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NATIONAL

VIETNAM VETERANS REVIEW

Volume 1, No. 1

"Strength in Unity"

1 July 1981

Serving All Vietnam-Era Veterans

From Sea To Shining Sea!

San Mateo to again honor Vietnam vets 4 July

San Mateo California to honor Vietnam vets 4 July 1968, the city of San Mateo, California "adopted" the men of A company, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, serving in Vietnam.

The local firehouse had the name of every man currently serving in the unit. The 101st struck its colors in 1972 and came home. The city welcomed them with a celebration including a parade.

The adoption began when 19-year-old Sgt. Joe Artavia, serving with the 101st in Vietnam told his family that his buddies "felt forgotten". It would mean a lot if they could receive mail and know that someone cared. The city council of San Mateo unanimously adopted the unit. Twenty days later Joe was killed in action.

Mayor John Murray of San Mateo stated that he received a letter from a member of the 101st after the homecoming of the hostages in January. The veterans told Murray that the celebration for the hostages made him realize "more than ever how much the people of San Mateo had done for me".

In view of this the city will sponsor a homecoming for the vets of the adopted unit and all who served in Vietnam over the weekend of four and five July.

Vincent Rios, a disabled Vietnam vet, Deputy Director, Western Region Veterans Leadership Conference, and a member of the veterans planning committee for the event, outlined the weekend as follows:

He will be the grand marshal of a parade on Saturday morning, the Fourth of July. The theme of the parade will be honoring Vietnam vets.

A barbeque and several picnics will follow the parade, the day will conclude with a cocktail reception.

Sunday the fifth will begin with a memorial service at the grave of Sgt. Joe Artavia followed by an afternoon band review and airshow at the local racetrack. Rios stated that the basic purpose of the festivities is to show the Vietnam vets that San Mateo cares and to enjoy the weekend.

Among those planning to attend are Joan Maiman, chairman of the Veterans Leadership conference, Frulton Barns, Oregon Director, V.L.C., Douglas Walton, Montana Director of the V.L.C. and Peter Tiffany, Western Regional Director, V.L.C.

Maiman stated that it is nice to see the impetus for the celebration coming from the citizens. We realize that we can not wait for the government to take the lead in changing the attitudes that exist toward many of those who served in Vietnam. We put our hope in the basic goodness of the American people and this activity is hopefully just the beginning.

The Vets take it on the chin again

Read:

Veterans Flight Training

page 20.



Arlington Cemetery Memorial Day, 1981
photo: P. Mcbeehan

Open Letter to the Hunger Strikers

Dear Veterans,

Many of us who were in Vietnam are deeply concerned to hear of the continuing hunger strike in which you are involved.

We, who have seen so much of death, have found that one of the lasting legacies of our time in Vietnam is a profound reaffirmation of the value of life. In a sense, we were held hostage to the future in that war and came home, granted in some cases to an untenable situation, but we did come home.

It would be, indeed, the supreme irony if the loss of life were the only avenue open to the achievement of a better quality of life for your fellow veterans. We reject this notion, there are other options. This is not to be simplistic in our belief that such solutions are easy, or will, in the end, achieve all that we desire, but we do have hope. In death there is no hope, only the end of any options.

While we cannot, in conscience, endorse any act which may cause suffering or loss of life to any human being, this is not a condemnation of the issue raised or of your courage and commitment as individuals for taking a stand. Rather, it is a statement of hope that your devotion will be channeled into avenues of life not death.

Joan M. Maiman
Chairman
Veterans Leadership Conference

This mailgram was read to the hunger strikers in Santa Rosa, California by Mr. Pete Tiffany, Western Regional Director for the Veterans Leadership Conference on June 13, 1981. On Saturday evening after receiving this message the Santa Rosa hunger strikers renounced the hunger strike portion of their efforts to make the public aware and raise the issues of Agent Orange, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the employment problem of the Vietnam veterans.

Van Devanter's Touching Vietnam Article on Page 19



Lynda M. Van Devanter, a registered nurse, was a first lieutenant in the Army, stationed in Pleiku and Qui Nhon, South Vietnam, from 1969 to 1970. She is the women's director of Vietnam Veterans of America.

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 23, 1981

As of today, the transition from base camp in Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. is complete. With the contingent of Veterans Coalition of Hunger Strikers in the District Capital decreases to 11 of the original 12 National Hunger Strikers. That leaves 1 member and one alternate at the Los Angeles base camp.

The two new members are Tom Langan, who has been fasting for 27 days and Greg Hinkel, 23 days.

We now begin our next and hopefully final phase. That of getting redress of grievance and the establishment of vets rights.

"You were there, you paid your way, and by God you deserve every inch of credit"

Iron Mike Healy

Editorial

Will They See What I See?

by Constance Brewer

Sometimes, while he is sleeping, I catch a glimpse of the eighteen-year old boy who, before he knew what he had gotten himself into in Vietnam, was so full of patriotism and pride in his country. Sometimes, while he is sleeping, I can catch a glimpse of the eighteen-year old man who has just seen another friend die, or has felt again the searing pain of bullets and shrapnel that have entered his body.

The pride and patriotism are still present in the thirty-year old man, but so are the memories of friends long since dead and the scars of a battle long since fought.

The gut-wrenching violence of the war will never be forgotten. It shouldn't be, lest we make the same mistake again.

Almost as hard to bear as the memories of the war itself, is the attitude of the American people, then and today. The Vietnam war was not a popular war by any means. But our men, the 80% who were volunteers and the conscripted soldiers, did their duty. They fought valiantly and bravely, at times not even knowing what they were fighting for. They were heroes, but they are not yet recognized as such.

The soldier who fought in Vietnam did so on the premise of defending his country from forces alien to our type of government. Now we treat these men and women no better than second-class citizens. Where is the justice? She is not only blind, but deaf and dumb. Or is she non-existence.

The cry in our country during the Vietnam era was "Peace and love!" The soldiers were fighting to maintain peace and make safe the country that wanted nothing other than to love. And now we condemn them. The intervention of the United States into the Republic of Vietnam was not a decision made by the soldiers who fought there. Yet, they are being held accountable for it.

Will the Vietnam veteran be able to forgive us for what we, his fellow countrymen, have done? And when the realization of what we really have done finally smacks us in the face, will we ever be able to forgive ourselves?

I wonder if I will ever catch a glimpse of the man who is at peace with himself and his country?

Opinions

The issue of educational benefits available to Vietnam Era Veterans under the G.I. Bill produces a remarkably uniform reaction among educators from a wide range of postsecondary educational institutions in the United States. They agree, with few exceptions, that benefits are too low and that relatively few students misuse these benefits.

News Items: More Vietnam veterans have died by their own hand since the end of the war than were killed during the entire conflict. (Post Traumatic Stress Disorders of the Vietnam Veterans, Edited by Tom Williams, Disabled American Veterans Cincinnati, Ohio, 1980, Page 11)

So who cares:

I care, said the VA official. Look at how hard I have worked on putting together programs designed for THESE PEOPLE. It is hard for them to realize that these things take time and after all, they are not the only priority of this place. How would it be if everyone wanted their problems to have priority. They will just

have to wait and we will get to them...we have programs on the drawing board.

I care, said the Department of Labor official. I work very hard to design programs that are useful and put THESE PEOPLE to work. They just have to realize that they have to fit the requirements and we can't possibly work any faster than we are. We have a department to run and funding is tight.

I care, said the senators and congressmen. After all, I have veterans working for me and I am always in favor of the vets programs, but it takes time to get programs out of committee and passed and there are many problems in this country. I do my part.

I care, said the state governor. I have a day for veterans if you check with my office they can fill you in. We honor and respect our vets here, make no mistake about that.

I care, said the mayor. I am always ready to refer them to the appropriate office. It really is not a CITY problem.

I care so deeply, said the family...but what can I do...It is just that there is nowhere for him to go. He has never been the same since he came back.

I care, said his buddy. Man, I am going through the same thing. I feel like a part of him.

I care, said the media. But face it, what can I do...If it isn't sensational we really can't use it. Try us around Memorial Day, maybe we can do something then...

I care, said the newly-dug earth. Come, child, be at peace...I will wrap you in my spring newness, cover you from the seasons, and I will cry the rains down as my tears...

News Item: Vietnam vet commits suicide, family asks why...

So who cares.....

Let There Be Light....

Is darkness all that is left to be said of Vietnam...

-A monument, hiding in darkness as though the brightness of light shamed it and those it stood for...

-death, sought in a sunlight California drama...a denial of the life so dearly prized in Vietnam...

-A generation, those who served transformed from "drug crazed baby killers" to objects of pity in the twinkling of a media eye.

-2,500 missing in the category of unaccounted for...

I, for one, refuse to see this as the final account of Vietnam, rather let it be written in the light...

-A monument of pride soaring as the eternal youth of those it honors, not seeking refuge in the black earth.

-Let an affirmation and a statement in itself as a goal in California and everywhere.


-dignity for all who served in Vietnam, honor-bright..

-Bringing to light a full accounting of all the MIAs

...Let it be written that the longest night had finally a dawn...

Joan M. Maiman

**HELP WORK FOR THE RETURN OF
POW/MIAs in Southeast Asia**



To Help, Contact:
Ann Mills Griffiths
NATIONAL LEAGUE
OF FAMILIES
1608 "K" Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

EDITORS CORNER

The National Vietnam Veterans Review...seems almost impossible to think that finally after years of procrastination we've come to publish this Volume I No. 1!

Are the times right: Do we need a National Veterans paper? After all, The American Legion, The Disabled American Veterans, The Veterans of Foreign Wars and a dozen other veterans groups have a paper or magazine.

Most of the established publications are set in their ways. Mostly reporting social events and a "Washington Report"

Not really much to get excited about, after all those groups are established and functioning, in some cases quite effectively, but...in other areas not too effectively.

We, the Vietnam-Era Veterans are a new breed. Sort of a country cousin so to speak. I've heard time and again "you should have been in the 'Real War'"

Just what the hell does that mean: I've been in three of them and man, they were all real.

This paper has several major goals: Primarily, it is our intense desire to help accomplish what is most needed right now!...Cohesiveness and unity. Our chosen slogan, "Strength in Unity" tells how the job can get done. There is strength in numbers and the larger the unified numbers the more power to persuade. Numbers mean votes, votes mean jobs and with the right people in those jobs the Vietnam veteran will finally receive the rights and services he was asked to fight for!

Secondly, communication. We need a sounding board, a carrier of the messages that need to be told. We intend to pull no punches in our reporting, no censorship in our editorial reviews and no one side of the road. Fair and equal reporting for all with emphasis on positive attitudes and direction.

Credibility - an important factor in the publishing world. This tabloid newspaper is not the product of some large, profit hungry corporation with dollar signs the principal motivator, quite the contrary, it is the product of a small printing, advertising and publishing firm that is owned and operated by veterans.

My personal experiences with the Vietnam fiasco were gained through four trips to that country for a total of five years in the combat zone.

That preceded by two tours earlier to Laos and Cambodia and three tours much earlier to the "Police Action" in Korea...I do know and understand Veterans feelings and problems.

Now, we need your support to help us to grow and accomplish these stated goals. Subscriptions, advertising and most importantly news. Lets hear from you all, tell us your opinions of this publication. Tell us what you would like to read and what your organization is accomplishing We'll print all that we can.



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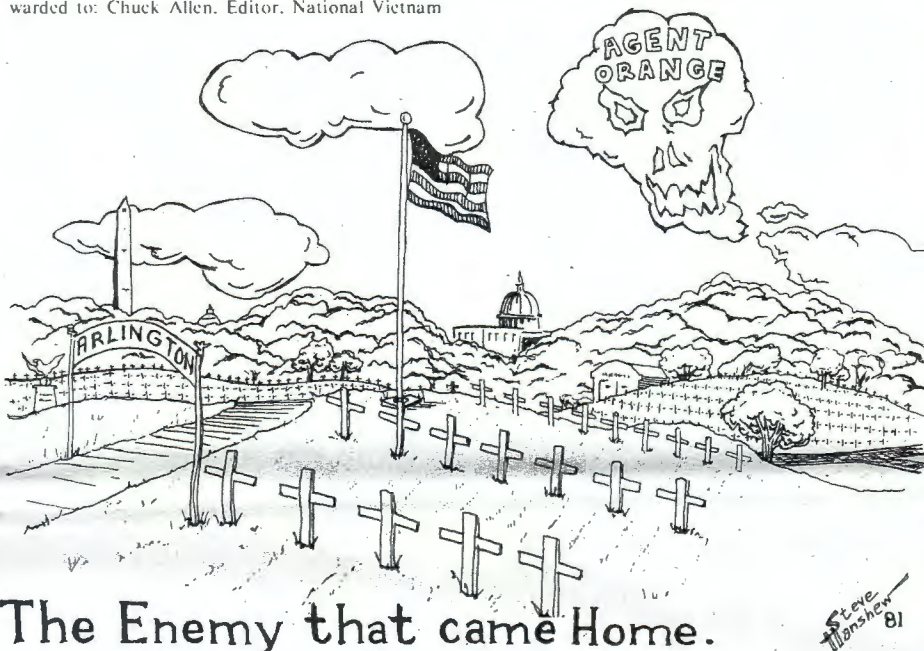
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The Enemy that came Home.

**The Issues; Their Answers
 Fact Sheet on Agent Orange Lawsuit**

The Stars & Stripes, May 7, 1981

What is Agent Orange?

Agent Orange is a herbicide which was sprayed in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971. It was used to kill plants in the jungle areas to deny cover and food to the enemy. About five million acres were sprayed with 400 million pounds of Agent Orange.

Why is Agent Orange harmful?

It is believed that Agent Orange contained a dangerous by-product known as dioxin. Dioxin is a deadly poison which has recently been linked to a number of serious diseases in animals.

How did servicemen come in contact with Agent Orange?

By being involved in the actual spraying missions, by being in an area which was sprayed, or by drinking the water or eating the food from an area which was sprayed.

What are the symptoms of Agent Orange exposure?

Because each person is different, there is no one particular symptom. However, the most common symptoms include a skin rash, numbness in the arms and legs, aching in the joints, loss of appetite followed by loss of weight, nervous disorders, loss of energy, and intolerance to alcohol.

Who made Agent Orange?

The Agent Orange used in Vietnam was made by a number of chemical companies at the request of the United States.

What is the Agent Orange lawsuit?

It is a class action brought by all servicemen who served in Vietnam against the chemical companies who made Agent Orange.

What does the lawsuit seek?

Recovery from the chemical companies of the cost of treating the medical problems of the veterans and their families. To the extent that such cost is paid by the Veterans Administration or another agency of the United States, reimbursement of that agency by the chemical companies. The suit also seeks disability and death benefits where appropriate.

What if a veteran becomes ill in the future due to Agent Orange exposure?

The lawsuit also requests that a permanent fund be set up from the profits of the chemical companies to cover these injuries.

Is the United States a party to the lawsuit?

No. The chemical companies tried to sue the United States unsuccessfully.

How do I become involved in the lawsuit?

The Federal Court in Westbury, New York, will soon give notice to all members of the class of the lawsuit. However, prior to this notice you may contact the Clerk of the Court for information.

Do I need an attorney?

No. The Court has appointed a group of lawyers to represent all class members. However, you have the right to choose your own lawyer if you wish him to represent you.

What if I do not want to be involved in the lawsuit?

Because it is a class action, if you do not wish to participate you must notify the court of your wishes. Otherwise you will be bound, as a class member, by any rulings made by the Federal Court.

What other choices do I have?

If you choose not to participate in the class action lawsuit, you can have your own attorney bring a separate lawsuit or you can do nothing.

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**Agent Orange
 Missions
 Were You
 There?**



Veterans' Administration

Did you know that only two federal agencies — Defense and HEW — have larger budgets than the VA? And only the Pentagon employs more people. The VA health care network is vast, with 174 medical facilities spotted throughout the country.

In recent years, VA researchers have won two Nobel Prizes in the field of medicine, while VA hospitals, through links to medical schools, provide a training ground for many of the nation's new doctors. The official purpose of the VA health delivery system, however, is to provide care and treatment for veterans with service-connected disabilities.

Why then do veterans and their families constantly tell us of their total dissatisfaction with VA health services? Why does the VA seem incapable of channeling its power, its wealth and its facilities into adequate health maintenance for Vietnam vets and Agent Orange victims in particular?

The problem is complex, but we think we can suggest some answers. In this era of economic tightening, the VA apparently finds the role of researcher and mentor of young doctors preferable to that of providing people-care. The cost of people-care is always rising and the work isn't as glamorous as the high-tech research and medical scholarship which leads to Nobel Prizes.

The VA is evolving into an elite institution like the University, where experimental medicine is gradually replacing its traditional function of providing care for those whose health decline is related to military service. According to a recent World Health Organization study, the U.S. has slipped to 44th among nations of the world in the overall health of its citizens. The VA's emphasis in health-care is apparently shared by the US health system in general. Its shrinking budget, coupled with these new priorities has resulted in an ever more narrow definition of "service-connected" illness by the VA in recent years.

The Agent Orange phenomenon is a graphic case in

point. Thousands of veterans, their wives and children may be health casualties of the Vietnam War and the VA categorically denies that any connection exists between exposure to herbicides and human health problems. This position is not based on any human health surveys or other studies; in fact the government has yet to even begin such a study among veterans.

Not only Agent Orange victims, but other ailing Vietnam vets seeking treatment from the VA based on claims of service-connected illness, are similarly denied. The VA doctor appears more like the veteran's adversary than his advocate. VA medical staff seem to have their minds made up beforehand that *your* problem can *not* possibly be service-connected. They seem to go out of their way to ignore and deny your condition, offering indifferent and cursory examinations, and in cases, downright hostility and arrogance.

"Health Care Second to None"

Over the entrance to VA headquarters, the words, "Health care second to none" are inscribed. However, the reality today is quite different; the VA often delivers abuse—not health care, to the individual vet.

Somewhere at the top in the VA, the word has gone out to downplay costly health care and to emphasize the more prestigious medical practices of research and experimentation which seek the treatment of rare diseases over the day-to-day health concerns of the vast majority of vets.

We are convinced that the public is totally unaware of this *de facto* shift in the VA's function and priorities. It is up to us to let the public, the media and our political representatives know that the VA does not deliver the goods, especially to the Vietnam vet. ♣

Cop-out At a time when Vietnam veterans need help, all the U.S. can do is declare a day of 'recognition'

By Rick Morton

Sunday, April 26, has been declared by Congress as "National Recognition Day for Veterans of the Vietnam Era." This is a nice gesture, but I must label it a cop-out. Last year a House bill died in committee which would have given Vietnam veterans something more tangible than a day of recognition.

The defeated Vietnam Veterans Act lived in committee for about a year and a half and never received a floor vote. This act could best be described as a GI bill for Vietnam veterans. It offered realistic solutions to systematically ignored problems, such as unemployment (seven times higher for combat Vietnam veterans than for the rest of their age group), mental and physical health care, extension of the educational assistance program, and a better deal on VA-backed home loans.

This is the bill that Congress should have passed instead of a one-day recognition which will come and go without most Americans even knowing about it. The government spends more on the food stamp program in one day than it has ever spent on programs specifically aimed at helping Vietnam veterans. This is a national disgrace.

The emotional problems of the Vietnam veteran are very real and directly affect millions of people. One study shows that more Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since coming home than were actually killed in the war itself; that's 55,000 men. What more proof does Congress need that the problem exists?

When the government turns its attention to the Vietnam veteran, the result has always been the same — more studies. The Vietnam veteran's problems have already been studied as much as the brain of a white laboratory rat. Vietnam veterans are not asking for handouts; all we are asking for is the same benefits given to all other war veterans.

The most recent and most comprehensive study on the present-day conditions of the Vietnam veterans showed more of the same depressing facts with one new notable statistic: One in four of those who served in combat were later arrested for a criminal offense after discharge. There was no deprogramming for the Vietnam veteran after the war, one day he was killing to stay alive and a few days later he was a civilian back in the "world" and he had to forget everything. Many Vietnam veterans couldn't forget and wound up in prison because they overreacted to a simple stress situation.

Ten years ago a bill was introduced into Congress to set up counseling programs for Vietnam veterans. In 1978 the bill was passed at a cost of \$12 million. The Veterans Administration (VA) opened 91 store-front counseling centers around the country (the only one in North Carolina is in Fayetteville). The program is definitely a success; however, it is one which will soon feel the force of Reagan's budget-cutting ax.

Reagan's budget-cutter, David Stockman, is the earnest young antiwar protester of the '60s who secured a safe college deferment. He will be the very person who will destroy the program that is helping so many veterans of the war which he openly opposed.

A memorial is being constructed in Washington to honor the men and women who fought the Vietnam war. The money is coming, not from a grateful nation, but from private donations solicited by a group of Vietnam veterans. The government has never felt any obligation to even raise a plaque or dedicate a building.

Veterans Lost in the Maze

The Washington Post

The Veterans Administration was founded to carry out Abraham Lincoln's admonition, quoted on the plaque at its headquarters: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan." A recently completed Louis Harris survey of Vietnam-era veterans, and of the public reception of them, underlines poignantly the words of Lincoln's statement. It is combat experience, especially heavy combat, that sets some veterans apart from their military colleagues not subjected to battle, as well as from those who did not serve. Many veterans with heavy combat experience are plagued by persistent memories of death and dying. They suffer considerably more emotional, drug and drinking problems than do other veterans. They are the ones who continue to express the greatest isolation from American society as a whole.

Although the age and race distribution of the Vietnam-era veterans in general was no different from that of the nation as a whole, those who were in heavy combat were disproportionately poor and young—both black and white. The responses these veterans gave to the survey show that, even for the vast majority of them who are outwardly doing well, the fact of their experience in battle is a continuing negative—not quite a disability for most, but a psychologically indigestible experience they underwent for the sake of their country.

The crucial aspect of the veterans' experience is not reflected in the administrative and legal structure of the military or of the Veterans Administration. People flow through the VA on the basis of formal paper categories that can be tracked in formal paper records. The fact is that neither the Defense Department nor the VA know precisely who was in combat. And even among those who served in Vietnam, experience varies.

Continued on page 10

Many Vietnam veterans do not suffer from various symptoms which cause emotional problems, suicide, divorce, unemployment, alcoholism, fits of irrational rage, etc. These "OK" Vietnam veterans should help the ones who are "not OK" because the rest of society is certainly not going to. This type of therapy has a proven track record of success, the vet helping the vet in the rap group session.

The "Vietnam Veterans of America" is an organization which uses this type of therapy. The VVA a four-year-old national organization, which is not associated with the VA, has a post in Charlotte. The meeting place is the Metrolina Independent Living Center, 909 South College ST., the second Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. The meeting is open to all Vietnam-era veterans and interested persons. ♣



Courtesy of Naegele Outdoor Advertising

REFLECTIONS

Larry Gries, Editor
Newsletter Service
Omaha, NE

I once stood alone
in the darkness,
with my bitterness,
in a crowd yet utterly by myself.

I once stood in Vietnam
over a dead man,
with my M-16
I saw my own reflection in his eyes.

I once screamed in fear
at myself,
at you
it's echo never ending.

I once was blinded
by a hand,
my hand
my spirit out of reach.

I once fell far
so far—away,
from myself
extended hands grasping only blackness.

I once grasped Nam's hand
cold and numb,
it's strength massive
I severed it's limb with my soul.

Free to move now
to live, to shine,
to meet my old friend
myself.

Sunlight bathing me
from within,
awakening
from my own manacled sleep.

I have shed the bondage
and felt a smile,
a love
a sunrise beckons.

Kurt Martin
Vietnam-1970-71

The Wounds That Would Not Heal

"He jests at scars, that never felt a wound."

—Shakespeare

By Arthur S. Blank Jr., M.D.
Associate Clinical Professor of
Psychiatry, Yale University

Military psychiatrists in Vietnam during the war, including this writer, were cheerfully reassuring about the psychological effects of the war on troops. In our reports and in the press, the word went out that— in contrast to WWII— psychiatric casualties were rare, thanks to the limited 12-month tour, the off-and-on nature of the combat, and new treatment methods refined during the Korean War. In fact, evacuations and hospitalizations for psychiatric reasons *did* remain low throughout the war.

But as early as 1970, a group of psychiatrists and psychologists led by Chaim Shatan M.D. and Robert J. Lifton M.D. in New York, first began to report important and persisting emotional stress in veterans who had successfully completed tours in Vietnam *and* had had no psychiatric treatment.

For many of us the deepest cut ultimately came from the atmosphere of terrorism which permeated the entire war zone. There was no safe ground and there were no safe people. Every Vietnamese person— man, woman and child, young and old— was potentially the enemy. Babies really were booby-trapped, and youngsters really did toss grenades into one's jeep. GIs worked, lived and even fought for months with Vietnamese who turned out to be working for the other side. *All* base camps, cities, towns, airstrips and installations established throughout the country were attacked at some time or other during the 11 years of war. Attacked also, of course, were units in the field proper and troops in "normal" combat situations. It was *all* a combat zone, the whole way through.

For those who were not in Vietnam, it is easy to dismiss this persuasive and penetrating terrorizing atmosphere— and its psychological consequences— as

exaggeration. But the features of guerrilla terrorism, were added to the mental challenge of combat experiences and have produced in some veterans an especially painful, deep and abiding kind of paranoid fear which we are now beginning to learn to recognize and treat.

It has also now become clear that uncertainty about the rightness and wrongness of the war itself has, for some veterans, been a major factor in producing lasting psychological disability. Now that passionate attitudes for and against the war have somewhat cooled, we have begun to see that some veterans remain sorely troubled by the nature of the Vietnam War, *and* that these difficulties go beyond political differences. That is, many veterans with stress syndromes have—as part of their problems—a relentless despair that in a war which they believe to have been just and honorable, they and their comrades were not permitted to fight to win.

On the other hand, some veterans who believe that the war was wrong from the outset and an unjustified interference in the affairs of the Vietnamese, share the same kinds of despair, pain and bitterness as part of their symptoms.

Thus our regular experience in rap groups now is that the political disagreements, though still real and important, can be transcended in the search for a common healing outcome.

A third major factor which has caused the perpetuation of stress syndrome in Vietnam veterans came about when the veteran returned home. Many veterans came home to friends, family and community who lacked the capacities to help in the emotional debriefing process which all war veterans need to some extent.

Because of the seemingly endless exposure to the war on television, to the deep divisions which came into our society over the war, or because so many of the civilian population was discouraged by the fact that so little was accomplished and so much lost, many people to whom the veteran returned could not stand to hear

Continued on page 14

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VVR Mail Room

Letter to the Editor

Dear Chuck:

I picked up a copy of your paper: Vol. 1, No. 2, Jan 81 at the Veterans Hospital and am amazed at the negative aspect of the majority of the articles. For those of us who know "soldiers are looked down upon when there is no war to be fought this includes the veterans of those wars also."

I take offense to your front page article, "The U.S. Teens Who Fought Didn't Lose Vietnam War" by Rick Morton. Almost all wars throughout history have been fought by teens. I was a teenager in WWII as was the majority of us who were "there". It was the same when I was in Korea during the war there, mostly teenagers, but not the first time I was in Vietnam, maybe so the second time.

