

May 2020

The Patriot Journalist: An Examination of the Work of Wisconsin's Dickey Chapelle

Dee Ann Holzel
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.uwm.edu/etd>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Holzel, Dee Ann, "The Patriot Journalist: An Examination of the Work of Wisconsin's Dickey Chapelle" (2020). *Theses and Dissertations*. 2384.
<https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/2384>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by UWM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of UWM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact open-access@uwm.edu.

THE PATRIOT JOURNALIST

AN EXAMINATION OF THE WORK OF WISCONSIN'S DICKEY CHAPELLE

by

Dee Hölzel

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in History

at

The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee

May 2020

ABSTRACT
THE PATRIOT JOURNALIST
AN EXAMINATION OF THE WORK OF WISCONSIN'S DICKEY CHAPELLE

by

Dee Hölzel

The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee

Under the Supervision of Professor Chia Vang

Wisconsin journalist Dickey Chapelle is primarily remembered as the first female journalist from the U.S. killed while covering combat. She died while on patrol with the Marines on Nov. 4, 1965 in South Vietnam. Chapelle was repeatedly in Vietnam to cover the war from 1961-1965, but the resulting articles were rarely published. In fact, only three articles from her trips to Laos and Vietnam were published in any major magazine. The evidence demonstrates Chapelle believed her difficulties in finding publishers was the result of gender discrimination. However, Chapelle had no formal education and no training for the work required of a journalist. An examination of her professional correspondence revealed that editors were dissatisfied with her work product due to her unorthodox reporting style, her inability to produce copy related to the assignment she was given, and in some cases her lack of objectivity. Chapelle professed to a sort of 'see and report' style, but an examination of her private correspondence revealed she had strong anti-communist, pro-interventionist beliefs that led her to tailor articles in order to gain the support of people in the U.S. for the Vietnam War. The evidence demonstrates that Chapelle was ill-prepared for the writing required of a war correspondent during this era. Further, her ideology shaped her reporting, as opposed to her reporting being shaped by events on the ground in a true 'see and report' style.

To
Professor Chia Vang
and
Professors Christine Evans and Aims McGuinness
For your wise counsel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Representation in Literature.....	3
Chapter 2: Professional Correspondence.....	12
Chapter 3: Journalism Ethics and Style.....	28
Chapter 4: Private Correspondence and Speaking Tours.....	45
Chapter 5: Reporting Vietnam.....	53
Conclusion.....	66
Bibliography.....	68

INTRODUCTION

Dickey Chapelle was a combat reporter from World War II to the Vietnam War, where she was killed on Nov. 4, 1965 while patrolling with the U.S. Marines. She was the first female journalist from the United States killed while covering combat, the first female journalist killed in Vietnam, and the sixth journalist to be killed in 1965. This thesis will focus on Chapelle's work as a journalist in Vietnam; though, her work in other combat zones will also be used where necessary to add context. The thesis is an examination of Chapelle's correspondence and work product, with additional observations from her biography and autobiography, in order to illustrate how her personal ideology impacted in her work. In doing so, I shed light on the unconventional ways in which Chapelle practiced journalism that resulted in different public and private characterizations of her life and work.

Because I have long been interested in journalism history, I was aware of Chapelle's status as the first woman from the U.S. killed covering combat. I was surprised to learn, however, that she was from Shorewood. I wondered to myself, "Where are her papers?" In fact, her papers had been left to the Wisconsin Historical Society. Chapelle was something of a saver, so I was delighted with the boxes and boxes of correspondence I found there. As a student of journalism history, I was also interested in her work product -- the magazine articles that were published, particularly from Vietnam. Here I was surprised again because there were just three articles as well as one published posthumously as part of a tribute. Considering the amount of time Chapelle spent in Vietnam, that was not a significant amount of published work. Her correspondence mentions so many articles, with intriguing headlines, but I was to discover those articles were never published. Chapelle's correspondence show she had to go on speaking tours

and make appearances for financial reasons because she was not selling enough articles to live. The methodology I used to understand the discrepancy between all the written articles, but the lack of published work, was to focus on the letters between Chapelle and her editors. I asked, "What was the problem?" I also examined Chapelle's letters for any particular ideology related to journalism. I learned that Chapelle had a strong opinions about how reporters should gather information and strong views about the world in general and Vietnam in particular. I also discovered that Chapelle supported the war and used her position as a journalist and public speaker to advocate for U.S. intervention in Vietnam. In the last few months of her life, Chapelle began newspaper work, but that will not be considered here as she was killed on her first overseas assignment.

Chapelle was described as a tough woman, known for covering the war by marching with the Marines, who earned her jump wings in order to parachute into combat with the troops. Her journalism ethics prevented her from reporting on events she did not witness firsthand, which resulted in her returning from assignments without an article for the magazine she worked for to publish. Chapelle's correspondence illustrated that she did not understand why she had difficulties getting her work published, she did not understand her unconventional methods were problematic to her publishers, but she understood the truth of Vietnam, and the few articles that were published demonstrated she used her platform as a journalist -- and public speaker -- to promote the U.S. mission in Vietnam.

CHAPTER 1: REPRESENTATION IN LITERATURE

In 2004, Warner Brothers and Plan B -- the production company started by Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston -- announced they planned to turn Dickey Chapelle's life story into a movie starring Jennifer Aniston in the leading role.¹ In the article, Chapelle was described as a blonde, blue-eyed beauty, who was smart, and tomboyish, but also brave and intuitive -- just like Aniston. But within a year, Pitt and Aniston divorced and the movie was never made. Considering the historical errors in the description by the screenwriter, it probably was for the best. Chapelle was generally not described as a beauty and her photographs of the front lines from Iwo Jima were not destroyed by the State Department, as the author contends. Chapelle was complex and perhaps that made her difficult to represent in 90 minutes. Another challenge was that she generally did not write about her life outside of work. While Chapelle's biography included little about her personal life, her biography was more balanced, and other writers were also able to contribute insight.

In her biography, *What's a Woman Doing Here? A Reporter's Report on Herself*, published in 1962, Chapelle does not begin with illustrated narratives of her childhood in Shorewood. Instead, she began with one of the defining moments of her life, and the event that was represented the most in her biography: her 1956 capture by the communists during the Hungarian Revolution. She was a long way from home, she told her readers, and only then did she visit the past.

¹ Michael Fleming, "Warner's focuses on war," *Daily Variety* 283, 50 (2004).

Chapelle's biography was about her work as a reporter, not a fulsome examination of her entire life, and she therefore spent little time on her childhood. She described her large German family as permissive, her mother strict, and she was an overweight tomboy who, she told her audience, had nothing to rebel against. Her family was conservative pacifists and her father an active member of the Republican party. Chapelle wanted to be a pilot, but her mother flatly refused to allow it. And so, she applied to and was accepted to Massachusetts Institute of Technology with the hope of designing airplanes. Except for her lifelong love of fresh milk, that was about it from Wisconsin.²

Chapelle's biographer, Roberta Ostroff, gave a more rounded view of Chapelle's childhood in Shorewood. When she was born on March 14, 1918, Chapelle was named for her Aunt Georgette and would be known in Shorewood forever by her nickname Georgie Lou.³ She gave herself the nickname Dickey -- after her hero, Admiral Richard Byrd. In the stories told by relatives and friends, it is easier to get a glimpse of the woman who would become Dickey Chapelle than it was from the few details given by Chapelle herself.

From a childhood friend who lived across the street, who walked with Chapelle to school every day, the reader learned that Chapelle would always stop at the Shorewood Village Hall to salute the flag, which the friend -- who said she was just as patriotic as the others in their conservative community -- described as "excessive".⁴ Chapelle was overweight, dressed with masculine flair, climbed trees, and fences, and was generally too loud.⁵ As a teenager in high school during the mid-1930s, Chapelle gave herself a crew cut. She was different and as sometimes happens with people who are different, she was bullied. Ostroff noted, "Although no

² Dickey Chapelle, *What's a Woman Doing Here? A Reporter's Report on Herself* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1962).

³ Roberta Ostroff, *Fire in the Wind: The Life of Dickey Chapelle* (Annapolis, Maryland: Bluejacket Books, 1992).

⁴ Ostroff 27

⁵ Ostroff 28

one was overly fond of her, fifty years later former classmates well remembered Georgie Lou.”⁶

There was considerable distance between the childhood described by Chapelle and that of Ostroff. From Chapelle we learn that her mother believed the world’s problem could be solved with more love and from Ostroff we learned how that played out in practice. For example, when Chapelle was bullied and pushed into the snow for showing off her knowledge in class, her mother responded with a plate of fudge for the class -- insisting the child who pushed received the biggest piece.⁷ Ostroff painted Chapelle's mother as overly controlling to a daughter who grew up to be a woman who followed her own rules, and not those of her mother, or society, and who would not be controlled.

Ostroff created a balanced view of Chapelle, both the glamour, and the rough spots -- including stories from her common-law marriage to a man twice her age, who taught her photography and the workings of the publishing world in the 1940s. Ostroff recounts many of Chapelle's adventures traveling the world as well as her struggles to earn a living as a journalist after her relationship with her husband ended. She went beyond what was in the files of the Wisconsin Historical Society, traveling and interviewing people who knew Chapelle, to present the complex woman that she was, not quite a woman of her time, as she had no desire to settle down to family life in the suburbs, or even at a desk, but also very much a woman of her time in political ideology.

Just as one example, Ostroff wrote about a speech Chapelle gave that very much illustrated her desire to succeed as a woman and also her patriotism. At the Annual Conference of the Girls Scouts of America in 1963, Chapelle was the keynote speaker and told the audience

⁶ Ostroff 28

⁷ Ostroff 35

she was always enraged by the story about Knute Rockne, the Notre Dame football coach, who would fire-up the team by starting off with, "Well, girls ..."⁸ She said the truth was when a man has to do something, he has to be fired up by a coach or a jumpmaster, if he was a paratrooper. She added a man needed "a brass band, three slogans, and a sergeant" to get a thing done. Her advice to the young women was, "You do it like a girl. Just go do it."⁹ She added that having grown up in the Midwest, in the heartland, she believed she could do anything she wanted, that being a woman would not hinder her. However, she cautioned, getting what you want, doing what you want, was work, and required sacrifice. She said, "That's how great the freedom is for being an American woman at this time."¹⁰

The evidence from Chapelle's own writing suggests she believed what she told the young woman, who cheered her speech. Of course, what she said was not true, but Chapelle was from an upper-class family and perhaps did not understand the struggles of poor women or women of color. Even white women of the middle and upper classes in the 1960s were still struggling for equality. This speech exemplifies Chapelle's blind spot, her inability to consider matters holistically due to her political ideology.

Chapelle is included in many histories covering war correspondents and/or the Vietnam War due to the notorious distinction that she was the first female correspondent from the United States killed covering combat. There are some accounts of her life with a little more significant details, but the information is repetitive, the same stories of Chapelle's derring-do, without much context. There are a few notable exceptions.

⁸ Ostroff 347

⁹ Ostroff 348

¹⁰ Ostroff 348

*Women of the World: The Great Foreign Correspondents*¹¹ was written by a friend of Dickey Chapelle, Julia Edwards. In fact, when Edwards left her position as public information officer at the Research Institute of America, she recommended Chapelle for her replacement -- though she did not stay long because Chapelle was not one for a desk job.¹² Edwards does recount many of the stories covered by other writers, and even makes a few mistakes, such as twice writing that Chapelle was pilot at 18 years old.¹³ Unlike other writers, she was able to give a colorful description of Chapelle's private life. Edwards explained when she met Chapelle in 1955, she was in the middle of a divorce from her husband, Tony. Edwards related a comment by a photo editor who knew both Dickey and Tony, who said it was bound to happen as "Tony was earthbound ... (while) Dickey was the one with imagination, dash, and glamour."¹⁴ Dickey and Tony spent six years following World War II traveling across Europe and the Middle East writing about humanitarian issues for various non-profits and the U.S. government. Occasionally, they would sell a story to a magazine to supplement their income. Eventually, however, since the Chapelles worked only for reimbursement of their expenses, finances forced their return to New York, and their relationship ended not long after, dragged down by financial problems and Tony's worsening health.

Edwards wrote that when she met Chapelle shortly after her relationship with Tony dissolved, Dickey was living in a tiny tenement in New York's East Side.¹⁵ Edwards described the apartment as barely large enough for Chapelle's typewriter, but filled with her photography, beautifully mounted.¹⁶ Edwards noted Chapelle was struggling for work and observed that hiring

¹¹ Julia Edwards, *Women of the World: The Great Foreign Correspondents* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988).

¹² Note: A conservative tax-research organization best known as the place William Casey worked before leaving to run Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign.

¹³ Chapelle said her vision was so poor, she could not pilot a plane; though, she did try. (Chapelle 32)

¹⁴ Edwards 208

¹⁵ Edwards 208

¹⁶ Edwards 208

female photographers seemed to have gone out of style. Although they were friends, Edwards did not smooth over the rough areas of Chapelle's adventures. She wrote critically about Chapelle's capture by communists during the 1956 Hungarian Revolt after Chapelle illegally crossed the border, noting, "This was not her finest hour."¹⁷ Edwards argued that Chapelle should have calculated the risk and remembered she was a photographer and not a freedom fighter. Here, Edwards repeated the allegation that Chapelle made the risky decision to enter Hungary to aid the development of her career as a journalist.¹⁸

Chapelle was eventually freed and was able to jumpstart her career, Edwards continued, but she faced stumbling blocks as she attempted to be accredited as a combat correspondent to Vietnam because editors were reluctant to hire women in that role.¹⁹ Edwards observed that Chapelle was not averse to risk; in fact, she had been a risk taker since she started off to cover the Pacific Theater during World War II. In her closing remarks, Edwards said of her friend that she was a pacifist at heart.²⁰ She does not say why she believed this to be true. Did Dickey say so? It is difficult to believe because Chapelle was an interventionist who supported the Vietnam War and believed the United States should fight where ever there was a threat of communism, and said so publicly when opportunity allowed, such as on her speaking tours. Perhaps Dickey had her own definition, as she was wont to do.

