

# VIETNAM GENERATION NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER, 1991

SPECIAL JOURNAL ISSUE

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Book Reviews: Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990*, reviewed by Dan Scripture; Barbara Cohen, *The Vietnam Guidebook*, and Lonely Planet's *Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: A Travel Survival Kit*, reviewed by Dana Sachs; Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book About Men*, reviewed by Daniel Egger; Delores A. Koenning, *Life After Vietnam*, and Lynda Van DeVanter and Joan A. Furey, *Visions of War, Dreams of Peace*, reviewed by Sandy Primm; Richard Wilmarth, *Poised for War*, and Jon Forrest Glade, *Photography of the Jungle*, reviewed by Bill Shields; George Bailey, *Germans*, reviewed by David M. Luebke ..... 74

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movies. We've got Dennis Fritzing, *LZ Friendly* editor, with a poem about surfing against Ho. We have vet biker tattoo fetishist Norman Lanquist in both a poem and an essay. We've got memoirist Ernest Spencer and linguist Gordon Lakoff and poet Stephen Hidalgo on Desert Storm, we've got David Connolly talking about Orcs and hobbits at the old firebase, we've got dozens of pages of informative and entertaining writing. Journalist Don North interviews Hanoi Hannah, and Fred Gardner recalls Jane Fonda's raid on the G.I. movement. Paul Ohmart reveals the greatest Green Beret boondoggle of all time. Alasdair Spark shows once and for all, with diagrams, that *Aliens* is a Vietnam War movie. Our Book Editor evaluates Marilyn Young's new history of the war. Dana Sachs reviews the new edition of Barbara Cohen's Vietnam guidebook. Bill Shields reviews Richard Wilmarth and Jon Forrest Glade. Shields and Glade and Leroy Quintana and Peter Desy and cowboy Bill Jones all contribute poems. Daniel Egger gives a fair summary of Men's Movement poet Robert Bly's recent work. Sandy Primm takes a quick look at Delores Koenning's home psychiatric manual for veterans, and at Lynda Van DeVanter and Joan A. Furey's collection of women's poetry from the war. Gretchen Kay Lutz talks about her walk by the Wall. Men's magazine writer and novelist Robert Lopez Flynn revisits Camp Baxter. William M. King, Director of Afro-American Studies at Boulder, expounds on the riots of '67. David Willson natters on about the glorious role of clerk-typists in our nation's military history. We're honored to have Tran Quoc Vuong, one of Hanoi's top academics, proposing a list of potential joint ventures between U.S. and Vietnamese scholars.

There's lots more. Read the *Table of Contents*. Read the *Announcements, Notices, and Reports*. Read the *Features* and *Book Reviews*. Write us a letter about what you're up to.

## IN THIS ISSUE

This newsletter still doesn't have any reporting on recent developments in U.S. relations with Southeast Asia. We come out quarterly so we can't keep up with the Cambodia negotiations. The basic thrust of them is always that the U.S. is eager to establish full diplomatic ties with Pol Pot, but the details are important. You should all subscribe to *Indochina Digest*, or one of the other newsletters devoted to political reporting. I'll print a roundup of such services in the next issue.

I can't wrap up this issue in one short notice. It's too big. The *Features* section starts with Alan Farrell on traumatic amputation in Homer. Renny Christopher inaugurates her regular fiction column with a piece on Danielle Steel and other romance novelists who have imagined the war. It goes on and on after that, one great poem or essay after another. We've got Cynthia Fuchs and David J. DeRose addressing about 30 plays and

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## PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

As you have certainly noticed by now, this issue represents a departure from our usual format. We decided to print a special combined journal/newsletter because we had a massive backlog of interesting and well-written material which simply didn't fit into our standard anthologies. You will find a little bit of everything here: poetry, fiction, memoirs, essays, reviews and interviews.

Our format will continue to evolve, and we hope that you will keep us informed about what you like and what you don't like. As a completely subscriber-supported enterprise, *Vietnam Generation* is shaped by the needs and desires of its readership. This means that we read and carefully consider every comment and suggestion we receive.

### Status Report

To date, approximately 125 libraries subscribe to *Vietnam Generation*, including college and university libraries, state historical associations, public school and community libraries, and military libraries. New library subscriptions are coming in every month, and most new subscribers buy back issues. You can help this process along by going to your own institution's library and inundating it with requests to subscribe.

Like most journals, we have a hard time keeping up with our individual subscribers. Libraries renew on a regular basis, but individuals are busy people with complicated lives and it's often hard for them to remember to write that check and send it off. Since *Vietnam Generation* operates hand-to-mouth, we can't really afford to send out more than one or two renewal notices before subscriptions expire. Since the journal was founded we've had over 400 individuals subscribe, but only about 100 of them are paid up at any given time. We heartily encourage you to keep your subscription up to date. Every \$40 counts.

The indefatigable Dan Duffy, Newsletter Editor, has volunteered to write personal letters to each of our lapsed subscribers in the hopes that he will be able to make them feel guilty enough to send us a check.

We have received about \$600 in donations this year. Most of that has come in small amounts—\$10 or \$15 in addition to a renewal check. We really appreciate that contribution, and just want to let all of those who sent in a little extra that it made a big difference. We did get one \$300 donation from one supporter. He knows who he is; we just wanted to thank him here.

I'm happy to report that professors have started to use journal issues as course texts. So far, the most popular selections are *A White Man's War: Race Issues and Vietnam*, and *GI Resistance: Soldiers and Veterans Against the War*. I think *Swords Into Plowshares* may become a big seller this year. Kinko's and other copy shops have begun to send requests for permission to xerox articles for course anthologies, which is also a good sign. (Our policy, by the way, is to allow professors to copy up to two articles from any single journal issue, at no charge. We do request that if you are going to use more

than two articles from one issue, that you ask your students to purchase the book.) We discount books used for courses (25%), but if your students must purchase them through a university bookstore, this discount is often not passed on. For those professors who feel comfortable with the idea of selling the texts directly to the student, we can arrange to send the correct number of copies and have you collect the money and send us a check. This way students can pay \$8 instead of \$12 for an average issue.

### What I Think of the Newsletter

Delegating responsibility is both a wonderful and a painful experience. Since Dan has taken over the position as *Newsletter* editor, I have been delighted to note a marked improvement in literary quality, an increase in the number of submissions, and the introduction of a regular series of features and reviews into the publication. All good *Newsletters* are shaped by the idiosyncratic style of their editors, and it's become clear to me that Dan lives up to the finest traditions of the genre: his witty and elegant prose betrays an Unshakeable Bad Attitude. I look forward to doing page-layout and proofreading the *Newsletter*—a task I formerly dreaded—because these days it's the first look I get at most of the material we're printing.

The painful part of delegating responsibility, however, is that sometimes things don't go quite the way you want them too. There seem to be too few women's voices in the *Newsletter* these days. I get worried when I notice the preponderance of masculine testimonial, even if much of it is written by certified Sensitive Guys. As conscious feminist voices, Renny Christopher and Cynthia Fuchs seem clearly outnumbered. In this context, sympathetic reviews of Robert Bly make my gorge rise... I'd urge Dan to actively seek more feminist contributors.

### And on a Personal Note...

This has been quite a year for me. I did finally manage to finish my dissertation (*Bearing Witness: The Literature of Trauma*) and I received my Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale University this last May. The tremendous relief of waking up every morning and realizing that I *don't* have to work on the dissertation has recently been replaced by the stress of realizing that I *do* have to work on the *book*. Clearly, it's a tremendous improvement. Not least of my delights is the knowledge that I will never have to set foot in Mother Yale's hallowed halls again.

I'm working as a consultant at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, revising my dissertation for publication (I'll be more forthcoming about that when I've signed a contract), and doing my best to get *Vietnam Generation* typeset, printed and mailed out four times a year. Like the Red Queen, these days I run twice as hard to stay in the same place. I miss teaching, but I won't look for a full-time faculty position until the Holocaust Museum finally opens in 1993. —Kali Tal

Thanks for all your support. And don't forget:

**Renew Now for 1992**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS, NOTICES, AND REPORTS

## SEASSI

The 1991 Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute was in Ithaca, NY at Cornell this year. Next year it will be in Seattle at the University of Washington. The program floats around a consortium of schools, staying two summers at each one. It's an area studies extravaganza. In the mornings they teach Thai, Vietnamese, Lao, Khmer, Tagalog and Indonesian at elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. The instructors are native speakers, each team supervised by a Western linguist. Afternoons and evenings are given to seminars and movies and dance shows and what have you. On the weekends people blow off a lot of steam. The whole experience is relentlessly multicultural, with Southeast Asians strongly represented in the student body as well as among the instructors. The Asians among the students include U.S. citizens who are illiterate native speakers, as well as foreign nationals learning a new language. I attended this year's session to start learning Vietnamese. There were twenty-one elementary students, about seven each in intermediate and advanced, altogether the biggest turnout in recent memory.

Our Western coordinator, Marybeth Clark of Australia National University, divided the elementary students into three sections. (Marybeth taught English in Vietnam for seven years in 60s.) My section was composed of the older students, who had some experience of Vietnam. I was one of two in the section who had never been there, and the only one who had not worked in Southeast Asia. The most experienced Vietnam traveller was probably Barbara Cohen, whose guide to business and tourist travel in that country is reviewed in this issue. Barbara served as an Army psychiatrist in Da Nang, 1970-71, and has returned to the country many times since then. Dana Sachs, who reviews Barbara's book for us, travelled to Vietnam last year on her own, and hopes to return. She is a Bay Area journalist who has written for *The Tenderloin Times*, the very neat San Francisco newspaper that publishes in English, Thai, Khmer and Vietnamese, all in one edition. Bob Brigham, a student of George Herring at the University of Kentucky, was probably the second most travelled member of the section. Bob is active in diplomatic history—his article on the recent SHAFR conference appears in this part of the newsletter—and has toured Vietnam several times with other U.S. scholars. Next summer he'll be at work in the archives in Hanoi, perhaps teaching U.S. history in exchange for research assistance. Carolyn Haynes runs a language school in a Philadelphia refugee center, and once managed a Red Crescent camp in Malaysia, like Lady Borton tells about in *Sensing the Enemy* (Dial/Doubleday, 1984). Carolyn was the best student in our

section. Linda James, another member of the class, is head librarian of the *Pioneer Press*, the St. Paul newspaper. She works with refugees in the Twin Cities. Linda and her husband Bob, the librarian at the Minneapolis newspaper and a Vietnam veteran, are interested in the possible introduction of U.S. library science to Southeast Asia. The last member of our section, Jack Dibbell, taught in Vietnam in '68 after his military service elsewhere, and would like to return. The fourteen students from the other sections included Jonathan Stromseth, who plans to write his Columbia University dissertation in Political Science on the Communist popular organizations during the war, and Mark Waltzer, who just finished his master's thesis in History at Buffalo State, writing on the pacification programs.

Most of the rest of the students were not coming to Vietnamese from an interest in military disasters, which refreshed me all summer. As a matter of fact, the very first SEASSI student I met—we asked each other if we were parking illegally when we arrived to register—was George Handyside, a Dallas social worker who had become so overwhelmed with the problems of recent Vietnamese refugees that he decided to do something else and learn Thai. Kari Lerum, of the Sociology Department at the University of Washington, was starting Vietnamese because her adviser needs a graduate assistant who knows the language. Rie Nakamura, of Japan, was there for her work in anthropology, as was Donald Jones of Emory. Pat Aronson was there because he just graduated college and he wanted to go to Vietnam. (I think he's there now, teaching English.) He grew up with an interest in U.S. veterans, via his parents, who made documentaries on the subject. Sandy Havens was there because she's been working with the Japanese version of USAID, and would like to work in Southeast Asia. Pat Frye was there just to pick up yet another language before starting a management career with a midwestern manufacturer. Among the advanced students was a Japanese diplomat about to go represent his country in Hanoi, and a potter, Miranda Krenzer, who plans to go to Vietnam to learn a certain firing technique that she hopes to establish in Laos. Her husband Rick was studying Lao.

It's hard for me to evaluate a language-instruction program that occasioned such an intense and happy period of my life. I lived alone in an empty rooming house. I got up every morning at 6:30, showered and shaved, went through my flashcards, then walked up two hills to meet Bob Brigham at a bagel shop at the edge of campus. We walked a bridge over a gorge to the student center, where I drank my coffee and ate my bagels and Bob and I drilled each other on our memorized dialogue for the day. Then we went to class until twelve, drinking more coffee in the sunshine on short breaks every hour. I ate and napped in my room, studied, exercised, scrambled some eggs in a wok with rice and black beans and took them down to eat on my big green porch, then went to the language lab until it was time for bed. Anytime I wanted to I could go to talk to someone who knows a lot about Vietnam.

The program was not terribly well organized. For instance, we didn't know what we were supposed to prepare for the class the first week, because our instructors

refused to speak to us in English. Bob Brigham and Mark Waltzer were impatient with this and seven dozen other SEASSI confusions. Bob and Mark are historians eager to work with documents and they would have liked a course intended to help them do that, such a one as many universities have worked out for graduate students who need to read German. But as Jonathan Stromseth, who was stuck for half the program in a dysfunctional section, kept pointing out, the methods of teaching Vietnamese to Westerners are simply not yet that well understood and widely implemented. It could have been worse. We heard horror stories of former SEASSI programs when they used the U.S. Foreign Service course materials, and everyone had to learn to say "Do you need any more ice in your drink?" We stumbled across old phrasebooks in the Echols Collection with such gems as "Do you know how to defuse that mine?"

But we learned how to ask and give directions, how to ask for food, how to count things and tell what time it is. This last Sunday I had dinner with a group of Vietnamese-American college students, and would have been able to speak a great deal of Vietnamese, if I hadn't been so startled when they understood what I did say. I can read and write more easily than I speak. I think I learned a year's worth in 10 weeks, as advertised. I don't think I would have learned much less in 8 weeks. There are a lot of other inefficiencies in the program. But no efficient reading course would make me want to give up the first couple of weeks of staring into the face of each one of our three teachers, trying to understand what he or she was trying to say and to guess how exactly I could produce the sounds I was supposed to make.