I put in over 30 years in the Army: a first scout in the Infantry in WWII; a Heavy Machine Gun Section Leader in the Infantry in Korea; an Advisor Senior NCO the first time in Vietnam and a 1st Sgt the second time. I wasn't welcomed home by any brass bands or parades from any of these wars, as a matter-of-fact a woman resented my returning home from WWII because her son didn't. I was left stranded in Baltimore, MD upon returning from Korea and stranded not allowed on a plane from Atlanta to Fayetteville. I was left in Florence, S.C. and the second time in Seattle, Wash. You see I'm a Viet Vet but not feeling sorry for myself or negative. I had to come out of "it" four times now. Let's be positive like "Old Soldier" who's been there.

Sincerely yours,

JM
Fayetteville, N.C.

"I am a combat veteran, and at the present time, incarcerated for the crime of rape. For the past ten years, I've known that something was wrong with me, but didn't know what. Since Vietnam, I have had a drug problem, depression, aggressive behavior, general inability to function in society, along with numerous medical problems. I don't care what the VA says. I was never like this before; even my parents and friends commented on the change in me, and it has gotten worse, over the years. My wife left me, and won't let me see my child. I feel that other vets and myself deserve something. I know I was affected by something over there, and if not Agent Orange, then mentally. It has just about ruined my life, and I feel that I deserve something..."

Veteran
New Jersey
Vietnam; 1968-70

I would like to thank our comrades in Fayetteville, N.C. for getting something started.

Bruce E. Cousins
Marion, N.C.

"A considerable part of my 11 months in the field was spent in defoliated areas. I remember walking through ghostly areas and wondering how the vegetation could be totally inundated and not have any effect on me. As you walked through these areas the dead vegetation would puff and rise from your feet and every time you brushed a tree the decayed foliage would drift down like dead snow.

"I have spinal problems now, specifically in the neck, causing the loss of feeling in my arms and hands. The mental aspect is more difficult to define. It's almost impossible for me to differentiate between the effect of the war as a whole and effects of Agent Orange."

Veteran
Conway, Wash.
Vietnam/1967-68

"I believe my husband was exposed to Agent Orange during his Vietnam service time; on April 11, 1979, I gave birth to a birth-defected baby daughter, Amanda, who was diagnosed as having "holoprocencephaly," she died 16 days later.

"After Amanda's death, we had chromosome and genetic research testing done on both of us since this defect can be a genetic problem — all genetics absolutely normal.

"I applaud Martin Sheen and his public service message; he has allowed us the opportunity to help others avoid the ultimate heartbreak and hell we suffered and are still suffering, only silently now. Help us!"

— Veteran's wife
Watertown, Massachusetts
Vietnam 1970

Open Letter:

As I watch with pride in my country and my fellow Americans honoring the 52 former hostages, I have a feeling deep inside which cannot be fully explained. I find myself going back to those days, weeks and months which seemed like years, and I and my several hundred thousand fellow Americans shed their blood and the ultimate sacrifice of their lives in Vietnam.

No welcome was given to America's returning military--no bonuses--no flags--just sighs of relief and a "let's forget it" attitude.

Please don't get me wrong, I am a grateful veteran who has continuing pride in my country and its leaders, but making a day once a year to remember the Vietnam veterans, so long after the war, will not equal or show us our country's "thank you, and welcome home from Hell."

Let's we forget our fellowmen who gave their lives and who served without question, we have missed the mark altogether. I do not wish to open old wounds--just share my heartfelt thanks to these men who served in an honest and faithful manner in the Republic of Vietnam.

A special war--yes. A special veteran--no. Just veterans--men who saw their duty and served their country, proudly and honorably.

Thank you....

Anonymous
Knoxville, Tennessee

"My husband, age 31, took his life on Christmas morning with a 12 gauge shot gun. The reason Agent Orange has come into the picture is because he had quite a few symptoms. T. spent 18 months in Vietnam with the Marine Corps. He started with a rash on May, 1979 on his leg and throughout the summer it appeared on his arms. He started losing weight for no reason--35 pounds by the time of his death.

"On Christmas he awoke very ill... he put his arms around me and said, "honey, what is wrong with me." I was going to take him to Emergency (when) he went into the woods with his gun. He was walking barefoot (although) it was pouring rain and very cold. My 6 year old slipped out of the house with his toy gun, thinking his father had gone out to practice. He yelled, "Daddy, daddy, wait for me." T. turned around but he just stared -- he didn't recognize him at all. I followed him all through the woods but all he said was, 'go back, go home.' Then, he stood there and shot himself without uttering a word.

"We thought my husband was a survivor of Vietnam, but he was really. That is something I will have to live with for the rest of my life."

Veterans wife
Rochester, N.Y.
Vietnam 1965-66

A message that emerges out of the Viet Vet's agony is as old as the "Illiad," as fresh as the obedience of Eichmann: force turns every living being it touches into a thing, and so does the language of force turn every living being it touches into a thing....

One thing we have learned is that a "talking cure" alone is useless to men who have been steeped in death and evil beyond imagination. The Vietnam generation feels little compassion for the Veterans' Administration - even though the VA was in the psychiatric vanguard in 1945. They view it, with cynical estrangement, as an outmoded arm of that morally corrupt ruling power that exploited and doublecrossed them.

On the other hand, the returnees are not satisfied to share their grief and outrage only with comrades in the same dilemma. By actively opposing war policies they helped to carry out, by throwing away medals which absolved them for murdering in a war they abhorred, they symbolically shed some of their guilt. These dramatic demonstrations have profound psychological meanings as well as impressive political impact.

All professional psychiatrists in the Vietnam Veterans' panel at the '72 Orthopsychiatric Convention agreed that only a "counter-VA" can provide the appropriate atmosphere in which veterans can confront their failure to mourn. Such a "counter-VA" would include veterans' self-help groups, storefront clinics, and therapeutic communes; theme-centered workshops staffed by vets; their own publishing house; their own convalescent home. In these intimate peer settings, vets find a closeness unavailable in society at large - a companionship and support like that which people in mourning expect from their families. Only after intensive sharing of such experiences as having been afraid, can they overcome the official dehumanized attitude of "anti-grief." Then they are able to grieve for their dead and mangled comrades, and for their victims. This "counter-VA" would also be free to undertake relevant social and political action in opposition to the power structure responsible for the Vietnam war and its underpinnings. Many vets feel that officialdom has no place in such a self-help movement, perhaps not even fund it.

Chaim Shatan, M.D. and VVAW New York

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Letters

Mail Room 

Dear Chuck,

First let me express my sincere appreciation for what you are doing. The earlier issues of Vietnam Veterans Review for the N.C. crowd were excellent. Finally, we have our own newspaper.

Secondly, the intimacy of the articles was very personal and informative.

I now hear that the next paper will be a national issue. Will you still be reporting on N.C. and the accomplishments within our state?

Keep up the good work, hope you have enormous success with the "Review". It is certainly needed to be a voice for all veterans groups.

God Bless,

J.R. Blenning
Gastonia, N.C.

Ed. Note:

Thank you Mr. (?) Blenning for your support. Yes, we plan to continue articles that are informative, personal and positive, however, we need to be available for negative or critical information also, for those that feel the need to express the negative or "back side of the moon."

We indeed pray that this effort will in some way help to unify the hundreds of organizations and groups that obviously have a common goal.

Chuck Allen

A Chief's Small Viewpoint

A lot of career soldiers often referred to as the "brown shoe" soldier who loved their country and were proud to serve their country in WWII, Korea and the Vietnam conflict know as I do that in Vietnam which was not declared a war we lost the cream of the crop, the best damn soldier who ever served in the U.S. Forces. I often think of these men as the forgotten soldiers of the U.S.A. Men who willingly gave their lives so that others could live in peace and form their own ideas on government.

Most of the men I knew did their duty proudly. However some of these soldiers gave their units a hard time from the squad leader to the commanding officer. These same men are still trying to get the most from their government simply for harassment. This ten per cent make it hard on the ninety per cent who served their country honorably.

The army always helps their own. I feel that the soldier who does need help can get that help if he went through the proper channels instead of complaining to the press and T.V. The men who were in a rut in the Army are in the same rut in civilian life because of their own doing. A lot of these men are tarnishing the respect due the soldier who gave his all. To all these men who feel that the U.S. Armed Forces are a farce or that we did was a farce "Don't tread on Us".

Vietnam Veterans Review:

The men were over in this area working. They gave me a Review to read. I liked it, so I'm enclosing a check for you to send it to me.

I gave them two blankets, a coat and had one to clean off the top of the house. When I have work to be done—will keep the vets in mind.

My husband was in the Army for 23 years. He fought in World War II, Korean and retired in Dec. 1965. He passed away with cancer in 1977. I still miss him. But I was lucky to have him as long as I did and I thank the Lord for that.

Lots of luck with your paper, Victory House, etc.

Notice where my church has helped with Victory House. I've been helping all along and didn't know it. Highland Presbyterian Church is where I go when I

can.

Cadillac was the man who helped me. He has a nice smile.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Misiaszek

26 Harding Avenue
Kingston, New York 12401

January 29, 1981

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

A lot of work, time and money was used to get back the 52 hostages held in Iran. In no way am I ungrateful for getting back the 52 Prisoners of War from Iran -- I use the words that you called them on National Television "Prisoners of War".

My question is about the Prisoners of War still in Vietnam. Marine PFC Robert Garwood reported seeing a couple of hundred other Americans still in captivity in Vietnam. And, a Swedish photographer reported seeing Americans in Vietnam and they yelled to him, "Tell them we're here."

What about the families of these men still not home after maybe 14 to 15 years?

Can something be done? Will something be done? If not, why not?

I have the honor to remain most respectfully yours,

Stanley M. Chandler

"How can I really explain in a letter the way Vietnam has changed me and my life?"

"For the past year and a half I have been seeing a psychologist. I still haven't talked much about Vietnam. He says it has left a terrible scar on my mind and it'll take a long time to get to it. He said I have so much hostility built up that he's afraid what might happen if I should release all my thoughts at one time. It has helped my marriage because my wife goes along so we can discuss a lot. See, after a while, it was getting too be too much for my wife to take. A few times it almost broke up my marriage. My wife said she was afraid to leave me because of what I might do."

"In December 1970 we had our first child, it was a girl. She was sickly just about the day she was born. Just about every week we have her to the doctors. She practically lives on antibiotics. The doctors can't understand all the problems she has. Our doctor bills are unbelievable."

"Now one of the worst things that could have happened to us came in 1974. Our first son was born. The thing that just about destroyed my wife's and my world was that he only breathed a few times. They said he was stillborn. The doctors did an autopsy on the baby and even though it was hard to face, we wanted to know what caused our son's death. They ran all kinds of tests on him. After all the tests came back, not one doctor could give us a reason for his death. Now you tell me, how we should feel, not knowing what caused it. We find ourselves just crying for hours. But I do believe that something that happened to me in Vietnam caused this. It's really a shame to live from day to day worrying if your children are going to be alright. We already lost one child and couldn't take losing another."

"Now you tell me Vietnam hasn't really messed up my life plus the lives of my wife and two unhealthy children. It's awful to see them suffer for what had happened to me over there. This is only a brief letter, it's hard to put into words what my last ten years have been like. Only men and women who were in Vietnam know how I'm suffering from the aftereffects. It's Hell."

—Veteran
Oberlin, Pennsylvania
Vietnam/1969-70

Dear Fellow VVA Members,

I am sitting here watching on TV the return of the American hostages to the U.S.A. I am watching with mixed emotions. One of happiness that they are safe and healthy. But another feeling of contempt, prejudice, mad!!!

I returned from Vietnam in 1967 seeing, feeling, the contempt people had for me and my compatriots. I couldn't understand this at the time. I had fought for my country, watched my friends die for their country and yet nobody wanted us, they wanted to sweep the war and us under the carpet, forget that "unpopular" war and us, who fought even existed.

Now, I sit here and watch these people return as "heroes". Parades, yellow ribbons, free vacations, sports lifetime passes, hotels, clothes, etc.

Now, I am watching whole towns turning out with flags, banners, bands, even my hometown of Lakewood, Ohio today, has flags, yellow ribbons, today, everywhere.

But, when I returned, and I am sure when most of my friends returned, we got "absolutely nothing" not even a "thank you."

I paid for my bus ticket home.

They will get "free" psychiatric help for their emotional problems for sitting on their butts. We get very little for our problems except for our own V.V.A. assistance. "Thank God."

I guess I am just prejudiced, but why should they get so, so, much for doing nothing and we get the proverbial shaft for doing our duty!!

I just don't understand why we are dirt and the hostages are heroes!!!

I would sincerely like to know if my other VVA brothers and sisters feel the same "emotions".

Thank you for listening to me while I sit here so confused!!

Thanks all of you for helping us.

James P. Kulow
2151 Atkins Ave. #1
Lakewood, OH 44107

"I am a combat veteran of Vietnam. I was exposed to Agent Orange (Dioxin) on four specific occasions, by Air Force bombardment, and was forced to live in areas defoliated by Agent Orange, for months at a time. One specific occasion involved a mission during (Dry Season), where literally thousands of acres were sprayed, and the dust got into our ears, eyes, hair, skin, nose, etc. including our food. I have contacted the VA, and was told: "either these symptoms are your imagination, or you're a bum trying to get a pension." For a person who firmly and patriotically believed in his country; a person who fought and won a Bronze Star and other citations for heroic combat action...I'm disgusted. I have legitimate, medically-diagnosable conditions connected with exposure to Dioxin, and the government disavows any responsibility. I have proof of the run-around I've had for over ten years."

Veteran
Indiana

Dear Sirs:

I ran across your paper in the VA Hospital in Durham. It is most informative and deals with true feelings on a subject the public should be more aware. I have a son who was in Vietnam for two tours of duty, but came home unharmed physically, but changed his life because of mental disabilities.

This little paper should be of far reaching value to school children so that they could have a better understanding of that awful war.

Thank you
R. Haymore

Just Another War Story

Coming in! Coming in! A green are pops, illuminating the blackness, a signal from friends in the dark.

I sit up, open my eyes to see dark forms walking silently through the mud and leaves. In the shadows are the sounds of helmets and flak jackets falling from bodies as the patrol enters the perimeter. There is quiet conversation, chambers being carelessly whispered jokes, laughter and sighs of relief. From the dew-wet ponchos on the ground come curses, rumbles and words of irritation as a bright yellow sun gives light to Vietnam. This is a metamorphosis of men, the morning blossoming of a Marine Infantry platoon: shivering, mud-caked modern centurions. We are American youths, graduates of the military schools of violence and propaganda, all majors in spit shined shoes, brass buttons and devastation; the barbarians of political inefficiency. I remember graduation lay, eating candy and cursing, acting tough and cocky. We were novice men. We marched in bright levee before our generals, among misty-eyed mothers, sweet ears, wives and beaming fathers, one of whom said "Just think! My son a Marine, just think."

I did think about it that sultry June morning in 1969 as I was finishing a brown substance known here laughingly as coffee. I looked at the patrol, wondering, had it been a success, success here meaning had they killed someone. You couldn't tell by expression though, you never could; we always looked the same, bored and fatigued.

Preparing to move out, a system of checking and rechecking, habits and procedures as inbred in us as the act of breathing. Rifle, ammo, magazines, grenades, poncho, pop-ups and toilet paper, a home on shoulders, low rent and little upkeep. But it was all we had and we cared for it.

I'm a sniper; a well oiled machine. I leave five minutes before the rest of the formation, they leave after seeing I'm still alive and therefore deducing that all is well. Military thinking at its best.

Today we headed down Route 1. This road with its deceptive title is the most infamous in Vietnam. There's no Vet who hasn't heard of it, and if a man were to walk it he would well remember.

It stretches through the entire country of Saigon, past the DMZ, to Hanoi if you wanted to make the trip. The road is covered with a dark brown dust as fine as face powder a half an inch thick. It penetrates clothing, sticks to your face, clogs your nostrils, blinds your eyes and makes you spit and curse every three feet. The sides of the road and the fields beyond are a landscape of destruction, extinction as an art. Desolate, pock marked patches where people once worked growing rice to feed families, now bomb-blasted and ravaged. Green metal skeletons of trucks, tanks and jeeps littering the area, silent symbols of Route 1 history.

A hundred yards to the side of the road lay a village, small, without a name, presenting a vision of sameness of villages I'd seen a thousand times before.

As we approached we saw nothing stirring. Coming closer to the yard, the only person visible was an old woman sitting by a hooch. A passive figure sitting in heavy silence, black eyes staring from a face as rugged and lined as the earth she squatted on. P.F.C. Andy Whitehorse, point man, a Navajo Indian from Arizona, walked ahead as the others waited. From hawk-nosed, tight lipped features he smiled, she smiled, she waved, he flew five feet backwards in a burst of fire, brown skin turned red and torn dead eyes staring at his life beside him.

Ambush! Get down, get down. Bodies flat on the ground, rifles firing in withering volleys. An old woman dead, mines clicking, orders being shouted as the platoon was flanking to seal off the village. Small arms and automatic fire now coming from the huts centered in the village; we have their position. Call in mortars! Orders being given and received smoothly and calmly. Our fire concentrated on the enemy huts. Rifles, machine-guns, grenades producing a leaden

wall of noise.

From the old woman's hut came a sound of children crying, a small face appears at the door, above us a whistled tune, and the mortars were coming in.

The child came out, not screaming, terrorized or running about, but slowly, legs chained in confusion, arms out-stretched and sobbing. A still form in the erupting world, vomiting violence all around her.

Courage, and the men we call brave. These adrenalin shocked phenomena of comic book fame we call heroes. Are they surly, quiet and black? Do they come from a Chicago ghetto? Willie Turner did. Crouched low, racing headlong, helmet flying, legs flashing, a shout cut short by patches of red finally falling with hands out to a girl with out-stretched arms. This hero lay dying.

My turn! Looking toward the target huts, the straw and canvas disguise was blown away revealing mud and sandbagged bunkers. The occupants being pinned down were only able to return occasional fire. I jumped, heart pumping, unning toward Turner and the girl then running for the hut. I was followed by Bob Townsend and the Corpsman, Doc Hargett. Doc grabbed the girl, we grabbed Turner dashing through the door with rifles firing.

Strange how we didn't find ourselves being shot to pieces by the Vietcong. I somehow expected it. What we did find were three more children. Two more girls and a boy, he being the oldest at about age ten. They were sitting, very intense, deathly solemn with the old woman's eyes, narrowed, cold, and accusing. They were expressions not of fear, but that point beyond fear, hatred. What were seconds seemed like hours.

On a mat beside them a woman lay moaning, not from wounds, but impending birth. Doc was busy trying to save Turner. Bob watched the kids, they watched us. I knelt over the woman and thought of the baby, wondering if he or she knew what it was like out here would it bother coming out. I smiled at my thought.

the woman noticed and tried to return it. I remember thinking as I smiled down at her, I hoped she realized that this horror wasn't my doing, not my fault; I was as much a victim as she.

"She's gonna have that kid soon you know," Doc said looking up. "I don't know, if he has any sense he'll stay put." Bob laughed, the children didn't.

Hours passed, it was getting dark. The shelling had stopped. A machine-gun rattled in the distance, far away. A rifle barked twice and quit. The bunkers were cleared of the V.C. soldiers, if that term could be used. I'm always disappointed when I see their faces, always very young boys, very old men half naked and docile.

Lima Company was penetrating the rear of the N.V.A. company that had been moving toward us. They had been spotted earlier in the day, Kilo Company was sent in to form a firing line to stop the advance. With Lima in the rear the N.V.A. had no way out.

Artillery, mortars, gun-ships and tanks were waiting for an order from a disembodied voice. Men preparing to kill other men, perhaps to die themselves; to maim and destroy. They prepared for futility; I prepared to deliver a child.

"Push, Bob, push!" damn it all do it right." Bob said, "I wish Doc were here." Poor Bob who bragged of being a heartless, gung-ho killer, a Marine. Frightened, face sweating, eyes wide and a gaping mouth, uncertain and afraid of a child not yet born. Doc came in tired and bloody. He looked at Turner and Turner was dead.

"Here it comes, here it comes" oh my God! Oh God! Oh God! Its a he; he's coming; its a he; he's coming; he's almost here; he's here." Doc takes over.

Slap! Slap! Slap! A scream of confusion, of anger, a scream of "who gave you the right." A cry so loud it could drown out war.

Morning, a yellow sun rising giving heat to Vietnam. Giving light to twenty men sighing, three kids smiling, one baby nursing and one man crying. Picking up my weapon I walked to the road, feeling strange, wiping my eyes.

Wonder what day it is: A birthday. A new day. ✚

Moving Right Along

The Washington Post

The Boston producers of a proposed 13-hour Vietnam retrospective for PBS, designed to be the definitive laying out of the long, tragic history of the Western experience in Indochina, have run into a snag...

The project has been in the works for nearly two years and WGBH in Boston has lined up three European TV networks to produce seven of the 13 one-hour programs and has also obtained access (at cost) to all Vietnam War footage in the ABC News archives.

...But the long delay in lining up the total \$4 million needed for the American production effort now threatens production and airtime schedules for the three European co-producers...ATV in Great Britain, Antenne Deux in France and the Swedish TV network...and if go-aheads aren't received here soon they'll have to pull out of the project.

...The National Endowment for the Humanities has already given WGBH \$700,000 for the series and a promise of another half-million in matching funds...although those matching funds haven't raised yet.

What's holding everything up is a request for \$1 million over the next three years that WGBH has had before the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for nearly two years...

Lewis Freedman (who only came on board himself six months ago as director of the CPB Program Fund) said Friday he hopes to make a final decision on the request by the first two weeks in August...

But Dick Ellison, the producer for the series at WGBH, said Friday they'd hoped to get started in June and even with an August start date it would still

be another two years (the fall of 1982 PBS season) before it would hit the air...

The CPB holdup is critical because according to some sources the usual lineup of corporate and foundation donors available to public TV projects just aren't lining up to lend their dollars and names to a series about Vietnam...no matter how far back in history and dispassionate the project turns out to be...



Men of Vietnam, Stand Tall!

Editor's Note: The following English assignment thesis, reprinted from the *Valley News of Lebanon, N.H.*, was written by Craig King, a senior at Woodstock (N.H.) Union High School. In King's words, it is "a reaction paper on a subject that has gained much notoriety lately—the Vietnam veteran."

The Forgotten Man

I feel that the attitude and treatment by the American public towards the Vietnam veteran was and is cruel and demeaning. I can understand the malice that they have exhibited toward their home government; but I cannot relate to the disdain the public has shown towards the soldiers who were thrown into this governmental blunder.

Before the time Pearl Harbor was bombed, my uncle was just a young man of 18 attending Boston University. When the naval base was so suddenly attacked by the Japanese, he came home—his college days stagnated for awhile. He enlisted with the Air Force, and during World War II won many citations as a tail gunner. My grandmother's voice was laced with pride when she told me, "Bill was the first boy to sign up from Pomfret."

Although seldom mentioned, I detect self-gratification from my father whenever he voices his military service to the country during the Korean Conflict. I know I'm proud. I think it's a damn shame that those who served in the Vietnam War are not held in the same light reserved for those who had fought in previous 20th century wars. Was their bravery any less firm or true?

For those who disregard the Vietnam veteran, this subsequent statement might prove a little hard to swallow— but I feel the Vietnam vet could command more respect than any other veteran. I feel they have an extra tangible in that they served without the moral backing of their countrymen: when they were dodging bullets and tasting blood they knew a lot of people didn't give a damn. Despite this great handicap, they served honorably for their country, because their country needed them. An interesting statistic points out that two-thirds of the men that served during the Vietnam years were volunteers, while two-thirds of the veterans of World War II, that much glorified war, were drafted.

I would like to say something about those so-called patriotic college students that went around picketing the war against Vietnam. I feel they had a right to their opinions. However, I believe that a percentage of those demonstrators were phonies. There were those that weren't really opposed to the war; it's just that they didn't have the guts to fight. That was allright; Vietnam was supposedly unpatriotic anyway; they could cop out by holding a sign damning the war, and in the bargain be respected for doing so, while countless of young Americans were dying in the rain for their country in those bleak Vietnamese jungles.

The public's animosity of the Vietnam veteran was partly ignited by the media. People would comprehend that these men were social outcasts—and murderers! Of course, television covered the war extensively; the public could witness the realities of war. I feel a percentage of the public maintained a very general perspective of what war actually is: they don't realize an ugly characteristic of war includes the killing of noncombatants. Because Vietnam was tainted from the start, this negative coverage further enhanced the public's discontent towards the war. What would have been their reaction if they could have witnessed the thousands of civilians killed when the allies bombed Dresden, Germany, during World War II?

Another poignant fact shows that the percentage of Vietnam civilian deaths was no greater than what World War II infamously took; in fact, Korea was even more costly in taking civilian deaths in proportion with its population. So all the bitter remarks jibed toward the Vietnam veteran are pure falsities.

Men of Vietnam, stand tall. ♣

Vets,
Let's do it
ourselves



Journey: Impressions of a Year in Vietnam

I really do not remember thinking much about the war before I went to Vietnam. It was as if the war had always been there, a part of the background of my life...

My first day in Vietnam. The beautiful Oreaga hotel in the heart of downtown Saigon...the sheets had not been changed since the French left in 1954 (or so it seemed) the lizzards, the dripping fountain...Learning to weave garlands of flowers from the child-whores on the roof before they went on duty for a night of 'Saigon tea.'

The year at the 24th evacuation hospital at Long Binh...

The young man dying a slow and wondering death from burn injuries "Just wanted someone to be here, I won't be so alone" Death coming before the dawn...

The 19 year old just beginning to realize that he is paralyzed forever. "How will I support my wife and baby, miss. I was a farmer"...

In memory of a long ago Child of the manger, the orphans at Christmas...opening their gifts we realize that they do not know how to play.

The truce at midnight, the red and green flares celebrating the brotherhood of man...

Midnight Mass "Peace be with you, in case of rocket or mortar attack during this service"...

Silent night...

The cherry kool-aid, more cherry kool-aid...

Malaria pill Monday...

Mail call...

Peter Rabbit, the dying three month old orphan, held and loved in the last few hours of his life. Godspeed, baby boy...

Mamma-san hanging my one pair of nylons on the barbed wire to dry...

The groups from the states, the athletes, the politicians ... "Is this the war: Take my picture and lets go home"...

Saigon, the onion soup...

the Cathedral, beggars dying on the front steps...I will go unto the alter of God...

Lunch on the Terrace of the Palace hotel...

Watching the flares from the rooftop bar of the Caravelle hotel, same time tomorrow night, folks...

R and R in Hawaii...great bathtubs, good food, and love those shops, have to stock up for the next three months...

Australia, some poor town signed on the exchange program for a "fighting Yank" and got me...

The rocket attack on Camp Alpha, tacky...NO ONE

Pass this paper on to another Veteran

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shoots at this place, anyway I have a card that says that I am not part of the war, so they can not shoot at me...

The feeling of a falling helicopter, eternity in two seconds. So this is what it is like to die...autorotation, the quiet of a rice paddy...I'm still here...

being shot at as we flew over the orphanage, active kids down there...

and always, my friends, my brothers, all their unfinished lives.

For God and Country...

