in ancient times and in obvious contrast to the modern warfare being waged across the river, but also how the weight of government of any kind bears on the pitiful farmers:

Despite the jet scream of modern war, just across the canal, life goes on in the paddies as it has for a thousand years. American helicopters cannot win the war in Vietnam without the support of these people in the paddies. But it’s one of the contradictions of the war that the peasant, who is the key to its outcome, and who suffers most from it, still has no real commitment to it. [As two women scoop water with a wicker basket from one side of a muddy dike to the other] They’re poor, illiterate, undernourished and have never known political liberty. [As a farmer whips a water buffalo pulling a plow through thick, heavy clay] Given a free choice, the average peasant would probably choose no government. [As the farmer

cracks the whip at the beast] Government in the past has usually meant oppression. [Over pictures of a large flock of ducks undulating down and up a ravine, intercutting close-ups of ducks looking one way and then the next] Caught between Viet Cong intimidation and government inefficiency, he can only continue to take orders from whichever side seems to be in control and try to survive.³¹

It was Rogers' talent as a writer that landed him the job at NBC in 1961. In crafting the script for *Vietnam: It's a Mad War*, he delivered on his promise as a documentary writer for television network news. Rogers and his script were recognized nationally when he became recipient of the Writers Guild Award for Best Documentary Script in 1964.

***Vietnam: It's a Mad War* as a Subject for Scholarship**

With Regard to Cultural Studies: Advocates of cultural studies who would seize on the fact that what Rogers reported to Yates in June 1964 was, to some extent, reenacted, pre-arranged, and not viewed spontaneously during filming some months later, would argue this diminishes the authenticity of *Vietnam: It's a Mad War* as a documentary. It is difficult to appreciate the effort within cultural studies to devalue the idea of the documentary as an expression of one person's or one network's version or vision of true journalism at any given time. All media expressions are interpretive and truth is a subjective concept. In the present case, however, the pair of documents—Rogers' archived field notes and the final version of his script and of NBC's program—validate one another as authentic representations of what could be seen in South Vietnam in 1964, not only in June but again later in the year when the program was filmed.

Furthermore, the body of other documentaries and fictional accounts pertaining to Vietnam

that were produced during and after the war also validate Rogers' reporting from the scene just prior to the U. S. intervention there. Just using *Vietnam: A Television History*, which incorporated several segments from *Vietnam: It's a Mad War*, as a representative example of other sources: We know about the corruption within South Vietnam and the impact this had on the people. We know about the VC ability to infiltrate the South and lead dual lives—as villagers by day and guerrillas by night. We know that Cambodia was a sanctuary for VC supply and infiltration routes from the North. We know about the Pentagon's numbers games and the failure of intelligence that ended in the debacle during the Tet Offensive in February 1968. And we know about the collision of cultures, of the vulnerabilities of U. S. pilots, and how the military victory became a political defeat.

So, despite the fact that some of the filmed sequences in *Vietnam: It's a Mad War* might have been set up to solve field production exigencies, what was captured on film and written in the program was contemporaneously genuine and accurate and a worthy documentation of many of the political, cultural, and military conditions that existed there and then.

With Regard to Apocalypse Now: Whether there are similarities, or, more accurately, harmonies between *Vietnam: It's a Mad War* and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* is an interesting question for film and documentary scholars. This writer cannot say whether Coppola had seen the documentary. The point seems moot, however. We have one interpretation presented as nonfiction in 1964 and another presented as fiction in 1979, with both depicting the cultural misunderstandings, the dangers lurking on the rivers of the Mekong Delta, the weirdness of the primitive cultures and rituals practiced there, the oddball recluses living among the primitives, the failure to recognize the French precedent (especially in Coppola's re-release in 2001), and the

futility of modern American military warfare, which because of its excesses, failed to come to terms with the political and social challenges in South Vietnam. The two films validate each other as reasonable representations of the crazy Vietnam War—with one large difference: Coppola portrayed what happened; Rogers portrayed what was to come.

With Regard to the Press, the Military, and Vietnam: Historians have spent much effort trying to determine the culpability of the press in the U. S. demise in Vietnam, as they should. But there is another provocative question that deserves attention: Why didn't this documentary head off U. S. involvement in the war? Although simplistic on the surface, the question relates to a larger, unexplored area of broadcast history. There were several reports that warned news viewers and readers of the problems in Vietnam. Why did the citizenry and politicians fail to act? Was Vietnam a military failure, a political failure, or a lapse in democracy in which citizens failed to heed valid warnings of the dangers to come and then respond? Because of the loss in Vietnam, Americans have sought to keep a distance between themselves and the complications of the world's trouble spots, as they had before Pearl Harbor. Perhaps Vietnam was not the trigger for a return to isolationism after America's success in World War II. Maybe it was Korea, forgotten again, that soured the country on the thoughts of another war overseas. So when Bob Rogers of NBC, Richard Dudman of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, or others, offered in-depth analyses of Vietnam before it became a quagmire, the citizens turned a deaf ear. Still the question is a valid one that resonates today: if it is assumed that a free press is essential to democracy, what are the responsibilities of the citizenry when confronted with valid news?

Vietnam: It's a Mad War also documents that the military officers themselves were questioning U. S. policy. They saw the military equipment as vulnerable, the history with the

French as evidence of potential failure, the stubbornness of the North Vietnamese as an insurmountable obstacle, and the end as very far off, if it would ever come. This documentary shows there was anti-war sentiment in the military before it surfaced on college campuses.