The faces we had to stare at were concerned and caring. The Thac Vu, a linguist from Hanoi University, who supervises the Vietnamese program at Cornell during the regular session, is a systematic, careful, demanding teacher who ran a stimulating series of drills on every member of the class until each of us got it right. He spoke slowly and distinctly most of the time, when he wasn't mumbling or rushing or coughing on purpose, and would never use a construction or a word he had not introduced to us. He communicated the wonderfully gentle way Vietnamese can sound, and the stern righteousness it can convey. Thac is a distinguished man, a highly trained academic from a generation that sacrificed a great deal in the war. His attention was flattering. Anh Dao Le, the Vietnamese language instructor at the University of Washington, taught us songs and poems and gave us short stories to read besides the course material, and took great pains with our pronunciation. She was responsible specifically for my section, and grew close to us. She drove with Dana and I to New Haven and back one weekend. We sang her four hours of U.S. songs on the way down, and on the way back we told her all the ways Americans cook eggs, and all the associations that we give to animals, colors, vegetables and fruits. Later in the summer Dao demanded to go to D.C., and seven of us rented two cars and drove there one Friday. We stayed with *Vietnam Generation* general editor Kali Tal and her husband, and visited, I think, every monument, museum, and government building on or near the Mall. When we stopped for hot dogs, the vendors were

Vietnamese, and Dao had to explain to them why we were ordering in their language. But they understood us fine. Dao reads 10 overseas Vietnamese novels a week, and I hope she'll start writing about them soon for the newsletter. Our third teacher, Hong Lan Tran, is a Hanoi economist now studying in the West. She wasn't accustomed to speaking Vietnamese to Westerners, as Dao and Thach were, and not used to the sounds Westerners make when they're trying to speak Vietnamese. It was great to drill with her because it gave us confidence that maybe someday we could talk to somebody besides language teachers. She spoke loud and fast, and reacted so fiercely when one of us pronounced "Viet" with a rising tone instead of with an abrupt dropping tone that it became impossible not to make this mistake. I woke up one morning with a cramp in my leg, and instantly dreamed that I had that cramp because Lan had sentenced me to redeem my bad accent by walking from Hanoi to Saigon with six mortar shells. Lan laughed about that for days. As the summer went on, her infinite energy became a great source of morale for us all.

The three teachers didn't jibe perfectly. Lan speaks like a boisterous professional woman from Hanoi, while Thach speaks a linguist's Vietnamese, actually giving a soft pronunciation to archaic spellings, as an American might do with "schedule." Thach and Lan both would contradict Dao on matters of pronunciation and vocabulary, especially on older and literary usages that are no longer as current in Hanoi as they are among overseas Vietnamese or in Da Lat, where Dao was raised. The contradictions among the instructors reflected some confusion in the program, but still they provided us with an interesting, real-life language situation to deal with, sorting out what our three teachers were trying to tell us.

I have a whole box full of notes and programs and gossip from the Southeast Asian cultural events that dotted the summer. I'll write these up for individual reports in future newsletters. The summer's Symposium on Vietnamese History is reported on elsewhere in this section. Keith Taylor, who organized the symposium, also taught the area studies seminar on Vietnam. He electrified us with an attack on his classic work, *The Birth of Viet Nam*. I'll report on that in the next issue, and also tell about the wonderful Echols Collection of Southeast Asian documents at Cornell's Olin Library, and its helpful assistant curator for Vietnam, Alan Reidy.

## WAR AND ASIAN AMERICANS

The impact of war on Asian Americans is the focus of the new issue of *Amerasia Journal* (17:1) published by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. The issue contains commentaries and essays by Asian American Vietnam War veterans and Vietnamese refugees, and poems, short stories, and essays by other Asian Pacific Americans about World War II, the Korean War, and Philippine-American War, and the recent war in the Middle East. Among the featured works is an original novella by Chinese American author Frank Chin about his trip to Cuba in 1960 and its subsequent impact on his draft

preinduction physical in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Chin's novella is titled "I Am Talking to the Strategist Sun Tzu, about Life When the Subject of War Comes Up." According to *Amerasia Journal* editor Russel Leong, Chin is thinking about developing his novella into a future book. Also contained in the issue are poems by Lawson Fusao Inada, Al Robles, Walter K. Lew, Russell C. Leong, Sachi Wada Seko, and Ko Won; and essays by Velina Hasu Houston, Frank Emi, and Robert Ji-Song Ku. Other contributors to the 200-page issue include Gisele Fong, Don T. Phan, Dick Kobashigawa, Van Luong, Jean Pang Yip, Paulino Lim, Jr., G. Akito Maehara, Darrel Y. Hamamoto, Lewis Kawahara, Jeanne Twaites, Thuy Dinh, Thelma Seto, Mari Sunaida, and Mary Kao. Providing analytic articles are Haeyun Juliana Kim on the lives of Korean war brides, and Teresa K. Williams on marriages between Japanese women and US servicemen since World War II. UCLA History Professor Emeritus Alexander Sacton contributes an introductory editorial essay, "The New World Order and the *Rambo* Syndrome." Copies of the issue can be purchased for \$7.00 plus \$1.00 postage and handling. California residents should add 6.5% sales tax, and Los Angeles Country residents, 7% sales tax. Subscriptions for *Amerasia Journal* are \$15.00 per year for three issues, or \$25.00 for two years. Checks should be made payable to "Regents of University of California" and sent to: *Amerasia Journal*, UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 3232 Campbell Hall, 405 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024-1546. For more information, call *Amerasia Journal* at (213) 825-2968 or 825-3415.

## ANDREW GETTLER

Two fine books of poetry in the mail from the vet poet and dynamo of the world of very small very good presses: *Footsteps of a Ghost: Poems from Viet Nam* (\$5, Iniquity Press, P.O. Box 1698, New Brunswick, NJ 08901), and *Lurid Dreams . . . because we all have them* (Intro. by Robert Bove; experimental press, 3740 n. romero road, #a-191, tucson, AZ 85705). The books are interesting for their verse, e.g.

the guy who masturbated with his feet  
cause he had no hands leaned out over  
the rail in the febrile wintersilence  
looked down at the ice colder than  
the river that it paved then he let

GO

("on reading Cynthia Ozick near the John Berryman Memorial Bridge" in *LD*)

and for their construction. *Footsteps* is simply done, 8 1/2" by 11" sheets printed on both sides and folded with a colored card-stock cover. It is made lively by varying font sizes throughout the book, and by a number of page-size xerox collages, all by the well-known small press illustrator and poet, Wayne Hogan. *Lurid Dreams* also uses 8 1/2" by 11", folded twice, with a slice going half-way down the center of each sheet, in the long direction.

Got that? Every page folds down to reveal its poem. Varied fonts within, a nice collage of a Gettler drawing of a face, I presume a self-portrait, on the cover. The construction of these books says that they are made on purpose by intelligent people who mean to be taken seriously. They're not counters die-cut for the game of cultural legitimacy. On the other hand, they aren't letter-press on vellum bound with fetal goatskin for the illiterate snob trade. The poems in these books appeared in the following magazines: *ALTERNATIVE FICTION & POETRY*, *Abbey*, *Big Hammer*, *Deros*, *Alpha Beat Soup* (Canada), *Slipstream*, *Poetry Australia*, *Open 24 Hours*, *MADDOG PRESS*, *Green Fuse*, *Rhododendron*, *Black Bear Review*, *Mosaic*, *Samisdat*, *Nexus*, *Ellipsis*, *Visions International*, *Second Coming Press*, *Mr. Cogito*, *Ball Peen*, *CAGE*, *The Enchanted Mountain Monthly*, *HEATHEN*, *The Kindred Spirit*, *The Lithic Review*, *NoMag*, *Parting Gifts*, *The Plastic Tower*, *Psychopoetica* (England), *Rhododendron*, *Shrink-Wrap*, *SubRosa*, *Tempus Fugit* (Belgium), and *Xenophilia*. Contact Gettler at 2663 Heath Ave, 6D, Bronx, NY 10463-7520 for help in contacting these publications. The poet is an authority on this kind of thing, as shown in his masterful anthology of vet poets from the small presses, in *Chiron Review*, Volume X, Spring 1991 (\$2, Michael Hathaway, 1514 Stone, Great Bend, KS, 67530-4027). Gettler's other books include *only the mountains are forever* (\$3, Black Bear Publications, 1916 Lincoln St., Croydon, PA, 19020-8026), *Zen & the Art of Perfect Desire* (\$2.50 from M.A.F. PRESS, Box 392, Portlandville, NY 13834).

## BEACH RED

Found in a used book store, no dustjacket, subsequently spotted in many stores in the same condition: *Beach Red: A Novel* by Peter Bowman, Random House, New York, 1945. My copy stamped "Jane T. Richardson" and inscribed "Dec. 1945" on the inside front cover. It's a book-length poem, pages numbered consecutively from 3 to 122 in the lower right and left hand corner, numbered 1 to 60 in big red numerals on the upper right recto. The poem follows a green doggie assaulting a Pacific island, similar to James Jones' Guadalcanal novel *The Thin Red Line* in the way it teaches tactics and attitudes, except that the poem sticks with one man and his head. He dies. Dedicated "To the Unreturning." Title page has awkward sketch of rifleman, prone on a beachhead, aiming toward treeline. The title refers to a standard name given landing beaches. There was one at Normandy, for example. David Willson says that *Beach Red* was a wide-selling book. Well worth obtaining and reading, if you've got a bug in your nut about the traditions and discontinuities of U.S. war poetry. The book itself has the same proportions, inks, binding and types as Karl Shapiro's *V-Letter And Other Poems* (Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, 1945) and *Essay On Rime*. No prickly metrics like Shapiro, no mandarin doggerel like Lincoln Kirstein's *Rhymes of PFC*, the verse is relaxed and dignified, has the tone of a nice college man who was in the Pacific War recently and is nauseated, the kind of person who will write something like E.B. Sledge's *With the Old Breed At Peleliu and*

**Okinawa** (Presidio, 1981) once he has rolled the bile around in his mouth for a few decades. We would welcome a full report, especially printing and reception history and author's career.

## BEACH RED, THE MOVIE: FROM THE JJ MALO/TONY WILLIAMS FILMOGRAPHY

**Beach Red**, 1967, U.S.A.; UA. Color. 105 mins.

Director: Cornel Wilde. Producer: Cornel Wilde. Screenplay: Clint Johnston, Donald A. Peters, and Jefferson Pascal, from the novel **Sunday Red Beach** [*Beach Red: A Novel*] by Peter Bowman. Photography: Cecil R. Cooney. Editing: Frank P. Keller. Music: Col. Antonio Buenaventura. Cast: Cornel Wilde (Capt. MacDonald), Rip Torn (Sergeant Honeywell), Burr De Benning (Egan), Patrick Wolfe (Cliff), Jean Wallace (Julia MacDonald), Jaime Sanchez (Colombo), Genki Koyama (Capt. Sugiyama), Gene Blakely (Goldberg), Norman Pak (Nakano), Dewey Stringer (Mouse), Fred Galang (Lt. Domingo), Hiroshi Kiyama (Michio), Michio Hazama (Capt. Kondo).

Themes: Metaphoric comment on the U.S. war in Vietnam.

Synopsis: A Marine unit prepares to invade a small Japanese-held island in the Pacific during the Second World War. Their officer, a lawyer in civilian life, understands his men, their hopes, and fears, and gives them strong guidance and encouragement, even as his own memories of home and his sense of the absurdity of war challenge his effectiveness as a commander. The men hit the beach and dig in, holding their ground through a bloody firefight. Moving inland, they are involved in a series of incidents that make the enemy nearer and more human to them. The officer finds himself increasingly at loggerheads with his tough first sergeant, whose ideas about the conduct of war are less humane than those of the officer. One squad is detached on a special advance mission and finds the location of the main body of Japanese troops. The squad is cut off from the rest of the Marine force, and is involved in a firefight as they await rescue. In a furious air strike, the Japanese force is slaughtered on the beach. One Marine from the cut-off squad and a Japanese soldier wound each other. They make a separate peace and share a cigarette as they lie injured, waiting for help; but the rest of the Marine unit breaks through and kills the Japanese soldier.

Comments: Set in the Pacific during the Second World War, **Beach Red** is a taut little antiwar film that gets its message across mostly by focusing on the material business of war and its inherent absurdity. It begins in a landing craft as a company of Marines prepares to storm a Japanese-held island; and it follows the operations of that company over the next several hours. Every once in a while, Wilde drops in a flashback to one of the soldiers' memories of home. The film's color values, its use of long lenses and soft-focus, and its flashback technique are very much of the '60s. So, surprisingly, are the clothing and hairstyles of the women in the flashbacks. Whether this was done deliberately to connect the film with the U.S. war then raging in Vietnam, or is traceable more to

the film's low budget, there's no question that **Beach Red's** sparsely-populated look deliberately evokes a milieu more allegorical than historical, and that the war in Vietnam, not the old one in the Pacific, was most on Cornel Wilde's mind in 1967.

Bob Cumbow 14814 SE 18th Place, Bellevue, WA, 98007 W 206-462-3241 wrote this article for Jean Jacques Malo and Tony Williams' Vietnam War filmography, to be published by McFarland. Contact the editors at 4411 Corliss Ave. N. #7, Seattle, WA 98103, 206-548-1419.

## THE NORTON BOOK OF MODERN WAR, edited by PAUL FUSSELL. (NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON, 1991)

Expertly edited by the author of **The Great War and Modern Memory** and **Wartime**, this collection has much to offer the specialist in Vietnam war literature. As others have pointed out, the war cannot be adequately understood without reference to representations of other twentieth century conflicts in both literature and poetry.