Coming home...the wonder that I could be so changed and the world so much the same...as if the horror and the pain and the glory and the nobility had not happened at all...

How can I talk to you...

the young vets in the hospitals, the teenaged amputee. "How will I fit in at the beach this summer?" All of our youth left behind...

Service as service was asked and ridicule and scorn and puzzlement in return.

I fought - for you and reaped your hate...

Long years after, still all the hurt for many and the confusion and the pride of having served...

Wondering when the war will end...

Joan M. Maiman

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A Good, Old War

Arthur Hoppe

San Francisco Chronicle
Friday, March 13, 1981

The distinguished military analyst, General D. Lewis Kleinberg, (retired), feels strongly that we should cease all military intervention in El Salvador immediately. He favors invading Vietnam instead.

"There's nothing like fighting a war in good old, familiar territory, by jingo," says the general. "And our flyboys know every single bombing pattern in the whole bloody country."

Much can be said militarily for invading Vietnam. It offers excellent harbor facilities, army bases and landing strips which we wouldn't have to build all over again. And, at last, several billion dollars worth of American arms were lying around, which, if recaptured, would certainly lower supply costs.

Lastly, we would save a bundle on defoliants as there couldn't possibly be much foliage left to defoliate.

Equally important, a war in Vietnam would be far more popular at home than a war in El Salvador. The trouble with El Salvador is that it's most difficult to distinguish the good guys from the bad guys. While General Haig holds that the ruling junta are the good guys and the guerrilla fighters are the bad guys, many Americans believe just the opposite. And, in any event, we're bound to wind up with the right-wing death squads on our side.

But Vietnam's a Communist country. So everyone's a bad guy and we can thus shoot whomever we please without first inquiring whether he or she supports the free enterprise system.

Newspaper readers will be delighted with not having to learn a batch of new names, such as Atiquivava, Suchitoto, and Jiquilisco. They can instead indulge in such nostalgic old songs as "Moon over the Mekong" and "We Were Sailing Along on Cam Ranh Bay."

Hollywood would save millions reissuing old movies like "Apocalypse Now." Protestors could simply dust off their old signs. And now that Vietnam's united, we wouldn't have all that cocktail party squabbling over whether or not to send troops across the DMZ or bomb Hanoi.

Best of all, General Haig has made it clear that we are intervening in El Salvador in hopes of sending the Russians a signal. Well, a massive invasion of Vietnam will obviously ring a louder alarm bell than fiddling around in some two-bit, banana republic.

Some may argue that invading Vietnam is unjustified. But no less a leader than President Reagan, himself, has described the Vietnam war as "a noble cause." And if it was noble to save half the country from communism in the 60s, it's certainly twice as noble to save all of it from communism in the 80s.

So let's all quote George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." And then let's go for the best deal we can get. ♣



Chicago Plans Vets Memorial

The Office of the Mayor, City of Chicago, has announced plans for the dedication of a memorial for Vietnam and Korean veterans on May 15, 1981.

The memorial will consist of a bronze plaque mounted on a three foot high marble base. It will be erected immediately adjacent to the eternal flame in the Daley Center Plaza.

"This memorial is a gesture of appreciation to the brave and loyal men and women who served in our Country's armed forces during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts," Mayor Byrne said. "Their sacrifice must not be forgotten or ignored."

Joan Maiman, Chairman of the Veterans Leadership Conference and a member of the committee to coordinate the activities for the May 15th ceremonies, spoke with Alderman Louis Farina, a World War II vet and Chairman of the Committee.

Farina told Maiman that he is behind this memorial as he feels that the veterans of the Korean and Vietnam conflicts have never received the recognition they deserved for their service.

Farina, a combat vet, is well aware of the situations men face in combat, and he agreed that the stress of combat deserves special recognition and honor. Farina also stated that he feels it is essential that the veterans of all eras work together as there is strength in numbers."

The 81st Airforce band will play and a Black High School chorus will sing prior to the dedication of the plaque. A parade is planned for the dedication ceremony in conjunction with Armed Forces Day.

Farina said that he believes Chicago is the first major city in America to honor the Vietnam and Korean veteran in this manner and that Mayor Byrne is hopeful that other cities will follow the example of Chicago.

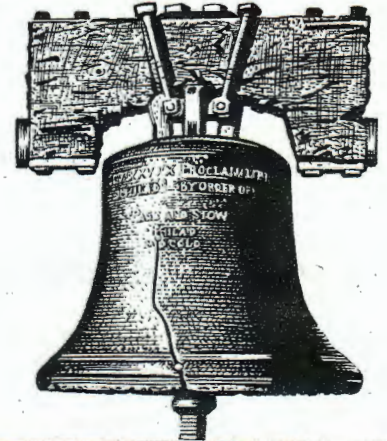
Maiman remarked that she is hopeful as are many of the Chicago area vets that much needed action in terms of veterans programs will follow this ceremony. Only if recognition leads to action will it be of use to us.

Veterans Lost in the Maze

From page 4

widely. The administrative difficulties of matching eligibility for benefits with having "borne the battle" leads to the growth of other categories like "service-connected disability," which overlaps only partially with "wounded in battle." The categories never fit real experience. Such mismatching is probably inherent in the response of large institutions to complex individual situations. Certainly the government is full of programs that aim generally in the right direction, but somehow don't quite reach those they are meant to help, amidst the details of statute and the regulations and the program administrative guidance and the reporting forms. But if any part of the government is to be made to work better, we have to move beyond simply feeling exasperated with large organizations.

Trying to design some aspect of the massive VA structure—spending some \$20 billion each year—to take account of the unique distinction of combat veterans is a good place to start. These veterans went through something that none of the rest of us has experienced. And they did it because, we as a nation ordered them out there.



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VIETNAM VETERANS REVIEW

Lest We Forget

The Women Vets of Vietnam

Special Four-Page Exclusive on the Women Veterans and Some Personal Reflections on their Experiences

*The Woman Vietnam Veteran:
An Unexplored Area***Problem Statement**

Issues involving women Vietnam veterans have, until this time, been ignored. Vietnam Veterans of America, the national organization working solely on the problems of Vietnam veterans, is addressing this long neglected area of women veterans. We are seeking financial grants to begin comprehensive study of the critical issues unique to the women Vietnam veterans of America.

The following are some of the areas we are exploring. As we continue to do further studies, we expect other vital concerns affecting this group to come into focus.

- 1. Demographics:** Where are the women? How many are there? Who are they? Are they denying being Vietnam veterans because they're ashamed of it? Has their role been recognized? Have their contributions in combat areas been cited and/or awarded? Do they benefit from recognition?
- 2. G.I. Benefits:** Have the women taken advantage of these? Are they continuing their educations? If not, why? What can be done to encourage them to do so, or at least make them aware of the benefits? Have women avoided using the Veterans Administration as much as, or even more than the men Vietnam veterans? Is the V.A. making sufficient effort to include women in their awareness and Outreach programs, or in their media coverage? We think the answer to this last question is clearly "no." What can be done to correct this oversight?
- 3. Medical Care:** Most V.A. hospitals we have contacted in cities all over the U.S. have no facilities for treating women veterans' problems. There are no obstetric/gynecologic clinics or physicians available. What other kinds of things are missing from the V.A. health care delivery system for women? Are the women Vietnam veterans being discriminated against within the system?
- 4. Agent Orange:** What is the rate of cancer in the women, birth defects in offspring, etc.? There has been no thorough comprehensive published investigation of this in women that we can find. The only women who have been studied at all are the Vietnamese (and this was not a scientifically acceptable study), so there is no way of knowing, at this point, whether birth defects in their offspring are a result of genetic problems in the women or the men, since both were exposed to Dioxin. How many women have held off having children because of fear of this, and/or is there a statistically significant number of birth defected or stillborn children in women veterans? Recent studies of animals are disturbing in that they suggest greater sensitivity in females, as compared to males, to Dioxin exposure with resulting significant increases in debilitating effects especially among offspring. One of the forms of cancer being noted frequently in men exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam is testicular cancer. Since this is not possible in women, what kinds of cancer may turn up in this population?
- 5. Psychological Problems:** There has been clear documentation by several studies of these difficulties in adjustment of male veterans. What about the women? The major empirical studies of

Vietnam veterans have not addressed female veterans at all. The rap groups now beginning to function in the storefront Vet Centers sponsored by the Veterans Administration seem to be an appropriate way of beginning to work on the situation, but are the groups suitable for women? Men are dealing with fears and memories related to the taking of lives in combat. Women, however, since they were nearly all medically oriented in the war are living with the images of those mutilated bodies and the often hopeless task of putting them back together in combat. Is there a need for additional peer support groups for women to deal with these problems as well?

APPROACH:

Phase I: Initially, we are seeking immediate discretionary grants for a three to six month period of data gathering. Since there are presently no statistics available on women veterans of Vietnam, it will be necessary to extract the information from Department of Defense and Veterans Administration records. During this time, we will also be preparing detailed proposals for the next phases of the project.

Phase II: We are next seeking a planning grant for a one year pilot study. This will involve making Public Service Announcements and providing an "800" phone number urging women Vietnam veterans to contact us. From there, we hope to learn, through a comprehensive questionnaire, how the women are faring. We want to see if there are high rates of cancer and what kinds, whether there is a high rate of miscarriage of pregnancy, stillbirths, or birth defected children. We also want to discern whether there are significant psycho-social problems, employment problems, and/or marital difficulties, all of which have been noted in significant numbers of male Vietnam veterans.

We will ask about utilization of G.I. benefits and about perceived deficiencies within the V.A. system for women. And, we will also be asking about the public's perception of and attitudes towards the woman veteran.

Phase III: The next stage will involve setting up peer support groups for the women, based on the models designed for the men veterans. We plan educational outreach to inform the women of genetic and reproductive problems. We will be urging the V.A. to address issues affecting women veterans, including health care, G.I. benefits, and public awareness and attitudes. We will pursue the need for cancer screening of women veterans exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange if indicated.

CONCLUSION

This is only a preliminary statement of the problems and approaches. Once we begin to obtain input from the women veterans of the Vietnam War, the likelihood is that we will find other issues unique to this group. We are prepared to examine all of these issues and attempt to address them. ♣

**Your Subscription
will be Appreciated.**

*Women Vietnam Vets
Seeking Peace of Mind*

by Kathleen Hendrix, Staff Writer
Los Angeles Times
Sunday, January 11, 1981

She is 39, friendly and hospitable, in spite of the tension in her face, offering tea and a pretty plate of carefully arranged cakes. She had to give it some thought before she agreed to talk of her experiences as an Army nurse in Vietnam and the aftermath. She seldom talks about all that, she explains.

In fact, she gave it some second thought, spending a rather sleepless night wondering what she was letting herself in for. She decided it was best not to use her name, but she did not back out. The whole subject of women Vietnam veterans and delayed stress syndrome sounded "interesting" to her.

She says "interesting" frequently when referring to Vietnam and once interrupted herself saying, "Interesting" is maybe not the word but they haven't invented the words for what went on over there."

She honestly cannot recollect if she was for or against the war when she went— "I just sort of wanted to go and nurse, I think." So she went through two months of what she likes to call "basic aggravation" and then spent a year at an Army evacuation hospital in Danang, six months in emergency, six on a ward, she says. "After the second day in that emergency room, you look at one more of those boys and you know we were in the wrong place."

'A Cram Course'

All of this is said quickly, in choppy phrases, accompanied at times with a little nervous mugging as she calls her year in Vietnam "a cram course in living." It gives her sincerity a breezy, arm's-length quality.

Then she slows down as she gets some distance, describing in detail the "phenomenal cultural shock," the heat, the dirt, the cockroaches that visibly distress her even as she recalls them nine years later in her cozy living room in Santa Monica. Beyond the physical hardships, there was the war itself, the long hours in the emergency room, her attempts to keep her sense of humor when her evening's entertainment was pouring herself a long one, sitting on the steps of her hooch and watching gunships battle below Monkey Mountain.

"Believe me, it was hell."

How so?

"I think I was mentally and physically exhausted the whole year. The ER work got to me. The tiredness—you'd literally have to put one foot forward."

She would go around asking herself "What is going on?" "What—?" "Why—?" she says, still unable to formulate the overwhelming questions, using her hands and face to supply the missing words. She'd cry, she'd get depressed, she couldn't wait to get home and wondered if she'd ever make it.

She has been talking for almost an hour. Still no mention of the horror of what she was seeing in Emergency. How did that affect her?

She recoils from the question flinching, shutting her eyes tightly, shaking her head.

The tears fight through anyhow. She does not give in to them, saying instead, "No, I don't ever talk about that."

Continued on following page

The Women Vets of Vietnam

From previous page

When she did get home from Vietnam, she was a nervous wreck, she says after a silence. "Vietnam was really hard on me. I did not bounce well."

'Just Jangled!'

There was Vietnam to deal with, a serious illness in her family and the fact that she had yet to come to terms with being divorced, a situation that preceded Vietnam. About 18 months after she was back, she says, she crashed and went into therapy.

"I was just jangled," she said of her overall condition. She has gotten on with her life and gotten on well. She has had a few serious relationships with men, although none currently, and feels no problems with intimacy were more theirs than hers. She has moved to Los Angeles, given up nursing but draws on that background in a unique job that she loves. The trouble in her face goes away when she describes her work. Overall, however, it seems there is much that has her still jangled and in pain.

Therapy was helpful to her, she says, although she never did deal with what went on in the emergency room.

"I think I mentioned it—I don't recollect. I dealt with the exhaustion—but the actual scene, the war wounds, I don't recall. I'm not sure if it would have helped. They are not muted by time. They don't come back as often, but they are not muted when they come."

They went to war. They did not kill or get killed. They often went through hell, though, and whether they have told them or not, they have their war stories.

Not much is known about the women who served in the military in Vietnam or their whereabouts and conditions now.

Estimates abound, figures varying within and between military departments and the Veterans Administration. Depending on the source, there were 188,000-192,000 women in the military during the years of the Vietnam conflict. Anywhere from 7,000 to 55,000 of them are thought to have served in Vietnam. No one was keeping those statistics at the time, and now, "the records have been retired," military public affairs personnel tend to say, warehoused in the government's storage facilities in St. Louis. The informal consensus seems to be that there were far less than 55,000 of them, and that the majority were in medical positions, especially nursing.

They came home, usually spent another six months to a year in service before being discharged and then disappeared into civilian life. Increasingly, however, there is question about how thoroughly or well they have been able to readjust to peacetime, American society and themselves.

Of those comparative few who have surfaced as Vietnam veterans with past or current problems related to the war, it is apparent that delayed stress syndrome is not necessarily a man's disease.

The syndrome—mild or severe delayed reactions to the stress of war—includes depression, flashbacks, nightmares, guilt, anxiety attacks, suicidal tendencies, migraine headaches, spontaneous anger, alcohol or drug abuse, inability to concentrate, inability to sustain relationships, avoidance of intimacy.

The syndrome is not peculiar to Vietnam. People come out of all wars suffering similar reactions. It is generally, if not universally acknowledged, however, that the circumstances of the war in Vietnam exacerbate it. An undeclared war played out in no-win conditions against an enemy who is hard to define or identify, an unpopular and increasingly unjustified war to many Americans; the absence of a unifying commonly accepted ideology that would justify one's presence or actions in Vietnam; an inglorious retreat; and anything but a hero's welcome upon coming home.

Suggestions have been made, however, that more of an attempt be made to reach women—through advertising, special programs, locations and staff.

Judith Saunders, a clinical specialist at the VA hospital in Brentwood who has a doctorate in nursing, made such suggestions in late 1979 when the centers were first opening. Her actions came, she said recently, out of her general knowledge that women veterans' medical needs have never been a priority with the VA.

"The Vet Centers are one of the most creative programs we've ever had," she said. "I do not want to take away from that...I just want women not to be second-class citizens with the VA."

Although Operation Outreach is so new, with some centers just opening now, it faces an uncertain future. The centers are not envisioned as permanent fixtures and current funding for them runs out in 1982. With a new administration about to take over, their future is doubly uncertain and some people within the VA are especially sensitive to criticism of them.

"Since the number of women is so much smaller," Shad Meshad said in Los Angeles, "it's like a minority—it just does not get the grease. They're not loud enough—like women in our society in general...The Vet centers are trying. We really have to figure out a way to reach the women. Women have not come in yet."

At least one woman has come in. And she did so when she glanced at her television and caught an image of Shad Meshad, whom she had known in Vietnam, talking about the new program. She rushed to the Vet center in Baltimore, she said recently, and has been going back once a week for individual counseling.

'Probably Saved My Life'

"I'm trying to figure out," she said of her counseling sessions, "why for the past eight years, I have been having problems keeping anything organized, having any continuity in my life. It's so good to unload it now. I'd been walking around with this inside me. It's probably saved my life."

She means that. Since she is a nurse studying for her bachelor's degree and planning to work as a psychiatric nurse in community mental health, she will not use her name. Not when she covers the scars where she slit her wrist with a watchband, talks of periods of heavy drinking, depressions, the mistake of marrying an alcoholic, abusive husband...It does not sound good.

She has her war stories—an overly sensitive woman not psyched up to kill or hate Vietnamese people having to deal with the consequences of an orphanage of 300 children being rocketed, an affair with a doctor who turned out not to be divorced after all, the unrelenting sight of the gurneys going out to meet the helicopters, the constant experience of loss and fear of getting too close to her patients...

For all that, however, she says, "My experience in Vietnam was far more positive than having to come back and cope with the hostility, with her own feelings of alienation, with her inability, after so much responsibility and life and death situations, to have to take seriously the prospect of supervising corpsmen washing down the bedsprings in an Army hospital in New Jersey.

Like Linda Van Devanter, she went into therapy and like her connected none of her problems with Vietnam.

"It just didn't click," she said. With the exception of drinking, she could never seem to get on top of her problems. That is beginning to happen now, she said, with the counseling she is receiving.

'I Realize It's Vietnam'

"Now that I realize it's Vietnam, I can use the information from there and apply it."

Not every woman who served in Vietnam regards herself as a victim of delayed stress or thinks she needs therapy. Chris McGinley Schneider is one veteran who feels she handled Vietnam as well as could be expected and has successfully readjusted to the rest of her life.

That does not mean that she thinks it was easy being a 22-year-old nurse at the evacuation hospital in Vietnam and then coming home to hear a neighbor complaining how all the guppies in the fish tank were dying.

"I had a hard time adjusting when I got home," she said recently one morning at her home in San Gabriel. "There was no transition program or deprogramming for us. It would have helped me tremendously."

To those general conditions must be added for the women who were there, the nature of their jobs, the fact they were women in a war and that they are reacting as women now.

Shad Meshad saw the problems for women coming while he was over there. He was a social work—psychology officer with the Army in Vietnam and has been working with Vietnam era veterans as a clinical social worker with the Veterans Administration ever since, currently as regional director of the VA's Operation Outreach program of storefront Vet centers. He worked with and around women in Vietnam and he has counseled a number of them, individually and in groups, since his return. He is one of the few, it seems, to have done so.

Women in Vietnam were officers, and as such not allowed to fraternize with enlisted men, he said recently at his office in the VA hospital in Brentwood. The enlisted men were more likely to be their peers—in age, marital status, interests and education than the officers, doctors especially, with whom they were permitted to keep company.

"The doctors were married," Meshad said. "They, like the guys in general over there, were looking for sex. Women at that age were looking for something more substantial. Then the doctor would go home at the end of his six-month tour and she'd have to deal with that..."

Then you add all the trauma of constantly seeing people blown away by war machinery," Meshad said of the nurses. "You're far away from it. You can hear it but you never go there. It creates an unknown. It really affects you. It's the twilight zone and you keep seeing people coming in in bits and pieces..."

"You'd get angry, but you can't go out and shoot a weapon, you can't punch somebody out, you can't get drunk. I'm not saying women never did, but generally they did the 'woman thing.' Hold it in and be appropriate."

Like the men, they experienced what Meshad calls the "sudden stop" of coming home. As awful as the war was, it was awfully intense. Nothing in civilian life could match it. Paradoxically, they wound up missing that terrible time and place. They were back in a country that offered them no gratitude. No thanks. All the stigma of having been there that attached to the men, attached to them too.

"They got asked the same stupid questions the (male) vets were asked," Meshad said, "instead of being asked, 'How do you deal with a no-win situation with an establishment that went through the motions with your life?' And, because they were women who had gone to war, he said, they were accused of being "whores and dykes." At best they met with indifference.

The Women Vets of Vietnam

They tended to do the 'woman thing' when they got home. They did not go to bars and pick fights. If they ever did get around to talking about Vietnam with someone who had been there, they did what they were used to doing as women and as nurses. They nurtured. They tended not to unburden themselves on others or ask support. Generally, however, they did not talk about it.

"It ain't easy to find us," Lynda Van Devanter, a veteran of Pleiku and Qui Nhon, now head of the women's unit of Vietnam Veterans of America, in Washington, D.C., said of the impact of such a homecoming. "We came back and went so deep into the closet."

A former patriot, who turned anti-war while in Vietnam, she developed a reputation as a troublemaker, but never turned against the enlisted men or questioned nursing them.

She says she returned home to such hostility and accusations there was no question of having any pride or receiving any gratitude for what she had done. She stopped admitting she was a veteran, she told the Times recently from her office in Washington and would gloss over that time period when asked what she had been doing. She buried Vietnam so deeply that she never mentioned she had been there to her therapist.

She had been a "basket case," she said, in 1972 when she went into therapy. Nightmares. Flashbacks. Depressions so severe she could not stop crying for months at a time—and, if for no other reason than that, she could not hold a job. Or a relationship.

She knew about delayed stress but did not relate it to her problems. When it was obvious it was Vietnam that was torturing her sleep, she told herself she was over-dramatizing. Instead she looked to her childhood for the causes and tried only to find practical ways of dealing with depression. To some extent it worked. The depressions were not constant. She worked from time to time, and in 1975, she married.

During those years, she said, she had no contact with the Veterans Administration, avoided the place, could not trust them and says now, "When is the last time you saw an ad for the VA that in any way gave you the idea that women were invited?"

Finally in 1979, she said, she more or less bottomed out. Couldn't stop crying, left her job, separated from her husband, left California and went to New York.

It was there, through her husband, that she finally began to come out of it. He is a reporter and was making a documentary on the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). He convinced her to go with him on the interviews and introduced her as "My wife the Vietnam vet."

A new chapter in her life. Several of them in fact. She came out of the closet. She went through a phase of being the "care giver" she said, listening to the men talk rather than talk herself. She talked enough, however, that VVA, a private organization that is an advocate for legislation, benefits and programs for Vietnam veterans, realized there were problems for women veterans that were not being addressed. They asked her to head a new unit.

She returned to California before making a recent move to Washington last November, reunited with her husband, met a few women Vietnam veterans, including her close friend Chris Noel, obtained some seed money from the Playboy Foundation for an initial study and met Shad Meshad. Meshad started her on the final steps with the approach he uses with most veterans.

"You've never walked through Vietnam," he told me. "We start now. You've got to get through this. You've got to get past it." She no longer just listened. She talked.

The problems are not totally behind her, she said, but she has "worked through a great deal" and no longer

panics if a nightmare comes back. Her energy seems to be directed outward now. At least that is how she talks—full of plans for her job and the future. And her attitude has changed.

From Victim to Survivor

"Slowly, I've gone from the mentality of being a victim to being a survivor. There is something very special about me," she said of having served in Vietnam. "Other people do not have it."

Van Devanter is in "phase one" of her job as women's director of VVA now, she said—trying to track down women Vietnam veterans. How many are there? Where are they? How are they? She is asking the Defense Department and Veterans Administration for help with statistics and informally, as the word spreads among women, she is making a list, contacting women and putting them in touch with each other.

She had avoided other veterans for so long herself, she said, that she knew only one or two women veterans when she started. Her list is growing. She just returned from a regional Vet center training program in Birmingham, she said, where for the first time "there were five of us in one room." She is protective of her contacts and does not readily give out names—too many are "in a real bad place," she said, too many, like herself at one point, are suicidal.

She wants the VVA to explore women veterans' knowledge and use of GI benefits, she said, and their overall experience with the VA. She wants to see an investigation of the effects of exposure to Agent Orange on women and their offspring. And she is determined to see that help is provided for the psychological problems she is convinced many are suffering.

Rap Groups Started

The rap groups developing at the VA-sponsored storefront Vet centers for Vietnam veterans seem one appropriate method of beginning to work on the problem, she said. However, the ones in existence are comprised of men and geared more to their specific combat-related problems.

Obviously, since some 2.5 million-3 million men served in Vietnam, compared to at most 55,000 women, the centers are male dominated in approach, staff (trained team leaders and streetwise veterans) ambience and clientele. That is where the overwhelming need is.

In Vietnam, she took advantage of what diversions there were. She knew how to party. She avoided the maudlin tapes of poetry and songs some people played endlessly while alone in their hooches. She was realistic about what to expect from a relationship with a married doctor and had such a relationship anyhow, calling it now a tremendous emotional support at the time.

And she let the war get to her. She did not hold her emotions at bay.

"You were seeing so much death," Schneider said. "It just wasn't natural—wrapping bodies all the time. I was real depressed toward the end. The major came in once and said to me, 'What's wrong with you?' If I had had to explain, she couldn't have understood. I remember when she came in, it was a black guy I was wrapping. I was tagging him and I saw his ring and started thinking of his family. He looked like he should be alive and I wanted to yell, 'Hey! Wake up!'"

She is getting out of nursing now. She has seen enough sadness and death.

Almost 10 years later it has finally caught up with her. She has recently married and that means a whole new chapter for her. She is enrolled in a humanities program at Pasadena City College, wants to go from there to Irvin, and she is interested in writing—about Vietnam.

And while she does not wear her emotions on her

sleeve they seem easily available to her. She writes powerfully of Vietnam. After her first effort was read to her classmates, she said, they were rather stunned—and really surprised to learn it had come from a woman.

She does not think she is a victim of delayed stress, is sure other women are, however, but said of it, "I do hope it's not abused. I think there are some people who have the problem of using something like that as a crutch."

She would not describe herself as unscathed, however. She came away from Vietnam with an inordinate fear of death, she said. And, she started to laugh—"I've never driven on a freeway since I've been home. I think it goes with my fear of death. My friends are used to it. They give me surface street directions. Other than that, I'm fine."

The woman who had said she came back "jangled" from Vietnam, and rarely talks about it, talked that day for more than three hours, using up her quota for the next two years, she laughed.

For all her lingering tension, she seemed to be trying honestly to assess the war's effect on her, approaching the question, it seemed, in layers.

"I do think I was lucky to get therapy privately when I did," she said. "I don't think the Veterans Administration has begun to realize until recently the terrible things that were staying with these young men. To look at the eyes of those boys," she said looking far off, "they were 18 going on 75. There were the wrong eyes."

She does not deny that she has her own terrible things staying with her. Whether or not she is suffering from delayed stress is a question she is neutral toward. She finally did say, however, that it probably would be good after all, to talk about some of those things with others who had been there.

Vietnam, she said, was outside of her. She held her arm out from her body at shoulder's length to show where she had to go retrieve her memories of it. It is not integrated with the rest of her, and maybe, she said, it would be better if it were.