Another interesting perspective on Chapelle came from Virginia Elwood-Akers who authored *Women War Correspondents in the Vietnam War 1961-1975* (1988).²¹ Elwood-Akers' narrative on Chapelle is interesting because it covered both the correspondent and the woman;

¹⁷ Edwards 209

¹⁸ Edwards 209

¹⁹ Edwards 211

²⁰ Edwards 213

²¹ Virginia Elwood-Akers, *Women War Correspondents in the Vietnam War 1961-1975* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1988).

that is, both her work and the drivers of her ambitions. For example, the author noted the reason Chapelle initially sought correspondent credentials during World War II was to follow her husband, then a Navy photographer, and not due to her own personal aspirations. She ended up in the South Pacific, as Elwood-Akers noted, because that's where her husband was going and she could not follow him there under any other circumstances except as a correspondent.²² The author argued that Chapelle's "lifelong attachment to the Marine Corps" began at this time.²³

Elwood-Akers also delved into Chapelle's deeply conservative, anticommunist, interventionist ideology. Although there are writers who place Chapelle's anticommunism ideology to her capture by the communists while sneaking into Hungary in 1956, the author places the roots of her feelings towards communism during the six years Chapelle traveled with her husband in Europe and the Middle East covering humanitarian issues after World War II.²⁴ Elwood-Akers made a very important observation about Chapelle when she wrote that for Dickey, the Vietnam War was not complex. She wrote, "To Dickey Chapelle the war in South Vietnam was a simple matter. Communists were attempting to take over South Vietnam. Anti-communists, assisted by Americans, were attempting to stop the invasion. Chapelle's opposition to communism was total; her patriotism was unquestioning."²⁵

Not all of the writers who undertook a telling of Chapelle's life were women. Don Haines, who primarily writes about military issues, wrote an unabashedly admiring essay on Chapelle for *Vietnam Magazine*.²⁶ Haines wrote of Chapelle's willingness to put herself in harm's way to cover her favorite subject: the Marines. Haines wrote of Chapelle's work ethic

²² Elwood-Akers 13

²³ Elwood-Akers 13

²⁴ Elwood-Akers 13

²⁵ Elwood-Akers 10

²⁶ Don Haines, "With Her Eyes Wide Open" *Vietnam Magazine* 20, no. 2 (2007) 38.

that drove her to "eyeball" the action as opposed to covering the war from a barstool in Saigon, as some of her male counterparts did -- whether or not that was true, it is what Chapelle herself said. He observed, "She loved the American fighting man too much, especially the Marines..."²⁷ Haines correctly noted that Chapelle was criticized for her lack of objectivity and for the fact her admiration for the Marines gave the appearance of bias. He also correctly noted that she did not care.²⁸ Later Haines compared Chapelle to famed photographer Margaret Bourke-White and argued that Bourke-White produced better photos, but Chapelle was the better photographer because she took any risk to get the story.²⁹ Haines' assessment of Chapelle's actions was sometimes exaggerated. For example, he argued that Chapelle battled generals and anyone else who stood between her and the story, which is overstating the case. While it was true that Chapelle disobeyed a direct order to go ashore at Okinawa, there wasn't a battle with a commanding officer. She -- figuratively speaking -- tiptoed around the commanding officer's orders and snuck out. Chapelle's hero worship of men in command would never have permitted her to battle one or disobey a direct order.

As others have, Haines repeated the gossip that Chapelle was working as a spy when she illegally entered Hungary, supposedly on a humanitarian mission to deliver penicillin to the people³⁰, which has never been confirmed because Chapelle herself never said and her file with the CIA remains classified. He also argued that Chapelle saw her ordeal in Hungary as an opportunity to promote herself. Haines described Chapelle using terminology she would have appreciated: A patriot journalist.³¹ He added that her editors at *Reader's Digest* did not mind, but the evidence for that assumption tells another story. However, Haines was able to capture

²⁷ Haines 40

²⁸ Haines 40

²⁹ Haines 41

³⁰ Haines 42

³¹ Haines 42

the spirit of Dickey Chapelle in a way that few have. He wrote about her as a woman who lived life on her own terms, regardless of the consequences, and that was an accurate portrayal.

Chapelle's life took her from the suburbs of Shorewood to every corner of the globe. Her career as a writer and photographer allowed her to have an adventurous life -- especially those times she could cover the Marines. There was another side to that life that included the balance between living the life she wanted and the need to earn money -- especially in light of the fact photography was an expensive pursuit. As much as possible, she attempted to use her work as a journalist to fund this lifestyle.

CHAPTER 2: PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

A theme underlying all of these representations of Dickey Chapelle is that she led an adventurous life -- even a glamorous life -- made possible by her career as a journalist. Within her correspondence, however, another Dickey Chapelle is shown, one who struggled to get her work in print, resulting in financial struggles, even while she showed determination to work according to her own ethics, and live life on her own terms. Chapelle did not publicly discuss the difficulties she had finding publishers for her work, and it was not a subject she covered in her biography, but there are clues in her correspondence that she felt gender discrimination was at least partly responsible; however, her correspondence reveals disputes with her editors over style and ethics may also have played a role.

Chapelle addressed the issue of gender discrimination in a letter to her agent in which she lashed out at the publishers whom she felt disregarded her work due to her gender -- with special reference to the two magazines she most wanted to work for: *Life* and *Look*. She wrote that the editors at *Look* always treated her with "discourtesy and doubt" and underlying their treatment of her was the challenge that the photos were hers, taken by her, and not some man who took them for her.³² She surmised that one of the editors bore a grudge against her because she was accredited as a photographer to cover the war in the Pacific Theater, when he assured her the War Department would not allow it, and then he was turned down for service because of a limp.³³ As for *Life*, she continued, they had held a grudge against her since 1956 when she was captured sneaking into Hungary by the communists while on assignment for *Life*. Chapelle

³² Correspondence from Chapelle to Nancy Palmer, Feb 25, 1962, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

³³ Ibid

expressed exasperation at the situation and concluded the only thing to do was show that other editors trusted her.

There were other hints that Chapelle felt a double standard existed in the world of correspondents. In her autobiography, Chapelle wrote about being one of the first correspondents to cover the Algerian National Liberation Front at a time when the French side was getting all the publicity. In the last paragraph of the chapter, she noted that over the course of four years, other journalists would make the trip after her and interview members of the NLF. She noted, "Joseph Kraft of *The Saturday Evening Post* had written a prize-winning book about it. Frank Kearns, of CBS News had produced an award-winning documentary film. All of us told the same story."³⁴ She does not directly say they received notice and awards due to their gender, but it is possible that was what she was suggesting.

In another letter, this one to William Garrett, who was a friend at *National Geographic*, there are also hints of gender discrimination. In that letter Chapelle recounted an instance in 1960 where she offered to write an article on a new training program the military had undertaken.³⁵ However, the proposal was rejected without comment. She sent the same article to General Maxwell Taylor for his opinion, who replied the article demonstrated "clear thinking" and he wished "more people in high places" thought the same. Since that time, she continued, a Pulitzer Prize winning author had written a book on a similar topic that in 1960 had been the "evidence of my bad judgment." The book, she argued, was "evidence I had a real scoop in 1960 -- even if I couldn't sell it." Again, even though she does specifically use the term discrimination, it does seem as though she is suggesting that is what was in play.

³⁴ Chapelle 238-239

³⁵ Correspondence from Chapelle to William Garrett, April 7, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

Dickey Chapelle may have felt some gender discrimination from the publishing world prevented her from achieving professional goals, but she was able to build a strong relationship with the military, which could have been challenging for female correspondents at the time. In fact, Chapelle's singular strength in her pursuit of a journalism career was her excellent relationship with the military because it assured she had stellar access to events. For example, in 1958, Chapelle was covering maneuvers of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, which she would spend a year on, when the fleet was ordered to Lebanon for what was ultimately called the 1958 Lebanon Crisis.³⁶ Having spent so much time covering the Marines and the Navy in maneuvers and exercises, Chapelle was allowed to go ashore in Lebanon with the third wave of Marines.³⁷ She stayed with the Marines in a foxhole securing an airport because the U.S. was concerned that due to instability in the Middle East, which included the assassination of the King of Iraq, that the USSR might try to invade by air and take the country of Lebanon.³⁸ Chapelle would later write a glowing article about the conduct of the Marines, arguing that war was averted because they were so well trained, they did not shoot anyone in Lebanon -- even when provoked.³⁹ In 1959, Chapelle was sent to cover the 101st Airborne Division. The Pentagon wrote a letter introducing her beforehand and noted she had been attached to more than 30 fighting forces during her career.⁴⁰ Ultimately, Chapelle would be trained with the paratroopers and earn her jump wings -- allowing her to parachute into battles with the troops she was covering. In another letter from the Marines, Chapelle was described as "extremely pro Marine Corps" and was the first to say so.⁴¹ The writer went on to say the Marines could expect "top

³⁶ Chapelle 242

³⁷ Chapelle 246

³⁸ Chapelle 246

³⁹ Chapelle 251

⁴⁰ Chapelle 279

⁴¹ Release from Commandant of Marine Corps, Director of Information, July 14, 1960, Box 5, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

billing" in Chapelle's future works.⁴² Even in Laos, where journalists were kept away from battles, Chapelle had been allowed to stay and report for more than a month. However, she struggled to capitalize on that good relationship within the publishing world.

In response to Chapelle's difficulty in getting her work published, her biographer wrote, "It was not surprising that the articles Dickey wrote from Laos and Vietnam, all of which were confrontational about American policy, were suppressed by the *Reader's Digest*."⁴³ In fact, there was nothing in her correspondence to indicate her work from Laos and Vietnam was suppressed, and Chapelle never made that allegation, but there was evidence of a problem. In Chapelle's correspondence are letters between herself and her editors that illustrated she was struggling with the most basic skills required of a journalist: the writing and occasionally the photography. Draft articles went back and forth between Chapelle and her editors over the course of months, and in one case years, while Chapelle struggled to produce the kind of work editors were looking for. In letters about rewrites, she would conclude with her hope that the article was now, "right."⁴⁴ Art departments complained her photos were underexposed or overexposed (a lifelong problem) and were focused incorrectly. Chapelle's struggles in the profession, and by extension her ability to support herself, demonstrate a darker side to the adventure-girl trope that writers use when covering Dickey Chapelle.

In the four years before her death, 1961-1965, Chapelle was in and out of Vietnam four times in addition to her work covering the Cuban underground. In both Vietnam and Miami, she lived with the people she wrote about, giving her a unique perspective into that specific time period, but the resulting articles were rarely published in prominent magazines. Chapelle's

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ostroff 329

⁴⁴ Correspondence from Chapelle to Hobart Lewis, March 4, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

stubborn reliance on first-person narratives, the difficulty she had tailoring her work to the editor's expectations, and her lack of objectivity, resulted in fewer assignments, and the bulk of her work went unpublished.

Chapelle's style of journalism was to present first-person narratives, in which she wrote herself into the story, and she believed in taking sides when reporting. It is not clear how she came by her philosophy of journalism. She had little education, having flunked out of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and was without formal training in the field other than her work on her high school newspaper, at that time called the Shorewood High School *Ripples*. What she knew she learned from her husband, a professional photographer who had been her photography teacher, and from on-the-job experience. On a number of occasions, Chapelle credited the Marines with raising and training her, to use her description.⁴⁵ She referenced a photo taken by her in Vietnam, in which Marines were storming out of a helicopter, and noted it was the Marines who taught her to get out fast, spin, and take the shot.⁴⁶ Chapelle's biography, *What's a Woman Doing Here: A Reporter's Report on Herself*, contained scenes from her life but not much philosophy. Her book was much like her reporting: this is what I have seen.

Where her philosophy came from is unknown, but the fact she held concrete beliefs about the profession is evident from correspondence with the editors at *Reader's Digest*, who admired her courage and agreed with her conservative principles, but who found her a problematic writer. *Reader's Digest* was founded in 1922 by Lila and DeWitt Wallace who sought to condense books and articles into the little magazine.⁴⁷ It grew steadily in popularity and by the time Chapelle began working as a stringer for the magazine it was published in 48 countries and

⁴⁵ Correspondence from Chapelle to Admiral Burke, April 29, 1962, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁴⁶ Ibid

printed in 15 languages. In 1951, *Time* magazine honored *Reader's Digest* with a cover story, calling it "one of the greatest success stories in the history of journalism."⁴⁸ However, it was not without its critics. Louis Bromfield, who wrote for the *Reader's Digest*, allegedly said the appeal of the magazine was to "intellectual mediocrity" and "it requires no thought or perception."⁴⁹ The magazine was unabashedly conservative with a mostly middle class audience.⁵⁰ Chapelle's five-year relationship with the *Reader's Digest* began with an article on the Cuban Revolution, which appeared in the April 1959 edition, and was told from the perspective of the revolutionaries, whom Chapelle travelled with in the last days of the war. The friendly letters back and forth between the Wallaces, editors, and Chapelle demonstrate a friendly relationship. However, by 1963, there were signs of problems between the magazine and Chapelle over the quality of her work. Over the course of a year, from 1963 - 1964, Chapelle and her editors discussed writing, her beliefs, their expectations, and in the end Chapelle's unpublished work was returned to her, and she was given no more assignments.