The Vietnam section occurs in **Part IV - The Wars in Asia**, subtitled "Obscenity Without Victory." With the exception of two journalistic extracts about the Korean War by Marguerite Higgins and Jean Larteguy, the remainder of the material concerns Vietnam. It includes diverse voices such as Bryan Alec Floyd's satirical poem, "Lance Corporal Purdue Grace, USMC" and key extracts from John Clark Pratt's **Vietnam Voices**, Seymour M. Hersh's **My Lai 4**, Gloria Emerson's **Winners and Losers**, John Ketwig's **And A Hard Rain Fell**, Kovic's **Born on the Fourth of July**, O'Brien's **If I Die in a Combat Zone**, Herr's **Dispatches**, Keith Walker's **A Piece of My Heart**, Truong Nhu Trang's **A Viet Cong Memoir**, and two poems by Bruce Weigl ("Mines") and Hayden Carruth ("On Being Asked to Write a Poem Against the War in Vietnam.")

However, the collection is meant to be read in the context of other war representations. **World War One** ("Never Such Innocence Again") contains selections from diverse voices such as Rupert Brooke, Philip Larkin, Katharine Tynan, Siegfried Sassoon, David Jones, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, Vera Britain, Ezra Pound, as well as some ironic British foot soldier marching songs. Among the authors in the Spanish Civil War section ("Authors Take Sides") are Luis Buñuel, Dos Passos, Orwell, and Hemingway. Aptly subtitled "Almost Beyond Human Conception," **World War Two** contains extracts from James Jones, Norman Mailer, Randall Jarrell, Martha Gellhorn, Marguerite Duras, Heinrich Böll, and Herbert Reed. The extract from **Commandant of Auschwitz** by Rudolf Höss is unbelievable and appalling.

The whole work covers 821 pages. It is relevant to our continuing destructiveness and provides good context for Vietnam War literature.

Tony Williams, *Cinema and Photography*, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, ILL 62901

## Billy Jack

From *USA Today* 9/25/91, Wednesday, p. 1 sidebar: 'Billy Jack', Actor Tom Laughlin, star of 1970s films, announces that he will seek the Democratic presidential nomination: "I am the outsider . . . I sound like a lone, weird voice in the night." Article on p. 2A by Bill Nichols elaborates that Laughlin toured Iowa, "eyeing a film about a 'Schwarzkopf-like figure' who returns from Desert Storm to find the country in domestic shambles." Laughlin ran ads looking for citizen response, a lot of people came to the meetings, and he decided to run for President. His platform: term limitations, national health care, and letting taxpayers earmark 25% of their income taxes for specific programs. He quotes Robert Kennedy, *Moby Dick*, and *Pretty Woman* in his speeches. "I have no possibility of really succeeding," Laughlin says, "I have no money . . . It is ludicrous. Yet I feel very strongly . . . that the country now doesn't know what its course is."

## VIETNAM PAPERS AT THE SHAFR CONFERENCE

The Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations held this year at George Washington University provided those interested in U.S.-Indochina relations, especially the U.S. war in Vietnam, with a full schedule. Three panels dealt specifically with the war—"Domestic Issues and the Vietnam War," "The Vietnamese and the Vietnam War," "Military History and the Vietnam War," and two other panels examined the lessons of the Second and Third Indochina Wars.

Historians Melvin Small and David Anderson joined English and American Studies professor H. Bruce Franklin in a stimulating presentation of papers concerned with some of the major domestic developments during the Vietnam war. Professors Small and Franklin explored the network established by the Nixon White House to deal with the Administration's Vietnam critics and to manipulate the POW/MIA question. Small spoke of an intricate network of Administration insiders who had an incredible public relations, financial, and even "statist" arsenal at their disposal to deal with "the peaceniks and the liberal press." Franklin summarized the thesis of a soon-to-be-released book that suggests that H. Ross Perot and other Nixon supporters duped POW/MIA families into a public relations campaign designed to revise actual events and the history of the Vietnam war. According to Franklin, their success is measured by the tens of thousands of Americans who now think the Vietnam war was fought over the POW/MIA question. In other words, American troops were in Vietnam to free our "hostages." David Anderson proposed that figures used in the late 1960s and early 1970s to show disproportionate minority deaths in Vietnam are now under scrutiny. He asserted that racism was still a factor at home and in Vietnam. Anderson's analysis sliced up the numbers by the different phases of the war to show less across-the-board racism than has been previously reported.

Two young scholars, Mark Bradley and myself, Robert Brigham, utilized new approaches in the study of the War in their papers, "Perception and Policy" and "Cautious Allies," respectively. Bradley and I both utilized a multiarchival and binational approach highlighted by the use of Vietnam-language sources. Both of us presented the Vietnamese as active participants in policies during the 1940s instead of passive actors. Bradley explores relations between the U.S. and Vietnam in the late 1940s to conclude that the Viet Minh were much more pragmatic about the French and American presence in Vietnam than most scholars believe. I examined the role of the U.S. Office of Strategic Service (O.S.S.) in the Viet Minh's rise to power to finally discredit the notion that Ho's revolutionary league depended upon the O.S.S. for political legitimacy. We're both currently writing our dissertations with heavy reliance on Vietnamese-language sources. We were joined on the panel by David Broschous who used the Bao Dai solution as an example of multilateralism. In Broschous' view, the United States, given the interdependent nature of U.S. relations with other world powers in the 1950s, had to accept the Bao Dai solution which brought the former emperor to limited power Vietnam.

The third panel on the Vietnam War explored "big unit" warfare, theories of military escalation, and the effect of prisoners of war on military strategy. Edwin Moise of Clemson University outlined Herman Kahn's theory of escalation as it applied to U.S. military options in 1964. James Wirtz of the Naval Postgraduate School discussed the development, over time, of big unit warfare in Vietnam and this policy's shortcomings. Finally, Larry Cable of the University of North Carolina proposed that military strategy was altered greatly as American prisoners of war became part of the whole war scenario. These theories were revisited by a panel on the military lessons of the U.S. war in Vietnam and their relationship to the Gulf War.

*Bob Brigham, History, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506-0027, will spend this June and July doing archival research in Hanoi, accompanied by his wife, the painter Monica Church.*

## MLA

Frank Burdick chaired a panel on literature from the U.S. war in Vietnam, at the Central New York MLA Conference, October 20-22, 1991 at SUNY Cortland. The panel included: "'Lift Your Heads and Lift 'Em High': David Rabe's *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel An Aristotelian Tragedy*" by Joseph Dewey, University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown. "Victim, Animal, or Fool: David Rabe's *Pavlo Hummel*" by Eric Gadzinski, Temple University, and "*Paco's Story* and the Ethics of Violence" by Grant F. Scott, Muhlenberg. Contact Burdick at History, SUNY Cortland, or Denise D. Knight, Assistant Professor, English, PO Box 2000, Cortland, NY 13045, 607-753-4307.

## COMMUNES

The recent sealing of Biosphere 2 in Arizona brought some mention of communes into the media. John Allen, Director of Research and Development for Ed Bass' Space Biospheres Ventures, led a 1970s commune called Synergia. Sally Ann Stewart, in her *USA Today* article (Wednesday, 9/25/91, p. 1) quotes "retired history professor" Laurence Veysey as an expert on Synergia. A *New York Times* article, "Management Citadel Rocked by Unruliness" (Thursday, September 26, 1991, D1) by Alison Leigh Cowan, on troubles at the *Harvard Business Review* under the new management of Rosabeth Kanter, mentions that the leading organizational behavior consultant started her career in sociology at Brandeis with a study of communes and utopian societies.

## MIA Play

Douglas R. Bergman, "A Writer/Director First. A Vietnam Combat Veteran Always!," of 47428 Francis Lewis Blvd., Bayside, NY 11361, 718-224-8246, sent out a notice dated August 14, 1991 about a play reading to be held Monday, 8-26-91 by the Artists' Perspective Inc. at the Master Theatre complex on 103rd St. at 310 Riverside Drive in Manhattan, of his play *The Decision*, which he summarizes as follows:

"Charles E. Shelton was captured in the Laotian jungle in 1965. In the spring of 1971, our government sent a secret rescue team to free him. The mission failed and he remains captive today. *The Decision* is a play that tells the story of his last few hours of freedom."

Bergman's press release explains that he staged the reading in response to the summertime POW/MIA photo flurry. "My play about Charles E. Shelton, our ONLY officially listed P.O.W., is now a highly emotional, credible and saleable commodity." The release was passed on to me by the literary manager of a Manhattan theater. When I worked in the literary office of the Circle Repertory Company in 1985-87, by the way, plays set in the war came over the transom every week.

## Civil War PTSD

"We Will All Be Lost and Destroyed": Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Civil War" by Eric T. Dean Jr. in *Civil War History: A Journal of the Middle Period*, Volume 37, #2, June 1991, pp. 138-153 examines the ways that psychiatric stress was understood among medical personnel treating veterans of the Civil War in the U.S. A thoroughly researched and digested paper, extremely helpful for establishing the chain of spiritual damage from combat extending from 1860 to the present day, and a good place to start if you want to look at the impact of our war in Vietnam on the historiography of our Civil War.

## FACTSHEET FIVE

In so many ways the most sophisticated and useful magazine I have ever seen. *Factsheet Five* is a periodical reference to newsletters, 'zines, bulletin boards, small press books, tapes and CDs and things you can look at or listen to that don't have any name yet. Superbly classified informative three-sentence reviews of hundreds of great publications, most of them way cool and real cheap. Much more: interviews, essays, tips on how to find something you'll enjoy having. If you haven't noticed, there isn't a single magazine in the U.S. that sells advertising for profit where the copy is worth reading. *Factsheet Five* is where you find the labors of love and the subscription-driven periodicals, the printed matter that actually carries information. The big publishers are businesses, the university reviews are prestige mills, if you want to read and write because you have something to say and like to learn stuff, start looking in *Factsheet Five* for your very own interpretive community. Editor Mike Gunderloy is now writing a regular column for *Whole Earth Review*, a sort of quarterly *Best of Factsheet Five*. *WER* is always worth having, but you need *FF* in the john. Many, many veteran-related 'zines reviewed. A whole set of back issues is available for just \$100 and some nice archivist of the literature from the U.S. war in Vietnam should buy them. *Factsheet Five* is available from: "Mike Gunderloy and Carl Goldberg Janice, 6 Arizona Ave, Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502, 518-479-3707 (24-hour answering machine, so call anytime); 300/1200/2400 baud phone 518-479-3879 (call anytime you have a computer handy); RelayNet Sysop at ->ALBANY. Mike's Compuserve address is 72271.275; from InterNet, you can get there by addressing mail to 72271.275@compuserve.com. On The WELL, Mike is ffmike; the Netmail address for this is ffmike@well.sf.ca.us. Carl's WELL name is ffcari, also known as ffcari@well.sf.ca.us. This is Pretzel Press publication #862 and is intended for direct Bulk Mailing to subscribers and good people across the country, around the world, and right into your face. Press run: 9500 copies. 43rd issue, June 1991. *Factsheet Five* is published eight times a year, appearing roughly at seven-week intervals." Subscription is \$23/yr for bulk rate, \$33/yr for first-class delivery, \$50/yr for diskettes. Or send in your 'zine. If Mike and Carl like your work, they'll trade.

## GENRE MAG

*The Vietnam War and Postmodern Memory* is Volume 21, Number 4, Winter 1988 of *Genre*, a "quarterly publication devoted to generic criticism" published by the University of Oklahoma, Department of English, Norman, OK, 73019. Ronald Schleifer, General Editor, Gordon O. Taylor, editor of this issue. About 584 pp., perfect bound, paper, black cover with painting repro. on cover of a human face of indeterminate sex and race, with a tropical treeline at the hairline. Contents: "Preface" by Gordon O.

Taylor, essentially an editor's note; "Cacciato's Grassy Hill" by Gordon O. Taylor; "Dispatches from Ghost Country: The Vietnam Veteran in Recent American Fiction" by Thomas Myers; *The Deuce, a Novel* [excerpts] by Robert Olen Butler; "From Documentary to Docudrama: Vietnam on Television in the 1980's" by John Carlos Rowe; "Antiwar Film as Spectacle: Contradictions of the Combat Sequence" by Claudia Springer; "Masculinity as Excess in Vietnam Films: The Father/Son Dynamic" by Susan Jeffords; "Rebellious Sons in Vietnam Films: A Response by Claudia Springer" (sic); "The Good Women of Saigon: The Work of Cultural Revision in Gloria Emerson's *Winners and Losers* and Frances Fitzgerald's *Fire in the Lake*," by Philip D. Beidler; "Fragments and Mosaics: Vietnam War 'Histories' and Postmodern Epistemology" by Kate Beard Meyers; *Was That Someplace You Were: Selected Poems 1968-1987* [excerpts] by R.S. Carlson; "Past as Prologue" by Gordon O. Taylor; Index. Bibliography with each article. No contributors' notes.

Smart and well-known critics covering fresh and interesting topics, plausible poetry and readable fiction. They don't come any smarter than Susan Jeffords, or more well-known than Philip Beidler. Definitely something to look through, and any library collecting criticism of books from that war should have it. I don't like the book, but I don't like opinion pieces that try to neutralize every objection in advance, that use the first person plural, or bring huge critical resources to bear on a few books, and I think that "post-modern" is vivid way to describe a Michael Graves building and not much else. Check out Taylor's hard work for yourself.

## GUMSHOE

*Gumshoe: Reflections in a Private Eye*, by Josiah Thompson (Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1988). 312 pp., nice author head shot on dj cover, epigraph from the "down these mean streets a man must go" passage from Raymond Chandler's essay "The Simple Art of Murder." Author's previous books include: *Kierkegaard* (1976), *The Lonely Labyrinth* (1967), and *Six Seconds in Dallas* (1967).

The story of a philosopher who abandoned a tenured position to become a private investigator. Contains accounts of cases from the late 70s and the 80s, sound literary criticism of *The Maltese Falcon*, and numerous glancing references to the inside workings of 60s-related stuff: Stephen Bingham, George Jackson, terror and dirty tricks by antiwar groups after the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, intelligence personnel, Roshii Baker and the San Francisco Zen Center, Jonestown, Harvey Milk, more. Of particular interest here are pp. 72-76, set in the antiwar movement at Haverford College, providing some context for W.D. Ehrhart's book-length account of similar events in his *Passing Time*. Some sensible discussion of Heidegger's imagery with reference to the experience of war in 1914-18. The author is a Navy veteran, with experience in unspecified SEAL-like activities in the Caribbean and the Middle East in the fifties.