Yes, she would be very interested in meeting women Vietnam vets, and if a rap group were to develop, that probably would be interesting too.

Cannot Take Violence

The lasting effect she is most aware of, she said, is that she cannot take violence anymore. Can't watch it on television. Can't stand the sight or thought of it, not after having seen the results of it.

She drew herself up in the chair, bracing herself, took a deep breath and held it a while. She let it go, wrenching out her words one by one.

"It's like I just don't ever want to see anything hurt. Not anything."

For just a few moments she went back to her own very private Vietnam, a place where boys lay dying on gurneys, telling her she smelled so good, apologizing for their language.

Easter Sunday was the worst. A cold wet day when a chopper full of wounded men arrived. There was one in particular.

"He was just a young, young man. He was very thin, I remember, and he had blond hair. 'Please ma'am, don't let me die,' he said. He was gone in 20 seconds. I rarely tell that. It hurts so bad. You'd see all this and keep asking yourself why the boys were dying, just fragged up into little pieces. Oh, my gosh." ❀

The Women Vets of Vietnam

Chris Noel's Personal Mission Delayed Shock of a GI Entertainer

by Lisa Conroy
Los Angeles Times

Hi, love! This is Chris Noel. Welcome to a date with Chris. Here are two songs dedicated to the guys of the 435th Tactical Fighter Squadron: Dionne Warwick singing "This Girl's in Love With You" and the Animals "We Gotta Get Out of This Place."

—Armed Forces Radio,
Saigon, 1966.

For 11 years, Chris Noel said, she refused to admit what she saw in Vietnam. From Christmas, 1966, to the summer of 1969, she entertained men at war. Chris Noel was the first woman for Armed Forces Radio who voluntarily spent five to eight weeks at a time in Southeast Asia building morale by dressing in miniskirts and white boots and playing to perfection the role of the All-American girl—next-door, sweetheart, sex symbol, sister and mother surrogate. It is said by those who were there that her message was simple: She told them to stay alive.

A television and motion picture actress, she was professionally prepared to sing, dance, wear a smile and talk of encouragement.

What she was not prepared for was the trouble that comes from killing and the perpetual fear of death.

The phenomenon of post-traumatic stress disorder (or delayed stress reaction) is solidly documented in the cases of an estimated 500,000 American GIs who served in Vietnam. That delayed stress also is experienced by non-combat personnel has passed almost unnoticed by the Veterans Administration and the public. Delayed stress finally hit Chris Noel.

"When I realized that my craziness, my pain, my depression, had to do with Vietnam, all I kept saying," Noel says, "was, 'No way. How could it be possible.' I hadn't killed anyone. It's 1980!"

Her symptoms are textbook-classic. DAV, the official publication of the Disabled American Veterans and DAV Auxiliary, lists, among other symptoms, recurring nightmares, sleep disturbances, migraine headaches, depression, spontaneous anger, flashbacks to Vietnam and self-deceiving and self-punishing patterns of behavior such as an inability to talk about war experiences, fear of losing others and a tendency to fit of rage.

Nine months ago, Chris Noel was driven to start talking by too many nights of wronged sleep, too many flashbacks and too many relationships gone bad, she says. "I lost interest in work. Can you believe it? I left the only business I know...I was an actress. I left because I couldn't do it."

At first, when her friends who fought in Vietnam suggested that she was suffering from the post-war syndrome, she pretended not to hear what they were saying. One friend finally said to her, "You gotta start reading about Vietnam, Chris." "I can't," she replied. "You gotta," he retorted.

"So I got some books," Noel said recently. "I got about a third of the way through 'Dispatches' and I came across the word 'depression' and how a particular man saved some pain pills for the severe depression that would hit him when he got back to Saigon, and I began crying. That was the beginning."

Sitting in the living room of her condominium, Chris Noel talks about the past 14 years. Her emotions zigzag rapidly from a high, throaty laugh to moments of shakiness and tears. Gaps in her memory interrupt her flow of conversation. "Oh, I don't remember," she laughs. "I don't remember," she repeats, as her hand covers her mouth.

Recently divorced from her second husband of six years, she now lives alone with her Yorkshire terrier and cat.

During her years with her second husband, Noel's own problems were obscured, she says, by her husband's. Her nightmares that related to Vietnam held second place to his nightmares that stemmed from Korea. "He would call out in his sleep, 'Please don't let me kill another person! I took care of him,'" she says. "I left when I realized I had to take care of myself."

Special Escort

She met her husband, a Green Beret, when he was assigned as her special escort to travel to South Vietnam. He killed himself shortly after their return to the States.

"He used to put a gun to my head. Something would happen to his eyes and he would flip out. If I had been there when he killed himself, he would have killed me. There's no doubt in my mind about that."

At that time, she was told she shouldn't feel guilty about her husband's suicide. "People said that to me so many times that I began to wonder, 'Should I feel guilty?' I had filed for divorce, so I suppose in some people's minds, the fact that I left him and a few days later he killed himself, you might think it's my fault."

During the early '60s, Noel auditioned for a job with Armed Forces Radio (now called American Forces Radio and Television Services). She got the position "strictly for my voice." The pay was AFTRA scale. Her tapes were pressed into records and sent to military bases all over the world, as well as Vietnam. When Pentagon officials learned of her interest in going to Vietnam, she soon received an invitation to tour.

Believing in the patriotic standard, Chris Noel threw herself with gusto into "doing anything that my country wanted me to do. If my country said, 'Go to war,' I believed it. I came from the old school.

"I totally stayed away from discussing the war here in the United States," she says, trying to describe the complex maze of charged emotions and ideals that characterized those years. "All anyone wanted to say when I returned was how dumb the war was and how dumb anyone of us that went! This is what I heard after seeing men with missing limbs!"

A Personal Mission

Her job became a personal mission, until, by 1969, "I had had my fill of it. I didn't even know when the war stopped." But until she had had her fill of it, Noel repeatedly returned to Vietnam with the sense of preference—horrors or not—to being at home. Many veterans have claimed the same feeling.

Surviving Vietnam, many say, involved Herculean efforts not to lose control.

"I got mad at myself twice," says Noel, "because I broke down in front of people—once when I was sitting in a small tent out in a field and a tiny Vietnamese boy was dying. His stomach was bloated from starvation and from eating garbage. I looked at the GIs, the medics, the boy's father, and I couldn't take it. I had to leave.

"The second time I was watching an officer lining up all his men at attention—all these guys in this long line—and I was standing there having to watch them all because he had them lined up for me. A fire base is not the place to be standing at attention! That's where we fired from, from where the patrols would go out and where we would have our bunkers set up. I hated it. I resented it, and yelled at the commanding officer, telling him how stupid I thought he was. I guess my nerves were really shattered and I lost it for a bit. That's not what I was all about. I was there to be the ray of light, Miss Sunshine, Miss Christmas, not someone losing control."

The habit of not losing it prevailed when she saw the film "Coming Home". "I told my sister, who took me, that it didn't bother me at all. It did. It bothered me a lot, but I didn't let her know. I just reverted back to being Miss Brave."

Firing a Howitzer

Noel pulls out a scrapbook the size of a coffee table. Leafing through newsclips and publicity stills, she searches for illustrative photos of her role in Vietnam. Casually, she mentions the time she fired a howitzer aimed at a VC camp. Asked why she fired the weapon, she says, "It was going to be fired anyway, so it might as well have been me." What happened after she fired the gun? "I have no idea," she responds nervously.

Today, Chris Noel's goal is to survive the Vietnam of her dreams and flashbacks. She wants to put behind her the "real bad days" when she sees "row after row after row of men in bandages, their arms cut off, their legs cut off." Her time is now spent taking care of herself. She sees a therapist for counseling, and is planning herself to become a counselor to Vietnam veterans.

Does she regret having gone? "Sometimes I wonder if it was really a privilege to see some of the things I saw. Then I look back and I say, yes, absolutely. Because probably, if I hadn't seen some of the things I saw, I wouldn't have the deep feelings that I have and be so interested in reaching out and helping those who have survived so far to continue and not to kill themselves."

The Wounds That Would Not Heal

From page 5

any more about Vietnam. By the end, at least as many people opposed the war as supported it. Many Americans were, or still are, sad and regretful about what happened in Vietnam: the pro-war folks because we did not win, and the anti-war folks because we were there at all. They have had their own wounds to heal, with not much left over with which to help the veteran work it out.

I must most emphatically add that many psychologists, psychiatrists and other counselors—with a few exceptions—have, until very recently, not been able to help those Vietnam veterans who needed to talk out the war. These professionals, too, have not been able to face it.

The hitch has been that for most Vietnam veterans with a stress syndrome, a true recovery has to include revisiting and re-experiencing, to some extent, the events which were lived through in Indochina. They must be remembered before they can be forgotten, sometimes in painstaking detail.

That need for talking it out will be instantly recognized by many veterans of other wars. It is part of the normal recovery process. Since the mental health field has had such a hard time providing the context for that, the Outreach Centers have been created as places where Vietnam veterans, their families, friends and other veterans can honestly—and with feelings—bring the buried past into the present and make it a constructive part of the future.

The core of the psychological difficulties which some Vietnam vets are now struggling to recover from is the same as in veterans from other wars. The trauma of combat, the encounters with death, horror, mutilation and suffering were the same. Some veterans of WWII and Korea to this day are fighting the same struggle.

In fact, it is our hope that through the concentrated attention which we professionals, community workers, Vietnam veterans and friends are now directing toward stress disorder in Vietnam veterans, we shall inspire the Veterans Administration and the nation at large to a deeper understanding of the problems, strengths and wisdom of all veterans of war, and to a more sensitive appreciation of the ways in which returned warriors can fully contribute to a happier and more peaceful society.

Hire the Veteran!

They're Not Interested

by Igor Bobrowsky Daily Record

Memorial Day Has Come and Gone...

And while most Americans rush off to meet the fast approaching days of balmy summer, and some few gather in brief clusters to listen to a quiet word and hear the simply haunting melody of Taps, the veterans of Vietnam stand apart, and watch America in silence — to see if she is ready for a reconciliation with her sons.

What they have seen in the past has not been heartening and what they have experienced in the present has not made them very hopeful of the future.

While for most Americans our nation's longest war may well be over - for many veterans of Vietnam the hardest battles continue here at home. Last October a report of the Center for Policy Research in New York confirmed what many Vietnam veterans have said for years: that all is not well with many of them and their brothers.

The government-sponsored study showed in its initial report that over 40 percent of Vietnam veterans are still experiencing major emotional difficulties, and more than 75 percent have recurring nightmares, marital problems and employment difficulties. Fewer than half have taken advantage of the G.I. Bill and, of these, fewer than 30 percent have lasted beyond a year of schooling.

Past studies have shown that of the roughly 2.75 million men who served in Vietnam, some 300,000 are in jails or out on bail. Other studies show that Vietnam veterans have a divorce rate which is twice the national average and a suicide rate 25 percent higher than that of their peers. Many are haunted by the specter of unresolved questions concerning Agent Orange while the Veterans Administration, in a long overdue national Outreach Program, tries to salvage some of the estimated 600,000 walking wounded who are still wandering home from the war.

And so, on unemployment lines, in schools, in hospitals, and on the streets of America's cities and towns, many of the men who survived the Vietnam War are now in danger of becoming casualties of peace. It is a shameful irony to see that the only men of our generation who were asked to pay their dues for a place in American society at the risk of their lives, limbs, and sanity are also the very ones whom our nation and its political, social and economic institutions continue to reward with indifference, neglect, and even scorn.

It is what many veterans perceive to be a breach of faith between themselves and the society they served

that lies at the root of many veterans' withdrawal and even bitter alienation.

And, while many would argue that it is the individual who is responsible for the ultimate outcome of his life, few would deny that the society is responsible for providing its individuals with a place in which to function.

America has not done that for the Vietnam veteran.

For reasons as diverse and individual as any among us, many of us went to fight in Vietnam. Despite the rhetoric on one side and the denunciation on the other, the bottom line for many of us who went perhaps was our willingness to take America at her word, to keep faith with her institutions, and to grant her our part of what we believed to be a mutual trust and a mutual obligation and a mutual responsibility between ourselves and our society.

We all know how that turned out.

When the adventure had lost its excitement, when the conflict grew too long and costly, when the war threatened to reach into the sanctuaries of education and wealth and when the political winds shifted enough to begin to endanger the prospects for reelection of those who had been so ready and eager to commit us — we were initially abandoned and ultimately disowned and denied.

When we — who had been deemed expendable enough to throw into the inferno — returned, it was only to discover that while we had been gone, we had become as expendable in America as we had been in Vietnam.

While we had been away, America had moved on to other things: the "wise" and the wealthy and the assorted "me firsters" had cleared their little paths into the mainstream of our nation's social, economic, and political life, had staked out their claims and feathered their nests.

The troops returned to be greeted with wary embarrassment by those who had sent us, to be treated with self-conscious awkwardness by our now far-advanced peers and to be regarded as a superfluous commodity by the economic institutions of our nation. The political right blamed us for losing the war; the left condemned us for fighting it; and the "silent majority" resented us for presenting it with living proof of its own impotence.

Vietnam veterans have been treading water ever since: swimming in the wake of those who felt, perhaps rightly, that the social contract in our country was just a fairy tale for children and fools; trying to make up for the years wasted fighting our government's nine-year

long withdrawal from a ten-year war and being forced to live like lepers in the midst of our own smug, wealthy, and wasteful land.

When we tried to say that there was something wrong, we were assured that what was wrong was only us.

When we asked for education and training, we were given a choice between eating and learning. When we asked for caring and healing, we were shown the statistics on inflation and reminded about how fortunate we were to be given a place to vegetate.

When we applied for jobs, we were found to be either "too old" or "too inexperienced" or "overqualified."

And when we said that we were hurting from the deep wounds that our nation was inflicting on our spirits, we were shown government charts that proved we were "fine."

Is it a wonder, then, that so many recoiled, that so many withdrew, that some even grew bitter...or is it the wonder that America is still unable and unwilling to face the implication of her veterans' feelings?

Is it a wonder that four, five, six, ten years after returning from the war, the men who fought it were still beating their heads against the doors that their own society locked against them?

Is it a wonder that so many feel that they were not wounded until they returned to the land that they had sought for resting and for healing?

And who, having seen what America has done, and what she has not done for the men who returned from Vietnam, will be willing to risk his life at her call the next time?

Whether the injustices and grievances that alienate and embittered so many Vietnam veterans are intentional or even real, is a moot question: the important thing is that they are perceived as such by veterans.

Consequently, the obvious, primary things that have to be addressed and resolved are: jobs, care, and education.

Vietnam veterans are not interested in trumpet calls: as it is, it seems we have answered one too many. We don't want parades; we have marched in too many ourselves to be impressed. We don't want speeches, dedications, resolutions, or easy honors: we have heard and seen them all, ad-nauseam.

We don't want pity because we are not the ones who need it, and we don't want to be mythologized into tragic heroes because we know that the tragedy is not ours, and all the heroes are dead.

What we do want is a place in the society at whose behest we fought the irresolute and ill-conceived crusade in Asia. When we were called, and when we were sent, it was not we who were found wanting.

How America comes to deal with her Vietnam veterans — whether she will be willing to take the time that is needed to bring them all home, whether she will have the courage and resolution to do what is right simply because it is right — may well determine whether we can begin to live again as one family or continue to exist as a nation of strangers with all that leads to and all that implies. ♣

(Igor Bobrowsky served in the Marine Corps in Vietnam. He was awarded two Purple Hearts - Editor.)

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**Have they
forgotten
me?**

Legal Update: Vietnam Veterans vs. Dow Chemical et al.

In January 1979, a class action suit was filed in federal district court on New York's Long Island, on behalf of veterans and their families who suffer from health problems believed associated with Agent Orange exposure. The suit asks the court to designate all 2.4 million Vietnam veterans as a "class" and to award them \$4 billion in damages. The defendants including Hooker Chemical of Love Canal fame, have denied all liability, claiming that the herbicides they supplied to the military pose no danger whatsoever to human health.

While the case is still in its pre-trial "discovery" phase, there have been several significant developments. Judge George Pratt has applied the Multi-District Litigation Act. This means that all Agent Orange claims throughout the US are consolidated in this one proceeding, at least until the pre-trial phase is completed. To date, an estimated two thousand Vietnam veterans and their families have filed individual damage suits (in addition to those participating in the class action). Secondly, Judge Pratt has ruled that "federal common law" (rather than the tort law of individual states) will be used to determine liability. This ruling has been appealed by the defendants.

A few months ago, the manufacturers requested that the US government be named as a defendant. Basically, they're saying that any harm caused by the Agent Orange was due to the military's misuse of an otherwise safe product. Many veterans have asked why the plaintiff's lawyers didn't just sue the federal government in the first place. The reason is a time-encrusted doctrine of "sovereign immunity." While Congress did expand the government's liability for negligence many years ago, the Supreme Court ruled in 1950 that a veteran is barred from bringing a negligence suit for injuries he suffered while on active duty. This unjust and harsh decision insulates the military command from any liability — no matter how reckless its conduct. This is justified on the grounds of "military necessity" and "national security."

Citizen Soldier has notified a number of veterans with serious medical symptoms that they may wish to pursue litigation against the manufacturers. We have suggested that they seek representation by a group of expert attorneys. The team is headed by Benton Musslewhite of Houston, who is responsible for case preparation. Melvin Block of New York is in charge of the team's trial strategy. An experienced product liability trial attorney, Mel is a member of the lawyers committee designated by Judge Pratt to direct the plaintiffs' side in this complex litigation. The Musslewhite group is currently representing approximately one thousand plaintiffs.

Other veterans and their families are being represented by a legal group headed by Victor Yannacone of Patchogue, New York, who filed the original class-action complaint. Still others have chosen to retain local counsel from their own communities. Lawyers handling this type of litigation routinely work on a "contingency fee" basis, i.e., no fee or costs are payable until and unless settlement is made or verdict is had. Then, the attorney receives a fixed percentage of the

plaintiff's total recovery, plus costs. Should the attorneys fail to win anything, they alone must absorb the financial loss.

The Agent Orange lawsuit has been described in the press as "the environmental lawsuit of the century." As such, it has generated enormous public attention in recent months. This has additional value for veterans beyond their possibly recovering damages for medical expenses and loss of income.

While we think there's sufficient evidence to prove our case in court, the manufacturers may decide to settle prior to trial out of a desire to stem the barrage of negative publicity. Barring a settlement (or a solution legislated by Congress) the legal battle could drag on for years with the well-heeled defendants trying to win by attrition what they couldn't achieve if the cases reaches trial. This cynical strategy has a chance of success given the enormous financial advantage the defendant corporations enjoy over the plaintiffs.

In our opinion, the litigation is a long shot, but worth pursuing, especially by those with "strong" cases. If we win, it will be because we all worked hard for victory. Winning justice is the toughest battle of all — as any Vietnam veteran knows.

A word to those who've joined the various lawsuits. Both clients and attorneys have responsibilities. The lawyers should keep the clients abreast of important developments in their case. The client, however, should avoid making excessive demands on the attorneys for information, realizing that his or her case is one of thousands. A certain amount of impersonal bureaucracy is inevitable when hundreds of claims are being processed. Clients should cooperate fully in answering depositions, requests for medical records, etc., as requested by their attorneys. As the cases move closer to trial you can expect to have increasing contact with your lawyers.

We want veterans to realize that legal action will be a long haul, with no guarantee of success. Because we don't want to raise false hopes among claimants, we've urged the Musslewhite team to inform any individual when, (after thorough evaluation) it is determined that his case doesn't constitute a reasonable prospect for recovery.

For those who desire further information about the lawsuit and are not currently represented by legal counsel (disregard powers of attorneys given Legion, DAV, or VFW reps. for VA claims) you may contact the following:

Benton Musslewhite, 3506 Travis, Houston, TX 77002 (713) 520-0621.

Victor Yannacone, P.O. Box 109, Patchogue, NY 11772 (516) 654-2662 or your local attorney.



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Hire The Veteran!

The Boy Scouts Remembered

On a holiday weekend when so many Americans were enjoying the day off, a small group of Boy Scouts took time to remember what the true meaning of Memorial Day is.

The scouts of Troop 249 of Lisle, Illinois came into Chicago bringing their troop colors to pay homage to all those fallen in battle. Led by scoutmaster Gerry Howard and assistant scoutmaster Eric Blevel, the four boys stood proudly through the ceremony behind the eternal flame in Daley plaza flanked by members of veterans groups at ceremonies on 25 May.

Prior to the beginning of the ceremonies, the boys had the opportunity to meet members of the Army who had served in WW I and posed for pictures with them.

Scoutmaster Howard told Joan Maiman of the Chicago based Veterans Leadership Conference, that he feels that the purpose of scouting is to build good citizens and he believes that patriotism is essential for a citizen. That is why the boys had come into the city and why they are encouraged to participate in ceremonies in their own communities throughout the year.



Troop 249 Lisle, ILL. Memorial Day, 1981

Assistant Scoutmaster Blevel at 23 is too young to have been a part of the Vietnam conflict, but he does not feel that what happened there would prevent him from serving if needed. The boys included 11 year old Justin Koehler, Tim Howard, 13, David Reed, 14, and Ron McFarland, also 14.

Koehler stated that he had been excited about the idea of being part of the ceremonies and the other boys echoed this statement. Reed said they had come "to honor those who had died in the service." At an age when possible registration for the draft is only four years away, Reed agreed that citizens "Have a responsibility to serve" the country if needed. Howard said that he only knows about Korea from watching MASH on TV and Koehler and McFarland both have grandfathers who served in WW II. Vietnam seemed like ancient history—for the boys.

The boys believe that they are learning a lot from scouting, including how to work with and help others. They are also learning civic involvement through community projects and participation in events such as the memorial service.

Howard went on to say that he believes scouting is making a comeback after a period of decline which he attributes partly to an increase in activities available for the boys such as sports etc. Howard believes however, that scouting is important as it is a well rounded activity. With the number of one parent families increasing Howard feels that scouting is especially important for many boys. ✚

Sighting of U.S. POWs in Vietnam Reported

February 25, 1981, Denver Colo.

By Stewart Lytle

WASHINGTON - American prisoners of war were reported being moved on a train with Vietnamese prisoners from Hanoi to Ham Tan last August.

A Norwegian who was traveling recently in Vietnam reported seeing Americans working in a road gang. They yelled at him in English: "Tell the world about us." He said they had "American accents."

That report came from a Vietnamese mortician who claimed to have handled the remains of 400 U.S. servicemen. The mortician said he saw three live Caucasians who he was told were Americans.

Reports of American prisoners, of American grave sites and pieces of crashed U.S. airplanes began flooding the DIA in late 1979 as thousands of Vietnamese refugees left their country.

Many of the reports were generated by advertisements in Vietnamese and Laos placed in newspapers around the world by the National League of Families of Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia.

These sightings are reported to DIA, which assigns staff members to the search or the nearest government



A former Vietnamese school teacher said that before he fled his country, he was informed by a Vietnamese army captain about American prisoners who were not returned with other POWs in 1973. He said the captain told him some American prisoners "are still being held in Hao Binh province in North Vietnam."

Such reports, totaling about 1,000 in the last 13 months - including 300 firsthand sightings - are typical of those the Defense Intelligence Agency is investigating.

None of the live sightings has been confirmed by DIA. However, Lt. Gen Eugene Tighe, director of the military intelligence network, refuses to rule out the possibility that Americans may still be held captive in Southeast Asia.

Based on the DIA investigations, the U.S. government recently dropped its official position that there is no "credible evidence to indicate that any U.S. servicemen are alive in captivity."

Tighe, whose searching for 2,500 unaccounted for American servicemen is his agency's top priority, recently told Congress he believes at least one of the reports of live sightings is credible.

official to check the sources. To the frustrations of the league, the results of these investigations are usually classified as secret.

A large number of these sightings turn out to be useless, said the official who heads the search effort.

Second- and third-hand reports are difficult - often impossible - to check. The report of the American prisoners on the train last summer came from the family of a Vietnamese air force major who was a prisoner on the train. The officer, not the family, supposedly saw the Americans.

There are many duplicate reports. The Vietnamese have trouble telling one Caucasian from another, confusing Americans with Europeans or Russians.

Some are outright lies told by refugees who think that relating them will help them gain entrance to the United States. But like the mortician's story, some of the reports are considered credible by U.S. officials.

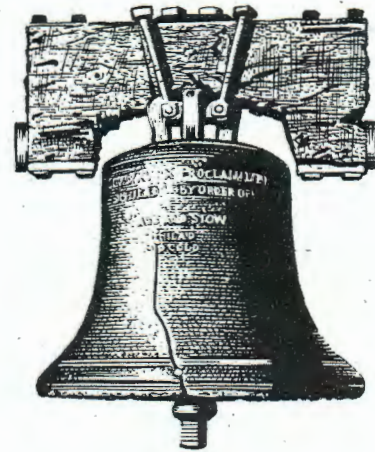
The U.S. government, fresh from negotiating the release of hostages in Iran, is planning initiatives - some public, some not - to gain more information from Vietnam and Laos on the mission 2,500. ♣

Fourth of July in Chicago to feature "Fires" and fireworks

Soldier Field in Chicago will be the site of activities including a football game by Chicago's new team, the Chicago Fire and a fireworks display on the Fourth of July. Aris Mantzoras, Vice commander of the Illinois American Legion, told Joan Maiman of the Veterans Leadership Conference that the Legion has had an activity in the field for the past 46 years. This will be the first year, however that they have had a football game. The newly established league plays in the summer and early fall months to avoid competing with the established teams. The Legion will sell 20,000 seats for \$3 each as opposed to the regular price of \$9 "so that a man with five kids will be able to come and enjoy the day. We feel that we have an obligation to the families of the Chicago area to make the day affordable," Mantzoras added. The activities will begin at six P.M. and half time will feature the presentation of certificates to the outstanding firemen and policemen of the Chicago area as recommended by their chiefs. The Fourth of July queen and her court will be presented. The queen will be selected from among the finalists of the nine districts and the runners up will compose the court. At the conclusion of the game the fireworks will begin. According to Mantzoras, 15 minutes worth of fireworks will cost \$12,000 and it will be one of the biggest displays in the Chicago area.

Tickets will be available at the gate or they may be purchased in advance by contacting the Legion at 343 S Dearborn, Chicago Illinois or calling (312) 922-7520. Mantzoras stated that the Legion will share in the profits of the day and the money will be used to finance community activities.

He stated that Vietnam vets are especially welcome to attend and the VVC will be represented by John Monaghan, deputy director and Vietnam vet. ♣



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Seeing Red

New York Times, 21 Sept. 1980

The two-week winter holiday; luxury hotel accommodations in big cities, treks through rustic rural areas and a lazy day-long boat trip down the Mekong River in scenic Vietnam.



and this is the "Tomb of the unknown Capitalist-Dog Pilot."

Vietnam: Many may think that Americans last left that country ill-equipped for tourism. Not so, according to the New York's Guardian Tours, which this winter is sponsoring the first American tours to Vietnam.

Granted, Guardian is not your typical travel agency. A revenue-producing arm of The Guardian, a self-described "Marxist-Leninist independent radical weekly," its connections with left-wing governments throughout the world have allowed it to obtain visas when conventional tour groups cannot.