One of the first issues to arise with Chapelle was her coverage from Laos in 1961, in which she was assigned to write about guerilla warfare and counterinsurgency. Chapelle covered Vietnam the way she had always covered conflict: by following the troops and reporting what she saw, regardless of the assignment. During her trip to Laos, she ended up in Binh Hung Village in South Vietnam, with Father Hoa and the Sea Swallows. In correspondence between herself and her friend Edward Lansdale, of the CIA, she said his article on Father Hoa published in *The Saturday Evening Post* made her want to visit, as well. The title of Lansdale's article was "The Story the Government Wants Published." And here was Chapelle, writing it again and not

⁴⁸ Webb, Sheila, "An American Journalist in the Role of Partisan" *American Journalism* 20, no. 2 (2005). 194

⁴⁹ Webb 194

⁵⁰ Webb 194

writing the story she was sent to cover on guerilla warfare. In a letter to Hobart Lewis, who had sent her three written reminders of her assignment, she wrote, "I want to try to tell "the way it is out here" for the little handful of flesh-and-blood Americans ...who I've seen daily risk their lives to carry out U.S. policy in Laos."⁵¹ There was nothing in the letter to indicate she was writing about counterinsurgency or guerilla warfare. Hobart Lewis wrote on October 23, 1961 reminding her what her assignment had been: to write about guerilla warfare. He noted that General James Van Fleet and General Maxwell Taylor expressed their concern about guerilla warfare in Vietnam (Maxwell played a key role in shaping U.S. policy in Vietnam).⁵² Lewis wrote, "I don't need to tell you how urgently we would like to see an article on the subject."⁵³ The article was never written. In fact, two years later, *Reader's Digest* was still requesting that article.⁵⁴ The articles she did write were not published. She later wrote to a friend, "I'm not just sorry but plain bitter that the tale still hasn't seen print; however, I haven't quit trying with it."⁵⁵ An article on Father Hoa and the Sea Swallows was eventually published in 1963 -- two years and several rewrites later.

A second issue with *Reader's Digest* was Chapelle's writing style, which was first person narrative, in which Chapelle was frequently featured. The effort by *Reader's Digest* editors to get Chapelle to tailor her work began with correspondence dated April 19, 1963, in which Chapelle is given the go-ahead to write an article on STRICOM. In the assignment letter from Hobart Lewis, an associate editor, he instructed her to conference with *Reader's Digest* editors before leaving in order to discuss the project. He wrote, "May I offer one word of caution

⁵¹ Correspondence from Chapelle to Hobart Lewis, June 29, 1961, Box 5, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁵² David Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire: America and Vietnam in the Kennedy Era* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008).

⁵³ Correspondence from Hobart Lewis to Chapelle, Oct. 23, 1961, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁵⁴ Correspondence from Hobart Lewis to Chapelle, June 5, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁵⁵ Correspondence from Chapelle to Captain Herbert Couvillon, Sept. 27, 1962, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

now?"⁵⁶ Lewis continued and instructed Chapelle to write the article as a military correspondent, to write about the program, and not herself. He instructed her to observe and not participate. "We want complete unanimity, top objective reporting and not first person "I was there" material."⁵⁷ Within Chapelle's correspondence, this was the first letter to be written so strongly in reaction to her writing style. However, the fact he gives the advice without explanation, indicates none was needed because they probably had this conversation in the past. Though, there may have been additional concern due to the fact Chapelle referred to the people in STRICOM as "my guys" and had been friends with the commander, General Adams, since the 1950s when she and her husband were living in the Middle East and writing about humanitarian causes.⁵⁸

In June 1963, Lewis wrote a letter giving Chapelle the go-ahead to cover the Cuban underground in Miami, a group comprised of Cubans who fled the country after the revolution, and who were then preparing to invade and liberate Cuba from communism generally and Fidel Castro specifically. This letter is long and specific about what *Reader's Digest* expected from coverage. Lewis wrote, "This is not an action story." He went on to explain the efforts of the Cuban underground would probably be unsuccessful and the resulting article a tragedy. For that reason, he saw the article as a human-interest story. "... a personal and human story of normal unmilitary, middleage people who have become desperate enough to involve themselves in an all but hopeless action."⁵⁹ What the *Reader's Digest* wanted, Lewis continued, was a literary piece. However, Chapelle's early drafts -- complete with an entire article on CIA activities in Miami -- demonstrated she was not following that advice.

⁵⁶ Correspondence from Hobart Lewis to Chapelle, April 19, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Correspondence from Chapelle to Hobart Lewis, April 7, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁵⁹ Correspondence from Hobart Lewis to Chapelle, April 19, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

Chapelle began submitting drafts of the Cuban story as early as November 1963. In a letter dated November 11, to associate editor Andrew Jones, she noted she attempted to remove the first-person narration⁶⁰ but correspondence dated April 18 indicated she may have changed her mind. In that letter, she wrote of her desire to use the device "a day in the life" to illustrate what it was like for her in the Cuban underground -- tailored to answer questions she had been asked about her experience. She wrote, "...questions by Americans who are uninvolved with any element of the Cuban's tale but who are mortally curious to know that there actually is, in an American city, a full working underground movement just like the anti-Red undergrounds of Vienna and Casablanca."⁶¹ In a December 4, 1963 letter, Chapelle indicated she was attempting to get the other side of the story, as instructed on the phone, of what she alleged was the kidnapping of Cuban citizens.⁶² These references seem to indicate ongoing conversations between herself and the *Reader's Digest* editors about their expectations.

Having read the draft articles, on January 8, 1964 associate editor Andrew Jones wrote a lengthy letter in which he reiterated his expectations about how Chapelle should approach the articles about the Cuban underground as she undertook revisions. He noted that the letter was in follow-up to everything he told her on the phone.⁶³ The letter went into lengthy detail about how he wanted her to write the articles. On January 29, 1964, Jones wrote another letter informing her an article needed further revisions because it was still weak on suspense.⁶⁴ He gave lengthy advice on the technique for creating suspense in a story along with the technique for creating sympathy for the exiled Cuban community. He advised Chapelle to save for the end the October 1963 U.S. Coast Guard interception of a boat Chapelle was on that had contained an arsenal of

⁶⁰ Correspondence from Chapelle to Andrew Jones, Nov. 11, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁶¹ Correspondence from Chapelle to Andrew Jones, Nov. 18, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁶² Correspondence from Chapelle to Andrew Jones, Dec. 4, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁶³ Correspondence from Andrew Jones to Chapelle, Jan. 8, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁶⁴ Correspondence from Andrew Jones to Chapelle, Jan. 29, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

weapons, including submachine guns, automatic rifles, hand grenades, anti-tank missiles, and various ammunition. The letter was written four days after the January 5, 1964 boat explosion in which Chapelle and multiple other people were almost killed as they attempted to move a second arsenal of weapons.

On May 10th, Chapelle wrote Andrew Jones a lengthy letter, about multiple issues, and one of those issues was their communication problem.⁶⁵ In the letter she complained about the number of rewrites *Reader's Digest* expected from both the STRICOM article, then nearly a year old, and the articles from Miami, writing that she just did not understand "...how they misfire -- or even if they have" (emphasis hers). *Reader's Digest* ultimately returned the articles to Chapelle and suggested she find another publisher for them.

On June 11, 1964, Chapelle received another lengthy letter from Andrew Jones on an article she wrote after her friend Felipe Vidal Santiago, along with three others, were executed in Cuba on May 28, 1964 on allegations they were agents of the CIA who had entered the country illegally. Having reviewed Chapelle's outline, Jones proceeded to explain how he wanted the article written. He emphasized that Chapelle should keep herself out of the article and make the story about Vidal.⁶⁶ Jones informed Chapelle the article had promise, "If you can hold it to a tight feeling, a feeling tribute to a great patriot Cuban, a friend of the little people, and a rescuer of them from tyranny in his homeland."⁶⁷ Jones' frustration with Chapelle spilled out and he wrote, "But -- and I confess I feel like a broken record on this point -- can't this be done quickly, economically and once and for all?"⁶⁸ The "once and for all" was probably a reference to the many rewrites Chapelle's articles always entailed. Jones continued and implored Chapelle to

⁶⁵ Correspondence from Chapelle to Andrew Jones, May 10, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁶⁶ Correspondence from Andrew Jones to Chapelle, June 11, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Correspondence from Andrew Jones to Chapelle, June 11, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society.

avoid writing the article as an adventure piece, but instead to write it with objectivity. He added the focus should be kept on Vidal, and she should keep herself out of the piece as much as possible.

Chapelle responded on June 16, 1964 with an argumentative defense of her reporting style. She said first person narration was the only way to know something was true; that is, because the reporter had eyewitnessed events and did not get them secondhand, what Chapelle called in the letter "...the 'I know this is true because I eyewitnessed it' element."⁶⁹ The only honest way for the reader to know a report was true, Chapelle continued, was to include the reporter in the narrative. She declined to invent objective circumstances, in which the writer is heard but not seen, an omniscience presence in the narrative. In the letter to Jones she wrote:

"It could expose my by-line to deserved ridicule in the eyes of most fighting men ... if ever they knew that I had seen something dramatic -- and then gone home to write about it as if I had been drinking daiquiris at the Dupont Plaza bar with other reporters at the time it occurred."⁷⁰

Chapelle took the time to complain about the editorial cuts to all of her articles from Lebanon, Turkey, Cuba, and Vietnam.⁷¹ In the letter, she acknowledged she never objected to the cuts at the time and only raised the issue in her letter because she felt the Digest was not being clear about what the magazine wanted from its journalists. She expressed confusion that the *Reader's Digest* sent her on assignments to see events firsthand, but did not want her to write about the experience, and then sometimes deleted her from the story in the editorial process. Although Chapelle continued to float article ideas for a time, they were rejected and she never again went on assignment for *Reader's Digest*.

⁶⁹ Correspondence from Chapelle to Andrew Jones, June 16, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid.

While *Reader's Digest* published the bulk of Chapelle's published work, two articles were published by *National Geographic*, both on subjects relating to the Vietnam War. The article "Water War in Vietnam" was initially shelved but eventually saw print posthumously, in 1966, alongside a tribute to Chapelle. James Santel, a former journalist, covered some of the history of *National Geographic* for an article in *The American Scholar* titled "Kodachrome Eden."⁷² He described the magazine at its founding in 1888 as a "dry scholarly journal" that by midcentury served the educated middle class a steady diet of a reaffirmation of the American Dream.⁷³ *National Geographic* was largely conservative, and their sources always official.⁷⁴ As the magazine did not delve deep into controversial waters at the time, the issue of objectivity was not nearly so pressing, and the writers frequently wrote themselves and the family members they traveled with into their narratives.⁷⁵ If a writer's child made a witty remark while traveling, and the writer included it in the article, that was not a problem with NatGeo. In the correspondence between Chapelle and her editors, there are no ongoing conversations about her lack of objectivity or complaints that she had written herself into the article. In a letter to a relative, Chapelle described National Geographic's approach to the news as scholarly, without the expectations of a happy ending that were expected of *Reader's Digest* articles.⁷⁶

There were, however, complaints that Chapelle was not following her assignment, concerns about her work product, and requests for lengthy rewrites -- just as there had been at *Reader's Digest*. In a 1964 letter from Herbert Wilburn, illustration editor for *National Geographic* at the time, Chapelle was given the assignment to write an informational article on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, with the possibility of a second story on military activities on the water --

⁷² James Santel, "Kodachrome Eden," *The American Scholar* 82, no. 2 (2013) 62-72.