## IMPORTANT WWI BOOK FROM A HOLOCAUST HERO

*King Matt the First*, by Janusz Korczak (Henryk Goldszmit), translated by Richard Lowrie, Intro. by Bruno Bettelheim (The Noonday Press/Michael Di Capua Books/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 1986, paper 1988). Originally published in Polish in 1923 as *Krol Macius Pierwszy*. This novel is a children's book, as well known in Eastern Europe as Barrie's *Peter Pan* is here. King Matt is a ten-year old who becomes king on the death of his father. He institutes a series of disastrous reforms and comes to a bad end. Hilarious, worldly, very sad. The Jewish author was the Dr. Spock of Poland in his time, writing such books as *How to Love Your Child*, and well-known for his radio call-in show. He was director of an orphanage where children governed the community. The Nazis relocated the orphanage to the Warsaw ghetto, then sent the children to Treblinka. The doctor refused opportunities to escape, offered by Jews and Poles and Germans. He got on the train with his friends, and of course they all died.

Of interest here: King Matt first gains credibility as something more than a ward of his ministers by escaping the court and fighting as an infantryman in a trench war. This section, pp. 40-87, gives a thorough description of the soldier's life, from what it's like to travel on a freight car to why exactly you dig trenches. Korczak piles up miserable detail as relentlessly as Paul Fussell or Erich Remarque, but without passing on anger and despair as these authors do. He was a doctor in the Polish Army in WWI. Betty Jean Lifton, wife of Robert Jay Lifton, author of *Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans, Neither Victims Nor Executioners* (1973), wrote *The King of Children: A Biography of Janusz Korczak* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988).

## THE LAWS OF WAR

"The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World" will be the topic of this fall's military history lecture series sponsored by the International Security Programs at Yale University. The program, now in its seventh year, is supported by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. The twelve speakers for the series "will each explore not only the formal constraints on the conduct of war throughout history, but also the unwritten conventions as to what was "done" and "not done,"" says George Andreopoulos, lecturer in history. The series: "The Laws of War: Introduction" by Michael Howard, Yale; "The Age of Chivalry and the Laws of War" by Robert Stacey, U. of Washington; "The Laws of War in Classical Times" by Josiah Ober of Princeton; "Law and War in Early Modern Europe," Geoffrey Parker, Illinois; "The Laws of War in Colonial America," Harold Selesky, Alabama; "The Laws of War in the Age of Napoleon," Gunther E. Rothemberg, Purdue; "Maritime Conflict and the Laws of War," John B. Hattendorf, Naval War College; "Land Warfare and the Laws of War, from Hague to

Nuremberg." Adam Roberts, Oxford; "Air Power and the Laws of War," Tami Davis Biddle, Smithsonian; "Nuclear Planning and the Laws of War," Barton J. Bernstein, Stanford; "The Laws of War in the Age of National Liberation", George Andreopoulos, Yale; "The Laws of War in Today's World: General Reflections," and Paul Kennedy wraps it up with "The Laws of War in Today's World: General Reflections." I've attended the first six lectures. Michael Howard gave a very illuminating review of the written law of war in the West, to lend background to subsequent speakers' discussion of informal norms of behavior. Howard is clearly an infantry veteran with an attitude, though the students probably think it's just his British accent. There were a number of U.S. WWII vets in the audience for his lecture, local Yale alumni retirees, who went silent when Howard pointed to the similarity of Lidice and My Lai. Bob Stacey was very informative, and so was Josiah Ober, though the classicist spoke at moments with the clueless assurance of a think-tank analyst, imagining the unimaginable with technospeak. He made a striking comparison of the military role of hoplites to their political role as voters. The series is a boys' club approach to war, but it isn't dumb. Geoffrey Parker spoke to the effect that norms and laws of war have changed little since early modern times. He has a brief to demonstrate continuity in these matters that might be a reaction to all the garbage we used to hear about the U.S. war in Vietnam being so unique and special. He is staggeringly well-informed, and moves around the ages with an assurance that's either brilliant or ahistorical. He's found a debate among the Spanish leadership, on the question of destroying Holland's dikes, that considers the same issues taken up several hundred years later by U.S. strategists deciding whether to target the Red River dikes in Rolling Thunder. Less exciting, he has a universal recipe for the military massacre of civilians, three necessary conditions, to wit: the ideological estrangement of the soldiers from the civilians, a strategic purpose from the commander's point of view, and low morale among the troops. Well, sure. This is a good thing to tell people who don't already know that killers are people like themselves acting for understandable reasons, but it doesn't tell the rest of us much. A little focus on discontinuity and change would have been welcome. He also justified the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by saying they hastened the end of war, and so saved people in the Nazi camps, which is an odd conclusion to draw, seeing that victory in Europe preceded those bombings. Parker was answering a question, so he might have just been confused, or maybe I was. Maybe he was thinking of strategic bombing in general, but still I've never heard anyone say that saving the Jews was an objective of SHAEF. Harold Selesky traced the use and avoidance of terror as military tactic from the Crown in Ireland, to the British colonists against the Indians, to the colonists against the French and Indians, to the Continental Army against the Crown. He said that scared amateurs descend to rawest brutality, while professional armies under sovereign control have an interest in showing restraint, to prove the legitimacy of their power, though such armies can also choose to use terror in a decisive stroke, or to

encourage irregular outriders to commit mayhem. Michael Howard introduced Gunther Rothemberg as a veteran of both the British and U.S. armies, a native German, and an expert on the Austrian and French militaries. Rothemberg gave the most impressive talk of the series so far. He introduced his theme, that there is great continuity in norms of warfare in that what restraints do exist usually favor combatants rather than civilians. He then regaled us with examples and counterexamples from the Napoleonic period. I'll have a report on the rest of the lectures from this outstanding series in the next issue.

## LZ FRIENDLY

Dennis Fritzinger at **LZ Friendly** has outdone himself with a Special Edition, August 1991, made as a souvenir for the VVA national convention this summer. It's an anthology of great articles from past issues, 23 pp long, as good a collection of writing by veterans as you're going to find. **LZ Friendly** is the newsletter of VVA Chapter 400, Bay Area, consistently publishing top quality essays alongside reports of chapter softball games and picnics. Fritzinger covered the Gulf War as an ecological disaster, bringing his own expertise to bear on wire service reports. I don't know what you have to do to subscribe or just to get this issue, but a good start would be a note to Delta Foxtrot, Editor, **LZ Friendly**, VVA Chapter 400, 200 Grand Avenue, Suite 50, Oakland, CA 94612.

## MSU FORUM

In the mail from Skip Delano, an announcement for The Tenth MSU Presidential Forum on Turning Points in History: America's Vietnam War, November 19 and 20, 1991, University Theater, McComas Hall. It was very sporting of Skip to pass this on.

Schedule: Tuesday, November 19, 1991, 2:00pm. Documentary videotaped filmfest: extracts from **Hearts and Minds, Vietnam: Unfinished Business, Vietnam: A Television History**, and **Berkeley in the Sixties** will be shown. Between segments of the films a panel including MSU History Department faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students will discuss the footage.

Tuesday, November 19, 1991, 7:30pm. Keynote Address on "The Vietnam War, A Turning Point in the Cold War?" by Professor George Herring of the University of Kentucky.

Wednesday, November 20, 1991, 11:00am. Panel discussion of "The U.S. Conduct of the War." Professor John F. Guilmartin of Ohio State University will speak for twenty minutes on "U.S. Military Victory Was Possible" and Professor Joseph Caddell of Saint Mary's College, Raleigh, NC, will speak for twenty minutes on "Restraints in the Vietnam War: Their Logic and Consequences." The two speakers will then participate in a discussion with MSU faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

Wednesday, November 20, 1991, 2:00pm. Panel discussion on "The War in America," Professor Howard D. Embree of MSU will speak for twenty minutes on "Opposition to the War," and Mr. Peter Braestrup will speak for twenty minutes on "The Media and the War." The two speakers will then participate in a discussion with MSU faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

Wednesday, November 20, 1991, 7:00pm. The keynote speaker, the panelists listed above, and MSU students will participate in a scholarly debate on "The Meaning of Vietnam for America Today."

The Forum is open to the public. For information contact Lorenzo M. Crowell, History Department, Mississippi State University, PO Drawer H, Mississippi State, MI 39762; (601) 325-3604.

## Outlook

**Outlook: National Lesbian and Gay Quarterly** (ISSN 0089-7733), 2940 16th St., Suite 319, San Francisco, CA 94103-9755, 415-626-7929. In Volume 4, Number 1, Summer 1991, see Special Section including "Lesbians at War with the Military," p 14, a dossier edited by Allan Berube and Rebecca Isaacs (see list of 12 books about gays and women in the military, p. 27), "Murder in the Women's Army Corps," p. 17, an interview with Pat Bond about "the nightmare of military witch-hunts," and "The Implications of Militarism," p 22, an interview with Cynthia Enloe, "can we fight war *and* exclusion?" Cynthia Enloe, chair of the Government Department at Clark University, is the author of *Does Khaki Become You: The Militarization of Women's Lives* (UK: Pandora Press, 1988), that important study of the influence of military experience of some upon people in general. The author's note reveals her as, sure enough, a Vietnam War Author: "CE's graduate work in Asian politics led her to Malaysia in the mid-1960s, where she studied the politics of ethnic minorities in the midst of the US military build-up in Southeast Asia."

An outstanding magazine, something a person can actually read. Some damp poetry and Latinate attitudinizing, but mostly intelligent opinions about life in the great world. The editors have their ears open to the fantastically fertile universe of amateur periodicals, the 'zines where smart people are writing for their friends these days, and of course they live in a world that nine-tenths of the population don't see. I hear they had a recent palace revolution about whether or not white women can report on women of color. A year's subscription, for four issues of about 90 pp each, is \$18.

## The Wall

Ellen Pinzur, in response to the Editorial in 3.1 Newsletter: "Veterans Day at the Wall":

I haven't been at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial during the Persian Gulf situation, but I was there on Veterans Day in 1988. I was dismayed by the overwhelming martial display everywhere. I, too, am appalled by the

apparent takeover by rightists at the Wall. I have often wondered why antiwar Vietnam vets don't mount their own displays.

But, I, too understand that the people who come to pay their respects at the memorial deserve to be let alone with their own thoughts.

With that in mind, I'd like to provide you, and possibly the *Newsletter* readership, if you think it's worthwhile, with comments from relatives of four of the men whose names are on The Wall (from interviews I conducted for my Master's Thesis).

**Robert Winslow Belcher**

**November 11, 1945—April 11, 1968**

**Panel 34E, Line 61**

Bob's mother, Lois, said:

I go, as I told you, twice a year usually.... But I've never laid a note or anything there. It's a very moving thing. I was struck by the demeanor of the people. The first time we went was before they even had the walk; you know, it was all mud and everything like that. And that's a tribute. That's the *unsung* tribute. There's a lot of people who are trying to make up—it's a wonderful [crying].

Lois added that watching the television movie about making the memorial "was a big help." She asked me to say to Jan Scruggs that she is:

One of the *millions*, no thousands, of parents who is deeply grateful to him that he pursued his dream of getting that memorial built; it couldn't be more appropriate. It just couldn't be, with that black marble—seeing yourself—it just couldn't be more appropriate. Seeing yourself even as you're standing there.

**John Alden Countaway, Jr.**

**May 4, 1947—May 8, 1968**

**Panel 56E, Line 37**

Jay's mother, Edie, told me that she has never been to the memorial, but she said:

I would love to go see it! It's just that I feel it might be a difficult thing to do, yet—in a way, I think we owe it, in a way we owe it to Jay to go.... We all have to do certain things that we particularly don't want to do. But I hear it's a beautiful memorial. It must really hit you when you see all those miles of names—and to think that each one of those names was a boy—or a nurse... This war for so many years it was like a forgotten war... The Memorial to me was a great thing... and *hopefully* we will be able to prevent other wars.

Edie explained that she has seen representations of the memorial, and various friends have sent her photographs of the panel with Jay's name:

It must be really mind-boggling to see all those names. Now, when I've ever thought about a memorial, I've always thought of a statue of a soldier or something like that. And I thought, "For crying out loud, that's, that's horrible! Black marble and all those names." And yet, the more I thought of it, the more I thought, "Well this is really more individualistic than some statue that doesn't look anything like any of the boys that might be, that died." So, then I had a complete change of, change of mind. I said, "It really is a beautiful memorial."

**Joseph Patrick Logan, Jr.**  
**June 7, 1943—May 29, 1968**  
**Panel 63W, Line 8**

Joe's sister, Cathleen Logan Walsh, told me:

I went down right after the Wall was built in Washington; it didn't have the walkway or anything, it was just basically there. I just wanted to check to make sure my brother's name was on it. And I thought to myself when I saw it—there's 58,000 names on that, and nobody ever thinks that's just the least of it—there are parents, close family members, wives—and I don't think people really realize the effect that that had on people.

Cathy added that although her mother has not been to the memorial:

I think she's glad I went. Just to make sure. You don't want [laughter]—they have this big monument, and you don't want *your* name left off [Laughter].

**Joseph Michael Pignato**  
**October 24, 1947—November 6, 1968**  
**Panel 39W, Line 29**

Joey's stepmother, Marlene, said:

I thought it was—it was unusual. When I first saw it, as you walk in, I—I didn't like it. Then, the more we looked at it [crying]—I thought it was nice.... I didn't [like it] when I first walked in, I just—it was so different. It wasn't something I was used to seeing.... After I really looked at it, then I did appreciate it. But at first glance, I didn't. It just—I don't know—it just gave me an odd feeling. When we entered the area there, there were of course a lot of people; and looking off in the distance, I just—it wasn't what I expected. I don't know what I did expect, but that wasn't it. But as you got up close and you could really see it, then I thought it was very impressive.