With Regard to the Historical Place of Bob Rogers and Other Lesser-known Producers: Although some literature mentions Yates,³² he, like Rogers, has been relatively overlooked in broadcast history. Barnouw, Ellis, and Bluem, for example, give no coverage to Yates.³³ One source on foreign-affairs documentaries from the Kennedy years does not cite Yates, even though he made a substantial contribution to that genre.³⁴ Some dissertations on Vietnam documentaries omit *Vietnam: It's a Mad War* because the program falls outside the parameters of the sample.³⁵

Before he died, Rogers produced more documentaries than Yates—whose career was cut short—and participated in pioneering experiments at NBC with newsmagazines, such as *First Tuesday*, the two-hour answer to *60 Minutes*.

There is a trend in Academe to downplay the significance of producers and individual programs and instead focus on social or cultural theory. But these theories must be based on a comprehensive body of facts, which is history. And history is the story of men and women. We have a good record of leading figures in broadcast journalism history, but we have very little on the legion of everyday line producers and their crews, like Rogers and the Washington unit. This is a gaping hole in the historical record that could be filled with more portraits of people like Bob Rogers and his colleagues and contemporaries.

#

Appendix: Vietnam: It's a Mad War
Produced and Directed by Ted Yates
Written by Robert F. Rogers
Airdate 1 December 1964, NBC News

Script Analysis Based on the Archived Notes of Bob Rogers

Opening Tease	
<p>Program Content: We see a South Vietnamese officer interrogating a frightened Viet Cong soldier. Ragtag bunch of blindfolded VC, crouching, barefooted, await questioning. An armed SV soldier grabs a VC and ushers him into an interrogation room. The VC is defiant and uncooperative and spits at the officer, who slaps and beats the prisoner. Chet Huntley: "They've been interrogated and tortured for a week. . . . Barefooted, without uniforms, they're winning the war against a modern army in an atomic age."</p>	<p>Rogers' Notes: <i>I flew over the river islands which the Navy has in mind for an operation for us . . . there will be a lot of shooting, and there will be prisoners, and possibly a bit of physical encouragement for them to reveal the hiding places of their comrades and weapons.</i>³⁶</p>
Segment One—Saigon	
<p>Program Content: Saigon's history and charm. We see scenes of a sunny beach in Nha Trang on the coast of the South China Sea; a Saigon tour bus, led by pretty, cheerful Miss Susie; scenes of bustling city. Also flyovers of rivers and mountainous terrain and close-ups of U. S. soldiers, bullets, side arms, and rifles; shot up helicopters. A commercial airline arrives in Saigon's airport on a runway lined with military helicopters and aircraft.</p> <p>Saigon tour bus, tourists in Saigon's streets, fleeting shots of zoo animals and common city sights.</p> <p>Huntley: "Vietnam is beautiful. The war often hard to see. This is the first of many paradoxes south of the 17th parallel. . . . It is a mixture of pretty scenery and ugly events. It's a land afflicted with a split personality. . . . The ambulance helicopters leave Saigon day and night, . . . their code name is Dustoff. . . . Just across the runway is the mortuary where American combat dead are processed for shipment home. . . .</p> <p>"What Miss Susie might add, but doesn't, is that in ten years since independence, Saigon has never had a popular or competent government. But American aid money, three billion, has created a fine city for shopping. . . . She tells the tourists about the exotic wildlife and world famous orchid collection, but not of the late [president's] underground vaults here to cage political prisoners. Nor that later from these pretty flowerbeds rebels launched the attack which ended in the overthrow and murder of Diem."</p> <p>Through a clearing in jungle brush, we see a posh tennis club, large swimming pool surrounded by bikini-clad women and girls. There is a crowded restaurant of outdoor tables and umbrellas.</p>	<p>Rogers' Notes: <i>Alexander Leigh, who runs the Vietnamese Travel Agency has promised help on a tourist sequence. . . . They normally make a one day stopover in Saigon from one of the round the world tours. They are met at the airport, taken around town in a micro-bus, after being informed that the American Embassy recommends against the tours formerly offered outside the city, shown the Embassy, the Zoo, museums, pagodas. . . . The personalities involved will make or break this sequence but judging from the glimpses I've caught of these groups, Mom in a cotton dress and Pop in a camera draped sport shirt it will work.</i>³⁷</p> <p>Rogers' Notes: <i>Two bits of local color which we must get: The Circle Sportif--the country club of Saigon with tennis courts and an Olympic size swimming pool surrounded by VN dilettants fat chinese merchants, US</i></p>