"The United States does not have diplomatic ties to any of the countries we tour," said Stewart Ozer, co-manager of the group. "But we just telex the visas through another country's office."

During the two-week Vietnam visit, the 20 tourists stay in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh city (formerly Saigon) and Danang, tour schools and agricultural cooperatives and float down the Mekong River. With a price tag of \$1,700, not including the \$1,200 airfare to Bangkok, "These tours are obviously not for starving Socialists," Mr. Ozer said.

This is not the weekly's first venture into travel. "All through the 1970s until 1976, any American who wanted to go to China besides Nixon had to go through us," Mr. Ozer said. In its eight years as travel agents, the Guardian has also ushered 500 Americans through Cuba on its \$599 one-week tour. This year the agency is offering a Nicaragua tour "to view the triumph of the Sandinista revolution first-hand" for 10 days, costing \$895. There is also a \$795 "social / political" one-week tour of Grenada.

"There's no ideological brainwashing," Mr. Ozer said. "The groups are fairly well mixed and the discussions are very lively. The only problems that we've had have been with suspicion that some tour members were C.I.A. agents, but then the tour group was just shadowed." ❖

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'Crybabies' No More— Except in Mourning

L.A. Times, June 7, 1981

by Frank McAdams

Before going to Vietnam, I used to have a recurring nightmare in which four Viet Cong soldiers, Russian AK-47 rifles held at high port, would chase me through my Chicago neighborhood. After I arrived in Vietnam, the nightmare stopped.

I'm lucky. I survived and have had no emotional problems. Other Vietnam vets can't say that. Many still have nightmares and often think about ending it all. Some do just that.

Today, Vietnam vets are the wake of a war with which this country still refuses to come to terms. It isn't only men who are suffering delayed stress, but also some women who served. Their story has yet to be fully told.

Last March Jim Hopkins, a Marine veteran of Vietnam, drove his jeep into the lobby of Wadsworth Veterans Hospital and shot up the place to protest a lack of psychiatric treatment on the part of the Veterans Administration. Last month, his wife found him dead, a vial of pills and a liquor bottle next to his body.

Who the hell cares? Maybe Hopkins was some spaced-out 'Nam gyrene who went zappy because of too many patrols. Yeah, or just one of those 'Nam crybabies who couldn't get in there and get the job done like they did in WW II.

The prejudice is there, deep-set in hypocrisy. Most of us have experienced it in at least one form. I once applied for a job with a large company. When the interviewer saw that I had been an officer with the 1st Marine Division, he leaned across the desk and said, "If you come to work for us, you'll be with a top-notch organization, not leading a bunch of grammar-school dropouts against a machine-gun emplacement." I bit the inside of my mouth to keep from coming over the desk at him. Then I left.

A friend of mine, while changing jobs about four years ago, put on his resume that he had served with the Army in Vietnam. One of the interviewer's first questions was, "Were you taking drugs over there?" He knew then that the job was out of reach. He was right.

A few months ago I was a guest at an American Legion meeting in Hollywood where I overheard a relative of a member ask, "What do you Vietnam people want, everything?"

The word "crybabies" was voiced several times that evening. In part, it's accurate: I cried more than once in 'Nam - whenever I heard of a friend's death.

Between 1966 and 1969, seven men I knew joined the select group that ended its pain forever over there. They never had the chance to ask the Veterans Administration or their President for anything.

What is the matter with the U.S. government that it is so reluctant to help a group of people - Vietnam veterans - who fought the most unpopular and longest war in our history?

Why haven't Jim Hopkins and the thousands of others who brought their pain home received treatment so that they'd have something to live for? When will the next Jim Hopkins do something drastic to illustrate the futility of begging for what is due him?

We went to war in a foreign nation divided by politics while our own nation was being ripped apart from within. We returned in pieces, literally and figuratively. Even those of us with no apparent scars have encountered insulting prejudice and insensitive bureaucracies, reinforced by epidemic World War II-vintage ignorance.

Ironically, some members of the 1960's "peace movement" have shown more sympathy, understanding and support for Vietnam veterans than the gung-ho politicians who signed and supported the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. How many of the politicians' sons received special draft-board consideration during the years when we were in 'Nam and the "peace people" were being clubbed by police in Chicago? Oh, the bloody hypocrisy of self-proclaimed patriots!

Politically, push is coming to shove again. Ten years ago there were "closet" Vietnam vets. But no more.

We are accepting prejudice better. We'll always be looked at by some people as being spaced-out losers of a no-win war who probably never could have hacked it at home. But now Vietnam veterans are digging into the mountains of bureaucracy and getting down into the mud of politics.

We don't need to be reminded that in 1966, Gov. Ronald Reagan of California said, "Once you ask the men of this nation to go into combat, you owe an obligation to those men." That's a time-honored idea. In fact, the motto of the VA came from Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address... "with malice toward none and charity for all... and to care for him who has borne the battle and for his orphan and his widow."

The gathering of Vietnam vets and hunger strikers in front of Wadsworth Veterans Hospital in West Los Angeles is testimony to the disgusting, shameful rape of Lincoln's words.

What do you Vietnam people want? Only our due; that our sick brothers and sisters be treated for service-connected disabilities. Really, is that too much to ask?

As I write, my mind plays over and over a refrain from a Clancy Brothers song: "Look at the scattered crosses... the boys beneath them slumber on..." If the past continues into the future, this select group of Vietnam vets will have lots of company.

God, I hope not. ❖

Frank McAdams, who served as a Marine lieutenant in Vietnam in 1968-69, is a lecturer in the UCLA theater arts department.



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In Memory of the Young Bleeder, the Children, the World

by Lynda M. Van Devanter
National Womens' Director of VVA
Los Angeles Times

When I read about President Carter's call to renew registration for the draft, this is what I see: It is 3 a.m. in Pleiku, South Vietnam. The fighting in the central highlands is heavy, and I am called out of my sleep to the operating room. I had been sleeping on the floor under my cot, having been awakened an hour earlier by a rocket attack, as on most other nights. Even in my groggy state, the gruff words on the phone, "Casualties! Get down here, on the double," are enough to send the adrenalin flowing, and I am alert by the time I arrive in the OR. I change quickly to scrub clothes, and report to the head nurse for my assignment.

"There's a bad one in the neuro room," she says, "and I need you to pump blood in there." The neuro room is one that I don't particularly like to work in, since head wounds are usually so messy, but, even knowing that, I am unprepared for the sight that awaits me.

It is the largest trail of blood leading to the table that I have ever seen. I slip on it because my eyes are drawn to the gurney where several people are transferring the soldier to the operating table. I watch in horror as the lower portion of his jaw, teeth exposed, dangles from what is left of his face. It swings in the air as he is moved from the gurney to the table, and I hold my breath to keep from getting sick. For a moment I am glued to the spot. I thought I had gotten used to it, but it keeps getting worse.

The shout of the anesthetist brings me up sharply, and I rush to his side to assist him in a tracheotomy. "We've got to get an airway into him fast — he's drowning in blood," he yells, and my training moves me into action. I grab a tray of instruments and open it. For the sake of speed, we perform the trach without donning gloves. Once the opening into the boy's windpipe is completed, and he is being ventilated, I move to help the surgeon. He grabs instruments from the tray to clamp off the largest bleeders in the face and jaw.

Meanwhile, the scrub technician is setting up the sterile field of linens and instruments and once the largest bleeders are tied off the surgeon puts on his gown and gloves and we begin to work in earnest to try to repair the damage. Now I realize what the head nurse meant when she told me that I was needed to pump blood: The young soldier was bleeding so fast that it was necessary to start four large needles in his leg, neck and both arms, and pump blood into all of them simultaneously. I do only this for the next several hours.



Operating Room, 67th Evac Hospital. Lynda assisting surgeon with removal of punji stick.

I invent a routine. Start at the neck, take down the empty blood bag, slip a new one into the pressure cuff, pump up the pressure in the cuff and rehang it. Then go to the left arm and repeat the process. Next the left leg, and finally the right arm. Then start back at the neck line and repeat the entire sequence. It takes about five minutes to complete the steps at each site, about 20 minutes to make a round of him. It becomes rote after a while, and I lapse into thinking about the patient.



Lynda Van Devanter awaiting transfer to Qui Nhon, March, 1970.

During one of my circuits around the table, I move his clothes to one side, and a snapshot falls out of the pocket of his fatigues. It is of a young couple — him and his girl. I guess — dressed for a prom. Tears come to my eyes. He is gazing sweetly at the girl. Straight, blond and tall, he looks proud in his tuxedo. She, too, is tall, with shining dark hair. She is wearing a long pastel gown. Love for him shines in her eyes.

The scene is in stark contrast to what I see in this room. The lovely young man is now a mass of blood vessels and skin, so macerated that nothing could hold together. The more the surgeon works, the more the boy bleeds. I've always held onto the notion that, given enough time, anything can be stopped from bleeding. Just keep at it, and eventually you'll get every last vessel. I am about to learn a hard lesson.

I pump 120 units of blood into that young man. But as fast as I pump it in he pumps it out. After hours of work, the surgeon finally realizes that it is futile. He wraps the boy's head in layers of pressure dressings and sends him to the post-op/intensive care unit to die. As I clean up the room, I keep telling myself that a miracle could happen. He could stop bleeding. He'd be all right. I move about the mess, picking up blood soaked linens and putting them into the hampers.

He was real. He was a person who could love and think and plan and dream — and now he is lost to himself, to her and to their future. I sit on the floor, my head in my hands, and sob.

After making the room ready for the next head injury — the next person — I walk over to post-op ICU to see him. His bandages have become saturated with blood several times over, and the nurses have reinforced it with more rolls of bandage, mostly to cover it up, so that now his head is grotesquely large under the swath of white, the red stains beginning to seep through. I hold his hand for a few moments and ask him if he is in pain. He squeezes my hand weakly, and I tell him that I'll request some pain medication. He squeezes my hand again in answer, and I stand holding hands with him for another few moments, the last of his life. My hands shake now as I write this, as they did then, and the tears return.

I think of this incident again now, and of many others like it during that year in Vietnam. I am reminded of tiny children with their arms and legs blown off. I remember a pregnant woman with a belly wound, and the delivery of her child by Caesarean section — the child who entered this life with a gunshot wound in his belly, the perfect circle of life in war.

A decade later, we have even more advanced weapons of war, and my heart aches with the thought that we may decide to use them.

When will we learn the lessons of past wars: When will we stop taking the seed of our lives, our children, and sending them to destruction? When will we realize that war does nothing but perpetuate war — that violence begets only violence? I ask our President and the leaders of the world community, can we not find some way of living together in peace and harmony? Can we not stop what seems to be carrying us inexorably toward another war — and possibly nuclear destruc-

tion.

I don't know the answer. I can only pray for peace.

'In Memory of the Young Bleeder...'

Los Angeles Times
Letters to the Times

The grim reality of Lynda Van Devanter's poignant account "In Memory of the Young Bleeder..." about the young American soldier, bleeding to death in Vietnam, is more than continents apart from the inanities of television's versions of war.

The price of the agonizing conflict that was Vietnam remains staggering: the loss of lives and loves, both Asian and American; the scarred lands and displaced persons of Southeast Asia; the economic malaise of a nation that bought the myth of "guns" and "butter"; the alienation from our own democratic process; the despair of Vietnam veterans, and the Agent Orange specter that haunts them!

Would that some courageous congressman or senator might stand before her his peers and read aloud the anguish of Van Devanter's soldier and those who, despite his shattered frame, tried valiantly to save him.

Rachel G. Miller
Sepulveda, CA.

With all the talk of war I hear today, it is refreshing to read an article by someone who really knows what the true cost of war is.

I don't feel however, that Van Devanter can "only pray for peace." I feel that we should all stand up and be heard that we will not stand for another war. I would rather give up the luxuries I have, like a car, than to see one more person killed in battle.

Jeff Kash
Van Nuys, CA.

I read with horror Army nurse Van Devanter's article about the young soldier who bled to death of head wounds...the tiny children with arms and legs blown off...the pregnant woman with a belly wound and her child who entered the world with a gunshot wound in his belly. It ruined my day! My hope is that it ruined the day for many readers who may have chanced across the article.

Can anything short of ridding our civilization of the periodical insanity of war really honor the sacrifices that countless millions have made to what remains a "to-be-continued" cause?

How long can we continue to demand this devastating sacrifice of the young and innocent? How long can the so-called mature keep making the faultless youth of the world pay for the ineptitudes of their elders?

Van Devanter asks: "When will we learn the lessons of past wars: When will we stop taking the seeds of our lives, our children, and sending them to destruction? When will we learn that war does nothing but perpetuate war — that violence only begets violence?"

Until we learn the necessity of finding answers to all these questions, until we learn how futile it is to wash our problems in blood, only to find they haven't been washed out, until we see how ridiculous it is to wage war until we are so thoroughly devastated and exhausted that we have only words left to settle our differences — until we learn the answers to these questions, we shall continue to attend rituals honoring sacrifices that bring us no closer to avoiding a repetition of the same mad drama.

William Baffa
Los Angeles, CA.

Lynda Van Devanter's article is so extraordinary that one wishes it could be written in skywriting over all the cities and towns of the earth.

Continued on page 20

The Young Bleeder From page 19

Or that, at least, it could be brought to the attention of every leader of every government — and perhaps framed on the wall of his or her office.

As long as there are any wars anywhere, every young bleeder dies in vain.

Kenneth F. Graham
Hollywood, CA.

As I read Van Devanter's article, I wonder if she understands the world. There is a nation (the Soviet Union) whose avowed purpose is to enslave the United States. What are our choices?

1. Surrender. Does Van Devanter know of the oppression of people within the Soviet Union, the killing of millions of people? Has she read "The Gulag Archipelago"? Does she want that to happen here?
2. Slow death and draining of wealth by endless wars across the globe.
3. Direct attack against our enemy.
4. Subversion of the Soviet Union from within like they are doing us.
5. Surrender of the United States to the will of God. He is our only hope for peace. Will we as a nation turn and repent and place our trust in the Lord? I don't think so, therefore you make the choice.

The Soviet Union does not want to live in peace with us or allow us the freedom to live as we want. They are at war with us. What would Van Devanter do if someone was trying to rape and murder her? That is what the Soviet Union is trying to do to us and the rest of the world; what would she have us do?

My choice is surrender to God. What is yours?

Paul L. Corathers
Pasadena, CA.

I suspect that Lynda Van Devanter would be a much happier person if she could excise the horrors of her wartime experiences. Consequently, I feel nothing but admiration for her willingness to relive and share those hastily memories.

If visions of the realities of war were substituted for the romanticized ideas most of us carry, we would be much less willing to follow our leaders to self-annihilation.

Norma Litman
Whittier, CA.

A Letter Home

Dear Mom and Dad,

Today we went on a mission and I am not very proud of myself, my friends or my country. We burned every hut in sight!

It was a small rural network of villages and the people were incredibly poor... The huts here are thatched palm leaves. Each one has a dried mud bunker inside. These bunkers are to protect the families. Kind of like air raid shelters.

My unit commanders, however, chose to think that these bunkers are offensive. So every hut we find that has a bunker, we are ordered to burn to the ground...

So every one is crying, begging and praying that we don't separate them and take their husbands and fathers, sons and grandfathers. The women wail and moan. Then they watch in terror as we burn their homes, personal possessions and food. Yes, we burn all rice and shoot all livestock.

Some of the guys are so careless! Today a buddy of mine called "Lai Dai" (come here) into a hut and an old man came out of the bomb shelter. My buddy told

Continued on page 21

Resolution

Veterans Flight Training

The Vet's take it on the chin again!

This past year has seen the continual erosion of benefits for many different groups but few of these groups has been targeted as continually as the Vietnam era veteran. The latest in this series of government cutbacks doesn't even afford the taxpayer a real reduction of expenditure and that is the drastic reduction in the Veterans Flight Training Program. The funding for the veterans educational program is essentially unchanged yet our Congressmen have placed further restrictions on what is or is not beneficial education. I am of the personal opinion that the average veteran has no desire to waste his hard earned benefits on educational programs which will be of no value to him. Governmental studies show that veteran flight trainees of the past have completed the courses of instruction with very high success rates. One of the primary points the Veterans Administration makes in their recommendation to discontinue the flight training program is the fact that fewer than 20% of the veterans who have received this training are working in jobs such as airline pilots. I would ask at this point how many people who have advanced education of any kind are currently working in a position which can be directly tied to their major course of study. Education is a total process of learning which not only considers the acquisition of particular skills but rounds an individual with values, an understanding of society, a feeling for responsibility and many other intangibles which generate the differences between ignorance and higher education.

The severe curtailment of military flight training is yet another fact which contradicts the action of Congress in this regard. Many members of Congress are currently seeking the support of the public under the banner of an increased defense posture yet with the current shortage of active military pilots and the severe shortage of trained reserve corps pilots how can these Congressmen call for the elimination of a program which is currently in such short supply? It takes the military a minimum of nine months to qualify an individual who has never functioned previously in an aviation capacity. It takes roughly two months to qualify a person who has previous flight training in the current aircraft being used as well as refresher training in terms of tactics and military procedures. I seriously doubt that in the event of a national mobilization the enemy will be willing to wait nine months or so to commence the battle. The curtailment of the Veterans Flight Training Program will surely dry up the pool of pilots who could be quickly and easily implemented into the military system in the event the assumption of a real defense posture were required. The contention of the Veterans Administration that there are an adequate supply of pilots through 1985 is also based on the number of known pilots rather than on the number of known qualified pilots. There happens to be a tremendous difference between the two. In previous years flying jobs were very difficult to land due to the large number of airliners in operation. In 1980 however an entirely different situation was the fact of the matter. The military pilots who left the service in large numbers throughout the Vietnam conflict had largely reached the age where retraining

was impractical. The airlines and other commercial operators are now forced to rely more and more heavily on the civilian aviation resources which are available and most of the pilots in this category have been trained under the Veterans Flight Training Program.

There are many other factors which must be considered when the elimination of programs such as the Veterans Flight Training Program are discussed. There are far reaching affects to be considered within the general aviation community as well. Many pilot training centers will be unable to continue operation without the students who are currently funded by the Veterans Administration and if you consider the high cost of flight training it becomes very apparent that army veterans will be unable to continue the training on their own. Veteran flight trainees make up about 30% of the total student population in our country's flying schools and a sudden and complete reduction of that magnitude would certainly force many schools out of business. In addition, a major portion of our country's general aviation fleet of airplanes are used in whole or in part as training aircraft for individuals enrolled in the Veterans Flight Training Program. The sudden decrease in utilization of these assets will not only cause immediate financial hardships for the individuals who maintain them but the entire service support network will suffer as well. Jobs in aircraft repair which are largely held by veterans who were military crew chiefs and aviation maintenance men will most assuredly be jeopardized by the elimination of the Flight Training Program.

It should be quite apparent by now that the elimination of the Veterans Flight Program or any reduction in its scope from the original 90% reimbursement plan targets one and only one group of individuals to bear the brunt of the adversity which will be caused and that is the Vietnam era veteran. The veteran who wants an education in aviation will be unable to choose that exciting field as his vocation, the veteran who survived his tour as a crew chief in Vietnam to return home and make use of the skill he learned in the service stands to lose his job, the country is deprived of essential services and defense related resources, the Veterans Administration budget is unchanged with no savings generated for the taxpayer and all because a group of government officials are trying to make token efforts to curtail their budgets by targeting the groups least likely to complain. I urge each and every veteran to stand up for your rights. Contact your Congressman today, by mail or telegram and urge him to help restore the Veterans Flight Training Program. It was a program that existed when you joined the service, it was a program which many veterans need and are entitled to, and it is about time the other special interest groups and large corporations which have become fat during inflation bear the burden of budget cutbacks. I personally favor drastic reductions in government size and control however these reductions must occur unilaterally throughout all areas of government spending and should never target the men who have served this country and pledged their lives in defense of her freedom. Again, please contact your Congressman TODAY by any means possible and stand up for what is your right!

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What is the Matter With the Vietnam Veteran?

Peter Tiffany, Western Regional Director, Veterans Leadership Conference

Part of the problem is the self fulfilling prophecy, it is alive and well. In the case of the Vietnam veteran, you repeatedly print stories in the media or produce a television story which portray them as crazed, drug prone, long haired killers of women and children. At least some of the targeted group will have internalized the misinformation and have become, at least in their own minds, that which they were portrayed. Just look around any city and you'll find individuals and small groups of Vietnam veterans drinking or doing drugs or being busted by the local constabulary for a variety of crimes. Once this has happened, we, the part of society which sits in judgement on fellow citizens, can sit back in self righteousness judgement and say "see what did I tell you."

The Vietnam veteran was assured that when he or she returned that a grateful society would provide for jobs and medical care for those injured while about the country's business. It has happened that during this time our society began to question the need of fighting in Vietnam and of sending our young men and women into the meatgrinder of combat. The country polarized, two factions emerged. There were the anti-war groups and the hard hats, American right or wrong and love it or leave it. In the process, those in Vietnam were caught right in the middle of the struggle back home. As we brought our people back home in ones and twos they had to face the war which was continuing here at home. This situation placed the returning veteran in a very peculiar spot. If he or she attempted to take advantage of the Preference of honorable military service, then the opportunity was great for the prospective employer to discriminate, particularly if that particular employer had been anti-war. Our veterans soon learned to conceal the fact they had served in Vietnam. To this day, many Vietnam veterans who have made successful transitions into society refuse to admit that they had anything to do with the war. They also don't get involved with those individuals and groups attempting to assist their peers who haven't been at all successful in reentering society.

Over 300,000 veterans returned from Vietnam who otherwise might not have because of the high level of technology available to remove them from the middle of firefights and evacuate them to our hospitals for immediate lifesaving treatment. Hand in hand with the technology available went the plain old guts and dedication to duty of the combat medic, those who under fire administered to the injured. In the hospitals trained medical staff including many nurses and doctors worked shift after shift to repair damage done by bullets, shrapnel, mines, booby traps and other devices aimed at killing or maiming soldiers. Where are these critically injured men and women whose lives were saved on a battlefield or in a hospital in Vietnam. For the most part, those with multiple loss of limb shy away from public places, those women and men who sacrificed much are not willingly accepted by the very people who sent them to war.

The average age of the Vietnam veteran was 19.5 years as opposed to WWII when the average age was 26.6 years of age. That many of those who went to war were physically adult but I suspect emotionally immature is another factor of the problem. We threw them into a jungle war where even children and women acted for the enemy and in the course of such activities were killed by our boy soldiers. The fact that our society doesn't allow our women and children to participate in such things as fighting shouldn't have affected those who had to kill them in self defense, according to some. It probably would have been better for our soldiers to have let themselves be killed by those

women and children than to come home and be accused of being killers of women and children. It would have been better for our national self image. The boy-men and girl-women sent to Vietnam were torn from their familial support systems - the one where mom and dad took care of everything for them. They had to learn very quickly about survival, they did too.

Wake up, America, before you commit any more of your youth to a war or police action to save a small country somewhere. There is a great deal of unfinished business we have with the Vietnam veteran. We have to deal with the war and its aftereffects. We have to deal with those we sent and who have come home changed. We have to try and understand and once we accomplish that we can truly begin to heal the wounds which still fester beneath the surface. ♣



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A Letter Home

From page 20

the old man to get away from the hut and since we had to move quickly on a sweep, just threw a hand grenade into the shelter. (There is a four second delay on a hand grenade). After he threw it, and was running for cover (during the four second delay) we all heard a baby crying from inside the shelter!...

There was nothing we could do...

After the explosion we found the mother, two children (ages about 6 and 12, boy and girl) and an almost newborn baby. That is what the old man was trying to tell us! It was horrible!!

The children's fragile bodies were torn apart, literally mutilated. We looked at each other and burned the hut.

The old man was just whimpering in disbelief outside the burning hut. We walked away and left him there. We kept on walking, then the three of us separated. There was a hut in the distance and my squad leader told me to go over and destroy it. An oldish man came out of the hut. I checked and made sure that no one was in it, then got out my matches. The old man came up to me and bowed with his hands in a praying motion, over and over.

He looked so sad! He didn't say anything, just kept howling, begging me not to burn his home.

We were both there alone, and he was about your age dad. With a heavy heart, I hesitantly put the match to the straw and walked away.

Dad, it was so hard for me to turn and look him in the eye, but I did. I wish I could have cried, but I just can't anymore. I threw down my rifle and ran in to the now burning hut and took out everything I could save - food, clothes, etc.

Afterward, he took my hand, still saying nothing, and bowed down touching the back of my hand to his forehead...

Excuse the writing, but I am a little emotional right now, even a little shook.

YOUR SON....



Joan Maiman Red Cross, Vietnam, Joe Amboose age 85 WW1 Vet, European theatre Daly Plaza, Chicago ILL.

Veterans Memorial Dedicated in Chicago

On 15 May 1981, Jane M. Byrne, Mayor of the City of Chicago, joined dignitaries, area veterans, and citizens at Daley Plaza in dedicating a memorial to the combat veterans of the Vietnam and Korean eras.

Speakers at the events included Major General Micheal Healy, USA (Ret), former commander of the Green Berets. In addressing the crowd of about 1000 persons, Healy told the vets "You were there, you paid your way, and by God, you deserve every inch of credit." Among prayers offered by the representatives of the Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant faiths the words of the prophet Isaiah were recalled: "Nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." The hope was expressed that the Vietnam veterans would be the last martyrs of war and the harbingers of peace.

In a statement issued for the occasion Mayor Byrne stated: "The Korean Vietnam memorial symbolizes the city's and the nation's gratitude and admiration for the men and women who served in the country's armed forces during the conflict on far removed battlefields in support of democratic ideals...It is imperative that the sacrifices of these loyal Americans should never be minimized or forgotten."

Senator Alan Dixon (D-III) told the group that he has spoken out in the Senate regarding the need to preserve the benefits of veterans.

Senator Charles Percy (R-III) sent a statement which expressed the hope "that this plaque...will spark renewed interest in our Vietnam era veterans and an outpouring of support and understanding." The Fort Sheridan Army band and a choral group from a local high school provided the music for the ceremony.

Following the speeches, the Mayor, General Healy and Alderman Louis Farina, chairman of the event, and a WW II Combat veteran, crossed the plaza to unveil the plaque.

They were followed by Joe Ambrose a WW I vet and Joan Maiman, who served with the Red Cross in Vietnam. Maiman and Ambrose presented a wreath in memory of those who died in these conflicts and the MIAs of Vietnam. A rifle salute was rendered and taps were played at the conclusion of the ceremony.

Cheryl Koehler of the VLC assisted Alderman Farina in distributing tee shirts the city provided for the event. The shirts were for Vietnam vets and read "American Heroes, Vietnam Vets." Willie Collins, a Vietnam vet attending the ceremonies stated: "The idea of the memorial is nice, but we need jobs and programs. We hope the city follows through."

Viet-vet's Image An Injustice To Those Who Died

by Rick Morton
Guest Columnist

The Charlotte News and Observer

This is my sixth and last article on the topic of Vietnam veterans. I think the guest columnist section of the News is an excellent chance to express ideas. This section is proof that The News does care about the opinions of its readers.