Joey's father, Joe, was particularly enthusiastic; contrasting his reaction to Marlene's, he said:

Not me—I liked it right off. Right from the start. The black onyx there, that the girl used, it stands out. There's no question that it

stand out.... That was another deal, because if that thing didn't get the money by soliciting, it wouldn't have been up there. So I was happy that somebody had done something. But it took too long to do it.... I thought it was beautiful. She [Marlene] didn't... to me, it looked all right. I suppose they could have put anything up and I would have liked it!

I just thought you'd be interested in what people directly involved with the memorial have to say.

*Ellen Pinzur, Cambridge, MA.*

## REAL WAR STORIES

Tod Ensign at *Citizen Soldier* mailed in the hot new edition of *Real War Stories*, the comic published by Tod and Eclipse Books and edited by Joyce Brabner, the activist familiar to many as a lead character in Harvey Pekar's annual *American Splendor*. From the publisher's statement: "What is Citizen Soldier? A nonprofit GI/veterans organization, founded in 1969, by both peace activists and Vietnam veterans. *Citizen Soldier* is dedicated to the principle that the U.S. military should respect, to the fullest possible extent, the civil and human rights of its members. Our newspaper, *ONGUARD*, brings a message of peace and non-intervention to active-duty personnel. It also provides a forum for GIs to discuss common problems and solutions." From the editor's statement: "Eclipse published *Real War Stories #1* on behalf of CCCO—the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, a non-profit military and draft counseling organization. The book made waves. In an Atlanta, Georgia, Federal Court, Lieutenant Colonel John Cullen, a special witness dispatched by the Department of Defense in an attempt to stop CCCO's distribution of the comic, testified that he did not find *Real War Stories* very real at all. Specifically, Cullen stated that "greasing," a vicious form of hazing portrayed in *Real War Stories #1*, did not exist. However, Lt. Col. Cullen's arguments were defeated after the U.S. Navy's own records were introduced as evidence."

The "greasing" Brabner talks about is a shipboard practice where a couple of sailors introduce a grease gun into a smaller man's lower G.I. tract. It sure as hell happens. It's the kind of routine bullying of the weak that it wouldn't occur to me to raise a stink about. You learn about it as a very young person, and spend the rest of your life reflexively making sure nobody ever targets you as weak. *Real War Stories* is for prospective members of the military, very young people. It doesn't focus on incidents like the massacre at My Lai, but tells about the daily hazards and indignities that follow on listening to orders. The first story, "Body Washing," written by Jim Naureckos, drawn by Bill Slenkewicz, and lettered by Kurt Hathaway, starts with the cruel drowning of a sailor by gung-ho naval lifeguard instructors, and goes on to explain the dangers military organization poses to servicemen and women who aren't free to refuse to work with incompetent supervisors, hazardous equipment, or

dangerous materials. The title refers to the practice of ascribing combat deaths in secret wars to industrial accidents at home. "War is a Racket," by Smedley Butler, adapted by Joyce Brabner, drawn by Wayne Van Sant, lettered by Diane Valentino and colored by Sam Parsons, is taken from Sam Spivak's 1934 interview with Major General Smedley D. Butler, USMC (ret.), a born-to-kill up-from-the-ranks lifer with two Congressional Medals of Honor. Butler explains all his wars as "racketeering" for U.S. commercial interests. "Citizen Soldier," written by Kim Yale, drawn by Dean Motter, and lettered by M. Eisman, starts with a montage from the G.I. Press Movement and gives an account of the present activities of Citizen Soldier. Includes a plug for *Military Life: The Insider's Guide*, an ARCO book by Tod Ensign (\$12.95 from Prentice Hall, Book Distribution Center, Route 59 at Brookhill Drive, West Nyack, NY 10995-9920), a list of "Agencies That Provide Military-Related Counseling," and a subscription form for *On Guard*. "Pool of Tears" by Greg Baisden and S. Destefano, invokes Carroll's Alice to talk about U.S. indulgence in military fantasy. "The Home Treatment" by Joyce Brabner, illustrated by Dennis Francis, lettered by Diane Valentino and colored by Sam Parsons, starts with the infamous Port Chicago incineration of black servicemen during World War II, and takes the opportunity to discuss the role of blacks in the U.S. military throughout history. "My Father and His Son" by Mike W. Barr and Mark Badger tells the story of a boy whose father died of a silly military accident while his son was small, and goes on to discuss Agent Orange and the recent court victory of a sailor who refused to handle hazardous waste without protection.

The fully illustrated stories are punctuated by a series of primer essays written by Tod Ensign and decorated by Rebecca Huntingdon. "The Weekend Warriors Go to War: The National Guard and Reserves" explains that these outfits are likely to serve in combat. "Homophobia in Uniform: Gays and Lesbians in the Military" covers the law on this topic. "Jar Wars: Military Urine Testing for Drugs" and "White Man's Army: Racism and Sexism in the Service" tell a teenager who can read what one hopes he or she doesn't have to learn the hard way.

The inside back cover is an ad for Paul Brancato and Sill Sienkewicz' fine "*Kennedy Assassination Trading Cards*. For the first time ever, all the conspiracy theories." (36 cards, \$9.95 from Eclipse Enterprises, P.O. Box 1099, Forestville, California, 95436) Other sets available, same price: *Iran Contra Scandal*, *The Bush League*, *Friendly Dictators*, and *Rotten to the Core*. Nice front cover of a pilot drowning in a faulty helicopter, back cover a What's Wrong With This Picture? rehearsing the contents of the book.

Overall a fine effort, should do well both as a document for Citizen Soldier in outreach to prospective military recruits and as a comic book. Some silly combat stories would have been nice, but there's always the next issue. I wish Brabner had cited sources for further reading. I hope maybe someday *Vietnam Generation* can do a comic book with her. Regularly \$4.95, *RWS* (ISBN 1-56060-072-1) is available for \$4.00 direct from Citizen Soldier, 175 Fifth Avenue, #808, NY NY 10010, 212-777-3470.

## REFUGEE ARTICLES

*The Seattle Post Intelligencer*, August 21 and 22, starting page one 8/21/91, has a lengthy and informative article on Seattle's Vietnamese, "Life in New World Pulls at Seams of Vietnam Culture." *P-I's* Pacific Rim Reporter Ron Redmond's excellent piece uses Mr. Oanh Ha as focus and foil for reviewing the principal issues in the refugee community. Mr. Ha came in 1981, earned an M.S.W. from the University of Washington, and works for the Lutheran Social Services and the Asian Counseling and Referral Service. The issues covered include: depression and disorientation among recent arrivals; the necessity for single-minded drive towards success; and division between 1975 refugees, boat people (1978-present), and participants in the Orderly Departure Program (1980-present, but principally since 1990). There are about 11,000 Vietnamese in Seattle; the fifth-largest Asian ethnic group in Washington. The Vietnamese have opened more than 400 small businesses in the city, and the young seem to do well in school. A lot of this information seems to come from Kim Long Nguyen, president of the Vietnamese Friendship Association, and executive director of the Refugee Federation Service Center on Rainier Avenue South. About 500 Vietnamese attend UW, and others attend local junior colleges and universities. Most of these students live with their families. Detective Richard Sanford of the Coordinated Criminal Investigations Squad/Asian Unit says that Seattle has fewer problems with Vietnamese gangs than other cities, because the Vietnamese community works closely with the police. The officer pointed to child-beating as a problem. As some children begin to behave as Americans, the parents react as Vietnamese, that is, with harsher beatings than U.S. social agencies like to see. Other issues: Depression is a problem for many Vietnamese-Americans, not only when an individual arrives ("I was more depressed when I came to America than I was in a communist re-education camp"), but after he or she knuckles down to work and represses his feelings for years. Other nuggets: Washington took 1,000 refugees from Camp Pendleton in 1975, and has taken more than 70 former prisoners since 1990 under Orderly Departure. Refugees now arriving, especially Amerasians and families of prisoners, lack education beyond the third grade. Other contacts: Robert Johnson, regional director for International Rescue Committee, Inc.; Vin Duc Vu, a program manager for the state Bureau of Refugee Assistance; Hiep Tran Thein, director of training and community relations for the International District office of the Employment Opportunities Center. A concurrent box article by Redmond discusses Amerasian refugees. Believe or not, they are called "My-lai," which Redmond translates as "half-breed." Without diacritics, I can't tell if that is the same as My Lai or not. I asked Huynh Sanh Thong, and I think he told me that they are the same syllables, but he's from Saigon and slurs the distinctions my Hanoi teachers taught me, so I'm not sure. I kept asking him for clarification, but it was embarrassing after a while. Does anyone know? He did say that the exact

translation is "Watered-down American." Anyways, the report focuses on Donny, Kathleen and Patricia Duffy, now in this country looking for their dad. 14,500 Amerasians have been brought to the U.S. since 1980, and 300 live in Seattle. Sindy Nguyen of the Catholic Community Services in Seattle says that Amerasians actually suffer worse from social rejection in the U.S. than they did in Vietnam. Black Amerasians face great difficulty. The Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987 allows anyone born in Vietnam after 1/1/62 and before 1/1/76, whose father was a U.S. citizen, to enter the U.S. with immigrant status and full refugee benefits. As many as 30,000 and their immediate families may show up. A contact: the Amerasian Project of Voluntary Agencies at 206-323-9450.

## RESIST

From an ad near the back of *Outlook Magazine*: "RESIST: We've been funding peace and social justice for 23 years; some recent grants include: Abortion Rights Fund of Western Mass. (Hadley, MA); ACT UP/LA (CA); Concord Feminist Health Center (NH); Gay & Lesbian Resource Center (Des Moines, IA); Gay Community News (Boston, MA); Lambda Rights Network (Milwaukee, WI); National Latina/Lesbian & Gay Organization (Washington, DC); Puerto Rican Women's Committee (Boston, MA); Southeastern Conference for Lesbians and Gay Men '90 (Raleigh, NC); Texas Lesbian Conference (San Antonio, TX); and The Women's Project (Little Rock AR)."

For information, grant guidelines, or to make a donation (and receive their newsletter), write to: RESIST, Box OL, One Summer St., Somerville, MA 02143, 617-623-5110.

## Rising Like the Tucson

My favorite novel from the war so far. Funny as hell, very smart. It's set in a specific time and place, not "in Vietnam." It isn't a naive memoir dressed up as a dumb novel. It includes a wide range of ranks and MOS's. It includes a number of Vietnamese of differing backgrounds. The protagonist knows exactly as much Vietnamese as I do, and we hear his efforts at elementary conversation. There aren't any diacritics, but that's probably appropriate. The author joins Daniel Ellsberg, David Marr and Keith Taylor as an Intelligence vet who's done something smart. The overarching story is about a U.S. entrepreneur trying to do business in Vietnam, and is terrifically appropriate to the carnival that will erupt soon enough with normalization. Great scenes: an American trying to make friends by offering a little girl a candy bar, while his ARVN translator tells her it's rat poison and she better tell where the VC are; a lieutenant shooting his squad one by one in the rows of the Michelin plantation; an officer and two men scaring hell out of each other as they get up off the ground after playing dead when their firebase was overrun. There's a good review in *Books*, Section 14, p. 8, Chicago Tribune, September 8, 1991, by Marc Leepson of *Veteran* magazine.

Here's the press release: *Rising like the Tucson* (Doubleday; September 16, 1991; \$20) by Jeff Danziger is a fast-paced darkly comic novel about the final chaotic stages of the U.S. war in Vietnam, when defeat was called disengagement, disengagement was known as Vietnamization, and Vietnamization wasn't working. In the midst of this ruin is Lieutenant Kit, a Vietnamese translator who doesn't understand Vietnamese, as ineffectual a soldier as they come. "The army made a great many mistakes in its prosecution of a victory. Making Lieutenant Kit an officer was just one of them."

It's 1969. Tens of thousands of American lives have been lost and billions of dollars sunk into the war, and there's still only talk of a negotiated settlement. Is it possible that there may be no payoff? Not according to Kit's crass father, a real estate developer in southern Connecticut. But he has a different kind of settlement in mind. One that will include malls, hotels and office buildings in what he envisions as the "Saigon metropolplex." Guided by Kit, who supposedly knows the lay of the land and speaks the language, his real estate consortium will buy up land during the war, before the prices skyrocket. "With American help," Kit's father predicts in a letter to his son, the "whole damn country is going to rise like a Tucson from its ashes!"

Under the black hilarity and violent confusion of this remarkable novel runs a serious accusation of deadly American mismanagement of the end of the war, and of shameful political games played with soldiers left there during Vietnamization. The desperate investment scheme itself—with its hopes for riches in a ruined land, and its blithe ignorance of the impending defeat—brilliantly reveals the deep separation between generations, between hawks and doves, and finally, between illusion and reality.

Jeff Danziger is a political cartoonist for the *Christian Science Monitor* and for the *Los Angeles Times* syndicate. He served in Vietnam as an intelligence officer with the First Air Cavalry Division in 1970 and 1971. Some mutual friends from a Vermont newspaper tell me he's personally respected in the state.

## Saigon Mission

The newsletter of "The Saigon Mission Association, Inc., 6934 Willow Oak Drive, San Antonio, TX 78249, "FOUNDED BY THE LAST AMERICANS TO LEAVE SOUTH VIETNAM" showed up here. It's five double-sided typed pages, mailed first-class, mostly devoted to the necessary business of a non-profit corporation, minutes of the directors' meetings and such. Some opinion pieces. Also obituaries, notices of old friends, and a report on the annual reunion. There are regional chapters of the organization in Ohio, Korea, the Philippines, and Japan. The "Goals of the Saigon Mission Association, Inc.: Promote friendship and cooperation between Americans who served in Vietnam and Vietnamese who worked for contractors, members of the Vietnamese Armed Forces and their dependents. Preserve personal friendships and memories among those who served in Vietnam and

provide a source for news of these people. Meet annually as well as publish newsletters to foster this fellowship. Pool knowledge concerning communications and support of those still in Vietnam via telephone, telegraph, mail, and freight. Establish a volunteer sponsorship program to support Vietnamese families and individuals remaining in Vietnam and living in refugee camps. Coordinate with other organizations throughout the world, especially in the U.S., in promoting the preceding article." The newsletter comes with membership in the organization, which is "Open to all US citizens and foreign nationals who directly served with or supported the US Mission to the Republic of Vietnam. Service may have been in country or from without—such as from an outside command (PACOM) or a neighboring country (USAHAC); in-country contractor personnel are also eligible. Others who do not meet the eligibility requirements but who have interests in common may join as ASSOCIATES but will not be eligible to vote or hold office." Regular membership, \$10/yr. Associate \$5/yr. make check payable to SMA and send to SMA Treasurer, Box 722, Anacortes, WA 98221.