<p>Huntley: “In Saigon, the war has not affected the traditional two-hour lunch break. . . . As one American put it, ‘we haven’t taught the Saigonese to win a war, but they have certainly taught us how to lose one pleasantly.’ . . . The cooking is French and so are the bathing suits.”</p> <p>Next we see wounded Vietnamese soldiers being treated by American medical personnel. Huntley: “In a war where statistics are often cited to show that our side is winning, it is surprising that there are no accurate figures on the number of people killed and wounded. The Pentagon admits its figures on Vietnamese army casualties don’t add up. There are no counts at all on the civilians killed. There is an understandable lack of enthusiasm by Vietnamese for dying in this war. The war has failed to become a crusade. The fact is that few people are eager to get shot at in a rice paddy for a government that has little support, for a country that has less and less cohesion and in an army that has not yet figured out how to fight a guerrilla war.”</p>	<p><i>rear area types, the French commercial community, and some of the loveliest near naked women of 3 or 4 nationalities. This . . . will say something important about these sort of wars we get ourselves into where in effect we end up supporting the old guard, the fat cats, who lead the same old good life, getting richer than ever before on our pump-priming of the economy and black marketing, while outside of the glittering island of Saigon, the peasantry are getting their asses blown off by both us and the VC. . . . We have deliberately made Saigon tremendously prosperous a sort of great white way of Southeast Asia. The people here are not tired of the war, its just that they have become so fat lazy and complacent that they want someone else to fight it for them.</i></p>
<p>We see a Pentagon spokesman at a podium giving a deadpan report of casualty figures for the week. Huntley: “The tourists also miss the weekly press briefing by the American military.”</p>	<p>Rogers’ Notes: <i>We should think about filming the regular weekly MAC-V press conference. I’ve only been in town for one the first week I was here but the situation briefing is delivered in a meaningless dialogue of figures and statistics which if cut in in the right place could be terribly funny, and very symptomatic of the Saigon “numbers game”</i></p>
<p>Neon lights evolve from blurry to crisp focus and then back to defocus. Miss Susie extols the thrill of Saigon’s nightlife. Huntley: “Under the French Saigon was famous for the opium dens and the world’s biggest brothel. But now the night life is for Americans.” We see a lounge-lizard-type emcee introduce flapper girls dancing the Charleston and can-can dancers at the night club Moulin Rouge. Huntley explains the nostalgia for the French way of life, as an epitaph for 100 years of colonial French rule.</p>	<p>Rogers’ Notes: <i>As part of the treatment of the French Cultural Heritage sequence which would play ironically with the military cemetery is the Moulin Rouge night club . . . The orchestra leader is one of the most repulsive men I have ever seen, literally slimy. And the proprietress is a real dragon lady. She was a little worried about us disrupting her club and I suggested we get the acts we want and the orchestra in during the afternoon, light the place get our masters and detail shots of the performers, pelvises, painted faces etc, then return in the evening for about half hour shooting, prelit, for reverse angles with the place filled and some audience reaction shots. She seems agreeable to this. We will have to pay for the performers time in the afternoon (in this town you pay for everything) But if we can get this for \$150 or so, its worth it.</i></p>
<p>From the nightclub, the can-can music continues while the camera moves to a stunning sequence of a French cemetery. We see flyover shots of row upon row of neatly constructed graves, tomb stones, and other signs of the fate that befell the French. It is an impressive monument to war dead. Huntley: “Until the very end the French generals were convinced their modern equipment and airpower could prevent defeat.”</p>	<p>Rogers’ Notes: <i>[F]or the lead-in to any French sequence can get tremendous mood bit from the French military cemetery outside Saigon. I’m amazed none of the other specials used it instead of all that crappy stock footage. With a funeral time Marseillaise over it 30 seconds of film will tell the whole story of the doomed French effort here. A large white monument inscribed LA REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE A TOUS CEUX QUI SONT TOMBES SOUS SES DRAPEUX [The French Republic to all those who died under the flag]. . . . Or depending on our final point of view it might make a telling point cut in before our mortuary or whatever other American dead sequence we</i></p>

	<p>get. The French spent 9 years and 75,000 dead to hang on here. Now we are doing the same thing. And not with a hell of a lot more success.</p>
<p>Segment Two—Soctrang Tigers Helicopter Patrol</p>	
<p>Program Content: Soctrang Tigers. We see a U. S. helicopter patrol flying over rice paddies in the Mekong Delta then landing at an airstrip. South Vietnamese soldiers are being treated for their battle wounds. We hear chopper sounds and see U. S. advisors holding counsel with South Vietnamese counterparts. Huntley: "Earlier that morning an ARVN unit marched out of Ve Than. The sequence of events which followed is familiar to Americans in the Delta. A merican advice on ambush precautions was ignored, air cover was unavailable, a supporting ARVN unit, which could have changed defeat to victory, failed to advance. The result—a real case of accidental suicide. . . . As these pictures were taken, the Viet Cong were hiding their weapons, including over a hundred newly captured ones, and becoming peaceful civilians."</p>	<p>Rogers' Notes: Soctrang Airstrip. This is the forward US airstrip in the delta, a chopper company a medical evac outfit, and some T-28s . . . The Med Evac choppers are the busiest in VN, and could give us some gory stuff. Two days at Soctrang I think would be well worth while, and not many newsmen get down there. (In early May the VC actually attacked the strip---37 mortar rounds right on the runway—4 birds wrecked) and they would be so happy to get some attention they'd do most anything for us.</p>
<p>The camera sweeps from the military equipment around across a river to a rice paddy, where Vietnamese women are planting and irrigating the rice fields. We see women plunging their hands into muddy water up to their elbows planting rice seedlings. They scoop water from one side of a dike to the other using a wicker basket suspended on a rope and swung in a monotonous rhythm to collect a bucketful of water from one side of the dike and dump it to the other. In a mucky clay field, a Vietnamese man whips two water buffalo, urging them to pull a plow through the thick clay. Huntley explains, as the scenes unfold: "Despite the jet scream of modern war, just across the canal, life goes on in the paddies as it has for a thousand years. American helicopters cannot win the war in Vietnam without the support of these people in the paddies. But it's one of the contradictions of the war that the peasant, who is the key to its outcome, and who suffers most from it, still has no real commitment to it." As the two women scoop the water, "They're poor, illiterate, undernourished and have never known political liberty." As the farmer whips the water buffalo, " Given a free choice, the average peasant would probably choose no government. Government in the past has usually meant oppression." And over pictures of a large flock of ducks undulating down and up a ravine, Huntley explains the plight of the South Vietnamese farmer: "Caught between Viet Cong intimidation and government inefficiency, he can only continue to take orders from whichever side seems to be in control and try to survive."³⁸</p>	<p>Rogers' Notes: Strategic hamlets now called New Life Hamlets--program has been slowed down. Hamlets set up only where they can work. POSSIBLE NARRATION OVER RICE FARMERS----VIETNAMESE STILL RESENT FORCIBLE DISPLACEMENT. . . . US has maintained economic mission and military mission but no political mission ---no continuing political guidance for a country that needed this most. After 10 years we have yet to develop leaders who reflect our own aims for VN.³⁹</p> <p>American success types can't succeed in VN, the very qualities which make them a success in US only emphasize the Collision of Cultures. Political and motivational aspects of the war are the key, and they are the ones being largely ignored. What is the effect of a battle on the people of the area is the key question, not what is the effect on the VC.⁴⁰</p> <p>Water Buffalo----over 800,000 of them in country----there was big shortage of them until few years ago when AID had import program from Thailand. . . . Pork is biggest meat. Fish and rice the staple, Ducks are mainly for eggs and feathers.⁴¹</p>
<p>Segment Three—Montagnards/Buddhists</p>	
<p>Program Content: Montagnard Village. First we hear an Oriental, tribal pounding on bronze drums that ring</p>	<p>Rogers' Notes: Referring to Claude Salvaire, who runs one of the world's largest tea plantations: Employs</p>