⁷³ Santel 64

⁷⁴ Santel 66

⁷⁵ Santel 66

⁷⁶ Ostroff 369

if time permitted.⁷⁷ In October 1964, the *National Geographic* received a letter from Chapelle indicating she was attempting to accompany pilots for aerial photos of the Trail.⁷⁸ By November, however, the magazine was expressing concern. They had received the shipment of photos illustrating military activities on the water, which were good, but there were no photos of Ho Chi Minh Trail with "troops walking down it" -- an apparent reference to some direction given to Chapelle.⁷⁹ O. Lou Mazzatenta, of the Illustrations Department, noted the AP had recently published an article indicating the Viet Cong had made extensive improvements to the trail to include hacking steps into a mountain, easing the climb over slopes, construction of little log bridges, and even benches -- presumably so those utilizing the trail could rest. Mazzatenta wrote, "These are the pictures that could be used with a story on the Ho Chi Minh Trail."⁸⁰ In another letter to Chapelle a month later, she was informed the photos she sent were a "technical disappointment" because they were overexposed and blurry from camera shake.⁸¹ Further, she was told there was too much space around the subjects, which could be remedied by zooming in closer. She was told to consider that round of photos a "warm up" with better things to come, and they were sending her fresh batteries for her light meter to help with her lighting issues.⁸² Mazzatenta concluded the letter by noting all of the places Chapelle referenced in her last letter were nowhere near the Ho Chi Minh Trail "according to our own and *The New York Times* map showing the trail."⁸³

In late October, Chapelle had attempted to get aerial photos of the Ho Chi Minh Trail through the Royal Laos Air Force. She claimed the Royal Laos Air Force was initially

⁷⁷ Correspondence from Herbert Wilburn to Chapelle, Sept. 9, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁷⁸ Correspondence from Chapelle to Herbert Wilburn, Oct. 18, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁷⁹ Correspondence from O. Lou Mazzatenta to Chapelle, Nov. 23, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Correspondence from O. Lou Mazzatenta to Chapelle, Dec. 3, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Ibid

cooperative, but her efforts were blocked by the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. diplomatic apparatus, and men who introduced themselves as "semiclandestine."⁸⁴ Unable to get the aerial photographs, Chapelle flew to South Vietnam and continued the coverage of the battles from the rivers that would eventually become the article "Water War In Vietnam." Of course, *National Geographic* was not expecting aerial photos. In fact, their instructions were to get photos of troops walking on the trail along with the improvements made by communist forces using the trail, which could not have been taken from the air. As the letter from *National Geographic* demonstrated, in December they were still anticipating an article on the Ho Chi Minh trail, but it was evident that Chapelle was no longer pursuing that assignment.⁸⁵

As with her work for other magazines, Chapelle's article from Southeast Asia for *National Geographic* required rewrites. Although the resulting article was not about the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a letter from *National Geographic* editorial staff indicated he thought the story should go forward, but a rewrite would be necessary, and he explained that Chapelle acknowledged the article she turned in was a hastily-written second draft.⁸⁶ The letter was from James Cerruti, an assistant editor, who wrote, "Dickey ... has come up with a whopping good battle yarn. I unhesitatingly endorse this as a story we should run."⁸⁷ However, Cerruti went on to indicate the article was "full of many small holes that must be plugged -- (including) careless disregard of important details, lack of big-picture background, sloppy sentences (the last quite minor and easily fixable here)."⁸⁸ The letter contained six pages of technical corrections, due mainly to the fact that Chapelle did not utilize a who, what, where, when, how template at the beginning of her articles. Because she wrote what she saw, her method could best be described

⁸⁴ Ostroff 370-371

⁸⁵ Ostroff 372

⁸⁶ Correspondence from James Cerruti to Allen Fisher, Feb. 1, 1965, Box 8, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid

as 'this happened, and then that happened' -- frequently referred to as bystander journalism. Midway through the letter Cerruti noted, "Entirely too much editorializing on this page about the emotional meaning of the war."⁸⁹ He felt the removing of what he called "emotionalism" could be handled in the editorial process as well as "the very garbled sentence structure of this page which results from Dickey's emotionalism."⁹⁰ Three paragraphs later, Cerruti noted that what Chapelle had written was "very bad propaganda ... for our side" after she described the South Vietnamese shooting indiscriminately in all directions, which was problematic because the reader had just learned the people in the area were allies.⁹¹ However, the majority of the complaints simply came from poor organization, with notes that Chapelle should explain things earlier in the article. In a subsequent letter to Chapelle in which the technical corrections were outlined, Cerruti warned Chapelle not to be discouraged by the length of the request because the article was basically fine, it just needed polishing.⁹² Interestingly, Cerruti suggested she delete the portion of the article in which she admitted to carrying a weapon, as it was against regulations for correspondents to do so, and it could endanger her accreditation.⁹³ Cerruti ended with a positive note, but the article was ultimately shelved, only to be run in February 1966 in conjunction with an article written in her honor after her death in November 1965.

In Ostroff's biography, she wrote about the difficulty Chapelle was having with *Reader's Digest* and described it as "the growing gap between their editorial policy and her journalistic sensibilities."⁹⁴ She noted stories eluded her "as if she were jinxed."⁹⁵ As her work for *National Geographic* demonstrated, when her attempt to get aerial photographs did not work out, she left

⁸⁹ Ibid 3

⁹⁰ Ibid 3

⁹¹ Ibid 3

⁹² Correspondence from James Cerruti to Chapelle, Feb. 4, 1965, Box 8, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁹³ Ibid 2 The picture of Chapelle and the machine gun she carried is on file at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

⁹⁴ Ostroff 343

⁹⁵ Ibid

and covered the story she wanted to cover -- despite the fact the magazine was not expecting aerial photos. Chappelle's correspondence revealed there was nothing supernatural about the problem, there was no jinx. Chappelle simply would not tailor her work to meet expectations.

CHAPTER 3: JOURNALISM ETHICS AND STYLE

An examination of the correspondence between Chapelle and her editors expose the limitations of Chapelle's style of journalism. The first issue was she believed journalists had an ethical duty to see events and report them, and she did not believe interviewing reliable sources was an ethical alternative. She would not write about that which she did not see, so she was sent on assignments and returned without an article, an expensive proposition for the *Reader's Digest*. Secondly, because she believed in seeing what she wrote about, but only really followed the military on operations, her work was limited, ran the risk of being repetitive, and sometimes resulted in her abandoning her assignment to follow the troops. And last, the objective method of reporting was considered best practice at the time -- where the journalist was a dispassionate, neutral observer who did not participate in events.

The first issue with Chapelle's style of journalism was that she was sent on assignments for *Reader's Digest* and returned without an article because she was not allowed to witness events. The two notable occasions when this occurred were the Bay of Pigs (April 1961) and the Sino-Indian War (October 20 - November 21, 1962). Chapelle was in Miami during the Bay of Pigs invasion but could not witness the actual invasion. She claimed for years afterward her efforts to cover the event were thwarted by the CIA whose agents, she claimed, redirected her away from the action.⁹⁶ As for India, in November 1962, the U.S. Air Force flew approximately 50 reporters, Chapelle among them, to Calcutta as the U.S. prepared to transfer military weapons to India for their defense in a border dispute with China.⁹⁷ Not only did the reporters not see the

⁹⁶ Ostroff 294

⁹⁷ Correspondence from Chapelle to Francis McNamara, May 22, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

transfer of arms, but Chapelle was not allowed to report from the front, resulting in her returning without an article for publication. She would not use information from an interview, not even with a credible source, for the article. If she did not see it, she would not write about it.

The problem, of course, was that the *Reader's Digest* was paying Chapelle for articles she did not produce. In a letter to Andrew Jones dated May 10, 1964, written after it became clear the *Reader's Digest* would not be using her work covering the Cuban underground in Miami, Chapelle acknowledged the issue but put the blame on government interference, writing, "...what has stopped me are circumstances not alone beyond my control but circumstances beyond the control of any journalist ..." ⁹⁸ She referred to the government's interference throughout her correspondence, in this letter and others, as the government's "ban on eyewitness accounts." ⁹⁹ In the letter she lamented the fact her travels for coverage of stories was costing her so much money personally. For example, she noted the loss of \$800 (\$6,921 when adjusted for inflation to the year 2020) of equipment in Laos, and the loss of \$1200 (\$10,381 when adjusted for inflation to the year 2020) of equipment covering Cuban exiles when the boat she was on exploded. It was also expensive for *Reader's Digest*. An August 11, 1964 receipt indicated the magazine had paid Chapelle \$6,647.39 (which is \$55,278 when adjusted for inflation to the year 2020) for her time researching the Cuban underground. It is possible this figure included the reimbursement of the cost of replacing equipment lost in the boat explosion.

The second issue with Chapelle's work was that her preference was to march with the troops, and her relationship with the military ensured she always had access to operations, but marching with the troops limited the scope of her understanding of the Vietnam War. Marching

⁹⁸ Correspondence from Andrew Jones to Chapelle, May 10, 1964, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

⁹⁹ Ibid

with the troops was more the job of newspaper reporters than magazine writers. Magazine writers were sent on assignment with specific topics. For example, Chapelle began her coverage of the war in Vietnam in 1961 in Laos with an assignment from *Reader's Digest* to write an article on guerilla warfare.

It was not uncommon for articles from the Vietnam War to go unpublished or to be edited in such a way to align the facts with what editors were hearing from Washington. This was the era of the credibility gap where reporters on the ground issued reports based on what they saw that did not always match what their bosses were hearing from the political or military apparatus. John Shaw, who was a correspondent for *Time* in Vietnam wrote, "For years the press corps in Vietnam was undermined by the White House and the Pentagon. Many American editors ignored what their correspondents in Vietnam were telling them in favor of the Washington version."¹⁰⁰ In 1963, two *Time* correspondents wrote an assessment of the Vietnam War under the headline, "The War in Vietnam is being lost."¹⁰¹ By the time the article was in print, the headline was removed and the article was rewritten to reflect a more positive message about how things were going in Vietnam. There is no evidence, however, from Chapelle's correspondence that indicated this was the reason her work from Laos was withheld, and she never made that allegation, though her letters confirm that she, too, thought as early as 1961 that the war was being lost. Chapelle's articles always reflected support of the military mission and U.S. foreign policy. And since she did not cover the political side, it seems unlikely her work would have contained information that warranted withholding. There is sufficient evidence that the work she submitted was of poor quality, requiring extensive rewrites. Further, she consistently failed

¹⁰⁰ Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) 412

¹⁰¹ Knightley 416

to fulfill the assignments she was given -- as in Laos where she was to write an article on guerilla warfare and counterinsurgency, which was not done.

Additionally, long magazine stories run the risk of being repetitive if the story is always about the troops marching. As Hobert Lewis noted in a 1963 rejection of one of Chapelle's Laos articles, it has "a similar atmosphere" to the Father Hoa story they had scheduled for publication.¹⁰² As usual, there was also a complaint the writing lacked polish and there were details missing; though, he added he understood that there are details in war that cannot be supplied.

Lastly, Chapelle's stubborn preference for first person, narrative style was in opposition to what her editors requested. An example of Chapelle's writing style appeared in the July 1963 article published in *Reader's Digest*, "The Fighting Priest of South Vietnam," Chapelle began the article on Father Hoa with a story about herself:

It was from a handful of American professional fighting men that I first heard the priest's name. On that night in 1961, a dying campfire deep in a South Vietnam jungle flickered on their sunburned faces as they discussed a subject that interested all of them: toughness. Who was the toughest man they had ever known? Names were suggested and discussed. Finally a veteran paratrooper said, "Nobody is tougher than Father Hoa." They all nodded. I was puzzled.

Chapelle opened the article with the information that she felt was most important to the reader: I was there and I saw this. This was a technique used by Chapelle to establish credibility; that is, the reader could have confidence in what followed because she personally saw what she reported. The issue with this type of journalism is immediately evident: Due to the use of first-person narration, the reader's initial reaction may be that the article is actually

¹⁰² Correspondence from Hobart Lewis to Chapelle, March 15, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

about Chapelle. To draw a careful distinction, there were writers who wrote in first person at this time or used first person sparingly in their reporting. As one example, in the very same July 1963 *Reader's Digest* issue that featured Chapelle's article on Father Hoa, Kathleen Walker Seegers wrote of a recent information-gathering trip to Brazil. The lede left no doubt, however, what her article would be about, "Brazil's vast and restless Northeast -- the hump of South America three times the size of Texas that bellies into the Atlantic toward Africa -- contains the harshest, cruelest land I have ever seen."¹⁰³ Her use of the first person was sparing, stays focused the topic of the problems facing the people, offers context, and demonstrated Seegers researched issues of the region.

Chapelle's use of narrative journalism was problematic because it inserted her, the writer, into the story at a time when journalists were supposed to be objective eyewitnesses to events. Chapelle's reliance on the narrative method gave the impression that she participant in events. For example, in the article about Father Hoa, Chapelle wrote of the trip, "The rice fields below offered a landing, but this area, we knew, was a stronghold of Viet Cong (communists) terrorists."¹⁰⁴ The use of "we knew" suggests the reporter was more than an objective witness, she was a participant in events.

Chapelle had a long history of participating in events that she covered. In a story published for *Reader's Digest* in June 1960, for an article on the Special Forces, Chapelle wrote of her own feelings and sensations while parachuting with the U.S. Special Forces Group 1 over Korea.¹⁰⁵ What she did not do is include the sensations and feelings of the men she was writing about, who remained in the background of her adventure. She wrote:

¹⁰³ Kathleen Walker Seegers, "Brazil's Big Dust Bowl" *Reader's Digest* (July 1963) 212.

¹⁰⁴ Dickey Chapelle, "The Fighting Priest of South Vietnam," *Reader's Digest* (July 1963) 195.

¹⁰⁵ Dickey Chapelle, "Our Secret Weapon in the Far East" *Reader's Digest* (June 1960) 189-200.

I feel a flash of understanding of why people undertake this kind of mission, war or peace. Right now, each of us, with one exception, is free of every choice of action. I have no decision to make and, thanks to that image the military lexicon calls leadership. I do not want one. If the colonel jumps, I know inexorably I will jump. If he does not, I won't.¹⁰⁶

Historically, war correspondents had utilized first-person narration. Chapelle frequently brought up Ernie Pyle, one of the most famous eyewitness reporters of WWII, who had indeed utilized first-person narration, even weaving himself into the account. Pyle's most famous column, "The Death of Captain Waskow," published in 1944, contains this description, "I was at the foot of the mule trail the night they brought Capt. Waskow's body down." Historically, war correspondents had also participated in events. From George Wilkins Kendall, described as the first U.S. war correspondent, who participated in the invasion of Mexico in 1846, to Ernest Hemingway, who famously participated in battles and entered Paris the day before the troops he was supposed to be covering, war correspondents also played the part of combatant. But whatever Kendall was doing in 1846, or Ernie Pyle in 1944, by the time of the Vietnam War correspondents were expected to be dispassionate observers of events, who judged objectively. As demonstrated in the letters by her chief employer, the *Reader's Digest*, Chapelle's use of first-person narration, and the fact she included herself in her reporting, shadowed her work with the appearance of bias and lack of objectivity.