## SESTO VECCHI

This American attorney practiced law in Saigon from 1966 to 1974, as reported in the June issue. He has made several trips to Vietnam in the past year, and sent this report in a letter of September 20:

"I made an observation during a visit to Ho Chi Minh City earlier this month which made me smile. I was surprised to learn that the name of Nguyen Thi Minh Kai Street will once again be rue Pasteur, the once elegant street of large villas and manicured lawns. I am sure that there is a story to be told why this street, so well-known under the French and which kept its name until after 1975, will be changed, and why Ms. Khai, a Vietnamese heroine, has had such a brief appearance on stage. Research done at the scientific Institute Pasteur, in Ho Chi Minh City, can be said to transcend the politics of name. On the other hand, there are plenty of cynics. One view is that the southerners are intent on going back in time. Another view—the view on the street—is that Ms. Kai's exit is tied to large French Government grant. Wherever the truth lies, I believe it will be quite sometime before the area in front of the Cathedral will be renamed John F. Kennedy Square."

Mr. Vecchi has published widely in the last few years on the possibilities of doing business in Vietnam. His letter accompanied a xerox of his article from *East Asian Executive Reports*, July 1991, Volume 13, number 7, "Operating in Unstructured Legal Environments: The Vietnam Model," offering sound advice on doing business in a country where what little commercial law there is lacks a strong history of enforcement and interpretation. Vecchi suggests that a cautious, long-term approach stressing high ethics and personal commitment is the best approach. His firm is Kaplan, Russin, Vecchi & Kirkwood, 90 Park Avenue, NY, NY 10016-1387.

## GOODBYE TO JOHN STEINBECK IV

John Steinbeck IV died on February 7, 1991, of cardiac arrest after routine back surgery. He was the author of the classic Vietnam War memoir, *In Touch*. He'd been hailed as "a second Steinbeck"—which he authentically was. Many years later, having published no other books, John sought to have his memoirs reprinted, augmented by some essays and more recent writing. But he was told by his publisher that his book was inappropriate to reprint, that it was "too much of its time" — another way of labeling it as dated and unreadable, which it is not.

Before meeting John Steinbeck IV in person, my impressions of him were formed by his book (and the lean and hungry picture of him on the cover), by a few brief letters, and by a couple of long telephone calls. When I finally met him in 1985 at Firebase Colorado, which he helped me to organize (he was living in Boulder at the time), I was shocked by his appearance. He was fat, breathless, terribly unhealthy in appearance. He seemed not long for this world. He was so far from the slender, intense, active young man of just a few years ago that I was unable to establish, in person, the easy intimacy that had been possible on the telephone. We spoke very briefly and never managed to get back together again.

I kept a first edition of his memoir on my desk for months, intending to send it to him for an inscription, but I never got around to it. Tipping in a signed letter would be silly and would fool me for a second into thinking I'd been a friend to a man who had been a great comfort to talk to when I had been going through a troubled time. John was a gifted and compassionate counselor and friend, and I miss him. I missed him even before he was gone.

It's very hard for me to deal with the effects of aging and disease, even though I know that none of us can remain forever young and healthy. But John was only 44 years old when he died. A young man really. A man with plans for publishing an autobiography in which he intended to examine the genetics of chemical addiction, and to trace what he believed to be his father's alcoholism to his own. But he was really just another son of a great man, a son who never lived up to the fabulous predictions made for him after his first and only book was published, and who never came to terms with being John Steinbeck.

John left a brother, Tom Steinbeck, a wife Nancy, and three children, Megan, Blake, and Michael.

I still keep John's unsigned book on my desk to remind me not to lose track of my friends. In my last letter from John, he said that "signs seem good" for a publishing project with Knopf. He closed, "Let me hear from you — John." I never got back to him.

*David Willson, author of REMF Diary, is a Contributing Editor to the Vietnam Generation Newsletter.*

## PRAISE FOR BAKY

I would like to share with other scholars studying the Vietnam War a word of praise for the "Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War" collection at La Salle University. I am preparing a course on the literature and film of the Vietnam War and have just returned from a week of research in that special collection. The collection is extraordinarily comprehensive (the largest in the world in its area), well-organized, and diverse, containing novels, short stories, comics, films, filmscripts, videos, TV productions, plays, poetry, music, graphic arts, and packaged games. The collection is also user-friendly: I was given access to a locked, spacious workroom with a large table and an easy chair in front of the VCR. Best of all was the expert assistance of the collection's bibliographer, John Baky. Mr. Baky sent me an annotated list of videos in advance so I could prioritize the ones I wanted to see, and once I started working and new lines of inquiry emerged, he saved me hours of time by drawing relevant items to my attention. He was also able to tell me about research in progress around the country, so that I became more familiar with our community of scholars. Mr. Baky was extraordinarily helpful in making my limited time at La Salle as productive as possible.

On the basis of my experience, I highly recommend the "Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War" collection at La Salle University in Philadelphia to other scholars and teachers in the field.

Margaret E. Stewart, English Department, Washburn University of Topeka

## SYMPOSIUM ON VIETNAMESE HISTORY

A central event at this year's Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute at Cornell University was the Symposium on Vietnamese History, July 19-21. Keith Taylor, author of *The Birth of Viet Nam*, invited the leading historians in his field to each prepare an essay on one document important to Vietnamese history. Participants did not read their papers. Instead, each listened to a summary and critique of his argument by another participant, made a reply, and then answered questions from participants at large and the symposium audience. Xeroxes of the papers were available in the hall. Participants and their papers: Cong Tu Nguyen, Harvard, "Is the *Thien uyen tap anh* a 'Transmission of the Lamp' Text?"; K.W. Taylor, Cornell, "Voices within and without: tales on stone and paper about Do Anh Vu (1114-1159)"; John K. Whitmore, Michigan, "Ching-hsing and Cheng-t'ung in Dai Viet: the historiography of and on the 16th century"; Alexander B. Woodside, British Columbia, "Central Vietnam's trading world in the eighteenth century as seen in Le Quy Don's Frontier Chronicles"; Tran Quoc Vuong, Hanoi, "The Legend of Ong Gigong from the text to the field"; Nguyen The Anh, National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, "Texts related to the Vietnamization of the Cham deity Po Nagar"; Tra Tong Hiep, National Center for Scientific Research and University of Paris 7, "Chinese

historical folklore in ancient Vietnam: commentary on a text in *Linh nam chich quai*, the 'Viet tinh' notice;" "Historical sites and local festivals in northern Viet Nam: a slide presentation by Virginia Gift;" Ha Van Tan, Institute of Archaeology, Hanoi, "Inscriptions from the 10th to 14th centuries recently discovered in Viet Nam"; Micheline Lessard, Cornell, "Jesuit perceptions of the Vietnamese;" Vinh Sinh, Alberta, "Elegant Females' Re-encountered: From Tokai Sanshi's *Kajin no kigu* to Phan Chau Trinh's *Giai nhan ky ngo dien ca*;" Shawn McHale, Cornell, "Charting the Rise of Women's Self-awareness in Colonial Vietnam: Women's Equality and Woman's Liberation from *Nu gioi chung* (1918) to *Phu nu tau van* (1929-34)"; William J. Duiker, Pennsylvania State, "Ho Chi Minh's *Duong cach menh*;" David G. Marr, Australian National University, "Ho Chi Minh's *Tuyen ngon doc lap*;" Christopher Giebel, Cornell, "Telling Life: An Approach to the Official Biography of Ton Duc Thang;" Hue-Tam Ho Tai, Harvard, "Of Myths and Mausoleums: The Cult of Ho Chi Minh in Viet Nam;" Patricia Pelley, Cornell, "History as Essence: Spirit and Transcendence in the New History of the Nation;" Wm. Theodore de Bary, Columbia, Comments; Benedict Anderson, Cornell, Comments; General Discussion.

It was a hot weekend in a hall without air conditioning. Everyone dripped with sweat. The speakers sat around a hollow square of long tables, with their name-cards facing across the square. The audience sat in rows ranking back from three sides of the square. Everything went smoothly: each participant was well-miked, and the format made for lively discussion among experts, rather than a series of talking heads. Sitting in the audience, I felt like I was eavesdropping on Southeast Asian Studies, which suits me fine. You have to know two kinds of Chinese, modern Japanese (for the scholarship), French, English and two ways of reading Vietnamese to get anywhere in this field, and a familiarity with Sanskrit and Lao and Khmer and Thai doesn't hurt, and I'm not going to live that long. Many of the historians showed marked literary sophistication. Alexander Woodside was just one of several who displayed an unusual acquaintance with Roman poetry in illustrating his points. It was a privilege to hear so many leading minds argue. Some attendees actually in the field felt insufficiently included by the seating and procedure. Moreover, the conference papers weren't available in xerox to the audience until Saturday morning, so it was hard to have anything to say when discussion was opened to the floor. It was also remarked that all the graduate students among the speakers were from Cornell. You can't please everyone.

SEASSI Director John Wolff greeted the audience at the beginning of the proceedings. He remarked that Vietnamese Studies have come a long way since they commenced in this country 30 years ago. Even 10 years ago, most of the work centered on the war, but that focus is now a thing of the past. Keith Taylor's undergraduate lecture classes on the full history of Vietnam are regularly oversubscribed. After Wolff spoke, the conference proper started. I've got notes on most of the discussion; give me a call if you're curious. I imagine the papers are available through Cornell or from the individual authors.

## USE OUR BOOKS !

The back of this newsletter contains a list of the titles of all the *Vietnam Generation* special issues and gives their contents. Each book is an excellent anthology of recent scholarship on its special topic, attractively bound and reasonably priced. Please use our back issues in your courses on the war, on the 60s, and in general surveys of Afro-American Studies, Women's Studies and American Studies.

Vietnam Generation, Inc. was established to meet your needs as researchers, as authors, and as instructors. We will continue to provide information, resources and a forum for your research. You can help us survive if you and your colleagues use our journal issues as course texts. A volume discount of 20% is available to all teachers.

## THE VIETNAM NEWSLETTER

A newsletter for those interested in doing business in Vietnam. I have in my hands Vol. 1, No. 20, June 15, 1991, pages numbered 125-132. There's a lot of expensive garbage in the business newsletter world, but this looks like eight pages of information. There are two pages of **Highlights**, two pages of export statistics, a basic article on "Vietnam's Agricultural Industry," a two-page "Overview of the Draft Political Report to the Seventh Party Congress," and a very nice reprint of Pham Thanh's *New York Times* op-ed from the Gulf War, "Not All the Ghosts were Buried, Nor Should They Be," also reprinted in the April 20-21 edition of the *International Herald Tribune*. Each page is 8 1/2" by 11," with three columns. The annual subscription is \$650/yr, for 23 issues plus two indices. When I was a consultant we would have repackaged the information from one issue and sold it to a client for a few thousand, so that's not out of line. As to whether a business executive would find a subscription a worthwhile expense, I have no idea. I can say that *The Vietnam Newsletter* is well written, carefully edited, dense with specific information, tastefully produced, and makes an effort to provide its reader with some of the larger pictures that will be necessary for acting in the new business environment in Vietnam. It's hard not to like a commercial letter that quotes the Second Inaugural above its masthead, "With malice toward none, with charity for all . . . let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds."

The masthead: "*The Vietnam Newsletter* is a semi-monthly newsletter produced by Kingship Limited, Room 2101, Causeway Bay Centre, 15-23 Sugar Street, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. Tel.: (852) 576 8573. Tlx.: 61584 AHEAD HX. Fax.: (852) 576 8846. *The Vietnam Newsletter* is a joint venture between Kingship Limited and Tilleke & Gibbins R.O.P. and affiliate Tilleke & Gibbins Consultants Limited - Vietnam Consultants, Bangkok, Thailand. Editor and Publisher: Mathilde L. Genovese. Copy Editor: Donald B. Ellis. Researchers: Kingship Limited and Tilleke & Gibbins Consultants Limited. Statistician: Drew B. Vella. *The Vietnam Newsletter* utilizes research and information provided

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## WAR BOOK SALE

Tom Hebert, Vietnam Bookman, 5 Marlene Drive, Burlington, CT 06013 is offering every item on his list at half price. Hebert has all the standards and many unusual items, already reasonably priced. Contact Hebert for the catalogue. It includes one-sentence descriptions. A fine opportunity for collectors, readers, and those who need a working library.

## A Quick Quiz

The test on the following pages was presented to the audience at a panel presentation in the Vietnam Studies Area during the Popular Culture Association conference, San Antonio, 1991. It was the product of a collaboration between four participants in the NEH-sponsored seminar on Teaching the Vietnam War held during the summer of 1990 at the Indochina Institute of George Mason University. All the attributed statements contained in the text are direct quotations taken from the various teachers, speakers and lecturers who staffed the seminar. Your tax dollars at work....