<p>with a peculiar sound. Then we see primitive villagers identified as Montagnards of the highlands, described as hating the Vietnamese. We see tribesmen, some dressed in loincloths, and others dressed in colorful ceremonial outfits. A water buffalo is tied to a large stake. A Montagnard man is chopping at the buffalo with a machete, hitting the beast's legs, then stabbing it in the body with a long spear, until it collapses. A few Americans are observing the event.</p> <p>Huntley: "Most primitive of the people caught up in the war in Vietnam are these Montagnards, who inhabit the vast highlands. . . . For years American aid officials have tried to convince the Montagnards to use their buffalo for farming, instead of for religious sacrifices. But the tribesmen still prefer to hamstring the animals and then hack them to pieces in ceremonies like this one, which honors the rain gods."</p>	<p><i>between 1500 and 1800 Montagnards depending on the season. When I drove out there the Army insisted I go with two machine-gun jeeps full of MPs as escort, and there sits Claude in the middle of the forest drinking Scotch Whiskey. . . . the mere existence of he and his colleagues living in the forest without arms and fortifications and driving roads where Americans venture seldom and nervously and never without the required force of 3 vehicles with an automatic weapon in each, is an interesting facet of this Alice-in Wonderland war over here.</i></p> <p><i>We are welcome to spend as long as we want at the plantation but Claude recommends we try to spend only one night there since if the word gets around too much and the VC might feel obliged to try something. . . .</i></p> <p><i>The only other sequence we should try to get in that area is something on the Montagnards (primitives) VNs biggest racial minority, some 2.5 million of them inhabit the highlands. They have exotic villages, fantastic bronze bands, and drink like fish. Rhather than have the Army set us up in some tame village near Pleiku of the sort shown to visiting congressmen and McNamara, Claude can set up a real Montagnard bash in a village hear the plantation. All we have to do is buy them a cow (\$50) to be slaughtered for the feast.⁴²</i></p>
<p>We see a Buddhist Temple and other religious images inside, including monks with shaved heads, candles or incense burning, and other artifacts. Huntley explains that although the religion is nonviolent, they have staged violent protests: "And if the Buddhists are not demonstrating, the Catholics often are. . . . Everyone agrees that what Vietnam needs is national unity. The riddle is how."</p>	<p>Rogers' Notes: <i>A good atmosphere provoking bit will be the Le Va Duyet buddisht shrine outside Saigon in Jardin Province. It is small, intensely colorful and weird full of joss sticks, gongs, prayer sticks, and old ladies beating their heads on the floor in front of the altar. . . . It really transports one to the exotic east. I looked at a number of other buddisht shrines but they are relatively colorless compared to this one . . . I spent some time in the cell of a mysterious little Buddhist monk, shaven head, saffron robes, the whole bit, and he speaks good English.⁴³</i></p>
<p>Segment Four—Pacification Program</p>	
<p>Program Content: Pacification. We see government troops sloshing through rice paddies, walking in up to their waists and chins. Mortar fire by U. S. troops. Vietnamese troops enter village, where bare-bottomed children scamper around.</p> <p>Huntley: "Government troops sloshing across the rice paddies—the classic picture of war in Vietnam. But theoretically these operations are something new. The first step in a long-range program which American officials hope will win the war and unify the republic. It is called the Pacification plan. But what it really amounts to is a plan for the government to re-occupy its own country. . . .</p> <p>"The plan has three steps. First strong army forces enter the selected area to drive out the organized VC units and keep them out. Next the hidden VC political structure is rooted out. Finally there is an intensive effort backed by United States civilian aid personnel and</p>	<p>Rogers' Notes: <i>The overall plan for winning the war (if that's possible) revolves around a plan called Pacification whereby VN govt gradually regains control of hamlets (a certain number of hamlets make up a village, villages make up a district, which in turn make up a province) sends in 5 man Hamlet action team which has its own two platoon security element and allegedly sets about setting up rudimentary municipal organization (The program is just getting underway and the people are poorly trained and there is some wishful thinking about just what is pacified and what isn't. The first time I got shot at was in an allegedly pacified village up north). Anyway we need to include a piece on a village and Thoi Thanh Village in Phoung Phu province where 4 Out of 8 hamlets are currently being pacified is the best and most typical I've scene. There is a tough and cocky little district chief, Captain TU, who drives around in a dusty pick-up the rear end loaded with dead-end kid bodyguards draped with grenades and bandoliers, raising hell with the hamlet</i></p>