There is a distinction to be made, however, between Chapelle's actual bias, which her editors did not complain about, and the appearance of bias that suggested a lack of objectivity. The editors of *Reader's Digest* do not articulate any concerns that she reported on events where her friends were the subject of the article, as was the case with both the article on STRICOM and

¹⁰⁶ Dickey Chapelle, "Our Secret Weapon in the Far East." *Reader's Digest* (June 1960) 194

the article on the execution of her friend, Felipe Vidal Santiago. Although she was warned in the STRICOM story against participating, there is no evidence they were concerned about the fact Chapelle was living with the Cuban underground and participating in their preparations to invade Cuba. Their primary concern was the appearance of bias. In the correspondence by Jones and Lewis, they insist that Chapelle cease to use first-person narration, and that she remove herself from the narrative, so that the article would appear to have been written with the objectivity that the writer lacked in actual practice.

Chapelle's lack of objectivity was noted by authors who study her work. Sheila Webb studied Chapelle's work in "Radical Portrayals: Dickey Chapelle on the Front Lines" in which she compared and contrasted Chapelle's work in Algeria (1957) with that of her Cuba reporting (1959).¹⁰⁷ Webb noted that Chapelle had "turned away from the standard of objectivity" then in use and instead adopted the style 'reporter engage'; that is, a reporter who engages with her subjects.¹⁰⁸ Webb argued Chapelle's style was more in keeping with the 1930s when journalists sought to reach their reader's emotionally rather than just report on facts. As Webb noted, Chapelle was "never neutral." In Algeria, she gave sympathetic coverage to the Algerian National Liberation Front, whose side had not been told, and later wrote with glowing admiration of Fidel Castro and his movement -- until that movement turned to communism. Webb quoted Chapelle's thoughts on detachment, which were written in an article while she covered the Algerian conflict:

¹⁰⁷ Webb, "Radical Portrayals: Dickey Chapelle on the Front Lines," *American Periodicals* 26, no. 2 (2016) 183-208.

¹⁰⁸ Webb 185

For a correspondent, a war always starts by belonging to somebody else. If the U.S. is involved, you say to yourself that you're a civilian and the fighting is the soldiers' job. And if there are no American troops, of course, it isn't your war just because you're assigned to cover it. After a little time on contested real estate, though, something happens to that firm detachment. It's just happened to me.¹⁰⁹

Webb noted Chapelle wrote this after narrowly escaping a bomb dropped by French planes. Later, Webb observed that Chapelle used the word "we" to describe an action that was to be taken by the NLF, signaling "her growing identification with the rebel troops."¹¹⁰ The author went on to say that Chapelle humanized the Algerian rebels by relating stories of their day-to-day routines and even their jokes.¹¹¹ As she would do throughout her career, Chapelle took sides. Webb quoted Chapelle, "It is not easy for me to keep my reporter's objectivity about my stories."¹¹²

Because Chapelle was so willing to take sides, getting a sense of how she defined objectivity for herself is quite difficult, but there were two examples from her correspondence that highlight her thoughts. As one example, in 1962 *National Geographic* was looking for a journalist to write a general information article on Cambodia that would require three four months of in-country work, December 1962 - March 1963. They offered the job to Chapelle, who was "... flattered by the high-paying, prestigious assignment ..." but she eventually declined the offer.¹¹³ Chapelle knew from her friends in the Special Forces that important military action would be undertaken against communist forces in South Vietnam at that time -- action that would test the military adviser system then in place, which Chapelle supported. She wrote, "I'm afraid the emotional pull on me toward that story would prejudice the results of any

¹⁰⁹ Webb 188

¹¹⁰ Webb 197

¹¹¹ Webb 191

¹¹² Webb 193

¹¹³ Ostroff 341

comprehensive general assignment in Cambodia."¹¹⁴ Chapelle's sources were right. There was action that resulted in the Battle of Ap Bac, in the Mekong Delta, in which three American advisors were killed. However, Chapelle was not able to get an assignment for it, and she missed that battle. What is extraordinary about the statement, however, is that she expressed concern the story would be prejudiced by how she felt about what was going on in South Vietnam. There is little evidence that Chapelle ever worried about what might prejudice her articles. She wrote unabashedly about her love for the Marines and never expressed concern that it might prejudice her articles. She wrote of her hatred of communists without concern that might prejudice her articles. Perhaps because Chapelle always took sides, she saw her support for the Marines as siding with the good guys, and her hatred of the communists as being against the bad guys, so those positions were acceptable, but her lack of interest in Cambodia was a problem.

There would be a second time Chapelle threatened to pull herself off a story due to lack of objectivity, and that was in Miami when she was living with the Cuban underground. In a letter to Andrew Jones, dated November 25, 1963, Chapelle wrote that she had learned from CIA-connected sources that the United States intended to establish a neutral Cuba after the model of neutral Laos.¹¹⁵ In the letter, Chapelle described the sources as "my closest Cuban friends."¹¹⁶ She described the situation with the Cuban underground as one permeated with fear because, as she alleged in the letter, the CIA had become "completely penetrated by Castro's agents, who created "deathtraps for Cubans" and it was a fact, she continued, "of the 80-odd Cuban nationals put ashore last year from small boats on CIA operations ...that 78 are dead or missing."¹¹⁷ She went on to say it was the intention of the CIA to allow Cuba to become a "fully

¹¹⁴ Ostroff 342

¹¹⁵ Correspondence from Chapelle to Andrew Jones, Nov. 25, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹¹⁶ Correspondence from Chapelle to Andrew Jones, Nov. 25, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹¹⁷ Ibid

socialist state opposed to the free world, with strong ties to Russia, friendly to Russian submarines."¹¹⁸ She added that the plan for a neutral Cuba was developed by President John F. Kennedy before his death, and her sources told her the plan was too advanced to stop after the assassination of President Kennedy. It was, therefore, going forward and would be supported by Nikita Khrushchev and the American voters. According to Chapelle, one of the factors driving the policy was the desire of the gaming industry to regain a U.S.-oriented Cuba. Chapelle anticipated a violent overthrow of the Cuban government, using covert operations, for the purpose of installing a neutral government in Cuba patterned after neutral Laos. In her letter, Chapelle reminded Andrew Jones she came to Miami to cover "...the men and women working and fighting to regain Cuban earth for the free world (which) is not quite the same thing as covering whatever happens here affecting U.S.-Cuban relations."¹¹⁹

In any case, I should remind you now that I am unable to see any virtue at all to the establishment of another neutralist government. This total blindness might prevent me from doing a good reporting job. I have seen the free world shrink in nine areas of the globe since 1956, and I do not feel able to pledge myself to tell the story of a tenth time with professional objectivity.¹²⁰

Chapelle concluded the letter by declining to apologize for her outrage as, she argued, outrage was the appropriate emotion to "freedom's suicide."¹²¹ These two examples were the only available evidence of Chapelle's thoughts on objectivity. However, in both cases, it was clear that Chapelle had taken a side and declined to cover the side she was not on -- with special reference to Cuba. While there is merit in her recognition of the fact she could not fairly write the article, it was a move made with partisan motives as opposed to objectivity. In both cases,

¹¹⁸ Correspondence from Chapelle to Andrew Jones, Nov. 25, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Correspondence from Chapelle to Andrew Jones, Nov. 25, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

she pointed to her emotional state as the cause of her withdrawal from a story. In the case of the Cambodia story, it was her "emotional pull" that prevented her from writing about Cambodia, and in the Cuba story it was her outrage that was the cause of her refusal. She did not intend to be a dispassionate observer, a neutral third party, who collected facts and arranged them in a logical order.

Chapelle's style of writing and her lack of objectivity were simply out of step with the direction of the profession in the 1960s. In previous wars, journalists were not concerned about objectivity, but the work of a journalists had taken a professional turn, due in large part to the growth and development of journalism programs at colleges and universities. The Cold War had introduced complexities to world affairs that required journalists who understood and could explain nuances.

Historians do not quite agree on when objectivity became so important in the field of journalism nor is there a ready definition. In *Covering America: A Narrative History of a Nation's Journalism*, Christopher B. Daley credits the Associated Press at its founding in 1846 with advancing and defining the philosophical idea of objectivity in journalism -- long before the use of the word objectivity was in general use. The AP was a wire service only and had no newspapers to distribute, then or now; they did, however, hire journalists to write and distribute news to those who did have newspapers. Because the AP had so many newspapers to serve, with various views, the writers were expected to craft their articles with objectivity. The AP defined objectivity as, "...the notion that a news story should be a collection of facts, arranged in a logical order, and free of any political bias or agenda."¹²²

¹²² Christopher B. Daley, *Covering America: A Narrative History of a Nation's Journalism* (Boston: University of Mass Press, 2012) 82.

From the AP, the commitment to objectivity spread to those organizations who both hired journalists and distributed newspapers. The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), published a set of national codes in 1926 in which objectivity was the goal. "Sound practice makes clear between reports and expressions of opinion ... News reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind."¹²³ W. David Sloan and Lisa Mullikin Parcell, the editors of *American Journalism: History Principles, Practices*, do not necessarily dispute the claim that objectivity started with the AP, but note that the adoption of objectivity may have been in response to the sensationalism attached to yellow journalism.¹²⁴ This is backed up by a quote from Casper Yost, the man who founded ASNE, who noted objectivity is what separated the profession of serious journalism from the tabloids.¹²⁵ In more recent times, Michael Schudson clarified the definition of objectivity as the assumption that facts or truth claims were validated by the "rules and procedures of a professional community."¹²⁶ Schudson went on to explain objectivity was a process by which distortions and biases were filtered out and that it demonstrated a "faith in facts" and a "distrust of values."¹²⁷

In contrast, Gaye Tuchman argued that objectivity was merely a ritual journalists used to shield themselves from allegations of bias.¹²⁸ Tuchman went on to explain by ritual she meant routine and adherence to procedure.¹²⁹ Tuchman noted for journalists, objectivity was a process of gathering facts. Tuchman wrote, "To journalists ... the term "objectivity" stands as a bulwark between themselves and critics. Attacked for a controversial presentation of "facts" ... they

¹²³ W. David Sloan, and Lisa Mullikin Parcell, eds. *American Journalism: History, Principles, Practices* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002) 50

¹²⁴ Sloan 50

¹²⁵ Sloan 263

¹²⁶ Greg McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent*, (London: Pluto Press, 2016).

¹²⁷ McLaughlin 39

¹²⁸ Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no 4 (1972) 600-678.

¹²⁹ Tuchman 661

invoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits."¹³⁰

Daniel C. Hallin wrote at length about the ideology of objectivity in "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media (1984)."¹³¹ In his report, Hallin argued the modern journalists commitment to objectivity was striking -- especially when compared to other times and places.¹³² He continues and notes that studies have confirmed that objectivity was a central ideology for the professional journalists, who have a commitment to a politically neutral press. Later in the report, Hallin returned to the subject of objectivity and clarified that news is created under a variety of circumstances and may appear with a political slant despite the commitment to objectivity.¹³³ Instead, he continued, the role of objectivity -- the goal -- is to prevent journalists covering contentious situations from endorsing a side.¹³⁴

However, Dickey Chapelle was not a general news reporter; she was a war correspondent and military reporter, which requires special consideration. As journalist Sebastian Junger observed, "I don't think journalists in World War II were objective about the Nazis, and I don't think they should have been." Journalists covering the Pacific Theater were not expected to get the side of the Japanese. As Greg McLaughlin argued in *The War Correspondent*, objectivity is actually complex and individual journalists have accepted it, refuted it, and defined it according to their own values.¹³⁵ War correspondents work in environments of propaganda and censorship, with the emotional charge of both life and death, and ideology, so achieving objectivity and

¹³⁰ Tuchman 660

¹³¹ Daniel C. Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media," *The Journal of Politics* 46, no 1 (Feb. 1984) 2-24.

¹³² Hallin 11

¹³³ Hallin 13

¹³⁴ Hallin 13

¹³⁵ Greg McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent* (London: Pluto Press, 2002) 33.

impartiality can be particularly challenging.¹³⁶ In that environment, absolute detachment -- the foundation of objectivity -- can be hard to achieve.

McLaughlin quoted journalists with thoughts on the issue. Mich Hume, at the time the editor of *Living Marxism*, called objectivity a "menace to good journalism." Herbert Matthew, who covered the Spanish Civil War, noted the deeply emotional nature of combat reporting, rejected the notion that unbiased reporting was possible, said those who claimed they were unbiased were lying, and readers and editors who demanded it were practicing "rank stupidity."¹³⁷ Matthew went on to say the most important elements of combat reporting were "honesty, understanding, and thoroughness."¹³⁸

However, the nature of the Vietnam War was different than previous wars and one of the factors that made it different was the education of the people writing about it. In her memoir, Beverly Deepe Kever, wrote that she arrived in Vietnam at 26 years old, having recently graduated with her Master's Degree in Journalism from Columbia, without any preconceived ideas about Vietnam, which had not been an issue for discussion in the recent presidential race. She brought with her what had been "drilled into her in journalism school" that journalists should be disinterested observers, neutral on issues, emotionally uninvolved, while stressing the importance of accuracy, fairness, and intelligence -- for explaining complex issues.¹³⁹ The influences of reporters like Kever had been from the world of journalism -- and not the military, as was the case with Chapelle.