## VIETNAMESE STUDIES BULLETIN

*The Vietnamese Studies Bulletin*, the voice of the Association for Asian Studies, Southeast Asia Council, Vietnam Studies Group, is appearing again. Volume 7, Number 1 came out in April 1991, with a promise to show up twice a year. The next one is due in October. The William Joiner Center has taken on the project. From David Hunt's editorial letter: "I am sending this issue to everyone on the list transferred to the Joiner Center by Edwin Moise, the last editor, and others who have expressed interest or who seem like potential subscribers. Please let me know if you wish to be included or if your address has changed. Most of you have already paid for subscriptions and are still owed issues, and for the time being the *Bulletin* will go free to newcomers. Once we are back on schedule, there will time to take up the question of subscriptions." Five double-sided typed pages, reports

# THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM

Compiled by: Siggson, Sibert, Terrill, McCarthy  
July 25, 1990

## 1. True or False

- "Truth is varied" (Summers)
- "Power flows the way the money goes" (Murray)
- "Propaganda is truthful communication" (Zorthian)
- "The Third world is no more" (*American Heritage Magazine*)
- "The Vietnam War started with Sputnik" (Rostow)
- "LBJ was chicken" (Braestrup)
- "We [U.S.] created a South Vietnam that could defend itself" (Colby)
- "Truth has a slow fuse" (Murray)
- "The Domino Theory was indeed valid" (Stearman)
- "There can never be another Vietnam" (Stearman)

## 2. Multiple Choice

The Press Corps in Vietnam was:

- a) responsible for allied defeat
- b) too democratic
- c) on drugs (Murray)
- d) buying mansions in Bermuda (Murray)
- e) a scapegoat (Braestrup)
- f) all of the above

The NVA were successful because:

- a) they were seven feet tall
- b) they were ten feet tall
- c) they controlled the population through fear
- d) all the Viet Cong guerrillas were defeated in 1968
- e) some of the above

Ho Chi Minh was:

- a) a Nationalist with a capital "N"
- b) a nationalist with a small "n"
- c) a communist with a small "c"
- d) a man with twenty different names
- e) ceased to exist after 1968

Since almost all Viet Cong guerrillas were eliminated in 1968, the American casualties (about 25,000) from 1968-1972 must have resulted from:

- a) swimming accidents
- b) drug abuse
- c) whorehouse mishaps
- d) NVA action
- e) all of the above

There were:

- a) three Vietnams
- b) two Vietnams
- c) one Vietnam
- d) "if you believe one Vietnam we can't talk" (Summers)
- e) none of the above

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident

- a) never happened
- b) might have happened
- c) consisted of one attack
- d) consisted of two attacks
- e) is on display in the Hanoi War Museum
- f) was proven by *good* sonar
- g) was disproven by *good* sonar
- h) is still classified by U.S. government
- i) is irrelevant
- j) is plausibly deniable

3. Matching

Column A

- "piss ant war" (Murray)
- "the big war"
- "bird entrails"
- "an honorable man" (Dommen)
- "peckerwood"
- "safer than Washington, DC in 1974"
- "masters of management"
- "the final domino" (Rostow)

Column B

- a. American Revolution
- b. Richard Nixon
- c. Ngo Dinh Diem
- d. Lyndon B. Johnson
- e. New York City
- f. Saigon
- g. Gen. William Westmoreland
- h. World War II
- i. U.S. generals
- j. India
- k. S. Vietnamese cabinet intelligence

4. Multiple choice

Obstacles to victory in Vietnam:

- a) democracy
- b) morality
- c) the press
- d) the U.S. Congress
- e) the American people
- f) all of the above

5. Fill in the blanks

Give us \_\_\_\_\_ (A)

and we'll give you \_\_\_\_\_ (B)

Column A

- Liberty
- Pearl Harbor
- a secret bombing
- the press corps
- a "piss ant war"
- bird entrails
- Curtis Lemay
- the truth
- a pudgy thumb
- a victory
- the Phoenix Program
- a Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
- Sputnik
- one Vietnam

Column B

- Death
- Hiroshima
- a Kent State
- an obstacle
- a Vietnam Memorial
- intelligence
- a peace talk negotiator
- a slow fuse
- a domino
- a defeat
- amnesty
- a War Powers Act
- the Vietnam War
- end of discussion

on "Economic Renovation in Vietnam Conference" from William Turley, "History of the Indochina War Conference," from David Hunt, "Conference on Vietnam's Economic and Social Reforms: Policies and Performance," from David Marr, a list of more than thirty "Graduate Students Working on Vietnam-Related Topics," about 20 items of "Other Research in Progress," 11 "Visiting Vietnamese Scholars," two pages of "Teaching, Research, and Study in Vietnam," an announcement of last summer's SEASSI, and miscellaneous "Notes." Write for subscription or send news to David Hunt, editor, *Vietnam Studies Bulletin*, William Joiner Center, Harbor Campus, UMASS/Boston, Boston MA 02125.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWS IN VIETNAM

17 September 1991—The Vietnam News Agency (VNA), based in Hanoi, has recently successfully expanded its English-language publications.

Previously, it had only been producing the 16-page weekly bulletin, *Vietnam Weekly*. *Vietnam Weekly* has now been coming out for just over seven years. In mid-June this year, the VNA commenced its (as yet) 6-day-a-week daily, *Vietnam News*. At 1200 dong (just over one US dollar) in Hanoi, and 1500 dong (for better quality paper) in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), the four-page tabloid is not aimed at indigenous English speakers since the monthly income for many public servants is only about 60,000 dong.

*Vietnam News* front pages contain mainly domestic stories, but also any international news that includes mention of Vietnam. For instance, Vietnam/Australia cooperation on gold mining, a group of US citizens (including war veterans) doing a 'peace walk' from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City to pressure Bush to lift the economic blockade, and diplomatic exchanges, such as the separate farewell given by the Vietnamese President and Premier to the Australian Ambassador, Graham Alliband.

There are usually two pages of international news, broken up according to continent or region, and with all such areas getting some prominence, and not just those with "crisis" news values. A lengthy interview with a prominent politician or an authoritative 'inform-atorial' (the *New York Times* calls them "news analyses") is common, as is a display ad for some commodity available in Ho Chi Minh City. There is also an occasional column where English-speaking foreigners give their thoughts on Vietnam. The back page is usually sports (often international sports coverage, where Vietnam is not mentioned at all), TV, and other entertainment, and weather (which matters a lot in a Third World country).

Contact addresses: Vietnam News Agency, Mr. Nguyen Kuyen, 79 Ly Thuong Kiet, Hanoi. Phone (42)54693 or (42)53508; FAX: (42)59617; Telex: (41)2311 VNP-VT. *Vietnam Weekly* is available in Australia at the ANU Australian National University Library, Asia-Pacific Division; contact George Miller, Canberra, 2600 Australia. *Vietnam Courier*, edited by Mr. Phan Doan Nam, 46

Tran Hung Dao, Hanoi; phone (42)53998; available care of the Vietnamese Embassy, 6 Timbarra Crescent, O'Malley, 2606, Australia; phone (06)2866059.

From Peter McGregor, Lecturer, University of Western Sydney, Nepean, Australia

## WARD JUST

*The Translator*, by Ward Just, 313 pp., A Richard Todd Book/Houghton Mifflin. 1991. \$21.95. From the Wednesday, 9/11/91 New York Times review by Herbert Mitgang: "Paris serves as a place of liberation for two expatriates, one from Vietnam-torn America, one from guilt-ridden Germany. Read purely as a story of a couple who find each other and then are tripped by circumstances or as an allegory for the state of the divided world, Mr. Just's 11th novel proves his growing mastery of fiction with something urgent to say. It's rather daring of Mr. Just—whose previous novels and short stories are rooted in his background as a journalist in Washington and Vietnam—to make his protagonist a German this time out. Sydney, the translator of the title, learned American English while working for the occupation forces. His father had been a staff officer, though not a Nazi, who was executed in the final months of the war; his widowed mother lives in East Germany. Sydney finds freedom from the past in Paris, where he works as a translator for a foundation that is secretly financed by the Central Intelligence Agency during the height of the cold war. In Paris he marries Angela, an attractive American with a wealthy but distant father. She is trying to recover after her brother has been killed in Vietnam." James Jones makes a cameo appearance, and so does someone who talks like Heinrich Böll.

I haven't seen this book yet, but I bet it's good. Former correspondent Ward Just's novels are all *de facto* Vietnam War books, which fact provides delightful ballast to his fascination with the techniques of Henry James. He manages to write interior monologues for public people, without drooling over the powerful as fellow establishment journalists David Halberstam and Neal Sheehan do in their alleged non-fiction, e.g. the star-struck dramaturgy of the funeral scene at the start of *The Bright Shining Lie*, and the Cabinet scenes in *The Best and the Brightest*.



plenty of odd moments in a war—I began to recast Homer in my head. I had read him carefully enough all right; I just hadn't understood. I soon found out just how much I had remembered and how many of those tired old scenes were charged now with a significance I had to learn.

All those episodes I had riffled through so casually now became important to me. If marrow did burble, if Homer somehow had firsthand knowledge on that score, what else did he know that I didn't? I recalled one thing: Homer didn't think much of modern men. "That's the way men are now," he would sneer, *hoioi nun brotoi etsi*, to explain why the old deeds looked so hopelessly grand to us. Sure enough, all the old soldiers from Korea or World War II, "the one wit' thuh numbar," scorned us kids: "You should have seen a real war!" Homer knew that.

And what got you killed? That hadn't changed either: *Spheterin atasthaliesen*, that is, your own foolishness. Homer knew that, too. And Homer seemed to know what goes wrong with even good men. He forgets and calls Aegisthos, lover of Clytemnaestra and murderer of Agamemnon, *amumonos*, that is, blameless, when he should be *dolometis*, duplicitous. So good men do dumb things and wicked for passion's sake. But do they cease even so to be good?

And how did Odysseus know enough to dodge Nausikaa, the nymph? And Circe the witch? By what intuition would a middle-aged man just back from a long war turn down offers like that? What made him reluctant to "put your sword in its sheath", *koleo aor theo*, as he was invited to do? Just what did he put—and where—for a year on that island? Why would such women as Nausikaa, Calypso, Circe find a tired, scarred, old man attractive, anyhow?

Homer understood all that, as I was beginning to. He knew about digging foxholes, *taphroorkute*, in any event. He knew about drugs, too, *athinon ediar*, flowery food, that sapped the will to go home. At night we listened to the *stubarophthongos luros*, the deep-voiced lyre, play us *aoiden neotaten*, the song freshest to men's ears. At that time it was the Animals and "House of the Rising Sun", *rhododactulos Eos*. Some of my buddies chased the *eudzonai*, well-girdled women of that Fortress to the East we had come to sack. Sorry. . . . come to save.

Homer had evidently met my buddies, too. He sang of *hyperphialos*, wiseapple Ajax, a good man in a fight but a pain in the ass when drunk back in camp. *Okupos*, swiftfooted, were all of us kids who wanted so badly to be heroes like Achilles. I never did like Achilles for my part, though, and the only thing I remembered about him was that he didn't enjoy being dead. Most of us trusted *polutropos*, "been-around" Odysseus, who knew the score and planned on going home. Odysseus was not averse to hiding behind a tree and whomping someone whose back was turned. The *hippos xestos*, "horse of wood" was after all the symbol of guerilla warfare and the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg in those days.

What had bored me at school saved me now. As I sat through ambushes, at relay sites, on security, in darkness, all those infinitely rich episodes came back to me. Now they beguiled the numbing reality of patience, by which guerrilla warfare is waged, through the very thing I had rejected them for in class. Each episode was a puzzle. I

was grateful for puzzles now. Those Homeric scenes were, I swear it, treasures I hoarded more jealously than any simple souvenir. Memories have only one face; Homer had a thousand, enough for the thousand moments of brute monotony. I came dimly to suspect that if Homer had known what he was talking about, maybe Goethe did, too. Rabelais. Cervantes.

Safe and cynical today, I cannot seem to set down here the depth of my gratitude to those swirling images of long-dead only-too-human heroes. I had found out firsthand that Homer knew what he was talking about. It had not been an act of faith, though, and I was a little ashamed that I had made him prove it to me. I had challenged him, lumpishly and brutally, to come up with proof. I chose to validate the poet's insight—and this is worse—by simple test of his knowledge of the absurdity of combat, of anatomy to be exact. I had required that whole shabby cataclysm to be staged so that I could see.

Did it come to this for everyone? And how did Homer's unerring eye for savagery qualify him to speak to me about sexuality, honor, despair, hope? Was I justified in concluding that someone with so faithful a regard for detail would not have missed telling detail elsewhere, or at least not likely?

And did Homer like or dislike war? Of course he disliked it, without for an instant dreaming that so silly a creature as man would ever find another way: *spheteresin atasthaliesin*, remember? The leaders of Troy, *gerai polemoio pepaumenoi*, "don't fight any more because they are old." They sure do talk a lot, though, *esthloi agorontai*. And the men who fight will probably never know any more of the reason why than the Greeks did about Argive Helen: an unapproachable ideal and anything but virginal.

My guess, though, is that Homer cannot repress at least a grudging admiration for the excitement, the commotion, the grandeur released in battle. There is some sort of intensity in combat that he cannot seem to deride or dispel. The poet's unabashed adulation for his heroes, who owe all they are to war, is probably rightly damnable. Wouldn't some other kind of adversity or adventure do as well for the instruction of the young of their race and the gratification of their baser instincts? Homer doesn't rightly know, I suppose. If he did, I'm pretty sure he would have told us. He told us everything else.

Well, now I'm the middle-aged man with the scar. And I've wandered inland to settle, just like Odysseus. I still have the dog-eared old copy of the *Iliados* I carried all through the war. I keep it so I won't forget how many times I've huddled in fear with that paperback in the trouser-pocket of my fatigues and won't try to persuade myself I was ever a hero. And I guess you know that on the day Odysseus came home, *nostimon hemar*, his dog died and his wife looked at him funny and his friends threw things at him. He was probably happy for all that, even if Tennyson doesn't think so. But sometimes the old tales would make him cry, it seems to me. We can believe that a man like that cried.

Homer says so. And he was right about the marrow, wasn't he?

## FICTION: THE ROMANCE OF VIET NAM

Renny Christopher, *History of Consciousness, University of California, Santa Cruz*

With the publication of Danielle Steel's *Message from Nam* (Dell, 1990), it seems that the Viet Nam war has been thoroughly domesticated. Steel's book is not the first time Viet Nam has appeared in the Romance genre, however—Anthony Grey's *Saigon* (Dell, 1982) and Christie Dickason's *Indochine* (Bantam, 1987) precede it.

