

The AP logo is located in the top left corner of the page. It consists of the letters 'AP' in a bold, black, sans-serif font, positioned above a solid red horizontal bar. The background of the entire page is a black and white photograph of a man, Malcolm Browne, sitting in the cockpit of a helicopter. He is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved button-down shirt and light-colored trousers. He is looking out of the cockpit window to his right with a slight smile. A camera is mounted on his lap, and a watch is visible on his left wrist. The cockpit interior is dark, with some metallic panels and a window visible behind him.

**AP**

# **THE UNQUIET AMERICAN:** Malcolm Browne in Saigon, 1961–65

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*The Unquiet American: Malcolm Browne in Saigon, 1961–65*, an exhibit drawn from The Associated Press Corporate Archives, honors the courageous journalism of Malcolm Browne (1931–2012) during the early years of the Vietnam War. While Browne was reporting a war being run largely covertly by the White House, the CIA and the Pentagon, he was waging his own battles in another: the war against journalists. Meanwhile, he accompanied U.S. advisers by helicopter into the countryside seeking the latest intelligence on Viet Cong and North Vietnamese offensives. Browne’s letters to AP General Manager Wes Gallagher and Foreign Editor Ben Bassett, and theirs to him, allow us to hear the Saigon/New York dialogue as the biggest story of the decade began to unfold.

When AP General Manager Frank Starzel decided to send a permanent correspondent to Saigon, he chose the 31-year-old Browne, a chemist by training, then working in the Baltimore bureau. He read and spoke French, had served in the Army as a public information officer in Korea and written for the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* before joining AP. In 1961, he asked for the Saigon assignment and got it. “It is my belief that Asia is the fulcrum of contemporary history,” he explained, “and I want to have a part in reporting it.”

It was a pivotal moment. The 1954 Geneva Accords had divided Vietnam provisionally, leaving Communist leader Ho Chi Minh in charge north of the 17th parallel, while the authoritarian but anti-communist regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem rose to power in the south and received substantial United States aid. Intent on preserving that aid, Diem employed censorship, physical intimidation and

other invidious means to impede reporting he perceived as critical of his government. Meanwhile, the White House and Pentagon provided little information to reporters and pressured them for favorable coverage of both the political and military situations.

Browne arrived in Saigon on Nov. 7, 1961, joining Vietnamese colleague Ha Van Tran. The bureau soon acquired two formidable additions, correspondent Peter Arnett and photographer Horst Faas. From the start, Browne began filing stories that got him noticed by U.S. military officials and the “goons” of the Diem regime. Among these early stories are the arrival of the USNS Core in Saigon harbor with its secret helicopter cargo and crews (December 1961); the difficulties of reporting from Vietnam (March 1962), a story held up by the censors; and a brilliant evocation of the “war behind the war” (October 1962), which got Browne into hot water with the CIA.

The exhibit also touches on the Buddhist crisis, which Browne later referred to as his “personal beat.” Throughout the summer and fall of 1963, Buddhist clergy, supported by Vietnamese civilians, began daily protests against the repressive pro-Catholic Diem regime. Finally, the regime struck back, driving the monks from their pagodas and into prisons. Browne’s reporting was tireless and his temper short. When New York sent a rocket (a critical missive inquiring about a missing or lagging story), he hurled this message back: “outpoint arnett faas eteye been working up to fifteen hours daily sevendays weekly propast few months ... this not not procrybabying but to ask forbearance for our deficiencies etrequest ununrocket us.”

Browne’s photograph of the self-immolation of Thich Quan Duc, taken on June 11, 1963, led President John F. Kennedy to reappraise U.S. support of Diem. After Diem’s murder on Nov. 1, 1963, in a coup that most probably had the administration’s tacit approval, Browne provided an unmatched account of Diem’s final hours that received tremendous play. For his breaking news stories and his astute analysis of a war in the making, Browne won the Pulitzer Prize for international reporting in 1964.

Browne left AP in 1965 but remained in Saigon as a television reporter for ABC News. In 1968, he joined *The New York Times* as a foreign correspondent. He worked in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Asia, left to edit a science magazine, and returned to the *Times* in 1985, mainly as a science writer. He also covered the 1991 Gulf War. He retired from the *Times* in 2000.

In 1993, Browne published *Muddy Boots and Red Socks* (Times Books), a memoir which deftly combines a fast-moving narrative with astute historical analysis and personal insight. He shows us the kind of journalism he practiced and why. Curiosity propelled him, and his early training in chemistry transferred directly into reporting, as he was always observing at close range. What piqued his curiosity remained with him. Of Vietnam, he wrote, “it is a beautiful and sometimes noble little country, which I have come to love.”