¹³⁶ McLaughlin 33

¹³⁷ McLaughlin 33

¹³⁸ McLaughlin 24

¹³⁹ Beverly Deepe Kever, *Death Zones and Darling Spies: Seven Years of Vietnam War Reporting* (Baltimore, Maryland: Project MUSE, 2013).

In 1918, the year Dickey Chapelle was born, "91 colleges had courses in journalism, and 26 were offering enough coursework for a student to earn a major in journalism."¹⁴⁰ By 1936, 532 colleges were offering courses in journalism, which showed the growth of interest. Initially, these programs focused on the fundamentals of reporting, which were writing and editing.¹⁴¹ At the beginning of the 21st century, journalism education was thought of as vocational and critics of journalism schools felt the best place to learn to be a newspaperman was by learning on the job with a good newspaper.¹⁴² Through the 1950s, the industry continued its criticism of journalism schools as graduating students with degrees in journalism who were ill-prepared for the work of a journalist because the people teaching at universities were pressured to research and had backgrounds incompatible with preparing journalism students to work in the industry.¹⁴³ The problem was that universities hire Ph.D.s to research and teach courses, when the best people to teach journalism were successful journalists, the critics argued. The debate went on for decades. In 1982, the editor of the *Milwaukee Journal*, addressing the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication outlined exactly what type of skills journalists needed: to interview, to gather information, to write solid copy, and to be able to understand the law, especially that governing libel -- all of which required a solid liberal arts education and not necessarily a degree in journalism.¹⁴⁴ There was -- and remains -- disagreement and debate about the necessary background journalists should have to work in the field.

The evidence from the early days of the Cold War indicated a growing call for a strong liberal arts education for journalists. In 1947, the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the

¹⁴⁰ Sloan 79

¹⁴¹ Sloan 80

¹⁴² Edd Applegate, *Print and Broadcast Journalism: A critical examination* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996) 93.

¹⁴³ Applegate 95

¹⁴⁴ Applegate 102

Press, who studied the issue of journalism higher education in-depth, issued a critical report on the notion of journalism education as a vocational field. The report indicated while journalism schools were producing students who knew the tricks of the trade, they were not producing students who were competent judges of public affairs" amidst a "mass communication revolution ... taking place in society" that they did not even realize was occurring.¹⁴⁵ The Hutchins Commission called for the end to journalism as a technical education while pressing for programs that taught "mass media and their relationship to society."¹⁴⁶ As a result, in the 1940s the nature of the curriculum of journalism schools changed, to include more interdisciplinary studies of sociology, political science, and economics, with classes for students to understand the impact of media on society.¹⁴⁷ The result of all of this attention to the education of journalists was that many of the journalists arriving in Vietnam had skills beyond see and report. As Phillip Knightley noted, in *The First Casualty*, "Vietnam was a new kind of war and required a new kind of war correspondent. It was an interdisciplinary war, where complex political issues intruded on the military aspects ..."¹⁴⁸

Chapelle was one of those learning on the job, but she did not get her education on staff at a quality newspaper surrounded by experienced members of the profession. Although she worked for a short while as a photographer for a teen magazine as a young woman, her primary education in journalism was as a freelance writer first covering humanitarian causes before jumping into combat reporting. In an undated letter to a friend, she argued that she had more formal training as a journalist than any other male reporter on the frontlines, which she got from the Marines and the paratroopers who trained her. And in fact, she continued, she was covering

¹⁴⁵ Sloan 82

¹⁴⁶ Sloan 82

¹⁴⁷ Sloan 82

¹⁴⁸ Knightley 423

events under fire before the other reporters covering Lebanon had graduated from journalism school.¹⁴⁹ However, an examination of the profession from the time period demonstrates the need for that kind of experience was waning as world events became more complex with a need for people who could explain the nuances of complicated public affairs.

¹⁴⁹ Correspondence from Chapelle to Barbara, undated, Box 8, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

CHAPTER 4: PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE AND SPEAKING TOURS

Chapelle was a woman who had strong and fast beliefs -- not only about her work but also about world affairs. Chapelle wrote much about the "professional eyewitness," but in practice she was deeply anti-communist, and used her position as a journalist and then a public speaker to promote the Vietnam War, but the way she gathered information ensured that her understanding would always be one-dimensional because she failed to grasp the political aspects of the war, which other journalists of the time understood better.

Chapelle's feelings about communism and what she would call the fight to keep the world free of it, were demonstrated in letters between herself and Chester Williams, of the newly founded (1961) Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank. It is not clear the two were friends, but the tone of the correspondence was informal, indicating they at least knew each other well. The conversation about communism started in a letter from Williams dated March 3, 1962 in which he mentioned that Chapelle had been featured in *New Republic* due to the spat between Chapelle and Jack Paar, on his show January 24, 1962, where Chapelle referred to South Vietnam as "our real estate."¹⁵⁰ Parr corrected her noting South Vietnam was a sovereign nation and not "ours." Mocking the magazine, which at that time leaned left, Williams wrote, "It is probably O.K. for the Soviets or the Chinese to covet real estate, but we just want everyone to be happily free to enjoy their real estate with the improvements we make with no strings attached." He went on to say the term "our real estate" was bad propaganda, but it did get her "... in the sensitive pages of the *New Republic* where you can attain the stature of a first-class warmonger without half trying."¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Correspondence from Chapelle to Chester Williams, undated, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹⁵¹ Correspondence from Chester Williams to Chapelle, March 3, 1962, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

Chapelle's response to the expression "our real estate" was reflective of her worldview. For Chapelle, the world was not comprised of sovereign nations, but of nations that were free and nations that were communist. The real problem, she argued, was not the use of "our real estate," it was not the old sin of imperialism, but the lack of commitment to fighting communism. She wrote, "It is the shiny new committed sin of saying in the voice of our President that we, America, will help countries defend themselves against communism and then not meaning it as we did not mean it in the cases of the Hungarian revolution, the Laotian betrayal, the Vietnamese foot-dragging."¹⁵² She went on to argue that Asia, South America, and Europe all felt strong negative feelings toward the U.S. because of Laos, Cuba, and Hungary. She wrote, "Yet hardly any of these things could have happened had we recognized the historic truth that those countries while a member of our family of free nations were one of the responsibilities of the greatest free nation, our own."¹⁵³ She went on to acknowledge she was a war monger -- that is, she explained, because she was selling the Vietnam War. She added while she did not advocate ground troops, she did support the adviser system then in place, and argued the U.S. should make up its mind to fight the war and win it. With the advisers in place, the people of Vietnam would be in a position to "...kill the greatest number of Viet Cong terrorists" possible.¹⁵⁴ She wrote:

You see, I believe the Reds are doing very well in their effort to reduce the U.S. continent to an isolated entity, thereby ending our and my personal freedom. I've seen them advance eight steps in six years while we only retreated (Hungary, Algeria, Lebanon, Cuba, Korea, Formosa, Laos, Vietnam).

¹⁵² Correspondence From Chapelle to Chester Williams. Undated.

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

Chapelle was not oblivious to the truth about the Vietnam War because she covered Vietnam the way she covered every other conflict she encountered: she followed the military. In a letter to her friend Stevie Blick during her first 1961 trip to Laos, she reported she covered three operations involving the enemy, which included marching 165 miles in 17 days.¹⁵⁵ After a short time in-country, Chapelle expressed serious doubts that the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) would win the war. She wrote, "There simply is no doctrine for licking guerrillas, and either the Viets -- not the Americans, but these little brown men of South Vietnam -- evolve one or we the lose the confounded war."¹⁵⁶

Following her trip to Laos in 1961, Chapelle wrote a letter to a friend in which she proposed her own two-prong solution for the problems plaguing the effort in Vietnam: 1) the U.S. had to retain its influence and help defeat the "violent forces" that were the communists, and 2) the people of the U.S. had to learn to love Asians -- or at least to make friends with them.¹⁵⁷ She outlined comparisons to Korea and argued the racism experienced during the Korean War would return to Vietnam:

We are hence in the psychological position of the fighting men in Korea, who too were trying to befriend a group of Asians in trouble for whom their own families back home expressed only contempt, or at least bewilderment. In the view of most American families with men in Korea during that war, or men in Vietnam now, no little brown heathen who probably smells has any right to friendship (real friendship, where the American risks his life alongside the Asian for a goal they both think worth it) of a big, healthy American who uses a toilet and can read and write.¹⁵⁸

Chapelle may have been influenced in this ideology by the people she knew in the military. The need for such alliances was included in an article in the July 1960 *Reader's Digest*

¹⁵⁵ Correspondence from Chapelle to Stevie Blick, Sept. 28, 1961, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁷ Correspondence from Chapelle to Samantha Duckson, Nov. 16, 1961, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid

article on the Special Forces where Chapelle reflected on two men, one American and one Asian, working and laughing together during a military exercise. In the same article she quoted Colonel Mills framing the war they were preparing for in Cold War terms, "The men and women who hate slavery enough to fight it if they have the means are our allies everywhere."¹⁵⁹ This is also another instance where the argument is framed in terms an American could identify with, the fight against slavery.¹⁶⁰

In the letter to her friend, Chapelle argued the U.S. did not win in Korea and were not winning in South Vietnam -- for the same reason. Using WWII as an example, she wrote the way to win a war was with "a preponderance of resources over any enemy" and support from the home front. What South Vietnam lacked, she continued, was support from the people of the United States. The job of the press, as Chapelle saw it, was to create sympathy and understanding for the Vietnamese, but more importantly, the fighting men of the U.S.¹⁶¹ What the press needed to do, Chapelle argued, was change the narrative because American women, wives and mothers, believed their sons and husbands were in Vietnam killing people and risking their own lives in the process, "...which makes her feel bad and she does say so, we know."¹⁶² Chapelle wrote the way forward was to convince American women, wives and mothers, that their sons and husbands were in Vietnam saving poor people, "This makes her feel good and she may even say so."¹⁶³ If U.S. policy in Vietnam was to win the hearts and minds of the people (as President Johnson would say repeatedly) Chapelle saw her job as winning the hearts and minds of American women in order to garner support for the Vietnam War.

¹⁵⁹ Dickey Chapelle, "Our Secret Weapon in the Far East" *Reader's Digest* (June 1960) 200.

¹⁶⁰ Chapelle 200

¹⁶¹ Correspondence from Chapelle to Samantha Duckson, Nov. 16, 1961, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹⁶² *Ibid*

¹⁶³ *Ibid*

As she had in Algeria and Cuba, Chapelle sought to influence how Americans saw and thought about other people -- in this case, Asians. She attempted to present a common cause, the fight against communism, and by using imagery Americans could easily identify with, its own origin story and the fight against tyranny. In an undated draft press release, which was probably written at the end of 1961, Chapelle noted it was uncertain whether the people of the United States would commit to "...a distant people with whom we have little in common but the enemy."¹⁶⁴ She added her conviction that if the American people did not find the will to support the fight in Vietnam, eventually the war against communism would be closer to home. She concluded with imagery meant to help the American people identify with the Vietnamese, "I have seen Asians fight for freedom as hard as it has ever been fought anywhere including Lexington and Concord."¹⁶⁵

While Chapelle's work from Laos was not published, this did not prevent her from using her influence on her speaking tours to promote her ideology. Chapelle utilized speaking tours to supplement her income because she was not being hired for assignments or selling articles. Her speaking tours were much like her journalism: I know these things are true because I have seen them. Ostroff wrote that Chapelle intended to use the lecture tours to help people understand there was a real war in Vietnam, and to rally the people to the cause, just like in World War II.¹⁶⁶ In a letter to Admiral Arleigh Burke, dated March 15, 1962, Chapelle admitted the primary theme of her talks were not popular because she counseled the audience on the necessity of the U.S. leveraging its power abroad "...with restraint and kindness but use it nevertheless if we

¹⁶⁴ Undated Press Release, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁶⁶ Ostroff 329

want to preserve our freedoms and especially if we want to extend it to other parts of the world."¹⁶⁷

The audiences on these speaking tours tended to be specific: either women's clubs or students. To the women, Chapelle always engaged in finger wagging about what she perceived was a lack of support for the military generally and the Vietnam War specifically. She told her audience that if the training of U.S. service personnel was "tapioca" it was the fault of U.S. parents who objected to serious training.¹⁶⁸ In a speech to women in 1965, Chapelle said, "I have to walk further to work in Viet Nam than the 19 year old American soldier is allowed to walk during his training."¹⁶⁹ She went on to say, "We women changed the American standard of military training in 1948 to the extent that I am almost afraid any more to go into dangerous situations with our fighting men."¹⁷⁰ The Vietnam War would need approximately 30,000 highly-trained troops, she told the audience, and at the time there were only 3,000 of that caliber because women had convinced men that military service was undesirable. The fact that women did not support men in military careers was the reason the U.S. was losing the Vietnam War, she said.¹⁷¹

Although Chapelle may have been influenced in her ideology by any number of sources, the specific topic of female support was raised in a letter from Chester Williams who wrote that Chapelle should consider writing a story about the training going on near the Panama Canal in conditions so comfortable for the troops, he argued, it was impossible to believe the Department of Defense was serious about training men for jungle warfare. Quoting one of the Hudson

¹⁶⁷ Correspondence from Chapelle to Admiral Arleigh Burke, March 15, 1962, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹⁶⁸ Bette McNear, "War Correspondent says tougher army needed," *Morning News*, Wilmington, Delaware, April 5, 1965.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁷¹ Bette McNear, "War Correspondent tougher army needed," *Morning News*, Wilmington, Delaware, April 5, 1965.