The public image of the Viet-vet must change because it is an injustice to the 58,000 young Americans who died in the war. Our future military strength depends, in part, on our ability to shed the false sense of shame that we have been told to feel about Vietnam. Actually we have nothing to be ashamed of except maybe poor judgement.

The public image of the Viet-vet as a drug addict was drastically overblown by the media. The contact with the troops by the news reporters usually took place in rear areas, in the rest and relaxation centers where the troops were allowed to go several times during their year-long tour of duty in Vietnam.

The opinion of the brass seemed to be to let the men do as they wished because they had earned a break. Drugs could easily be obtained around these areas but in the field it was a different story. The news reporters usually never came to the field where the fighting was going on; they were satisfied to stay in the rear areas where it was safe. The reporters incorrectly assumed that drugs were used in the field as they were in the rear areas.

A member of a combat unit who was high on drugs could easily get others killed in a combat situation, therefore the other members of the unit would not let it happen. If necessary we would inform on him to get him out of the field. The image of the doped-up soldier killing everything in sight in the movie "Apocalypse Now" was a self-indulging fantasy created in the mind of Francis Ford Coppola — this movie is not the definitive statement on the Vietnam war.

The differences between Viet-vets and their counterparts of previous U.S. wars are many. The fact that Viet-vets fought a war without public support was a first for America. Most Americans were against the war, which was their privilege, but in the process of opposing the war, the warriors were opposed.

On Dec. 24, 1969 I was a patient on a hospital ship when Bob Hope's group came aboard to do a show. Bob Hope made a false statement, but with the best of intentions he said: "You guys have the support of all the people back home. They are behind you 100 percent." The only message that came across was that one person cared very much.

There was a drastic age difference between Viet-vets and veterans of previous wars: We were much younger. In W.W. II most GI's were in the military for the duration of the war, but in Vietnam most GI's served a one-year tour of duty. So in Vietnam there were no seasoned combat veterans to help in the adjustment process of the new troops.

I agree with the "noble cause" label given by Ronald Reagan to our participation in the Vietnam war. America's mistake in Vietnam was not entering the war but in failing to win it. Reagan said, A U.S. victory in Vietnam could very well have prevented the Cambodian holocaust, which was nothing short of genocide.

According to a report from a Vietnamese who recently left Vietnam, there are over 800,000 political prisoners in Vietnam today. Doan Van Toai also states that the people are less free today than they were under President Thieu. There must be some reason why the Vietnamese people will risk everything by leaving in small boats for the open sea just to get out of Vietnam.

We did not win in Vietnam because the public did not support us. Now the public does not support veterans benefits because we did not win in Vietnam. A statement made by Phil Donahue on his TV show best puts the Vietnam War in its correct perspective. He said, "The whole country could use a shrink on this war." ♣

Agent Orange: Science Update

VA Administrator Cleland, in sworn testimony before Congress in February, 1980 stated: "There have been no studies demonstrating that humans contracted cancer from the components of Agent Orange." He gave this testimony although he later admitted that the VA had copies of five recent European studies (four from Sweden and one from West Germany) which found "higher than normal incidence of cancer" among workers studied.

One of the Swedish studies concluded that "there was an increased risk" of cancer, especially stomach cancer, among people exposed to Phenoxyacetic acid, a major component of Agent Orange. Another of the studies found that exposure to the herbicide "constitutes a risk factor for the incidence of malignant lymphoma" (cancer of the lymph system).

In its August 1, 1980 report to President Carter, the Inter-agency Work Group on Phenoxy Herbicides and Contaminants summarized its review of these five studies: "In spite of the reservations that are generally associated with these case control epidemiology studies, (they) show a correlation between exposure of phenoxy acid herbicides and an increased risk of some forms of cancer."

Finally, Dr. Ton That Tung, a highly respected Vietnamese scientist, has recently completed a study of 836 Vietnamese soldiers who were exposed to Agent Orange while fighting in southern Vietnam. Tung compared them with 236 soldiers who'd never served in the South and found that 3.6% of all children fathered by the exposed veterans suffered congenital birth defects, compared with none in the non-exposed group. He found that the exposed group had a miscarriage/premature birth rate of 15.3% compared with 10.4% among those not exposed. Finally, he found that 3.3% of the exposed vets were sterile, contrasted with 1.9% among those not exposed. The complete study will be published this Fall in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Despite this mounting evidence, the VA continues to act as if a strong scientific case against Agent Orange has yet to be made. The only study which they've bothered to publicize is a recent one which suggests exposed male mice don't father increased number of birth-defected offspring. Either by accident or design, the study's conclusions were badly distorted when it was publicly released. The wire-service story exaggerated the study population by 100% and failed to mention that all exposed mice suffered enlarged livers. VA chief Cleland has been suggesting that the study "proves" that Agent Orange doesn't cause birth defects, even though most scientists wouldn't accept health data based on animal studies as necessarily applying to humans.

The VA recently published its first informational

pamphlet entitled, "Worried About Agent Orange." It can only be described as too little, too late. While it contains some information about the issue, we cannot determine how broadly it is being distributed. It doesn't seem that the VA has budged from its position of not attempting to locate and identify ailing veterans. Perhaps the most glaring defect of the brochure is its omission of two salient points. First, it ignores the fact that the Agent Orange issue among American veterans is only another chapter in a decade-long health controversy over the safety of dioxin-contaminated 2,4,5-T. Secondly, it fails to mention that last year the EPA placed a total ban on any domestic use of 2,4,5-T where humans might become exposed.

At press time, the VA has still not acted on a Congressional mandate issued almost a year ago to begin a full-scale epidemiological study of Vietnam veterans. In fact, the protocol (study plan) for this study has not even been approved.

The only other "official" study of health effects from Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam — the Air Force's proposed study of the "Ranch hand" spray handlers — has also been mired in controversy.

Recently, the National Academy of Sciences reviewed the Air Force's protocol for the Ranch Hand study, and found it deficient. NAS criticized the scope and design of the Air Force's study; and asked whether the public would perceive the study's findings to be credible, since the Air Force is in effect, studying itself. Nevertheless, the Scientific Panel of the Inter-Agency Work Group, after reviewing the Air Force protocol, overruled the prestigious academy and gave the Air Force the green light to conduct the study.

The results will not be in for 20 years however. The White House panel didn't bother to explain if ailing Air Force vets would have to wait an additional two decades before they receive care and compensation for herbicide exposure. At this rate, Vietnam veterans will be drawing Social Security before any study "results" are published. ♣

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Point of View**Where Have all the Soldiers Gone?****The Stars & Stripes, May 14, 1981**

Do we really need to know where all the soldiers of Vietnam have gone? Yes! The reasons are many, but we will deal with a couple of them.

First, many are unaccounted for. They include POWs, MIAs and KIAs non-combat deaths and those who managed to return, but have withdrawn from society or refuse to admit that they served.

We need a strict and accurate accounting of everyone who was sent and what happened to them.

Since the termination of the war in Vietnam, various government bureaus have reported that between 9 and 10.5 million served during the Vietnam era (1964-1975). There is further difficulty in determining how many men and women actually served in the Vietnam theatre. The media, the government and others variously report from 2.2 million all the way through 4.5 to 5 million as having served in Vietnam itself.

A couple of years ago, the Veterans Administration commissioned the Louis Harris organization to poll Vietnam and Vietnam era veterans to discover their feelings and perceptions of the V.A. among other topics. Once concluded, the report was full of mundane information which basically substantiated the VA's own projected image.

A little noted fact which has important ramifications, is that after the study was published, an addendum was added. In the midst of all the information provided was a short sentence which basically stated the following: It is felt that the VA, which provided the figures concerning the members of Vietnam veterans used for this study, "*Underestimated by Approximately 42%.*"

What does this mean? For one thing, if we use a median figure of 2.5 million and add 42%, our figure becomes 4 million. If true, the loss of misplacement of 1.5 million Vietnam veterans is disgraceful.

Also where has the Department of Defense been? Why haven't we heard from this well financed and supposedly super official agency?

There were also thousands of women and men in Vietnam who were sent by groups such as the Red Cross, the USO and religious organizations.

It is certainly apparent that the country wishes to "put that war behind us," but before we close that chapter of our history, let's account for, and recognize, those who served.

Vietnam veterans have been abandoned, misused and politicized for many reasons, not the least of which is to act as an involuntary scapegoat for the collective conscience of America. That must stop. Americans must deal with the war and with its veterans. We must know how many there were, who they were and how the after-effects of the war, such as post traumatic stress syndrome, agent orange poisoning, and under-employment are affecting our newest veterans.

America, let's find all of those who served in Vietnam. Let us begin, at last, to treat the still-unhealed wounds brought about because our involvement in Vietnam and our lack of involvement with those we sent to that terrible war. Reach out, touch that Vietnam veteran. Ask your honest questions and let us help each other.

If we can do this, Americans will be able to be proud and know that we can come through difficult experiences and be better off nationally for those experiences. We will once again, truly be the United States of America. ♣

Compensation for civilians in Vietnam

Over 2.4 million United States troops served in Vietnam during 1962 and 1971. At this time the chemical mixture "Agent Orange" was used extensively as a weed killer. To the extent that American forces now face health problems from their exposure to Agent Orange, they are parties to a class action lawsuit now pending against the chemical companies who made Agent Orange.

A number of civilians also served in Vietnam. They are not parties to the class action lawsuit. These civilians included Red Cross nurses, civilian missionaries, USO personnel, and government contractors. No exact figures are available, but as many as 5,000 individuals may be involved. Unfortunately, many of these civilians may also now face health problems due to their exposure to toxic chemicals.

The purpose of this article is to explore what compensation programs may be available to a civilian who believes he is suffering from exposure to Agent Orange while in Vietnam.

At common law, no person could file a claim for compensation against the government because of the doctrine of sovereign immunity. Under this doctrine, the government was immune from a lawsuit unless it had consented by some special legislation.

This harsh common law rule was changed by the passage of the Federal Tort Claims Act. Any person may now file a claim against the Federal government under the FTCA. However, this special legislation does not apply to claims arising in a foreign country, or to claims arising from the combat activities of military forces. This means the civilians who served in Vietnam could not successfully proceed under the FTCA.

Another compensation statute is the Civilian Employees Claims Act. This special legislation allows the settlement of certain claims of military and civilian personnel for damages to or loss of personal property incident to service. But again, this special statute would not help our civilians. A proper claimant must be a member of the uniformed services, or actually employed by a military department. Second, the statute authorizes payment only for property losses and not for personal injuries or disability.

The Military Claims Act authorizes the Secretary of the Departments of Army, Navy or Air Force to establish regulations under which they may pay a claim of not more than \$25,000 for property damage, personal injury or death caused either by a civilian officer or employee of that department or by a military member acting within the scope of his employment, or otherwise incident to noncombat activities of that department. Claims in excess of \$25,000 may be approved pursuant to special procedures.

The law regarding proper claimants, grounds for liability and elements of proof is very sparse. It appears that if a claim arises from combat activities, the claimant must establish negligence, a drawback for our civilians. Another problem is that the claim must be presented in writing within 2 years after it "accrues." However, the time within which a claim for compensation must be filed is a problem under all compensation statutes.

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act is available to employees of the United States. By this special legislation, employees of the Federal government are given the right to seek compensation for disability or death resulting from personal injuries sustained while

in the performance of duty, as well as medical treatment. No showing of fault is necessary.

A key question is whether our civilians are "employees". One definition under the FECA is "an individual rendering personal service to the United States similar to the service of a civil officer or employee of the United States, without pay or for nominal pay, when a statute authorizes the acceptance or use of the service, or authorizes payment of travel or other expenses of the individual."

Under this definition, a volunteer who donated refreshments which she served to patients as part of recreational activities at a Veterans Administration Hospital was held to be an employee. This means that many of our civilians would seem to fall within the coverage of the FECA, including nurses, missionaries and USO personnel.

A claim under the FECA must be filed within 3 years of the disability or death. However, there is a special rule for "latent disabilities", under which the time for filing a claim does not begin to run until the employee should be aware of the causal relationship between his disability and his employment. The Secretary of Labor may also excuse the timely filing of a claim because of "exceptional circumstances."

After a claim is filed under the FECA, the claimant may be successful in obtaining a government-paid medical examination under a provision of the law.

The Defense Base Act covers employees of contractors working on military installations outside the United States. This special legislation extends the provisions of the Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act (another special statute applying to certain workers in the United States) to injuries or death of persons employed at military, air, or naval bases outside the United States. The liability is against the employer.

An "employer" has been defined to include someone "providing welfare or similar services for the benefit of the Armed Forces" and hence, the American Red Cross, USO and the Salvation Army. The employer must furnish the injured worker with all medical, surgical and hospital treatment that may be necessary.

A claim must be filed within one year. However, the time for filing does not begin to run until the employee or beneficiary is aware or should be aware of the relationship between the injury or death and the employment.

The final compensation statute is the War Risk Hazard Compensation Act. It is designed to provide compensation for injuries, death or detention of certain categories of people from a defined, war-related hazard. The definition of "war-related hazard" includes "the use of any...noxious thing...in combating an attack or an imagined attack by a hostile force or person", and this might be interpreted to include the use of Agent Orange.

The statute applies to all employees under the Defense Base Act if such person is not entitled to compensation under that act. This includes workers of employers providing "welfare or similar services" for the benefit of the armed forces, as outlined above. Workers included under the FECA are excluded under this statute unless they meet certain other requirements.

The time limit for filing a claim is identical to the provisions under the FECA, and may be waived by the Secretary of Labor "because of circumstances beyond the control of the injured worker."

In summary, a civilian who served in Vietnam and now is experiencing health problems believed to be caused by exposure to Agent Orange may have a compensation remedy available. There are obvious legal difficulties, but it costs nothing to file a claim and a lawyer is not needed to do so. ♣

**Have a Happy and
Safe
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Hire the Veteran!

Just What is the Veterans Leadership Conference?

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

It is a commonly accepted fact that Vietnam veterans tend not to receive from the government the full benefits to which they are entitled. Also, many of the existing programs make no distinction between those who served in Vietnam as military and those who served there in support of the United States military action. As a result, the civilians who served in Vietnam have been overlooked in many instances.

The most common problems faced by those who were in Vietnam are post-traumatic stress disorder, unemployment, the effects of exposure to toxic chemicals, including Agent Orange, and the attitude of the public in general.

The purpose of the Leadership Conference is to link a very large, fragmented, dispersed, and often alienated group of persons so that they may have an input into the development of needed programs and may easily access such programs. Such action addresses both the immediate and long term needs of the group.

To date, the Leadership Conference has united over 20 groups nationwide with the base in Chicago, and has had direct input into the positions of both of the major parties during the last presidential election, engaged in voter registration and education, promoted better harmony and understanding between the so-called traditional and non-traditional groups by activities such as the recognition day in Grant Park in 1979 and attempted to create a more positive public attitude through numerous radio, television and print articles.

Through networking and information sharing, including a large group of veterans in Australia who served in Vietnam as members of the SEATO force, we seek input on program development geared to the needs of the veterans, and strive to achieve a degree of political awareness and involvement. Our goal is to bring the unutilized resource of the Vietnam veteran into the mainstream of American society so that both the veterans and the society which they served so well may profit.

If you are interested in supporting us in this work or for further information please contact:

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Vet Translates an Ugly War Into Beautiful Music

by Dana Doo
from the UCLA Daily Bruin

Lem Genovese, a Vietnam veteran who writes and sings about the experiences of veterans who have come home, told the **Bruin** he wants to convey a positive image of the veteran through his music.

"My songs are non-sexist, non-accusatory," Genovese said. "I refuse to write depressing songs.

I write songs for the 80's. I want to see this nation heal itself," he added.

In Vietnam, Genovese served as an aviation clerk checking casualty and death reports and correcting letters of sympathy as well as other paperwork. "It was really depressing," Genovese said.

While in Vietnam, he began reading literature written by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Genovese added he bordered "on being what the (military) would call subversive, but they thought I was crazy anyway."

It was his music that kept him sane in Vietnam. In his barracks, he explained, there are two groups — "heavy alcoholics or dopers." He stayed away from both because "somebody had to stay straight if something happened," he said.

Because Genovese's music dealt very much with the problems of returning Vietnam veterans, Genovese claims that he was labeled by some as "a fanatic". But while he acknowledges that there may not be a commercial market for his type of music at present, he thinks that may be because he is ahead of his time, he said.

Recently though, it has been easier for him to get his message across because of the release of several films dealing with Vietnam, particularly **Coming Home**, he said. It has a story similar to his own experience when he returned from Vietnam and which he wrote about in the song "Pathfinder Blue," Genovese added.

In his songs, Genovese tries to convey more than the ugliness of the Vietnam War. He feels that "guilt" about the war has been overplayed by those who really don't know what it was like in Vietnam.

Genovese tries to give an impression of what it was like during the war, using "anecdotal" imagery with "just enough vernacular of Vietnam War terms to provide the setting. In his song, "Firefight's Passage" for example, there is only one line that alludes to Vietnam because the song is basically a love song, he said. "The first sensual one I've written."

Genovese is now working on organizing a Vietnam Veterans Artists and Writers Guild so that veterans can do anything artistically they want to, he explained. "Veterans are the one invisible minority that need to believe in this country again."

He does not really think of himself as a spokesman for the Veterans' cause, Genovese said, adding that he realizes that an image "gets forced on you" when a person is in the spotlight. Primarily, though, he considers himself just an artist who deals with his feelings and thoughts on history, past and future.

Despite his feelings about the Vietnam War, Genovese said he does not feel that the war was totally worthless. It showed them both sides of the American dream and made people realize "we as a country can't go around saving people all the time."

The singer said that it was a "real honor" for him to have a chance to play here because "UCLA is where it's at on a national level." He also said that audiences are much more sophisticated now and "you can't lead them around by the hand" like one could in the sixties. However he is impressed by the way students at the university have received his music, he added. ♣

As the Vietnam Veteran Tunesmythe, Lem Genovese has a unique approach to his craft of songwriting. Since there are virtually no recording or performing artists consistently concerned with the experience, relationships and problems of the Vietnam Veteran, Lem has taken it upon himself to present the Veteran in an uplifting, positive and assertive style. When asked about his music being thought of as 'Protest' in nature, he invariably replies with a grin:

"Where does it say that my music has to be negative, ugly or protest any thing? I refuse to write depressing, angry or sexist material."

His sense of historical perspective is also rather unusual, in that the American Civil War and Indian Wars are directly correlated to the Indochinese Experience regarding the aftermath of Vietnam and its impact on the Veteran and Society. He asks those timeless questions that the Veteran and those involved in the Veteran's life have faced for centuries with an unmatched sense of urgency and compassion.

He has performed for seemingly countless events on behalf of the Vietnam Veteran, such as the recent Vietnam Art Experience in St. Pauls, Minnesota in 1980 and the first national Soldier of Fortune magazine Convention in Columbia, Missouri in 1980, where he was interviewed by Playboy and Rolling Stone magazines for his advocacy of the then upcoming Art Experience and the Vietnam Era Veterans Writers and Artists Guild. He has shown through such appearances as the 1978 Dallas, Texas 'Welcome Home Ceremonies' as well as many national Vietnam Veterans conventions to be a respected authority at those events. He has appeared in newspapers nationwide ranging from the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Sun-Times, the Dallas Morning News, the Philadelphia Times-Inquirer and collegiate newspapers like the UCLA Daily Bruin.

Lem Genovese received a Citation from President Carter for Vietnam Veterans Week in 1979 and was awarded the National Association of Jay Cee's "Outstanding Young Man of America" in 1980.

If his music is anything, it is versatile and eclectic. In one set he can play on that trademark brown guitar, anything from Reggae to Rock, from Bluegrass to Blues, from Neo-Classical to Jazz, and always with a pleasingly warm and genuine stage presence.

Lem Genovese has been recognized as one of the Vietnam Veterans best friends and respected authorities. Ron Kovic, author of Born On The Fourth of July, wanted three of Lem's songs included in the soundtrack of the film adaptation produced and starring Al Pacino. Ron likes to call Lem: "A true voice of the Vietnam Veteran." C.D.B. Bryan wanted to see the instrumental composition "Theme From Vinh Long" included in the ABC Television adaptation of his work Friendly Fire. He is currently negotiating with Hugh McClure for still another soundtrack.

As founder of the Vietnam Era Veterans Artists and Writers Guild, he had the role of Media Liaison for the Art Experience in St. Paul, Minnesota in November of 1980. The Vietnam Art Experience garnered the attention of the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite and a follow-up article by Charles Kuralt the next morning. The interest and support given the Art Experience shows that the Guild is an organization whose time has come.

In a deeper sense, the Vietnam Veteran Tunesmythe keeps alive the higher aspirations of his generation forged in the fires of Indochina and performs a sorely needed reconciliation to all that the War has touched.

As a participant in the Southeast Asia War Games there is no room left in his life for second place. ♣

Chloracne Task Force Established

(Washington, D.C.) Chloracne is a skin disease that is often referred to as the hallmark of dioxin exposure. Industrial workers exposed to dioxin have experienced re-occurring skin problems. Unfortunately, chloracne is not always easy to distinguish from other more common forms of acne. To overcome this problem, a Chloracne Task Force has been established, headed by Dr. Kenneth Halprin, a physician at Miami VA Medical Center.

A group of four distinguished dermatologists are currently designing a protocol for chloracne examinations. They are in the process of developing educational materials on this subject for the VA's environmental physicians.

The task force has another job: reviewing previously denied claims for skin conditions to check for possible misdiagnosis.

Incarcerated Cook County Vets to be Advised of Agent Orange Litigation

In a meeting with members of the Veterans Leadership Conference in Chicago, Charles Fasano, Director of Human Services at the Cook County Jail in Chicago, was briefed on the current class action litigation regarding Agent Orange.

Gregory Stayart of the Law firm of Sullivan and Associates, Midwest Regional Counsel for the class action litigation, advised Fasano that Judge Prutt of the Federal District Court in Westbury, New York, will approve the notice to all class members in the next 60 to 90 days. The method of distribution of the notice has not been determined, but it is anticipated that it will be carried by radio and television stations and newspapers as a public service. Fasano agreed to distribute the notice to inmates at the facility by using a computer readout which identifies who is a veteran.

The facility has a population of about 4000 of whom about 50% are Vietnam veterans. The length of stay is anywhere from days to two years. Until two ago the facility had no program for veterans. The first program implemented was through the Department of Human Services, City of Chicago. However, the current program is under the Veterans Outreach program of the Veterans Administration. A counselor is on site at the facility five days a week and serves the needs of all the vets. Fasano was also advised of the physical screening program of the VA, and the possibility of such screening being offered at the prison will be explored.

The meeting grew out of the expressed concerns of Community and civic leaders of the Chicago area that the incarcerated vets, especially the minority vets, might not be aware of the Agent Orange problem and pending legislation.

Fasano is looking at expanding the service programs to vets in the facility but this is contingent on the funding levels for next year. Joan Maiman of the Veterans Leadership Conference stated that it is essential that all potential members of the class action litigation be advised of the suit and advised of other resources available to them. We are hopeful that we will be able to meet with correction officials on a statewide basis to advise them of this matter, also.



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VETERANS, From B1
looking for a flying job." "Use my name," shoots back Perot. "I probably know 'em." A little laugh. "I hope I don't cost you the job."

There were lots of laughs. The former POWs and pilots are into "right stuff" talk these days. Jokes, macho, friendly congenial banter. "Hey, you ole sonof-a-bitch, how are you?" One pilot to three women talking together. "Now there aren't enough pretty ladies to go around. This is no time for a hen party."

They were crowned heroes in a war that had few heroes. "Our psychological problems just drifted away," said Allen Stafford, commander, U.S. Navy. "Hell, we were professionals. I fly my plane and do what the boss says to do." He speaks of the man who fought the war on the ground. "I don't relate to their problems but I'm in sympathy with the poor guy that was on the ground. But our life just gets better. I just about had a coronary I was so glad Reagan got in, El Salvador? I'm not up to speed on that. But I have absolute faith the president will do what is right. I'd go again and fight it all the way. If he wants to send me in a cockpit, I'd go."

At American University this Memorial Day weekend, Stafford's gung-ho view was lost on another group of veterans—the drafted and enlisted men, the grunts and ground-pounders who slogged through the jungles of Vietnam. There were no White House parties for them as they returned from that same war. But the ex-POWs got a liberal discount on their Washington hotel rooms and eight airlines offered free rides to the Washington reunion. The 200 other vets and their families across town at the Agent Orange conference stayed in friends' houses, cheap hotels. They came from California and Boston and Florida. The Wisconsin group had bake sales to pay for their trip. And they had to sell T-shirts and fatigues at \$5 and \$7 to help meet expenses. They were doing a brisk business in shirts with such slogans as "No Draft, No Way," and a T-shirt with the slogan "Dow Shall Not Kill" (for Dow Chemical Company, manufacturers of the chemical Agent Orange).

For they were here for a National

Vietnam Veterans Conference on Agent Orange. There were professors, scientists and lawyers in three-piece suits and veterans in faded fatigues as well as coats and ties. They tried in vain to get a representative of the government, of the Veterans Administration, to attend.

These are the men who were thankful they made it back whole but now feel they are victims of a sinister legacy—Agent Orange. The defoliant that rained on Vietnam for years contains dioxin, one of the world's most deadly chemicals. A single drop, if it could be divided equally among 1,000 people, would kill them all. It can topple a 150-foot hardwood tree in two days. The amount of Agent Orange sprayed in Vietnam totaled about \$6 million pounds. The veterans are asking for testing, treatment and compensation for what they feel are Agent Orange-caused illnesses—everything from cancer to birth defects in their children.

"This is the first war that reached into our maternity wards," said Tom Valley, a Boston state representative and Vietnam veteran who received the silver star for bravery. Eighteen months ago, his daughter was born with a serious birth defect. "The Vietnam experience does not belong to the past," Valley said. The warfare we saw in Vietnam is the warfare of the future. Vietnam was a laboratory, our own men were the guinea pigs. Our men got caught in a crossfire of bullets and chemicals."

Their cause is not popular with the government or chemical companies who could have to pay billions in medical benefits and lawsuits if the list of diseases was ever linked to Agent Orange.

And so Ronald DeBoer, a tall, slim, handsome ex-veteran and director of Agent Orange Victims of New York, was speaking mostly to the converted as the keynote speaker.

Life was fine for DeBoer. He returned from Vietnam, went to college, started his own business. Then he got cancer. "My wife read about Agent Orange—a herbicide that causes cancer in laboratory animals. I began to read and I still couldn't believe that my government would send me into an area that would be contaminated with what turns out to be the most toxic substance known to man." Laboriously, DeBoer began

Two Faces of War

trying to find out "what happened to the other men in A Troop, Seventh Squadron, 17th Air Cav." He called Kevin, a New York City cop whose first child was born dead and his second deformed. He got him in touch with another from his troop who told DeBoer: "My first child was born with a deformed leg and my second child was born mentally retarded." Like many of the other veterans and wives with deformed children, the man had no history of genetic problems. Next was Alan, a California mailman. He had developed hypertension, severe headaches, skin problems and "never felt well a day since I returned." DeBoer contends that "five out of six of the troop that I contacted had hard-core Agent Orange problems." He is loaded with statistics: "A new study found 43 percent higher incidence of soft tissue carcinoma among people who have been exposed to dioxin, and was greeted with sustained applause when he shouted, 'We don't have to hear about rabbits and mice and monkeys. We have the people—2.48 million who served their country. They should be compensated in a controlled study with 2.4 million men who did not go to Vietnam but were in the Army.'"