<p>funds to provide the population with efficient local government and a better life.”</p> <p>Vietnamese soldiers appeal to locals to welcome and participate in the Pacification program. Next we see Captain Tu, a jaunty, thin Vietnamese soldier wearing a bush hat. He is introduced as being from Phoung Phu province. Riding in a pick-up truck loaded with gun-toting men, he heads into a village.</p> <p>Huntley: “Captain Tu’s bodyguard of ragtag provincial soldiers is not for effect but a matter of survival. . . . Tu’s destination today is the village of Thoi Thanh, heavily infiltrated by the Viet Cong and currently undergoing Pacification. In the village, small teams work at setting up the rudiments of a local administration. This team is taking a census, the first in thirty years.”</p> <p>We next see a group of young girls, dressed in folk attire, dancing and performing before a local group. Captain Tu gives a statement of appeal to the locals to embrace the Pacification plan.</p> <p>Huntley: “Also in Thoi Thanh, that day, a government entertainment troupe about to put on a free show for the villagers. Dancing girls and music, one of the Pacification plan’s new techniques in psychological warfare. . . .</p> <p>Despite the optimism of American officials, there is no guarantee the Pacification plan will work. Many officials were optimistic about the Strategic Hamlet program, which failed. . . .</p> <p>If Pacification fails, it will be because the government can no longer provide the security the plan needs to work, and because Vietnam has not produced enough men like Captain Tu.”</p>	<p><i>action teams to get out and do their jobs instead of turning into small town versions of Saigon bureaucrats, a few shots of him inspecting a village and then a brief sequence of the Hamlet Action team under armed guard conducting so elementary a procedure as a census and taking a picture of each family so that eventually the govt will know just who is really a resident of each village and can weed out the VC who use it for a hideout between operations. Then we top it we show the villages being assembled for a performance by one of the Army’s psy warfare drama teams, in this case a grimy but cute-in-a-pathetic way quartet of dancing girls performing folk dances on a stage in the rear of a 2 ½ ton truck. This is the govt’s first sad little effort to prove to the villagers that it is interested in helping them. Normally this performance would be at night but I have asked the Arvin to do it in the afternoon so we don’t get involved in a Donaldsonville lighting project in this area which is still a VC happy hunting ground.</i></p> <p><i>I think this sequence is well worth the day’s shooting it will take. Nobody has ever gotten down for a look at these, dirty, miserable bastards with no shoes and a belt four sizes too big who if the war is ever to be won must be converted into patriots, though God knows what they’ve got to be patriotic about.⁴⁴</i></p>
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Segment Five—Villages at Can Tho and An Long

<p>Program Content: Out in the villages. We see the 3rd Field Hospital at Can Tho and hear brief summary of the hospital’s assets, which are meager. A wall chart spikes up to indicate a 300% rise in admissions. Vietnamese casualties are brought in on stretchers, covered with bloody bandages. There are pools of blood on the floor. Patients moan in pain as they are treated. Injured are bunked two to a bed; terminal patients left alone and display faraway look of despair.</p> <p>Huntley: “While theories are formulated and tested, the war continues more or less routinely. This is Can Tho, government headquarters in the Delta. These buildings, formerly a French Foreign Legion post, are the 3rd Field Hospital—the only military hospital south of Saigon. . . . (VO pictures of injured) This is what the statistics mean in terms of people.”</p>	<p>Rogers’ Notes: 3rd Field Hospital CANTHO. Thru 1962 casualties averaged less than 100 monthly. Mar, April, May, June 63 = 416, 465, 288, 341. Only four months in 60, 61, 62 did casualties reach 100.⁴⁵</p> <p><i>The US Navy hospital in Saigon is the main casualty treatment point for the rough areas north of Saigon and the whole delta. Located in grimy, made over French Apartment building converted into an hospital for \$25,000. . . . When I arrived the courtyard featured a trail of blood stains from Ambulance park to the ground-floor emergency room . . .</i></p> <p><i>This would be a tough sequence to get but would be worth a try. There is no standard procedure for casualties, those up north go mainly to the 8th Base Hospital at NaTrang on the coast where I hope to go next.</i></p>
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	<p><i>Others are dumped off at the Air Force dispensary at Ton Su Nhut Airfield outside Saigon. But most go to the Navy Hosp. here. They come in by chopper to a soccer field near the Five Oceans BOQ, where the Hosp. Ambulance meets them and then races siren blaring to the hospital courtyard where they are hauled into the emergency room. The hospital gets varying degrees of advance notice, sometimes more or less than a half hour. The hospital staff will cooperate in setting up a deal where they would let us know as soon as they get word of a casualty coming in. We race to the soccer field, film the chopper coming in, the casualty being loaded in the ambulance then race to the hospital and the transfer to the emergency room. It would make a fast and dramatic little opening sequence. . . .</i>⁴⁶</p>
<p>Special Forces camp at An Long. We see Vietnamese recruits in black uniforms wearing camouflage caps, learning to shoot rifles under tutelage of American advisors.</p> <p>Huntley: “The Viet Cong are bullies. One of their military doctrines is ‘pick on someone smaller.’ Therefore most government casualties are among militia units and instant soldiers like these counter-guerrilla strike-force troops receiving their basic rifle instruction at An Long, Special Forces camp near the Cambodian border. Few are volunteers, most were simply scooped up in one of the periodic round-ups which are the mainstays of selective service Vietnamese style. . . . The amazing thing about the Vietnamese soldier is not that he has a high rate of desertion, which he does, but that he continues to fight, if not always with great skill, at least with more courage and persistence that could reasonably be expected.”</p>	<p>Rogers’ Notes: <i>The special forces camp at An Long on the banks of the Mekong way up on the Cambodian border has just about everything we need. Anyway it’s the best one I’ve seen. But tomorrow at 7 I’m flying up to another which promises to be even better. . . . Otherwise we should use An Long for our isolated American outpost sequence.</i>⁴⁷</p>
<p>VN troops clean weapons in barracks. Outside, large flock of geese mill about the compound.</p> <p>Huntley: “Special Forces techniques of counter-guerrilla warfare are one of the brighter spots in Vietnam. Their biggest weapon is resourcefulness. Even the camp geese are kept outside the parapet to honk an alarm in case of night infiltrators.”</p>	<p>AUTHOR NOTE: Rogers used this visual earlier in the program as a powerful metaphor for the plight of Vietnamese civilians, trapped between VC intimidation and government inefficiency. It is one of the best illustrations of his ability to write to picture and to raise the power of the image by blending word and picture for greater impact.</p>
<p>Segment Six—River Patrol</p>	
<p>Program Content: River Patrol. This segment features Ted Yates as the NBC correspondent, who interviews Captain Syd Shacknell [spelling not verified] about the security of the base and his unit’s mission. Then we see, in silhouette, scenes of a river boat patrol up the Mekong River. There are camera shots from within a boat toward other boats in the small fleet of four or five craft. There are also camera shots from shore as the boats move by. The boats are slowed by the swamp and high weeds. The Captain jumps out and pulls the craft, walking in neck-deep water. To ward off ambush, they</p>	<p>Rogers’ Notes: <i>There are several sequences we should do in the Delta: I spent some time with a River assault group, these are motley collections of landing craft, gunboats, and armed launches which patrol the rivers and canals in the vast delta (This is distinct from the junk force which merely patrols the coast) The RAGs as they are called are in the thick of the hottest regions, the Delta, and since a good bit of the Delta is water they are one of the keys to the war over here. Ferrying troops and furnishing mobile fire support they move up and down canals less wide than Wisconsin Ave. [the Washington,</i></p>