Institute's experts on guerrilla warfare, Cresson Kearny, he wrote, "He says the commanders have picked a nice area where the men can have all the comforts of home and bring their wives instead of selecting a real jungle environment where they can learn to get tough."¹⁷² He went on to note this was done "at the insistence of the ladies who don't want their men to suffer any hardships or wander too far from the bridge table and the bedroom."

Chapelle would not be the only correspondent to raise the issue of military readiness. Homar Bigart, of the *New York Times*, also expressed concern U.S. troops were not up to the harsh conditions of jungle warfare. Bigart, whose last article from Vietnam was filed in 1962, expressed doubt U.S. troops would fare any better against the guerillas than did the French, in consideration that both armies were trained for conventional warfare. Bigart wrote, "...Americans may simply lack the endurance -- and the motivation -- to meet the unbelievably tough demands of jungle fighting."¹⁷³

Although Chapelle primarily spoke to women's groups, she also spent time speaking to audiences of high school students. To the male students, she promoted a career in the military, with special reference to the Special Forces, and told the young men they, too, could be advisers in Vietnam.¹⁷⁴ Chapelle wrote to an Army friend who worked as a recruiter that she added two paragraphs to the speech she gave on tour to recruit for the Special Forces.¹⁷⁵ On her 1965 speaking tour, she brought a member of the Special Forces, a Green Beret, with her as an example.¹⁷⁶ Ostroff wrote, "The young, broad-shouldered sergeant would stand beside her, later making a recruitment pitch, while Dickey hyped the Marines and, for the less warlike, the Peace

¹⁷² Correspondence from Chester Williams to Chapelle, March 3, 1962, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹⁷³ William Prochnau, *Once Upon a Distant War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 81

¹⁷⁴ Ostroff 332

¹⁷⁵ Correspondence from Chapelle to Bob Jewell, April 1, 1962, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹⁷⁶ Ostroff 332

Corps."¹⁷⁷ If Chapelle spoke of her own profession journalism, and if she attempted to recruit the young women in the audience to follow in her footsteps, there is no record of it.

Chapelle deeply believed her work, and the work of journalists in general, would and should help the war effort. In a letter to a relative during her first trip to Southeast Asia in 1961, she expressed concern that world matters, in Berlin and the U.N. Crisis, would overshadow events in Vietnam and Laos. She understood that the people of the U.S. would not place significant care into what happened to the people of Asia and wrote, "...and of course this is just what the communists are counting on our doing."¹⁷⁸ It was Chapelle's intent to use her platforms as a magazine writer and public speaker to keep the issue of support for Vietnam in the forefront.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Correspondence from Chapelle to unnamed relative, Sept. 22, 1961, Box 6, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

CHAPTER V: REPORTING VIETNAM

Chapelle's correspondence was a reflection of what she believed journalists should be doing in Vietnam: garnering sympathy for the Vietnamese people and supporting the U.S. military mission. The text promoted the need to fight communism while the photos reflected the suffering of the people and the willingness of the Vietnamese men to fight -- with the U.S. military aiding where possible. Chapelle's article in the November 1962 *National Geographic*, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," was a testament to these beliefs. She had been assigned to cover the use of helicopters in the war, but the helicopters made only the rare appearance in the text; though, there were multiple photographs of helicopters. Instead, she did what she said was her responsibility, she promoted the war as a fight for the free world, writing:

This was the place, then, where the fate of millions of people was being decided in blood, the blood of the men around me. If their battles were won, Southeast Asia might remain free. If the battles continued to be lost, the Communists would surely dominate all Viet Nam and strike for the rest of the Indochinese peninsula.¹⁷⁹

As was shown in her correspondence, Chapelle defined foreign policy alliances as those where the U.S. demonstrated its friendship by taking the same risks to safety and life as the native peoples. That ideology was illustrated in the article when Chapelle reported on the U.S. military advisers living within a fortified village (known as the Strategic Hamlet Program) protecting 10,000 rice farmers.¹⁸⁰ She explained to U.S. readers the villages of the Vietnamese rice farmers had previously been scattered and hard to defend, making the move to strategic hamlets necessary for their defense. The U.S. advisers in the area were led by Major McCurly, who apparently had a habit, Chapelle wrote, of walking throughout the village. Chapelle quoted

¹⁷⁹ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 733.

¹⁸⁰ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 754.

a Vietnamese regimental commander as saying, "Your country honors us by sending such a decorated soldier to help us ... but does he not know how badly the enemy wants him to die? If the Viet Cong sees how unguarded he goes -- poof! -- one grenade in the market place is all it would take."¹⁸¹ Chappelle quoted herself explaining that the major's risk was symbolic of the friendship between the U.S. and Vietnam, to which the man replied he understood but it was just unexpected from a westerner.¹⁸² She went on to explain to U.S. readers the military advisers were training the men from the strategic village to defend themselves from the communists.

It's difficult to know in the early days of the Vietnam War and the Strategic Hamlet Program how much of the truth Chappelle knew, and did not report, or if she was strategically located by the military so as to be oblivious to the truth of the resettlement program. Nothing in her reporting or correspondence indicated she was concerned about the rights of the Vietnamese people living in the resettlement villages. By 1962, foreign correspondents were reporting on the forced relocation of the rural Vietnamese farmers, and the destruction of their villages. The *Daily Mail* reported the use of barbed wire around the villages -- but only minimally to avoid the appearance of a concentration camp.¹⁸³ There is a possibility that Chappelle was brought to the village to counter bad press from non-U.S. correspondents, but the truth of that is unknown.

Chappelle's photography from her 1962 trip to Vietnam was especially insightful. The images of fighting men were always Vietnamese. As Chappelle argued in her private correspondence, she believed American women did not want to think of their loved ones fighting on foreign soil. The message that the war was being fought by the Vietnamese themselves was illustrated in a large color photograph of armed South Vietnamese fighting men preparing to

¹⁸¹ Dickey Chappelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 754.

¹⁸² *Ibid*

¹⁸³ Knightley 413

battle the communists. One face is turned and looking up at the camera with emotional eyes. It could be argued his eyes were on the United States reader -- the people Chapelle said she wanted to impact. Turn the page and the reader sees an American adviser, armed, surrounded by Vietnamese military personnel, in a photo the government wanted withheld from print. Chapelle would win an award for this photo because it was the first of its kind in a magazine to show a combat-ready military man in Southeast Asia.¹⁸⁴

While Chapelle's photographs show Vietnamese men prepared to fight, Vietnamese women are shown suffering through the horrors of war and the loss of loved-ones. In the first photograph of Vietnamese women, they are shown collecting their few belongings from a burned-out village.¹⁸⁵ On the opposite page, a young wife sits crying with her infant on her lap, saying good-bye to her husband who was killed in an attack on their village.¹⁸⁶ On the next page there is a large photo of women and children being evacuated from the danger and immediately after that is a picture of a women holding the hand of her injured husband.¹⁸⁷ On the next page is a picture of a funeral, with multiple coffins, and weeping women following an attack on a village by communists that left 30 people dead.¹⁸⁸ Viewed on their own, it would be difficult to interpret these photos. With the obvious suffering of the Vietnamese people, there might be an assumption that Chapelle was attempting an anti-war message. However, her correspondence demonstrated that was not the case. She was attempting to garner sympathy for the Vietnamese people because she supported the war and wanted other Americans -- especially women-- to also support the war.

¹⁸⁴ Correspondence from National Press Photographers Association to Chapelle, Jan. 22, 1963, Box 7, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

¹⁸⁵ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 732

¹⁸⁶ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 733

¹⁸⁷ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 734-735.

¹⁸⁸ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 736.

The one exception to the suffering women photographs is a young woman shown sitting on the floor, with her hands tied behind her back, looking away from the camera.¹⁸⁹ She was identified in the cutline that accompanied the photo as someone who served "the Reds" as a medic. The woman was one of three prisoners who were suspected communists to be featured in the article. It should be noted the Geneva Prisoner of War Conventions and U.S. policy prohibit the publishing of prisoner of war photographs for the sake of curiosity. However, if wounded U.S. military could be denied the Purple Heart because their country denied they were at war,¹⁹⁰ then it follows journalists could publish pictures of captured communists for the same reason.

The photos of the U.S. military men in this article were particularly interesting because they depict the men engaged in a singular activity: helping. In the first photo showing U.S. military personnel, two advisers -- one Army and one Marine -- are shown smiling while they walk between two flags -- one American and one the flag of South Vietnam. Perhaps Chapelle was attempting to symbolize the partnership between the U.S. and South Vietnam with this photo. In subsequent photos, military personnel are shown helping to move a stretcher with a wounded South Vietnamese man on it, a Navy corpsman is smiling while he treats a little girl in her father's arms, and a Green Beret is shown giving the gift of clothing to a little girl practically nude and suffering from burns.¹⁹¹ On the next page, a U.S. military adviser is shown on a break from work, smiling, and surrounded by children. The photo is large and is spread almost over two pages. The cutline noted the officer was helping to defend eight fortified villages while "the Reds" were offering a \$25,000 bounty "for men like him, dead or alive."¹⁹² As with other articles, Chapelle attempted to gain the support of the American public with familiar imagery. In

¹⁸⁹ Dickey Chapelle, Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 735.

¹⁹⁰ Prochnau 20

¹⁹¹ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 738-739.

¹⁹² Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 740

one photo, a U.S. military adviser is shown creating a parapet covered in bamboo spikes.¹⁹³ In the cutline, Chapelle writes, "The British used a similar device, made of sharpened stakes, at Yorktown during the American Revolution."¹⁹⁴

As was Chapelle's method of storytelling, she wrote herself into the narrative throughout the article. In fact, in one of the first photos, Chapelle is shown smiling, in her signature bush hat and jungle fatigues, walking with Vietnamese troops in high water.¹⁹⁵ She also made a special point of noting the U.S. major in charge of the village she visited told her he had never seen a correspondent in the field before and some paragraphs later she noted she had covered conflicts in Hungary, Algeria, Cuba, Laos, Korea, and Formosa -- thus reconfirming her credentials (while Chapelle did not cover the Korean War, because she had lost her credentials during WWII and had yet to get them back during Korea, she did cover training of military personnel in Korea after the war).¹⁹⁶ Chapelle also concluded the article with a story about herself by relating the fact that three different young Marines told her their fathers remember meeting her at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Chapelle observed:

With a shock I realized I was now covering my second generation of combat Marines -- covering them, again, on embattled ground half a world away from home. And, when I stopped to ponder it, even their cause remained unchanged: man's ever-threatened right to freedom. THE END.¹⁹⁷

Without Chapelle's correspondence, it would be difficult to understand that while she stated her personal journalism ethics were to see and report, in fact she had an anti-communist, interventionist, personal ideology that actually guided the composition of her articles and photos.

¹⁹³ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 743.

¹⁹⁴ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 742.

¹⁹⁵ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 729.

¹⁹⁶ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 754.

¹⁹⁷ Dickey Chapelle, "Helicopters over South Viet Nam," *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 754.

Through a combined examination of her letters and articles, it is clear Chapelle supported the Vietnam War because she saw it as a fight to contain communism, as was the U.S. policy at the time and had been since President Truman, and she used her articles as a method to influence U.S. readership.

By examining Chapelle's work against other journalists covering the conflict in Vietnam, the historiography demonstrates her ideology was aligned with U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, and in the early days of U.S. intervention in Vietnam, and other journalists were reporting in similar ways. Although there were people who accused the media of undermining the war effort in Vietnam, during the period Chapelle was in Vietnam, (1961-1965), journalists generally promoted U.S. foreign policy. The primary difference between the work of Chapelle and that of other journalists is she covered the military while they covered the war -- and there is a distinction there to be made. The Vietnam War had a political element as well as a military element, but Chapelle only covered the military, while other journalists covered both, making their understanding of the Vietnam War more holistic.

There is a myth about Vietnam. The myth is that journalists opposed the war and used their institutional authority to turn Americans against the Vietnam War -- to the detriment of the cause. President Richard Nixon once said, "Our worst enemy seems to be the press." The theory that the press could use its resources in opposition to U.S. policy is known as oppositional media. A critique of this theory was part of the study by Dr. Daniel C. Hallin. Although Hallin's research centered on television, because he included reporting from Vietnam as part of the study, the discussion of an oppositional media is relevant here. Hallin called Vietnam "the most extensively covered and the most controversial news story of the period from 1960 - 1964

through 1976 ..."¹⁹⁸ It was also a time, Hallin continued, when the political institutions lost the bulk of their public support. But correlation is not causation. The evidence demonstrated that the ideology and newsgathering techniques remained basically the same during the period, with a focus on objectivity, while continuing to utilize information from official sources without "passing explicit judgment on official policy and statements."¹⁹⁹ Hallin acknowledges the primary changes to reporting occurred during and after the Tet Offensive (1968), a time when there was significant critical reporting out of Vietnam, which is outside the scope of this report.