DeBoer finished with, "This Memorial Day, thousands of Vietnam vets aren't going to home-town parades because they're in cancer wards, thousands of Vietnam veterans wives are going to be at cemeteries pulling flowers on the graves of those who survived the war. This is our Memorial Day. But who in the VA stands up and speaks for us? As the people in Washington and the war contractors sit around the pool and go to parties and dip their manicured fingers in the cash, you can be sure they are not thinking of us."

At the Shoreham, H. Ross Perot finally ducks out of the endless stream of praise from the former POWs. Perot was hiring Vietnam veterans for his Electronic Data Systems Corp. last

when "you were thought a militaristic lunatic to do that. We've hired 'em by the thousands and not had a psychological problem with a one. I feel sorry for the ones who have trouble but it's a gross distortion to say they're the average Vietnam vet." He is, however, interested in Agent Orange. "You know that fella that shot up the VA hospital in California? His wife sent me a letter. So I called her and asked if there was something I could do. She said, 'Nothing. He's dead.' She's got a very famous coroner doing a detailed autopsy to see if anything can be linked to Agent Orange."

The former POWs glisten with prosperity, look so healthy that it is hard to imagine that most spent seven years in prison. Seven of them line up and a wife snaps a picture as all grin. There are occasional, brief clouds. Asked about his children, one stops smiling. "I lost them when I was over there. They don't know me. But I'm remarried . . ." and the smile is back.

Ron Bliss, now a Texas lawyer, looks at another former POW and says, "He was my first roommate." He was not referring to a military academy. They were together for nearly a year in the prison dubbed The Hanoi Hilton. "He was tortured so badly he couldn't move his arms for months." As Bliss drifts off, Jack Fellows says, "He saved my life. When I couldn't move my arms he fed me, bathed me, clothed me."

Now, all these years later, Ross Perot has a thought on the way America treated veterans. "We've got ourselves in a strange box in this country. Making heroes out of hostages and prisoners and not the others. Think about it."

At the Agent Orange conference, no one was talking about wanting to be heroes. Many there were forged in the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) movement. They were there, among the several hundreds of war heroes who peddled ribbons and medals

at the Capitol terrace in 1971. They are leery of right-wing revisionism on Vietnam and feel the war was wrong.

Their concerns are personal. Margaret and Larry Driscoll wear their bright orange "Agent Orange Victims of New Jersey" T-shirts as their 4-year-old red-head, Erin, plays on the lawn outside the conference. Driscoll was a medic. He began getting severe headaches in Vietnam (one of the symptoms mentioned by alleged Agent Orange victims) and "they continue to this date. Nothing helps. All I can do is lie down and wait." He was in the computer field but took a laborer's job, unloading trucks, "just in case my headaches were caused by the mental stress of the job." In 1969, Margaret had a stillborn baby that was badly deformed. "A very rare defect. She was born with only half a brain. They couldn't give me any reason." Her husband's problems grew. Headaches, severe skin rash, "and now my joints kill me. I was on the swimming team before. Now I can't throw a ball 10 feet."

They held off on children and then, in 1977, Erin was born healthy. The next year, a baby was born with a cleft palate. "You look down at your newborn and you see this. She had only two chambers to her heart, a displaced spleen. She died three days later," says Margaret. Scientists refer to such personal information as "anecdotal data" that contain no hard-core facts. However, veterans and their families feel there are insidious and peculiar patterns to these stories. Margaret Driscoll was the third woman at the conference to mention that she had had amniocentesis; that no birth defects were detected and yet she gave birth to abnormal babies. "We went all through the genetics and the doctors still haven't given us an answer."

Today, they are still paying for the medical bills—"and the funeral bills."

The wives of former POWs are dressed in flowing chiffon and lace. They, like their husbands, are professionals. Little of those seven years of wondering, of raising children alone, shows on their faces today. "The children were all scarred," says Louise Mulligan, whose oldest of six was 15 and the youngest 3 when her husband was cap-

tured. "But most of us have found our children have come out very well." It was hard on teen-agers, whose peers were vociferously anti-draft. "I told my oldest, when he went off to college, not to mention where his father was. He was having enough trouble" without that.

Nearly sits a younger lady, Mary Jane McManus. She had been married four days when her husband left for Vietnam. He was captured June 14, 1967. She was in her early 20s. "I was in college in the nonvictimized period." She and other POW wives tried to appeal to all political persuasions. "No matter how you felt about the war, they were political prisoners." Her pretty face grows hard when she remembers those in the peace movement "who wanted to try our husbands as political prisoners." They survived because, said McManus, "they followed a chain of command within the POW system."

McManus now has five children—ages 7, 5, 4, 3, 2—"and one coming."

There is talk of Agent Orange. "I don't know what we can do about that," she says. "My brother has had it, has had the same and skin conditions for eight years." She is told of the women at the conference who feel that birth defects were caused by Agent Orange. "Oh really," she said, sympathetically. "I didn't know about that." There is a moment's sigh.

At the Agent Orange conference, a lawyer says, more sadly than disparagingly, "The POWs are an accident of history—a bunch of right-wing officers turned into heroes."

Meanwhile, in the Shoreham banquet room, where every military man turned in precision as the color guard filed past, there is a heady feeling that their time is now. Approving nods as Reagan's emissary, Lynn Novizer, assures that "no longer is the United States backing off in places like El Salvador."

And yet, even here, there is still an edge of ambivalence, a remembrance of bad times past.

McManus says softly, "Who would want to send a child or husband to any war?"

Staff writer Myra MacPherson is on leave and working on a book about the Vietnam generation.

On Wednesday, May 27th, Beefsteak Charlie's will donate a percentage of every check to the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. We hope you'll come join us in support of America's forgotten heroes.

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**"Thanks,
Charlie"**

Bobby Muller
Executive Director
Vietnam Veterans
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BEEFSTEAK CHARLIE'S

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Preservation Copy

Thursday, April 23, 1981,

Chicago Plans Vets Memorial

The Office of the Mayor, City of Chicago, has announced plans for the dedication of a memorial for Vietnam and Korean veterans on May 15, 1981.

The memorial will consist of a bronze plaque mounted on a three foot high marble base. It will be erected immediately adjacent to the eternal flame in the Daley Center Plaza.

"This memorial is a gesture of appreciation to the brave and loyal men and women who served in our Country's armed forces during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts," Mayor Byrne said. "Their sacrifice must not be forgotten or ignored."

Joan Maiman, Chairman of the Veterans Leadership Conference and a member of the committee to coordinate the activities for the May 15th ceremonies, spoke with Alderman Louis Farina, a World War II vet and Chairman of the Committee.

Farina told Maiman that he is behind this memorial as he feels that the veterans of the Korean and Vietnam conflicts have never received the recognition they deserved for their service.

Farina, a combat vet, is well aware of the situations men face in combat, and he agreed that the stress of combat deserves special recognition and honor. Farina also stated that he feels it is essential that the veterans of all eras work together as there is strength in numbers."

The 81st Airforce band will play and a Black High school chorus will sing prior to the dedication of the plaque. A parade is planned after the dedication ceremony in conjunction with Armed Forces Day.

Farina said that he believes Chicago is the first major city in America to honor the Vietnam and Korean veteran in this manner and that Mayor Byrne is hopeful that other cities will follow the example of Chicago.

Maiman remarked that she is hopeful as are many of the Chicago area vets that much needed action in terms of veterans programs will follow this ceremony. Only if recognition leads to action will it be of use to us. *

The Stars and Stripes

The National Tribune

VETERANS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

300 North State Street, Suite 3409
Chicago, Illinois 60610

Duty, Honor And Country

By Joan M. Maiman

The responsibility of any citizen of a Republic is to serve the nation when called upon to do so. It is perhaps simplistic, but bears repetition that if one is to enjoy the blessings of liberty, one must be willing to serve to secure and preserve these blessings. Indeed, historically, in any society, the rights of citizenship have been co-existent with the obligation of service.

In the United States many types of service have evolved. The military has been the most common, but other forms include missionary service, the Peace Corps, the Red Cross, the United Service Organization, and lay church service. To date, the military has been the only service which guaranteed

benefits upon completion of tour or incapacity.

Perhaps the time has now come for us to look closely at the system which has evolved out of this concept. The enormous cost of supporting the Veterans Administration has now come under fire from many groups. The inequity of one group of persons receiving benefits at cost to the taxpayers, while another group or groups who served, many times in the front lines of combat, are without any such benefits is pronounced.

A case in point is the issue of Agent Orange. Those who served in Vietnam at the invitation of the military, such as the Red Cross, the

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USO and the church groups, are without any testing and treatment programs, as it now exists.

The need for readjustment programs for some of those who served in the Vietnam conflict is well documented. However, the treatment centers which now exist are open to all who served in the Vietnam era, whether or not they were in the combat zone, while excluding the civilians who saw extensive combat.

The hostages and their families were given educational benefits, while again many others who served in combat in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam are without any such benefits. Certainly, we went into the combat zone knowing that we were doing so without any repayment in terms of benefits or services. The knowledge that we had served was and is payment enough.

However, it might be worth considering in light of the inequities which exist and the move toward a form of national service, that perhaps the criteria for benefits should be for those who served in combat and those who were injured in service of country in any location or capacity.

As it stands now, some forms of service are apparently more lucrative than others. Persons who never saw combat are rewarded more than those who served under fire.

If we are to recognize our citizens for fulfilling their obligation to serve, let us look at the many forms of service available, and make the system more equitable and just for all. It is an honor to serve and we should honor all those who served under fire. ★

The talking wounded

Horror festers in Viet Nam vets

By Steven Morris

AS THE LAST of the departing office workers trickled into battered elevators of the Federal Building on Clark Street south of Congress Parkway, about a dozen men arrived, one by one, in an office on the 4th floor.

Though their dress was casual, they nonetheless seemed vaguely to retain — in the directness of their speech, the economy of their movements — the efficiency of a military squad, ready, upon a long-remembered command, to snap instantly to rigid readiness.

In the wide aisle between vacated government-issue desks they pulled chairs into a rough circle. A few minutes later Curtis Colin, who works down the hall for the Veterans Administration, came in.

Colin, a pleasant faced black man with a slow smile, began staying after work every other Wednesday night early last year. Guys would come in to rap, to exchange information about jobs, or maybe just to sit and listen. Once in a while a guy would bring his wife, a way to let her know a few things that the guy by himself hadn't been able to make her understand.

COLIN KNEW THE GUYS needed the sessions, as did he. At least a decade after most had returned from the war, these survivors of Southeast Asia gathered to talk mainly about how they had made it through another two weeks in the U.S.

"I study at U. of I. Circle," said a swarthy, slender man in a blue sweatshirt who in Viet Nam drove trucks loaded with dangerous helicopter fuel. "I'm surrounded by children who have the nerve to look down on me. The media have stereotyped us, telling people that, 'those mothers are crazy, doped up.' You've got movies like 'Taxi Driver.'

"If you go for a job and put down that you're a Viet Nam vet, you're not getting any job. I want to go out and walk proud. I don't want to feel I have to hide what I've done."

A heavy-set man, with lively brown eyes, spoke sardonically about job discrimination, a common topic.

"A high school kid can get a job. I happen to have a good aptitude for computer programming, but nobody will hire me. Those people who ran to Canada and renounced their citizenship were all pardoned, and they've got jobs making decent money. Ten per cent of those guys maybe had a religious reason not to fight. The other 90 per cent were cowards, chicken."

FOR SOME OF THE guys, though, the problem is not merely job discrimination, but a seed planted in Viet Nam that seems to prevent them from holding a job once they get it.

"I'll work a couple of days," said a mustachioed man in a brown suede shirt. "Then I'll have a spell . . . and there I am."

Another, blond and Nordic, detailed in a quiet, gentle voice a kind of odyssey from horror.

"In Nam I smoked grass so that when my buddies got hurt I could stand it; I could just walk away. There were times over there when the incoming (enemy artillery fire) was falling and I wouldn't take cover because I just didn't care. I feel guilty coming back alive.

"The first two years after I got out, sometimes I would just sit there and shake and scream. I used to walk around like a bomb. Everywhere I went I was

afraid of talking. I used to beat up my wife, my kids. I gave them punishments like I had in boot camp. In boot camp the sergeants say, 'I'll tell you when you can go to the bathroom.' That's what I was doing to my kids. (Tears formed in his eyes, and his voice became heavier.)

"I SLEEP BETTER NOW because I'm off the stimulants that the VA doctors were giving me. But I still get tense. Saturday night I was going to a dance. I froze at the door. I'm afraid to sit in classes. I want to be something for my parents, but I'm afraid to achieve the things that I know I deserve.

"Ever since I've been back from Nam I've felt like an alien from another planet. And when I would get depressed, I would look at the pictures and the articles that my mom had saved from when I was over there. I would see a few people I knew, who got wasted. A couple of days ago I tore up all the pictures and the articles. I feel a lot better to have let it go."

"I talk to friends I had over there. They're like me. We try to care, but we don't know how. They took away our love and gave us hatred. I never felt love until 10 months ago with this woman. I want to hang onto this love."

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV), a private group, has known for a long time that some — though by no means all — Viet Nam combat veterans suffered severely from a clump of symptoms called the delayed stress syndrome, not as common to veterans of the nation's previous wars.

THROWN INTO GUERRILLA war in which some had seen their buddies killed by women and children, in which massacres such as at My Lai were numerous, in which the "fragging" of American officers by their subordinates symptomized growing distrust and alienation, and then wrenched home with disorienting swiftness to meet indifference or hostility from their neighbors, often unable to get jobs, thousands of vets remain today a psychologically wounded army.

Last year the DAV published a report suggesting that the suicide rate for Viet Nam combat veterans, which in 1975 was 23 per cent higher than that of the general population, had grown to 33 per cent higher by 1980. Of vets who were married before going to Viet Nam, 38 per cent were divorced within six months after returning home.

The DAV asked Colin, a VA benefits counselor, to hold the sessions because of his training in counseling and, as important, his experience in combat. A member of the Special Forces, a Green Beret, he was wounded three times and, not unusual for men in that unit, had signed up for additional combat tours. Instead of the standard 13 months, he had fought for three years. Like others in the session, he has worked with the Viet Nam Veterans Against the War and the Veterans Leadership Conference.

"OFTEN VETS WILL only talk to vets," Colin said. "They avoid people who haven't been in it. I know. It was difficult for me to even talk to anybody about my feelings from the war. I wanted to forget about it, block it out of my mind. But that defense is damaging. You become numbed. Your emotions start dying."

In the meetings, Colin said, "the guys can feel

Continued from first Tempo page

secure and know that they can express their feelings to other people who know what they're talking about. You're not just talking at someone. It's a dialog because the others have been through it, too. If you feel like crying here, nobody is going to look at you like you're crazy. There are times when we find ourselves crying together. When we see somebody else coming out of his shell, it helps the rest of us to do the same."

Often when a vet returned home, his family seemed surprised that he had changed, Colin said.

"Of course, we changed. I was 17 when I enlisted. In high school I had been the class clown, always in the middle of everything. I played football and baseball, and I was good. I was an artist, too. I devised a technique called blow-painting. I would draw the outline of the figure, then wet the paper and redraw it in ink and blow on the paper to spread the line. No one else had done that as far as I know. One of my pictures was entered in a citywide art contest.

"Now I don't paint anymore; a nerve problem in my arms and hands won't let me."

COLIN DOESN'T PLAY sports anymore, either. Physical problems, which he thinks are caused by exposure to Agent Orange, have stopped that and in addition have prevented him from attending the sessions recently and prompted him, at age 36, to apply for medical retirement.

Since 1971, five years after he returned, Colin has had problems with his digestive system. Last year his gallbladder was removed. In the last two years he has had pneumonia five times. He has ulcers that will not heal. Because of his breathing difficulties, doctors have advised him to move away from

Chicago to a better climate.

Colin also is familiar, firsthand, with some of the psychological aftereffects that can burden combat vets:

"Sometimes I would flash back to a time when about 12 of us were walking through the jungle. We were a mobile team, and our job was to harass the enemy's supply lines and territory. It was dusk; in the Special Forces we did a lot of our hunting at night. We had men out on the flanks, but were basically walking in a line."

SOME MEN CARRIED Russian-made AK-47 automatic rifles, Colin said. Americans often took AK-47s from fallen enemy because they considered it a more rugged and reliable weapon than the M-16 issued to U.S. soldiers. Capable of spewing either Russian or American bullets, the AK-47, like war itself, didn't seem to care whom it killed.

"That mission became a classic case of the hunter becoming the hunted," Colin said. "Our radio man was walking directly ahead of me. The VC's first shot hit him, and his head exploded backward into my face. I got shot in the stomach. I grabbed the radio and started shouting for the choppers to come in and cover. The whole key to a successful guerrilla force is to hit and run. Inflict as much damage as you can, and get the hell out. It was a quick fire fight. We never knew how many VC had attacked us. For years I would wake up at night shouting, 'Kilo 1, this is Kilo 2. We are being overrun.' It's not like a dream. It seems real."

During his first two years back home Colin felt as if his life were in constant danger.

"I STILL CAN'T sleep much of the time. Even now if I go anywhere, I will not just walk into the

room. I'll kind of stop, and if the door is closed, I will stand off to the side and push it open and wait a few seconds. In Nam they booby-trapped doors.

"I also will not sit near the front window of a restaurant. Once I was eating in a place in Saigon, fortunately in the back, when a VC threw a bomb through the door. Quite a few people were killed."

When Colin returned home from the war, some friends gave a party for him in a bar in Hyde Park.

"A woman in the bar asked what we were doing. Someone told her, and she came over and spat in my face and called me a baby killer. People back home have tried to make the vets feel as if the war was our fault. They had become ashamed of the war so they blamed us for going to fight it. That seemed logical to them, I guess.

"A lot of people are still trying to ignore us. If we hadn't had each other, I don't know what would have happened to most of us."

ANGERED AND GUILTY over what he came to view as the immorality of the war, Colin burned his green beret and threw away his three Purple Hearts and other medals. Later, though, he found another green beret in a store and bought it.

"I have talked to other vets, and I realize that we have no reason to be ashamed of having fought there. We were young men who were trained and sent to Viet Nam, a place we'd never heard of, to defend our country. It wasn't us who had committed a crime, it was our country, the people who sent us there.

"It may be that someone should be blamed for throwing young men onto the garbage heap of devastation. But I am not ashamed for being very good at what I was trained to do, for surviving, or for doing my duty to the best of my ability."

(Curtis Colin is a consultant to the Leadership Conference.)

By CARLA MARINUCCI
Times Staff Writer

MARTINEZ — The days, the years in the tanks and the jungles are gone. Packed away are the photos and memories of Vietnam.

They have tried, for a decade, to forget that war. But it has never gone away.

Out of the nightmares, the cold stares and put-downs that followed the coming home, came frustration and the terrible sense that no one listened or cared.

Finally, there was anger and it was then that some of the soldiers said they'd had enough.

In Contra Costa, it was one year ago today that four Vietnam vets declared a war of their own — one against their countrymen.

It was a war on the attitudes that were gradually adding the surviving Vietnam vets to an already-long list of casualties. And it has been fought by the Contra Costa County Chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) — one of two state chapters, and three nationwide — that many observers say has become the most politically active local group of Vietnam veterans in the nation.

"We're dealing with the White House, and the input of the Contra Costa vets is invaluable in terms of giving a local perspective," says Joan Malmen, head of the Chicago-based national Veterans Leadership Conference. "They have been very, very helpful."

The county's Vietnam vets group hasn't had it easy. One of the founders is dead — his family and friends say it relates to serious health problems from his exposure to Agent Orange.

There has been a series of angry battles with the Martinez VA Medical Center after many vets complained their problems with delayed stress and Agent Orange were being ignored.

And there are countless local vets who have had continuing difficulties with health, unemployment and personal traumas — some have threatened suicide as a way out.

But, despite its problems, VVA continues to grow and attack the issues important to its members.

Two of the local VVA's original founders each have taken different roads in tackling the problems of their fellow vets, but they agree the past year has been one of encouraging strides in the treatment and awareness of their concerns.

Pete Tiffany, group president, in the beginning often raised eyebrows with his outspoken, often fiery approach to veterans problems.

"Sure I was radical," he says now. "When this thing started, I was angry. But I've begun to look at broader issues, to raise those issues in a thoughtful manner and provide solutions to the problems. As a good citizen, that's something I've got to do."

Tiffany works at the grass-roots level — and as the Northern California director for the Veterans Leadership Conference — to bring problems to the forefront. He spends hours weekly on the phone and in his living room, listening to those who still can't find work, or stability, almost a decade after the war has ended. On that subject, he is just as angry and outspoken as ever.

Tiffany has led monthly veterans meetings, organized demonstrations, marches and letter-writing campaigns, and now wants to tackle the Reagan budget cuts — which he says are a "hatchet approach" to services "that has betrayed veterans" who supported Reagan in the last election.

Art McGowan, an ex-POW who was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, four Bronze Stars and four Purple Hearts, is the national legislative director for the Legion of Valor, an honor group for veterans.

His aim is to bring about change through political channels.

McGowan has taken the lead in working with legislators like George Miller, D-Martinez, as chairman of the Veterans' Advisory Committee, and on the state legislature's Agent Orange committee. This month, McGowan will testify in Sacramento to help promote support for Assemblyman Patrick Nolan's Agent Orange bill.

He spearheaded discussions between the Martinez VA officials and veterans when they voiced deep frustration with the hospital, and worked directly with VA director Clarence Nixon to smooth out difficulties.

McGowan is in contact with top Washington officials, inside and outside the VA, in his continuing concern over Agent Orange, the chemical defoliant used in Vietnam, which many vets insist is the source of health problems — and which McGowan and his wife were exposed to.

Membership of the self-funded VVA has grown in one year from four to more than 200 people throughout the Bay Area, including supportive wives, friends and children.

Veterans Problems Are 'Largely Untreated, Poorly Understood'

By CARLA MARINUCCI
Times Staff Writer

Years after the war has ended, Vietnam veterans — especially minority veterans — live with a deepening pain, confusion and problems readjusting to normal life.

And, according to a national study just released, their problems could be getting worse.

"Legacies of Vietnam," developed after eight years of study and interviews with more than 400 Vietnam veterans, was released this month by the New York-based Center for Policy Research. It is a center staff effort directed by Robert S. Lauder, Ph.D., director of the Vietnam Era Research Project.

The study points out problems of Vietnam veterans "have remained largely untreated and poorly understood" and Veterans Administration hospitals must place priorities "on appropriate research, training and treatment innovations" to help them.

About half of all Vietnam veterans "remain troubled by war experiences that are unresolved." But so far, "the overwhelming majority of Vietnam veterans ... seem little disposed to utilize" the VA services, which don't meet their needs, the report indicates.

Outreach centers — those threatened by the Reagan cutbacks — provide a valuable service by giving vets a chance to meet with peer counselors and overcome their trauma.

Clarence Nixon, director of the VA Medical Center

"We get together and there's all those guys saying, 'What's the damn VA doing for us?'" says McGowan. "It's dynamic."

VVA membership is continually sounded out on national issues, and Tiffany supported the nomination of Vincent Rios, one of the Contra Costa members, to head the Veterans Administration.

"We've picked up support from some of the old line veterans groups, like the Mt. Diablo Disabled American Veterans, and the Pleasant Hill Veterans of Foreign Wars."

Local vets, along with their families, have been featured in television investigative reports, and on radio shows. The resulting attention has aroused public conscience, and the interest of legislators.

"I've worked with George Miller, Boatwright, Sunne McPeak," says McGowan. "Now we're recognized in local politics, at least."

Perhaps the biggest change is the noticeably improved relationship between the local VA hospital and the vets.

Says Martinez VA Medical Center Director Clarence Nixon: "No one is happier about it than we are," and better communication has resulted in "growth on both sides. I have come to understand better some of the problems that they faced, and also their frustrations."

in Martinez, says that a veterans outreach center in Contra Costa County could be "very beneficial" to local vets, and would probably be highly utilized. "There's a much higher level of awareness here," he says. "I would certainly support it, publicly and privately, provided the local veterans support it."

The study reveals some gloomy statistics about the conditions of many Vietnam vets:

- They showed a marked "disadvantage in educational and occupational achievement," and generally lose out in the competition for better jobs

- Combat veterans report more anger and hostility, stress symptoms and alienation than their non-vet peers, and have a higher arrest, alcohol and drug abuse rates than any other group.

- The problems are markedly intensified for black veterans, 70 percent of whom report serious stress problems, and who have higher rates of unemployment and drug abuse problems.

- But men with many Vietnam veteran friends — with whom they can discuss common problems — have fewer symptoms of stress.

"This is the kind of stuff we've been saying all along," says Art McGowan, a local veterans' leader.

"The emphasis on readjustment programs, on mental health, job services — that is what we've asked for."

States the report: "If the country as a whole, wishes to derive important lessons from its experience in Vietnam ... it would do well to acknowledge and encourage Vietnam veterans as among those leading the way."

The drawn-out battles with the VA brought concrete changes, McGowan says, among them the establishment of a patient assistance center and telephone hotline — an idea suggested by vets; some personnel changes; and a greater sympathy toward vets who come in for Agent Orange examinations.

Tiffany, who was highly critical of the facility, agrees: "They (Martinez VA Hospital) had an image problem, all right. There's a hell of a lot more upbeat attitude there now, and that spells something upbeat for all vets."

But, Tiffany stresses, there is much to be done: "Now is our new beginning."

"There is a tremendous amount of potential for us to make some substantial contributions to this country," he says. The key lies in adequate "delayed stress and psychological services for the veteran in Contra Costa County."

Tiffany says a "major objective" is the establishment of an outreach center in Contra Costa County for the vets, a visible center for readjustment.

"It's absolutely critical. We've got to take all the resources available and focus on it. There's proven volume and need."

McGowan says more than 33 percent of all veterans are Vietnam vets — yet they still feel outside the system, as evidenced by the fact that they are not utilizing VA health programs. "We would like to know what services are being offered to the Vietnam veteran. Are they getting their 33 percent? We know they're not."

That could change with the introduction of legislation like AB-14 introduced by Assemblyman Patrick Nolan. It would direct the California Department of Veterans Affairs to institute an outreach program on Agent Orange.

McGowan and veteran Rand Miller are also studying the possibilities of a bill to "use veterans in employment in parkland and forestry areas, as an aid to readjustment," McGowan says. That idea "emphasizes all the strengths of Vietnam vets — our responsibility and integrity," and has support from Congressman Miller, he says.

The changes have been "a step in the right direction," says Tiffany. But Vietnam veterans are still chronically unemployed, have higher divorce, suicide, alcohol and drug-related problems than the rest of the population, "and the gap is widening. If it's unaddressed, their downward trend will continue."

Says McGowan: "This county gets more than \$10 million income a year" from financial returns generated from its 91,000 veterans. But the county is putting out only \$20,000 annually toward services for those vets — "about 25 cents per veteran."