Valerie S. Komor  
Director, AP Corporate Archives  
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From left: Malcolm Browne at work in New York as a chemist for the Foster D. Snell Co. in 1953, before his induction into the military and subsequent career in journalism.  
PHOTO COURTESY LE LIEU BROWNE

Associated Press General Manager Wes Gallagher, left, walks with AP correspondent Malcolm Browne in Saigon upon Gallagher’s arrival, March 20, 1964, for an inspection tour of news operations in the Far East.  
AP PHOTO

Reporters, from left, David Halberstam of *The New York Times*, AP Saigon Correspondent Malcolm Browne and Neil Sheehan of UPI chat beside a helicopter in Vietnam, ca. 1964.  
AP PHOTO

Browne, on home leave in New York, reads about his Pulitzer Prize for international reporting, May 4, 1964. His colleague in Saigon, David Halberstam of *The New York Times*, also won the Pulitzer in the same category that year.  
AP PHOTO

Le Lieu and Malcolm Browne pose on their wedding day outside their apartment at 158 Rue Pasteur in Saigon, July 18, 1966.  
PHOTO COURTESY LE LIEU BROWNE

From right, Browne, his wife Le Lieu Browne and AP veterans Edie Lederer and Nick Ut examine a photo at an Aug. 11, 2012, tribute to two AP colleagues from the Vietnam era, George Esper and Horst Faas.  
AP PHOTO / VALERIE KOMOR

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AP SPOTLIGHT ADVANCE FOR SUNDAY AMS

BY MALCOM W. BROWNE

SAIGON, VIET NAM, OCT. 27 (AP)--THERE IS A WAR BEHIND THE WAR IN SOUTH VIET NAM, AND IT SEEMS TO BE GOING WELL FOR THE WEST.

IT IS A WAR IN WHICH AMERICANS PLAY KEY ROLES--ROLES THAT CANNOT YET BE FILLED BY TRAINED VIETNAMESE MILITARY MEN.

LIKE AN ICEBERG, ONLY PART OF IT SHOWS. THE REST LIES HIDDEN UNDER SECRECY CLASSIFICATION STAMPS AND CODE WORDS LIKE "JUNGLE GYM," "DIRTY THIRTY," AND "FARMGATE." OFFICIALS PRIVATELY CALL IT THE "GRAY AREA" OF JOINT VIETNAMESE AND AMERICAN EFFORTS TO WIPE OUT THE VIET CONG, AS THE COMMUNIST FORCES ARE CALLED.

EVERY CONCEIVABLE MILITARY TALENT--FROM AIRCRAFT PILOTING TO UNDERWATER DEMOLITION--COMES INTO PLAY. MANPOWER INCLUDES ECONOMISTS, COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALISTS, INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVES, PROPAGANDISTS, DOCTORS AND POLITICIANS.

IT IS A WAR FOUGHT IN MANY WAYS ON THE SAME TERMS AS THOSE OF THE VIET CONG, WHICH HAS USED SOME OF THE TECHNIQUES WITH DEADLY EFFECT.

SOMETIMES IT COMES UNDER THE GLARE OF PUBLICITY. A VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE FIGHTER PLANE CRASHES, AND IT IS LEARNED THAT THE LONE OCCUPANT WAS AN AMERICAN. OR IT IS LEARNED THAT U.S. ARMY MEN HAVE ORGANIZED A MOUNTAIN TRIBE INTO AN IRREGULAR BUT EFFECTIVE COMBAT UNIT.

THIS "OTHER WAR" IS TRICKY TO FIGHT, BECAUSE TWO DIFFICULT CONDITIONS MUST BE MET. AMERICA MUST NOT SERIOUSLY INFRINGE ON THE NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM. IT ALSO MUST NOT PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR A SERIOUS CITATION BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL COMMISSION.

THIS COMMISSION, MADE UP OF DELEGATIONS FROM INDIA, CANADA AND POLAND, WAS CREATED IN 1954 TO SUPERVISE TERMS OF THE GENEVA ACCORD THAT ENDED THE INDOCHINA WAR. THE COMMISSION HAS NO POLICE

The Associated Press Corporate Archives, founded in 2003, documents the history and operation of the organization. To that end, the Archives acquires, preserves and makes available for research those records that are deemed of enduring value.

Supporting these activities are programs in collection development, manuscripts processing, cataloging, preservation, exhibition and outreach, oral history and reference services.

"A War Behind the War in South Viet Nam," Oct. 27, 1962, by Malcolm Browne. FOREIGN BUREAU CORRESPONDENCE, AP CORPORATE ARCHIVES, NEW YORK.

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