<p>fire machine gun rounds toward the shoreline. The troops leave their boats for shore when an ambush arises. There are rounds of gunfire, but no casualties seen or reported.</p> <p>This segment continues with voiceover by the Captain Shacknell: “We have to recognize that this war is a way of life for [the Vietnamese]. The average peasant in this area is very indifferent about the war. He will go along with the winning side, but primarily all he is interested in is raising his family and raising his crop. The VC in this area primarily operate from Cambodia, which is their sanctuary. During the day we control the countryside out here. However at night this area is back under VC control. . . . When we do make contact with the VC, they have a remarkable ability to vanish into the countryside and all we end up liberating is a flag, a dummy, or some propaganda material, which is at times frustrating, however it keeps the VC off balance. . . .”</p> <p>Another U. S. patrol leader on Camera: “Actually there’s only one way to win any war, that’s to kill enough of ‘em so the rest of ‘em get scared then they quit.”</p>	<p><i>D.C. street where the NBC Bureau is located] are frequently bushwhacked and are at the mercy of mines. . . . The advisor to the Navy RAG operating out of Can Tho, which is one of the hot spots of the Delta, and handles patrols right up to the Cambodian border, is Lt. Comdr. Dusty Rhodes . . . With him we can set up a sweep of one of the islands in the Delta rivers which might be pretty good. It would be as close as we could get to filming a controlled bit of combat. What they do is pick an island with a high VC infestation rate. Most of them are low, flat expanses of paddies with good camera vistas. We use three cameras, one with the assault force, one in a light plane above, and one with the cordon of picket boats which takes position the evening before around the far end of the Island to prevent the VC from escaping. It will give us a complete little sequence on a pretty typical operation in the crucial delta region and offers us a degree of control impossible if we tried to do this with a strictly landborne or helicopter force because of the pre-set cordon around the island prevents the VC from following their 99 out of a hundred times strategy of simply melting away thru govt land cordons when faced with a superior force.⁴⁸</i></p>
<p>The segment continues with Captain Shacknell’s voice over pictures of a U. S. physician treating a Vietnamese child’s foot in An Long. We also see many shots of large groups of Vietnamese adults and children, including close-ups of young faces: “Fighting VC is not our sole objective. We also try to win the support of the peasant, the indifferent peasant. And one of the ways is an effective medical program. For example, this detachment, during a five-month period, treated 20,000 patients. It is hard for us to imagine, however the majority of people in this area are disease ridden with every sickness imaginable. And this is primarily due to the standards of living. . . . Success is extremely difficult to evaluate, for we are not trying to gain the possession of a hill or a piece of terrain, but the support and the minds of the people in Vietnam.”</p>	
<p>Yates continues his interview with Captain Shacknell. Yates: “Do you look to any kind of dramatic victory out here?” Shacknell: “I think it will be a very gradual victory. It won’t be a complete victory as we knew in World War II. I think the impact of the VC will be felt for maybe fifty, sixty years.”</p> <p>Over scenes of barbed wire fences, Yates: “I hope the patience of the people back in the United States will hold up that long.” Shacknell: “Well I hope so, because some of the problems, from what I’ve read, the French had, is that they did not have the support of the French people. And we will come by the same fate if the people back in the United States don’t support the Americans that are over here.”</p>	

Segment Seven—Soctrang Tigers Officers' Club

Program Content: This segment revisits the Soctrang Tigers helicopter-assault unit. The program intercuts scenes of helicopters firing on VC with the debriefing/bull session held at the end of the day in the Officers' Club. We hear chopper sounds, copious machine gun fire, rocket firings, and the squawking radio communication among the pilots and base. We see bullet shells bubbling up from the machine guns, views through the gunner's gun sight, rockets leaving their pods and landing in rice paddies. We also see, from the helicopter above, people wearing black outfits running through the paddies. In the club, men are huddled over the bar, while others occupy a booth, and a musical combo plays on makeshift instruments and a tinny piano.

Huntley: "[T]he Soctrang Tigers await the order to attack the fleeing Viet Cong. At Soctrang, the day's battles are refought each night over a fifteen-cent beer. Here at the Officers' Club, the temperature is 95, the humidity higher. The pilots furnish their own music. Soctrang is surrounded by swamps and the enemy. Last spring the Viet Cong mortared these buildings. Any night they could do it again. After the nightly movie, the bull sessions revolve around sex and the war."