"We don't get a hell of a lot of county service for those dollars," agrees Tiffany.

Nationwide, a greater awareness continues to grow, veterans say. "Now, no one has to explain what Agent Orange is anymore," says McGowan. "The press has covered the issue virtually completely," and "the publicity nationwide over the hostages" highlighted what happened during the Vietnam vets' homecoming — and the lack of it.

"I'm looking forward to the future with a lot more hope and positive feeling," says Tiffany. "We're going to be able to work directly with government agencies that have responsibility for veterans, and we're going to get results."

'Irreparable Harm' to Women Vets

In response to the March 25 article by Pete Earley ["Forgotten Women: Effects of War on Female Vietnam Veterans Are Only Now Emerging," front page], I wish to bring the following points to The Post's attention:

I served in an evacuation hospital with the American Red Cross from 1970 to 1971. Upon my return to the states, I continued to work extensively in military hospitals for a period of six years with Vietnam returnees.

As chairman of a coalition of 20 veterans groups, I speak for many of us when I say that The Post's article does a serious disservice to the Vietnam veterans movement by its sensational, un-

balanced and stereotyping perspective.

We do not dispute that there are many serious problems facing many of those who served in Vietnam, post-traumatic stress disorder among them. However, to focus on the minority who are suffering to the extent that the women in the article are mentioned, without giving coverage to those who are attempting to operate in a reasonable manner to find a solution to this situation, does irreparable harm to all of us, as our credibility is called into question by association.

JOAN M. MAIMAN,
Chairman,
Veterans Leadership Conference

Chicago

Washington Post, April 8, 1981

File
Vietnam
Veterans

Vietnam Veterans Are Wondering Whether They Have a Friend in the VA

Although the Veterans Administration has a policy of helping all veterans equally, some Vietnam veterans argue that their problems demand special attention.

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

Steve Androff is a Vietnam veteran, and he's angry about it—angry enough to stage a hunger strike in a park across the street from the White House to dramatize what he sees as inadequate treatment of Vietnam veterans.

"We're sorry it had to come down to this, that we couldn't go through other channels," he said. "They closed the door in our face."

By "they," Androff means officials of the Veterans Administration (VA), the agency pledged, in Abraham Lincoln's words, "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan." Androff's statement only highlights an unpleasant reality: that, in the eyes of at least some Vietnam veterans—how many is uncertain—the VA is more an adversary than a friend.

Vietnam veterans believe they need a friend. Those who returned from the war in Southeast Asia, many of them disabled, were treated not to a hero's welcome but to embarrassed ambivalence: critics of the conflict accused the veterans of waging an immoral war; others accused them of being the first Americans to lose a war.

The veterans have watched the Reagan Administration propose to close the counseling centers that represent the VA's only program designed to help them exclusively. They also have been concerned about federal policy toward those who complain of the ill effects of Agent Orange, a defoliant used in Vietnam. And they are concerned about the Administration's difficulties in installing top VA officials who are sympathetic to their cause.

"The Administration," said Robert O. Muller, executive director of Vietnam Veterans of America, "certainly doesn't have any compassion or sympathy."

Vietnam veterans and the VA may not see eye to eye on some key issues, but they agree that some of the 9 million men and women who served in the armed forces between 1965 and 1975, including 2.8 million in Southeast Asia, have had trouble readjusting to civilian life.

A recent study for the VA by the Center for Policy Research Inc. in New York City found that roughly half of Vietnam-era veterans remain troubled about their experience. Arrests and convictions are more frequent among veterans and particularly among combat veterans, the center reported. "Military duty in Vietnam had a negative effect upon post-military achievement."

"Delayed stress syndrome," whose victims may suffer anxiety and other psychological problems after being removed from combat, seems significant as well. A 1977 study by John P. Wilson, a psychology professor at Cleveland State University, found that as many as 250,000 to 500,000 Vietnam veterans might be suffering from that disorder.

ALIENATION

Although no one denies that some Vietnam veterans have had readjustment problems, there is no agreement over how many. VA officials hold that veterans with serious problems, though significant in number, are a small minority.

"These guys are probably the best readjusted veterans of any war we've been in," said a spokesman for the VA. "There is an element of guys with trouble readjusting, a relatively small group, and they just don't trust the establishment."

"The VA historically has denied that the Vietnam veteran has had readjustment problems," said Muller, a 35-year-old who returned from Vietnam paralyzed from the waist down. He founded Vietnam Veterans of America in 1977, and it now has 7,000 to 8,000 members.

"Vietnam veterans have a long history of schism between them and the VA," said John Terzano, national legislative and membership director of the group. VA treatment of Vietnam veterans is often "shabby at best," he said, and he attacked the VA as unprepared and unwilling to offer Vietnam veterans the sort of psychological and personal counseling that he thinks they need to adjust to civilian life. "The VA was very innovative and progressive when guys returned from World War II," he added, "but its innovation has long since ceased to be."

The VA's mandate is to help all veterans, and it says it tries to help them all equally. "No conscientious person here says, 'That's a Korea vet and that's a World War II vet and that's a Vietnam vet,'" said the VA spokesman.

"I don't think that one class of veterans deserves to be treated better than another," said Rufus Wilson, acting VA administrator for three months earlier this year and now minority counsel at the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. "I don't think a veteran should be singled out because of the war he fought in."

But Muller argues that the men and women who served in Vietnam had different experiences from those who fought in other wars, and that they received a much cooler reception when they returned home. "World War II veterans could campaign for Congress in uniform," he said, but Vietnam veterans would get no votes that way.

Muller's group, citing figures showing a higher unemployment rate for Vietnam veterans than for their non-veteran peers, wants job counseling and placement programs, for example. A program of that kind was started in the Labor Department under the Carter Administration as a part of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) program, but two years after it was begun in



Steve Androff, who took part in the Vietnam veterans' hunger strike across the street from the White House, said of the Veterans Administration: "They closed the door in our face."

1977, it had created less than 200 jobs. It will be shut down in the next fiscal year, along with several other programs in other departments, because Congress has slashed jobs programs in its 1982 budget. "The VA's not in the employment business," the agency spokesman said. "They should go to the Labor Department for that."

Muller points to such statements when he maintains that discontent with the VA is rife among Vietnam veterans. "There are a lot of people out there who don't relate to it," he said. "We consistently encounter Vietnam veterans who are totally disgusted with the VA system."

Muller said the VA, the government's second-largest agency, is run largely by World War II veterans—the so-called Class of '46—who are less than sympathetic to Vietnam veterans.

The VA tells it differently. Stratton M. Appleman, acting assistant administrator for information services, said the VA's staff of 199,000 includes 42,000 Vietnam veterans. "About 89 per cent of the men in this agency are veterans," he said. "You'd better believe we relate to veterans."

VA officials do not doubt that some Vietnam veterans believe they are treated with hostility at VA facilities. "Particularly when you have depressed and upset people, they kind of expect to be rejected," said Dr. Jack Ewalt, director of mental health and behavior science services.

A former high VA official, who asked to go unnamed, said: "There clearly are a lot of people that are alienated and

turned off. The question is, is that a representative sample of Vietnam veterans? My guess is that the amount of dissatisfaction is no higher than with people dealing with any big bureaucracy."

What figures exist are ambiguous. A July 1980 poll by Louis Harris and Associates Inc. for the VA found that "by a small margin, 51-45 per cent, Vietnam-era veterans give the Veterans Administration an over-all negative evaluation. . . ." The study emphasized, however, that "there is a consistent tendency for specific VA programs to get better ratings and for these ratings to be most positive" among those who have actually used them.

VET CENTERS

Among the special programs sought by Vietnam veterans, readjustment counseling centers are of particular political importance just now.

Congress, reacting to Vietnam veterans' conviction that they needed places where they could "talk through" their wartime experiences and readjustment problems with fellow veterans, in 1979 authorized the VA to set up a chain of "vet centers." The centers aim for disenfranchised veterans who for some reason will not use or do not trust more traditional VA institutions. The 91 centers have counseled more than 52,000 Vietnam veterans.

In its March budget revisions, however, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requested that the vet centers, a pilot program whose authoriza-

tion was scheduled to end on Sept. 30, be allowed to lapse as planned as one of several measures designed to cut back on the VA budget. Meanwhile, President Reagan's January freeze on federal hiring temporarily prevented the VA from spending an additional \$6 million appropriated by Congress in 1980 to allow the VA to fill 176 positions for up to 44 new centers. (See box, p. 1294.)

Apparently the Administration was unaware of the political sensitivity of that program, the product of several years of lobbying by veterans' groups and the only VA program aimed specifically at Vietnam veterans. "They didn't know anything about it and thought it was an easy way to cut some money," said Ryan Krueger, an aide to Rep. Thomas A. Daschle, D-S.D., a Vietnam-era veteran who strongly supports the program. "What they didn't realize was what a symbolic issue it was to Vietnam veterans."

The result was a loud outcry from both Vietnam veterans' groups and traditional organizations. "The Administration's attitude is at least unsympathetic. That's a polite way of putting it," Muller said in an interview. He was quoted in *The Washington Star* as saying that OMB director Dave Stockman was "a 34-year-old draft dodger. When I was doing what my country asked me to do, he was safe in

Harvard Divinity School. . . . He thinks we're the suckers of the '60s."

The traditional veterans' organizations, though less strident, lobbied extensively for the program. They have been less hasty to characterize the Administration and so far seem to be giving it favorable reviews.

"The President has opened up a dialogue with veterans that we haven't had for four years. Those people will sit down and listen to our problems," said Thorne Marlow, director of public affairs for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW).

Marlow's attitude does not square with that of an official of a Vietnam veterans' group. Although President Carter became known among some veterans' groups as the "anti-vet President," he said, "compared to this Administration, we had it good under the last one."

Either way, the veterans' groups' unity on vet centers paid off when the House voted, 388-0, on June 2 to extend the centers for three years and the Senate followed on June 16, 98-0. The bills (HR 3499, S 921), will go to a House-Senate conference, where some minor differences will be worked out.

But how well the centers work is open to question. Supporters argue that they are highly effective.

Rep. David E. Bonior, D-Mich., a Vietnam-era veteran, said that the centers' success has been "overwhelming" and that they have "earned the trust of their communities." *Time* magazine, in a recent cover story on Vietnam veterans, held that the centers "literally and probably save men's lives."

Others, while acknowledging that the centers have done a considerable amount of good for some veterans, point out that the program has numerous flaws as well. Complaints include allegations of incompetent staffs, managerial sloppiness and establishment of centers in regions where they are not needed.

In its original rationale for allowing the program to expire, OMB said the centers averaged only "about six visits a day for the four employees at each center, a very low level of activity." An OMB official said privately that the centers did not have properly trained counselors and that they were "mostly places where you could sit and chew the fat. They weren't doing the kind of counseling that they were supposed to do."

Don Dachner, a Vietnam veteran in California, complained that of the three centers that he had visited, the first tried to hire him, the second gave him a counselor with only four months of military service and no psychological credentials and the third told him he'd have to be screened to see whether he could stand

up to the "strain of rapping." "I think the whole thing is a public scam," he wrote to *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Within the VA, attitudes toward the centers have been mixed, particularly at the outset. "When this program was first advocated, a reasonable number of people in the VA thought it wasn't needed," Ewalt said. "But I think you could say that most of those people have come around."

Publicly, the VA says it was not consulted on OMB's budget proposals. But an OMB official who asked not to be named said that "a lot of dissatisfaction with the program was building up in the VA" and that in informal discussions dating from the middle of last year, VA officials including chief medical director Donald L. Custis, who became acting administrator in late May, had suggested to OMB that the program be given low priority and perhaps abolished. That account was confirmed by a VA official who also declined to be named. Custis would not comment.

Another VA official said it was a question of saving medical programs that

were seen as being more important. "Some of the people I know who supported the program most strongly said, 'Hell yes, if it's a choice between this and the most basic programs, it should go.'"

WHO SPEAKS FOR WHOM?

Assessing relations between the VA and the nine million Vietnam-era veterans requires determining who speaks for the veterans. Both traditional veterans' organizations and groups such as Muller's lay claim to representing those who returned from Vietnam.

All the groups agree that the hunger strikers, while reflecting the concerns of some veterans, are decidedly not representative. "They further the image of the crazed, strung-out vet, which is precisely the image we're trying to dispel," said Ken Berez, correspondence representative of Vietnam Veterans of America.

But that's where the agreement ends. According to Muller, the traditional organizations are anything but representative of Vietnam veterans at large. "There has been a generation gap, to say the least," he said. "Their control, their outlook, is

And Now, Agents Blue, Brown and . . .

Agent Orange is two things: a defoliant widely used during the Vietnam war and a source of endless controversy.

More than 12 million gallons of the chemical were sprayed in Vietnam before it was realized that Agent Orange contained, as a byproduct of the process by which it is manufactured, a dioxin called TCDD, a potent poison. Ever since 1978, Vietnam veterans have been charging that the defoliant is responsible for a host of problems, including cancer and birth defects, and they have been demanding compensation.

The problem is that no definitive study has linked Agent Orange with any particular set of symptoms—or any symptoms at all save for chloracne, a skin condition that shows up soon after exposure. The Veterans Administration (VA) has been treating and compensating veterans for that but so far has refused to allow claims based on other symptoms. The VA says that the vast array of problems attributed to Agent Orange by veterans ranges from lung cancer to trembling hands. In response, all the major veterans' groups have joined in condemning the VA for dragging its feet, and some have accused it of acting in bad faith.

In June, Congress moved to head off, if not all of the controversy between the VA and veterans, at least a lot of it. The House and Senate approved federally financed medical treatment for veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange at the same time that they voted to extend the readjustment counseling program for Vietnam veterans.

But there's a wild card in the pack. Congress also mandated that the VA treat veterans for exposure to "any other toxic substance found in an herbicide, a defoliant, or a malaria-preventive medication used in connection with military purposes. . . ."

A variety of defoliants were used in Vietnam, including Agent Brown, Agent Purple, and so on, and at least one of them, Agent Blue, could prove to be more harmful than Agent Orange. According to Thorne Marlow, director of public affairs for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Agent Blue is 65 per cent arsenic, five milligrams of which is lethal. Marlow said that 4.5 million pounds of arsenic were sprayed during the Vietnam war and that the substance could well turn out to be considerably more hazardous than Agent Orange.

And then there are all those other defoliants. As far as the VA is concerned, it looks as though Agent Orange was just the beginning.

still a very conservative, very traditional one. We are not the knee-jerk militarists that they are."

Vietnam veterans, he said, "have been made to feel the outsiders, members of that counter-culture generation of the '60s that didn't fight the war to win."

The older groups see it differently. The three largest are the American Legion, with 2.7 million members, the VFW, with 1.9 million, and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), with 700,000.

"Some World War I veterans looked askance at the World War II veterans. I think this is a natural thing within an organization," said a spokesman for the American Legion. He said that such an attitude toward Vietnam veterans is the exception rather than the rule and pointed out that among the legion's ranks are 700,000 Vietnam veterans.

The VFW's Marlow said that his organization has almost 600,000 Vietnam veterans—almost a third of its membership. "The Vietnam veteran is the backbone of our organization," he said, emphasizing that the VFW has been "terribly active" in pressing Vietnam

veterans' claims in Congress.

"Traditional, old-line veterans' organizations are the ones that actually get extensions in the GI bill, keep the vet centers open, lobby for studies on Agent Orange," Marlow added. "I just don't see the import of the smaller organizations."

The DAV says that 28 per cent of its members are Vietnam veterans, with World War II veterans making up most of the rest. A spokesman said that the DAV set up a counseling system for Vietnam veterans a year before the government did.

Outside the veterans' organizations, opinions are mixed. Bonior believes the traditional groups "have historically not



Rep. David E. Bonior

done a very good job of representing Vietnam veterans. I think that recently—and by that I mean in the last year—they have done a better job."

A House aide said that the VFW "definitely doesn't" represent Vietnam veterans but that the American Legion and the DAV are better.

"I think Muller's group is necessary to be a catalyst," said Dean Phillips, a Vietnam veteran who was a special assistant to VA administrator Max Cleland during the Carter Administration and is now a staff legal consultant with the VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals. "But the other

groups are crucial. There are incidents where we would have been blown out of the water if we hadn't had those organizations standing beside us." He cited the vet centers controversy as an example.

But Muller holds that the goals of the traditional groups—mostly pensions and health maintenance programs, he said—

Congress v. OMB: Who Controls the Purse Strings?

Veterans' readjustment counseling centers have become embroiled in a constitutional dispute that may test Congress's authority to limit the spending power of the executive branch.

In 1979, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directed the Veterans Administration (VA) to take money that Congress had appropriated for VA hospitals and use it instead toward pay raises. In response to what John Paul Hammerschmidt, R-Ark., the ranking minority member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, called "widespread outrage" in Congress, legislation was passed to prevent OMB from denying the VA appropriated funds for health care positions. OMB was required to certify that it had made money available for all employee slots for which Congress had appropriated money, and the General Accounting Office (GAO) was to verify that OMB had complied.

Such provisions have become rare since the Impoundment Control Act was passed in 1974, and they represent an unusual attempt to circumscribe executive spending power. The problem was supposed to have been solved.

Not quite. Last year, Congress made some additional medical appropriations for the VA, including \$6 million meant to create up to 176 new employee positions for vet centers. But on Jan. 20, his first day in office, President Reagan announced a freeze on the hiring of federal employees, including the vet center staff. On March 10, OMB further announced that money to hire for the vet centers, as well as for the other VA positions, would be deferred until July 1 and might not be available at all.

Congress objected that OMB, by preventing those spots from being filled, was violating the 1979 law. In early June, the Senate passed a resolution formally disapproving the deferral. Under the Impoundment Control Act, OMB may defer an expenditure only until such a resolution is passed in either the House or Senate. At that point, OMB authorized the VA to fill the positions at the vet centers.

But the Senate went a step further in its resolution, declaring that it should not have had to resort to such a step because the 1979 law already prohibits OMB from withholding the funds.

OMB maintains that it did nothing illegal, but several Members of Congress, along with Vietnam Veterans of America, have sued to prove otherwise. Rep. David E. Bonior, D-Mich., who is leading the suit, disputes OMB's contention that the issue is moot because the money has been released. Unless OMB is proven to have broken the law, he says, the 1979 law will be unenforceable.

OMB argues that the statute, strictly read, does not limit its spending authority. For example, it said, it could establish positions without actually authorizing that they be filled and could grant hiring authority as required by the statute and then withdraw it again.

All those arguments the GAO, in several legal opinions, rejected earlier this year, saying it was clearly Congress's intent to stop OMB if it tried to redirect or hold up money appropriated for VA medical personnel.

It is the second kind of argument that is at the core of the issue. OMB says that Congress cannot deprive the President of his power to manage the executive branch and that any attempt to do so is unconstitutional.

That argument by OMB resembles those that were used unsuccessfully by President Nixon to defend his impoundments in the early 1970s. Bonior finds it no less dangerous now.

"The situation politically is that OMB has become increasingly a power center in the government, so much so that some people have suggested that OMB is forming the domestic policy of the U.S. government," he said. "I don't think that's too much of an exaggeration. You will see a growing tendency on the part of Congress to harness OMB in. It's the old imperial presidency against weak Congress conflict."

are far different from those of Vietnam veterans. Muller said he wants chiefly re-entrance programs, employment counseling and placement services. The traditional groups, he said, "are exploiting the nation's willingness to help veterans to create a massive welfare system."

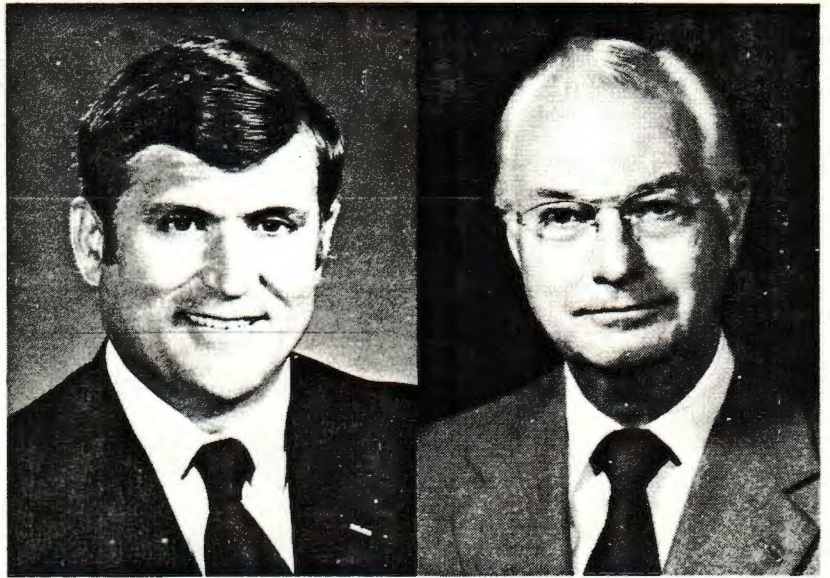
For example, according to Marjorie Quandt, the VA's assistant chief medical director for administration, the law requires the VA to treat all veterans over 65, regardless of income, for whatever ails them. And it must provide for nursing care and, where income is below specified levels, pensions.

These requirements have enormous implications. By 1985, the approximately 12.3 million surviving veterans of World War II will have reached an average age of 65. By 1990, more than half of the men in the United States over 65 will be veterans. Since people in that age bracket require at least five times as much medical attention as others, the result will probably be a rapid increase in such VA expenditures as nursing services and other geriatric programs.

None of that bodes well for younger veterans. "The VA hospital system is becoming nothing but glorified nursing homes," said Terzano.

Muller goes even further. "The needs of the World War II veteran have been in direct competition monetarily with the needs of Vietnam veterans," he said. The odds in Congress, Muller said, are against Vietnam veterans. He complains of the "iron triangle," an allegedly cozy relationship among the VA, the traditional veterans' groups and the House and Sen-

Robert O. Muller, head of a Vietnam veterans' group: "We consistently encounter Vietnam veterans who are totally disgusted with the VA system."



It hasn't been easy finding someone to head the VA. Robert P. Nimmo (right), a World War II veteran, finally took the job after three other candidates were considered. And Allen B. Clark Jr., a disabled Vietnam veteran, left his job as deputy administrator because he felt he was being used as a "token."

ate Veterans' Affairs Committees.

Wilson, at the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, disagrees that Vietnam veterans are a low priority in Congress. "I haven't seen any anti-Vietnam veteran sentiment at the committee," he said.

But a House aide who has worked extensively on Vietnam veterans' issues said that through last year, "it was truly ghastly. We've always had the leadership opposed to us. We had virtually no support in the 96th Congress."

Vietnam veterans are better off this year, he said. A key factor is the retirement of Ray Roberts, D-Texas, and his replacement as chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee by G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery, D-Miss. Bonior called Montgomery "far more sympathetic than his predecessor."

In 1978, Bonior founded a caucus called Vietnam Veterans in Congress. In the last Congress, it had 17 members from the House and 2 from the Senate; in this one, its membership consists of 26 House Members and 5 Senators.

If Vietnam veterans' prospects in Congress seem to be looking up, their clout at the White House is harder to make out. Complicating matters is the apparent trouble the White House had in finding a VA administrator.

The initial favorite was former Rep. William H. Ayres, R-Ohio, a World War II veteran who headed Reagan's transition team at the VA. But when Vietnam veterans contrasted their treatment with the rousing welcome accorded the returning hostages from Iran, the Administration apparently decided that it needed a

Vietnam veteran in the sensitive VA slot.

The second choice was a Vietnam veteran named John L. Behan, whose selection was reported in *The New York Times* but not by the Administration. When the major veterans' groups objected that Behan, who had run a liquor store and had been a New York state assemblyman, was unqualified, he, too, was dropped.

The next leading candidate was James H. Webb, a Vietnam veteran and author who was minority counsel to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. He withdrew after refusing to defend the Administration's proposed VA budget before Congress and objecting that he would have no higher access in the Administration than to Stockman.

Finally, on April 30, the Administration announced the appointment of Robert P. Nimmo, a World War II veteran who said on NBC's *Today* show, "I disagree... that the Vietnam veterans have been shortchanged."

But that wasn't the end. In early June, the Administration announced that Reagan would nominate Allen B. Clark Jr., a disabled Vietnam veteran, as deputy VA administrator. But on June 26, Clark, who felt he was being left out of the decision-making process and used as a "token," left his job.

His departure has left a vacancy at the VA that probably won't be filled for weeks. Even when the VA's staff is complete it will take several months to find out where the agency is heading, and considerably longer than that to learn what's in store for Vietnam veterans. □

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M. Blackwell



Vietnam Veterans Association

October 5, 1982

for
dictation
file

President Ronald M. Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Would you agree that one of the finest principles our Nation stands for is integrity? And, would you also agree that this fine quality is one of the major points that enables the US to enjoy much of its worldwide respect?

If we are in agreement Mr. President, and I am confident that we are, then there is some important unfinished business between yourself and the veterans of Ohio.

It is my understanding that it was the White House who approached the Ohio Veterans Association with a request for sponsorship of your October 4th visit to Columbus. Is it true that your advance party staff was informed of the Association's policy regarding a position of not endorsing any political candidates? My information is that an agreement was made to the effect that the Association was sponsor the trip only if YOU agreed to make your speech statesman-like and non-political.

Is all of the above information true and accurate or am I missing some pertinent facts? Was there missed communication or did someone make a conscious decision to violate the agreement? In other words, did political considerations outweigh the value of integrity?

Our association members feel these are important questions and this is a serious issue. Do you appreciate the severity of the impact on America's two million Vietnam veterans?

May I suggest you ask yourself a few questions.

How do you feel when it appears that another person or nation fail to honor their commitments or violate agreements? And when that type of situation occurs, do you ignore it or are there consequences to the behavior? What do you think is going on in the mind of Ohio veterans today?

/more . . .



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President Reagan
October 5, 1982

I can not speak for all Ohio veterans. I can, however, speak for the Vietnam veterans in this area. We are concerned and we care about the integrity of our government. As a counselor and a Vietnam veteran myself, I am painfully aware of the enormous lack of trust in government officials and their agencies. What effect do you feel the events of yesterday had on their level of trust now?

While we can appreciate the necessity of a political system, we cannot acquiesce to some of its techniques. Our perception of Monday's events may be an unfair assessment or it may be an unfortunate truth. Never-the-less, there is only one person who can resolve the issue satisfactorily. That person is you Mr. President.

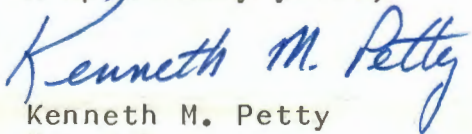
You alone are the only person who can prove that Vietnam veterans are NOT second class citizens. It is you who can demonstrate that the government can be trusted and relied upon.

How?

May I suggest that you either clarify the issue or publicly apologize; whichever is appropriate. As one American citizen who happens to be a Vietnam veteran to another American citizen who happens to be our Nation's President, I urge you to accept the responsibility of resolving the issue.

Finally, I encourage you to take prompt and decisive action now. You'll be glad you did.

Respectfully yours,



Kenneth M. Petty
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