Hallin's study included the theory that the media was not so much acting as an oppositional force in Vietnam as they reported on "the failure of the U.S. policy and the growth of domestic opposition," known as the mirror theory of news; that is, reporting mirrored events.²⁰⁰ However, Hallin continued, there is sufficient evidence to conclude the media began to increase the reporting on South Vietnamese politics. Due to the political weaknesses of the South Vietnamese political structure, this might have seemed like a growth of oppositional media, but the evidence of other sources will demonstrate the South Vietnamese political infrastructure had always been weak, there just came a point where the media started talking about it.

The myth that journalists allowed their opposition to the Vietnam war to permeate their reporting was referred to as the Vietnam Syndrome by Greg McLaughlin in *The War Correspondent*.²⁰¹ McLaughlin noted that some critics of the Vietnam press coverage have accused the media of helping to lose the Vietnam War with their negative coverage.²⁰² He

¹⁹⁸ Hallin 5

¹⁹⁹ Hallin 6

²⁰⁰ Hallin 9

²⁰¹ McLaughlin 78

²⁰² McLaughlin 112

continued and noted the myth of the Vietnam Syndrome actually impacted relations between the press and military during future conflict. McLaughlin noted, "With few exceptions, the American press corps in Saigon was composed of ordinary journalists who knew where their sympathies lay."²⁰³ The issue, he later noted, was not that the press were opposed to the war, but the war had a political element, and members of that political element, such as Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, were extremely sensitive to what they perceived as negative news or any inference the U.S. was not the winning the war.²⁰⁴ As Homar Bigart wrote in the *New York Times Magazine*, "We seem to be regarded by the American mission as tools of our foreign policy."²⁰⁵ There is evidence that journalists worried about how the reporting of the war impacted the political element. When Larry Burrows, a photographer for *Life*, sent photos of the U.S. participating in the Battle of Ap Bac in 1963, even though the policy of the U.S. was that the military act only as advisers, he noted the man firing the rocket in the photo was an American pilot, which could hurt the U.S. politically if that fact were printed. Back at *Life*, the photo was doctored and the caption indicated the pilot was Vietnamese.²⁰⁶ When the nature of war is changed, the nature of war reporting changes, too. World War II correspondents never had to worry that a photo of U.S. military personnel participating in a battle would have negative political results.

The evidence demonstrates that journalists generally supported U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. William Prochnau, who reported in Vietnam and later wrote about the experience in *Once Upon a Distant War* (1995), explained journalists covering the war in Vietnam essentially supported the war -- much like Chapelle had. Prochnau observed, "The correspondents thought

²⁰³ McLaughlin 113

²⁰⁴ McLaughlin 113

²⁰⁵ Knightley 411

the war was *right*.²⁰⁷ Neil Sheehan, who arrived in Vietnam as a war correspondent for the *New York Times* in 1962, later wrote, "I believed in what my country was doing in Vietnam. With military and economic aid and as few thousand pilots and army advisors the United States was attempting to help the non-communist Vietnamese ... defeat a communist guerilla insurgency that would subject them to tyranny."²⁰⁸ Like Chapelle, there were journalists who believed the U.S. should intervene where ever there was a threat of communism. Frank Harvey said, "The United States is presently a world leader and I believe we intend to keep it that way -- we are prepared to fight, if necessary, to hold onto what we've got and get more. In Vietnam. In South America. Anywhere."²⁰⁹

Chapelle was also not the only correspondent in Vietnam who was fervently anticommunists. Just as one example, famed war correspondent Marguerite Higgins, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for her work during the Korea War, was a longtime anticommunist -- going back to her work in Europe during World War II. Higgins believed the aggressions of the communist in Korea were a warning to the free world and further believed that the U.S. was ill-prepared for the threat posed by communism.²¹⁰ Further, like Chapelle, Higgins believe the U.S. had to fight and win in Vietnam to check the spread of communism.²¹¹ Another anticommunist zealot was a friend of Chapelle's. Elaine Shepard made the decision in 1965 to cover the Vietnam War after becoming alarmed by U.S. news indicating support for the Vietnam War was waning.²¹² Described as an "unrepentant hawk" who supported the U.S. mission in Vietnam as the only way to preventing all of Asia from falling to the communists, Shepard later said nothing

²⁰⁷ Prochnau 90

²⁰⁸ Neil Sheehan, "Not a dove but no longer a hawk," *New York Times Magazine* (1966).

²⁰⁹ Knightley 423

²¹⁰ Elwood-Akers 21

²¹¹ Elwood-Akers 23

²¹² Elwood Akers 44

would have kept her out of Vietnam -- she would have swum there with her "typewriter in her teeth" if necessary.²¹³ Although outside of the time period of this thesis, it is notable that the anticommunism fervor of the journalists became to change after 1965, after both Chapelle and Higgins died within weeks of one another, and a batch of new journalists arrived who were younger, with ideologies decidedly more left of center.²¹⁴

It is also true, though, that there were many correspondents in Vietnam with a variety of views. As Virginia Elwood-Akers noted about the female correspondents in Vietnam, "Their politics covered the spectrum from Phillipa Schuyler's fervent anti-communism to Madeleine Riffaud's fervent Marxism. Some were advocates of a style of journalism which allows for no personal opinion; others wrote in a highly emotional and dramatic style which bordered on fiction."²¹⁵ This was not just true of the women. Every correspondent who landed in Saigon came with their own ideologies. However, generally speaking, in the early days of the war the correspondents questioned U.S. policy and not the fact the U.S. was intervening in the affairs of a sovereign nation.

Like Chapelle, Prochnau and the Saigon press corps relied on the military for information -- just not the generals in Saigon as much as the colonels in the field -- and while occasionally critical, the colonels in the field stayed on brand. On a guided trip to the Vietnamese countryside, Vann told reporters "... these people need help and you ought to write positively about what you see"²¹⁶ -- the narrative Chapelle also promulgated: the U.S. was here to help. Prochnau had developed a relationship with Colonel John Paul Vann, who would influence his reporting. Vann supported the war and thought it could be won, but not with indiscriminate

²¹³ Elwood-Akers 44

²¹⁴ Elwood-Akers 60

²¹⁵ Elwood-Akers 6

²¹⁶ Prochnau 89

killing that resulted from more and bigger bombs that killed civilians, and lost them the hearts and minds of the populace.

Ultimately, the primary difference between the reporting of Dickey Chapelle and other Vietnam correspondents was the political element. Unlike Chapelle, who supported the advisor system and never covered the political side, the correspondents working in Vietnam did double duty as war correspondents and political reporters due to the political apparatus conducting the war in Vietnam -- including the government of the United States, but primarily the incompetent government of South Vietnam. In the early days of the Vietnam War, it did not take correspondents long to see it was the strategy that was wrong -- along with the U.S. alliance with South Vietnam's political leader, Ngo Dinh Diem.²¹⁷ Homar Bigart correctly predicted in an article published in 1962 that Diem would fail to win the loyalty of his people and the U.S. alliance with Diem was doomed.²¹⁸

That year, 1962, the year Chapelle was in Vietnam for *National Geographic*, there was a spate of articles critical of U.S. policy in Vietnam -- with particular reference to the alliance with Diem. Among the critical articles was one by Francois Sully, a stringer for *Newsweek*, with the headline: VIETNAM: THE UNPLEASANT TRUTH. In the article, Sully called Vietnam "a losing proposition" and he expressed serious doubts about the quality of training the Vietnamese were getting from the U.S. military advisers. Quoting the historian Bernard Fall, Sully was also critical of Diem and his government, calling it inadequate.²¹⁹ Sully was expelled from the country. Although accreditation during the Vietnam War was relaxed, much more so than World War II, for example, journalists were accredited to the government of South Vietnam, which

²¹⁷ Prochnau 90

²¹⁸ Prochnau 81

²¹⁹ Knightley 415

could easily revoke accreditation when displeased; though, the U.S. diplomatic apparatus did attempt to prevent this from happening.²²⁰ It is also worth noting the article that got Sully expelled from South Vietnam appeared just three months before Chapelle's positive article on the U.S. intervention, which demonstrates the uneven reporting from Vietnam.

Expulsion from the country was not the only consequence reporters faced for their mirror coverage of the political situation in South Vietnam. David Halberstam, who was frequently critical of U.S. policy, was accused by the CIA of having no objectivity in a report they produced on his work product, the conservative *New York Journal-American* accused him of being soft on communism and advocating for a Vietnamese version of Fidel Castro, and President Kennedy asked Halberstam's boss at the *New York Times* if he intended a different assignment for Halberstam in the near future.²²¹ As was reflective of the political culture in the United States at the time, those who questioned U.S. policy were liberals or communists.²²² Peter Arnett later wrote, "Caught between the truth of what we saw and the nation's sense of patriotism, the Vietnam reporters became something like outcasts, destined to defend their professionalism for the rest of their lives."²²³ These were not reporters who were opposed to the war; they were reporters who understood the political aspect of the war and reported on it.

Chapelle's claim that she reported what she saw is problematic. The evidence is substantial that she had ideological objectives and used her reporting and lecture tours to promote those ideologies. Further, her method of newsgathering, which was to march with the troops, ensured her understanding of the war was limited. Other reporters demonstrated a much more substantial understanding of the war, including the political aspect, but faced substantial

²²⁰ Prochnau 68

²²¹ McLaughlin 113-114

²²² McLaughlin 114

²²³ McLaughlin 114

pushback from the political apparatus as they attempted to report on elements of the war that contradicted the messaging of the U.S. government.

CONCLUSION

Dickey Chapelle is remembered as the woman who died covering the U.S. mission in Vietnam, the first woman from the U.S. to be killed covering combat. She is also remembered for her daring coverage of the Marines, marching with them through dangerous territory, and parachuting with them into combat. Her struggles to get her work published, and her unorthodox journalism principles, have become lost among so many letters left behind in boxes.

Chapelle's correspondence illustrated how unprepared she was to be a war correspondent. She had no formal education, and her experience working for a woman's magazine as a young woman in the 1940s was insufficient preparation for the work required of a war correspondent in the 1960s. Chapelle relied heavily on her background as a writer covering humanitarian issues in Europe and the Middle East to jumpstart her career as a correspondent, but that experience was also insufficient. Ultimately, she never learned the very basics of professional writing, as was demonstrated by the critical letters from editors.

Additionally, it is only through extensive reading of the correspondence that it becomes clear Chapelle's ideology shaped her work -- rather than her work being shaped by the facts on the ground. She claimed to write about what she saw, but her information-gathering, research trips had limited scope, and the resulting articles were tailored to promote her ideology. When Chapelle landed in Vietnam, she already had an opinion about the war due to her anticommunist views, which blinded her to the truth about both the human-rights crisis faced by the South Vietnamese people being held in secured villages, and the political side of the war that she did not cover. As a result, she continued to advocate for the Vietnam War, going so far as to publicly recruit young men for the military to serve in Vietnam.

Chapelle is an excellent example of a person who lived her life just as she wanted to, someone who challenged gender norms, and kicked down barriers for other female correspondents who came after her. As much as she is an example of the fact a woman can do anything a man can do, including covering combat, her lack of training, and the way her personal ideologies colored her work, makes her journalism a reflection of U.S. policy at the time, and not a mirror for the truth of the Vietnam War.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Applegate, Edd. *Print and Broadcast Journalism: A Critical Examination*. Westport, Connecticut, 1996.
- Brewin, Mark W. "A Short History of the History of Objectivity." *The Communication Review* 16, no. 4 (2013): 211-29.
- Daly, Christopher. *Covering America: A Narrative History of a Nation's Journalism*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.
- Chapelle, Dickey. *What's a Woman Doing Here? A Reporter's Report on Herself*. New York: Morrow, 1962.
- Chapelle, Dickey. "Our Secret Weapon in the Far East." *Reader's Digest* (June 1960) 189.
- Chapelle, Dickey. "Fighting Priest of South Viet Nam." *Reader's Digest* (July 1963).
- Chapelle, Dickey. "Helicopters Over Viet Nam." *National Geographic* (Nov. 1962) 723.
- Chapelle, Dickey. "Water War in Vietnam." *National Geographic* (Feb. 1966).
- Dickey Chapelle Papers. Wisconsin Historical Society. Madison, Wisconsin.
- Edwards, Julia. *Women of the World: The Great Foreign Correspondents*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988.
- Fleming, Michael. "Warner's focuses on war." *Daily Variety* 283, 50 (2004).
- Hallin, Daniel C. "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media." *The Journal of Politics* 46, no. 1 (1984): 2-24.
- Knightley, Phillip. *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker*. First ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.
- Haines, Don. "With Her Eyes Wide Open" *Vietnam Magazine* 20, no. 2 (2007) 38.
- Halberstam, David. *The Making of a Quagmire*. New York: Random House, 1965.
- Keever, Beverly Deepe. *Death Zones and Darling Spies : Seven Years of Vietnam War Reporting*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013.
- McLaughlin, Greg. *The War Correspondent*. London: Pluto Press, 2016.
- Ostroff, Roberta. *Fire in the Wind: The Life of Dickey Chapelle*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992.

- Prochnau, William W. *Once upon a Distant War*. New York: Times Books, 1995.
- Santel, James. "Kodachrome Eden." *The American Scholar* 82, no. 2 (Spring 2013), 62-72.
- Seegers, Kathleen Walker. "Brazil's Big Dust Bowl." *Reader's Digest*. (July 1963). 212.
- Sloan, David W., Parcell, Lisa Mullikin, eds. *American Journalism: History, Principles, Practices*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002.
- Webb, Sheila. "An American Journalist in the Role of Partisan - Dickey Chapelle's Coverage of the Algerian War." *American Journalism* 22, no. 2 (2005): 111-34.