Huntley introduces four pilots, Capt. Ralph Hamner, Capt. Joe Camel, Major Joe Levinson, and Capt. Burt Nye. Capt. Nye: "I think we've got a problem with our armed helicopters. We can't compete with anything heavier than a 30-caliber. And actually we're only just barely competing with 30-caliber. Our range is the same as there's. When we get within our range, we're within their range. So we don't have any margin for safety." Capt. Hamner: "I'm with Burt on this thing. With a heavy-caliber weapon like they have, like a 50 or 20 millimeter, my goodness, they'll knock us out of the sky." Major Levinson: "You can say we've never been driven away, though."

The scene cuts to several rockets firing from a helicopter and machine gun fire down toward a rice paddy at several enemy. One pilot comments about splattering one right in the back with a rocket. Capt. Nye: "Blew the other one about ten feet. I got the other two with the machine guns. It's very satisfying to know that sometimes you do kill people with these things."

Major Levinson: "This is not like another war where you're fighting a known enemy and you can draw a line of demarcation. . . .The problem is that the enemy is well intermixed with the friendlies." Nye: "This war could go on ad infinitum. There's no goal, it doesn't seem to me, to be attained at this point. Course the

Rogers' Notes: *Soctrang Airstrip: This is the forward US airstrip in the delta, a chopper company a medical evac outfit, and some T-28s . . . the best thing about Soctrang is the Dawn Patrol-Tomorrow We Die atmosphere of the club. These guys sing, drink and relax hard and we might get some good dialogue. Joe Levinson, is a jovial guitar playing Major who commands the place. He will send his armed Hueys out to pick a fight for us if we're interested. And there's no trouble finding someone to shoot back down there, as I found out. The Med Evac choppers are the busiest in VN, and could give us some gory stuff. Two days at Soctrang I think would be well worth while, and not many newsmen get down there. (In early May the VC actually attacked the strip---37 mortar rounds right on the runway---4 birds wrecked) and they would be so happy to get some attention they'd do most anything for us. Contact Major Joe Levinson or Capt Burt Nye Lady 403, or thru Delta Avn Bn in Cantho Weasel 69.⁴⁹*

Also in other notes on interviews and from various sources: ---our immediate problem no longer to win war (hopeless) but to prevent threatened ascendancy of anti-war government...⁵⁰

NVN convinced that the US has neither the will or patience to hold onto SVN.⁵¹

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE FRENCH COMPARED TO ARVIN WAS NOT TOO BAD. THE FRENCH HELD MORE TERRITORY, WITH LESS TROOPS AND FAR LESS PLANES.⁵²

<p>ultimate goal is to throw the VC out and to give the country back to the regime currently in Saigon. Nevertheless, I don't think we have the solution to the problem. And I think it's strictly a trial and error type thing. Eventually I think the solution to the thing will be recognized and dealt with. I can't see any answer that's coming in my lifetime."</p> <p>Capt. Camel: "At the same time you gotta figure another thing. They've been at this thing a long time. A real long time. And just how much motivation can one have over a period of eight, ten, eleven years? And yet no solution. Until we solve this the helicopters, American forces, or any other government forces, until we get to that point, the people have heard 'cry wolf,' they've heard 'this,' 'we will support,' 'we won't support,' and if I were one of them I would just think, well, you're gonna be here today, are you gonna be here tomorrow? And with this in mind, I don't know what I'd have to say to myself as far as motivation and nationalism are concerned."</p> <p>Levinson: "The way it's going now, it's going to be a long, long, long war. And we'll be back here."</p>	
<p>Over pictures of battered aircraft hulls, Huntley: "Most of this junk is the result of Viet Cong ground fire. The total number of American aircraft shot down is classified. But the number exceeds one hundred. Some have been repaired, the rest look like these. One of the few certainties in Vietnam today is that there'll be more of them." As the camera pans wrecked U. S. helicopters, the music changes from the home-grown jazz playing at the Officers' Club to a reprise of the French can-can music played earlier and back again to the jazz. [Like the scenes of the French graves earlier in the documentary, the implication is clear that the United States is on a road formerly traveled by the French.] Huntley: "Theoretically the United States is in Vietnam to defend a free country. But, in fact, we are still trying to nurse one into existence. That is the problem."</p>	

¹ Daniel Einstein, *Special Edition: A Guide to Network Television Documentary Series and Special News Reports, 1955-1979*, Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1987, p. 202.

² *New York Times* 7 June 1967, p. 21.

³ Richard "Jim" Norling, unpublished memoir, 30-35. Courtesy Jim Norling. Charles A. Hoagland, "Ted Yates Killed During Fire Fight in Jerusalem," *White House Photographer*. Reprinted in *Congressional Record--Appendix*, 17 July 1967, A3582.

⁴ Norling memoir 30-35.

⁵ Norling memoir 30. Al Hoagland, oral history with the author, 22 February 2000.

⁶ Hoagland oral history, 22 February 2000.

⁷ "In Memoriam--Ted Yates," *Television Quarterly*, Summer 1967, vol. vi, no. iii, 46-53. "He Was Too Brave," *Newsweek*, 19 June 1967, 84. "U.S. TV Aide and Photographer Are Killed in Mideast Fighting," *The New York Times*, 7 June 1967, 21. "Cost of War," *Time*, 16 June 1967, 73-74. Charles A. Hoagland, "Hoagland Describes Middle East Fighting--Calls Battle Fierce, Damage Devastating; Ted Yates Killed During Fire Fight in Jerusalem," *White House Photographer*. Reprinted in *Congressional Record--Appendix*, 17 July 1967, A3582. "Ted Yates, of NBC News," *Congressional Record--Senate*, 6 June 1967, 14754. "Paul Schutzer and Ted Yates," *Congressional Record--House*, 7 June 1967, 15084. "The Death of Ted Yates in the Arab-Israel War," *Congressional Record--Senate*, 7 June 1967, 15005-15006. "Ted Yates," *Congressional Record--Senate*, 12 June 1967, 15345-46. "Death of Paul Schutzer and Ted Yates in the Near East," *Congressional Record--Senate*, 14 June 1967, 15801-803. "Ted Yates," *Congressional Record--Appendix*, 22 June 1967, A3165-66. "Ted Yates' Fire Team," *Congressional Record--Appendix*, 17 July 1967, A3581-82. "Ted Yates," *Congressional Record--Appendix*, 23 June 1967, A3226.

⁸ Susan D'Entremont, "Appraisal Report, Robert F. Rogers Papers," State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1 August 1995.

⁹ Robert F. Rogers, interview with the author, 10 February 1987.

¹⁰ There is no mention of Rogers, for instance, in classic texts like A. William Bluem's *Documentary in American Television* (NY: Hastings House, 1965) or Erik Barnouw's *Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹¹ Rogers' papers, box 1 folder 7, letter to Yates attached to notes for 1-6 June 1964.

¹² Jim Norling, oral history with the author, at his Maryland home, 19 May 2000. Mr. Norling's diary collection was also examined there.

¹³ Norling oral history, 19 May 2000.

¹⁴ Rogers' papers, box 1 folder 7, attached to notes dated 1-6 June 1964.

¹⁵ Rogers' papers, box 1 folder 7, notes dated 7-22 June 64.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Rogers, oral history with the author, at the Kenwood Country Club, Bethesda, Maryland, 19 May 2000.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Several marriage announcements of 21 September 1952 and 25 January 1953, contained in Rogers' file at Georgetown University. Courtesy Lynn Conway, Georgetown University Library.

¹⁸ NBC News bio, 26 March 1983, in Rogers' papers. Rogers interview, 10 February 1987.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Rogers, 19 May 2000.

²⁰ Lois Stark, 18 September 1998.

²¹ "The College," *Georgetown University* informational catalog, circa 1952-53. *Georgetown University Catalogue* 18-19.

²² *G Book 72*. Thirteen stars denote the original colonies. A striped shield with stars symbolizes the union of the colonies into a single nation. These symbols also signify the proximity of the college to the national government, in geographic location to the capitol and in history and purpose. (Georgetown University was founded in the year of the U. S. Constitution, 1789.) The seal was granted to the university along with its charter by an Act of Congress in 1815.

²³ *Catalogue* 25.

²⁴ Stark, 18 September 1998.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Douglas J. Rowe, "Preserving Hollywood Lore," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 21 May 2000, 8.

²⁸ Obituary, *Washington Post*, 30 June 1979, C8. Dave Kehr, "At the Movies," *New York Times*, 7 April 2000, E:14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Reuven Frank interview 26 April 1999.

³¹ *Vietnam: It's a Mad War*, NBC News 1 December 1964, Ted Yates Producer-Director, Robert F. Rogers Associate Producer-Writer, Julian Townsend Cinematographer, Georges Klotz Editor. According to soundman Al Hoagland, the ducks were an early warning system to protect the village against surprise attack. But the shot became a visual metaphor for a hopeless dilemma.

³² Einstein. Raymond Lee Carroll, *Factual Television in America: An Analysis of Network Television Documentary Programs, 1948-1975*, diss., Madison: U Wisconsin-Madison, 1978. Reuven Frank, *Out of Thin Air, The Brief Wonderful Life of Network News*, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1991.

³³ Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film*, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993. A. William Bluem, *Documentary In American Television*, NY: Hastings House Publishers, sixth printing, 1975. Jack Ellis, *The Documentary Idea*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989.

³⁴ Michael Curtin, *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

³⁵ Ahmad Alasti, *The American Documentary Films of the Vietnam War*, diss. University of Texas at Dallas, 1992. Jongsoo Lee, *Network Television Documentaries about the Vietnam War: CBS Documentaries form 1964 to 1984 in a Changing Historical Context*, diss. University of Minnesota, 1994. Thomas Michael McNulty, *Network Television Documentary Treatment of the Vietnam War, 1965-1969*, diss. Indiana University, 1974.

³⁶ Rogers' papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, box 1 folder 7, notes 7 June 22 June, p. 5.

³⁷ Rogers' papers, 1-6 June 1964, p. 3.

³⁸ *Vietnam: It's a Mad War*, NBC News 1 December 1964, Ted Yates Producer-Director, Robert F. Rogers Associate Producer-Writer, Julian Townsend Cinematographer, Georges Klotz Editor. According to soundman Al Hoagland, the ducks were an early warning system to protect the village against surprise attack. But the shot became a visual metaphor for the hopeless dilemma of the Vietnamese peasants.

³⁹ Box 1, folder 7, Vietnam Notes NEW LEADER June 1964.

⁴⁰ Interview notes with Tom Corcoran, Col. John Cleland, State Dept., box 1, folder 7.

⁴¹ Interview notes with Gilbert Kinney AID, box 1, folder 7.

⁴² Notes to Yates 7 June –22 June, box 1, folder 7, p. 2-3.

⁴³ Notes 1-6 June 1964, box 1, folder 7, p. 2-3.

⁴⁴ Notes 2 June 22 June, box 1, folder 7, p. 5-6.

⁴⁵ Field notes, box 1, folder 7, page on 3rd Field Hospital.

⁴⁶ Vietnam notes 1-6 June 64, box 1, folder 7, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Notes 7 June 22 June, box 1, folder 7, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 4-5.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 6-7.

⁵⁰ Vietnam Notes, box 1, folder 7, NEW LEADER June 1964, p. 1.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 2.

⁵² Ibid. p. 3.