And before you stop reading because you think Romance novels are below consideration, consider this: more people have read Danielle Steel's vision of the Viet Nam war than Philip Caputo's or Tim O'Brien's.

*Message from Nam* is the story of Paxton Andrews, daughter of an emotionally repressed southern lady, who defies her family to go to college at UC Berkeley in 1964. In Berkeley she falls in love with and lives with Peter, the son of the owner of the fictional San Francisco newspaper *The Morning Sun*. (In many ways this novel breaks Romance genre conventions—or perhaps the conventions are changing rapidly. Paxton sleeps with three men she's not married to, and she says "Fuck off," a time or two.) Peter finishes law school, and is one month short of his 26th birthday when he's drafted. (Here's this guy, son of a rich and influential man, a lawyer himself, who doesn't want to be drafted, but can't think of a way out of it. Possible, but maddening because it misrepresents the real—poor, uneducated—victims of the draft.) Instead of assigning him to the JAG, the army makes him an infantry soldier, and he's killed immediately. This makes Paxton want to go to Viet Nam, so she gets Peter's father to hire her and send her as a correspondent. It's halfway through the novel before she arrives in Viet Nam. She spends two years there, during which time she has an affair with a Captain who's killed, and then with a sergeant who's MIA for the last third of the book. Paxton leaves Viet Nam after two years, is hired by the *New York Times*, and goes to Paris to cover the peace talks. She goes back to Saigon just before the end, and leaves on the last helicopter on April 29, 1975.

This novel, along with the other two, shows a nostalgia for French colonialism in Southeast Asia (as can be seen by the title alone of *Indochine*). In *Message from Nam* this nostalgia manifests itself in a series of comments about the city of Saigon: "If you squinted, you could almost tell yourself you were in Paris," and "The touch of France was still visible here in the decor, the food, and the menu," (188) and "It had been pretty once, when the French were there..." (p. 205) and "It was easy to believe that this had been a lovely city once, when it was French" (p. 224) and so forth.

The nostalgia for colonialism also manifests itself, in all three books, in the form of mixed-race characters. Oddly, however, the Romance genre constructs its Eurasians with Vietnamese fathers and French mothers, quite the opposite of the usual historical case. In *Message from Nam* France Tran is the equivalent of the "tragic

mulatto" so common in turn of the century American fiction. The girlfriend of an AP correspondent, she is a stereotype—beautiful, ladylike, unassuming, reticent, and not accepted either by the American family of the GI to whom she had been married when he was killed, or by the Vietnamese. Her fears of this lack of acceptance for herself and her mixed-race children lead her to her tragic and unlikely end.

It's fairly easy to take potshots at all the inaccuracies in *Message from Nam*. Steel, with the huge success of her books, could certainly have hired some poor old ex-army officer living in a retirement home to vet her manuscript, but her research is actually very poor. She has army personnel in Viet Nam "for a standard tour of 13 months" (p. 136). Paxton urges Peter to go to Canada after he's finished basic training, and then claims that someday he'd be able to come home again—Steel clearly doesn't understand the difference between draft-dodging and desertion. Paxton flies a military transport from California to Saigon, rather than a commercial airline charter. At a firebase, all the soldiers have .45s.

When Paxton's Captain boyfriend dies, she goes to collect from his effects anything that would indicate he was having an affair with her (he was married). According to the book, the army sent home "everything from his underwear to his postcards..." (p. 274). The book needs this action as a plot device, but in fact, the military censored personal effects sent home, so as not to offend parents and wives. Both the Captain and his sergeant are described as having served 4 tours. Paxton gets caught in a firefight, and she has to take the radio from a wounded, unconscious soldier to call in her own rescue. Somehow the RTO has had "his whole back blown open," (p. 313) but his radio still works.

All of those are serious and annoying factual errors. What's worse, though, are the murkier areas, where Steel is both confused and confusing, and gives some really false pictures of the war.

Steel's notion of a journalist's role seems to have been formed by something other than reading journalists' autobiographies. Paxton wants to go to Viet Nam because, "I want to understand what happened. I want to stop it from happening..." (p. 170). Not only is she a (quite unlikely) activist journalist, but also, nobody in the book shows any understanding of, or interest in trying to understand, the war, at anything other than a tactical level. We never see a single word that Paxton writes from Viet Nam, and none of her activities show her doing anything that would win her an understanding of the war. Further, her mother tells her, "You don't have to go to war"—Steel clearly conceptualizes being a correspondent as being a participant in the war. All of the soldiers (with one exception, who changes his mind later) and all of the officers are very friendly and cooperative and chummy with the reporters. And the kill ratio among journalists is just about as high as that among soldiers in this novel.

Worse, Steel has no real conception of geography, politics, or military matters, and she tries to write about them anyway. There are a couple of very confused action scenes, one set at a "firebase" in Nha Trang. There's some sort of daylight battle going on (all the battles Paxton

witnesses are in daylight), and a TV crew is covering some sort of "foreward movements," of the US Army vs. the NVA, supported by "planes dropping bombs," and ARVN howitzers in the distance, but the TV crew never leaves the firebase, which is itself being shelled. Don't ask me to figure out that one.

Far worse is the MIA thing. Tony, Paxton's last boyfriend, goes MIA during a big battle near Cu Chi in 1970. The army never gets further information about him. In 1973, when Paxton interviews returning POWs from Hanoi, she runs across people who knew he was a prisoner. She returns to Saigon to try to find him. This section of the book is really confused. Tony was captured in the South, evidently held in the South, and escaped (that has to be in the South), yet somebody who was in the Hanoi Hilton knew him. Worse still, he "had taken two months to come down from his hiding place in the tunnels he had found and used until he reached the outskirts of Saigon..." on April 29, 1975 (p. 415). I'm not sure if Steel is saying he did escape from the North, and made his way South, or what. And if he was hiding outside Saigon for two months, why? Why not just walk right into town?

Further, the book is imbued with racism from the start. Paxton is raised by a black maid named "Queenie" who's described as "the old beloved black mammy" (p. 7) who cares more for the blonde Paxton than for her own children. That racism is carried right over into Viet Nam. As soon as Paxton arrives, the Vietnamese are immediately portrayed as threatening. Her cab driver from Tan Son Nhut is sure she's a prostitute and tries to pick her up. Vietnamese kids "would blow your face off with a grenade just as soon as look at you" (p. 220) and "The VC are amazing little people" (p. 227). Paxton's Captain says, "They're amazing little folks." He said it almost with respect and humor" (p. 230).

Now, for all my criticisms of this novel, I don't want to say that it's particularly terrible. Despite its ignorance and inaccuracies of detail, Steel's vision of the Viet Nam war reflects current American attitudes. She seems to have done her research simply by absorbing American prejudices and mythology about the war—that the press was anti-war, that American Viet Nam veterans are heroes, that the Vietnamese are "amazing little folks," treacherous and sneaky, but not full and independent human beings who defeated the US, that there are mysterious MIAs who the Vietnamese failed to list as POWs, that the war was some kind of a mistake, although the novel gives no clue as to what sort of a mistake it might have been.

As far as Romance novels go, *Message from Nam* is a better book than *Indochine*, which focuses on Nina, daughter of a French mother and a Vietnamese father, who inherits an opium business and has to learn to run it. That novel partakes of Orientalism of the rampant kind—everything is exotic and mysterious, and merely serves as a backdrop for the heroine, Nina, who behaves much more like a contemporary American woman than a metisse born in Saigon in 1938, although Dickason is a better writer stylistically than Steel, who repeats herself rather too much.

*Saigon* is the best of the three, although it, too, has a few screamers in it. (My favorite is when Tran Van Kim castrates himself in order to dedicate himself more fully to Ho's revolution.) Despite such over-the-top inauthenticities, *Saigon* is a thoroughly researched book. In fact, it has a page and a half of acknowledgements at the end. While it is clearly a Romance, it is perhaps better classified as a Historical Romance. It is at least as interested in history and setting as it is in plot and character, and its history is, for the most part, reliable. It's also huge in scope (748 pages), and covers Vietnamese, mixed-race, American, and French characters. It was once scheduled to become a TV miniseries, but development plans fell through.

*Indochine* and *Saigon* both place their characters in Viet Nam, and focus on events in that country. They both begin well in advance of the American war, and therefore supply it with some context. In this way they differ totally from *Message from Nam*, which follows much more closely in the mainstream of American fiction, with conflates Viet Nam the country with the Viet Nam war, so that Viet Nam exists only as a war the U.S. fought, and not as a country at all. In that way, at least, despite their nostalgia for French colonialism, *Indochine* and *Saigon* are far superior books. *Message from Nam* merely takes American mainstream fiction's attitudes toward Viet Nam and transplants them into the Romance genre, thus popularizing those ideas and spreading them to segments of the reading public that may never have read any other book about the war. The last line of the book reveals the usual ethnocentrism of Euro-American views of the war: "But Nam was gone now. A distant memory...a nightmare...a dream. For them, and everyone else, now, it was finally over" (p. 415). Yes, the war is over, but the country still exists, and, for its people, history goes on. It is only Americans—and not just Romance writers—who can put a period on history and say, there, that's over.

## A FIREBELL IN THE NIGHT

By William M. King, *Afroamerican Studies, University of Colorado, Boulder*

At 2320 on Monday, 24 July 1967, Lyndon Johnson, at the request of then Michigan governor, George Romney, ordered 4700 members of the 82d and 101st Airborne units, who had begun arriving in the area earlier in the day, into Detroit to supplement 7000 National Guardsmen already in the city. Twice before, under Eisenhower in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957, and under Kennedy in Oxford, Mississippi in 1962, troops from these two divisions had been called into action to protect life and property and restore civil order that was beyond the ability of local authorities to handle. Detroit, with 7200 persons (most of them young black males) in temporary detention, 43 dead, 33 of them Afroamericans, and 50 millions of dollars in property damage, was but the loudest cry for justice in America by black people in this fifth year of urban unrest that had begun with Harlem in 1964. This decision was taken after some negotiation

between the president and the governor to avoid nullification of extant insurance policies that would occur if the locals declared that the riot was beyond their ability to control. Clearly, in a capitalist society, property, being more important than human life, must be protected at all costs.

In the "Two Societies: 1965-1968" episode of the second series of *Eyes on the Prize*, once the troops had been deployed, a newsman asked a black sergeant, who had just returned from Vietnam, how it felt "to come from one zone of combat in a foreign land to one in [his] own land?" He replied, "Not a good feeling, not one I'm kind of proud of. But it's a job, it's a duty. It have to be done." But what was it that had to be done? Moreover, as Johnson would ask his National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, whose report he ignored, why did it happen, and what needed to be done to prevent its happening again and again?

These questions are of particular importance here, because, like now, the United States then was more concerned with foreign than with domestic affairs. Like now, there was then great disparity in the distribution of opportunity that effectively invalidated the rhetoric of freedom and equality. Black people in particular had been frozen out by an insensitive power structure that was more interested in preserving itself and the privileged classes in whose interests it had been designed than it was in living up to its national creed. Expressways had been built to speed the translocation of resources and talent to the suburbs, sundering at the same time community networks that had once provided modest amounts of hope to the dispossessed. Yes, there had been a civil rights bill, and a voting rights act. But these shallow pieces of social engineering had more to do with the elimination of de jure segregation in the southern regions of the country than with the nation as a whole. Authority, which we might define as socially legitimized power, was still being exercised arbitrarily.

Yes, there was the Great Society. And yes, there was the Model Cities endeavor. But the Congress, in attempting to pay for Lyndon's war in the jungles of Southeast Asia, was bleeding these programs because the society could not afford both guns and butter; there was simply not enough money to pay for both. And so the promise of the one was compromised to sate the illusions of the other in the mistaken belief that ideas and the desire of a people for self-determination, however much we might disagree with those ideas and the desire of that people to throw off the ties that bind them to abiding by the expectations of others, might be pursued.

The triggering event for Detroit was a raid on a "blind pig", an after-hours joint in the black community early Sunday morning, 23 July 1967. The after-action analyses and investigations made clear that the police arrived with inadequate intelligence about the resources they would need to quell the disturbance they had catalyzed. Their continued presence in the area, the fact that the police force was 95 per cent white and their track record of acting like an occupying army in the provinces, gave impetus to the need of the citizenry to vent the frustration and rage that had intensified over the years as a consequence of tilting against the racial barriers white

America had thrown up in education, employment, housing, government and the media in an attempt to make the fact that the economic order of this society was incapable of responding to the needs of all its constituents. Indeed, we had designed a society that was predicated on the principle of exclusion and then we had sought to rationalize away its inequities by blaming the victim for not being able to compete, overlooking the differential distribution of opportunity the land in accordance with certain ascriptive criteria over which the victims of American democracy, as Malcolm pointed out, had no control. It is not so much the fact of oppression that destroys a people as it is acceptance of that oppression made manifest in disingenuous social policies and practices that in the case of Detroit and other cities of long hot summers were symbolized in the presence and conduct of the police who are charged with maintaining law and order.

Clearly, the conduct of black people during that five day period of barely controlled chaos was exacerbated by the "revolutionary" climate of opinion that had been building in Black America since World War II, which I contend is second in significance only to the War Between the States in understanding the history of black people in the United States. By the beginning of the 60s, there was sufficient momentum in the struggle by black people for self-determination, for the objective of black control of black communities, that any attempt to thwart that realization without the use of massive force was bound to inflame extant passions and heighten tensions in the community. Moderate leaders who entered the riot area were as ineffective as Martin Luther King, Jr had been in Watts in 1965 necessitating a show of massive force to reimpose that thin veneer of civilization that distinguishes us from other members of the animal kingdom. And so, some 12 hours after the raid that initiated the riot as an event, it having become evident that things were getting out of hand, Romney mobilized the Michigan National Guard and ordered them into the city, heavily armed and without any training in riot control tactics that would prove most tragic in the hours and days ahead.

What existed in Detroit during the riot was an atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty fed by rumors and fear. Not unlike in the bush, in Vietnam, the guardsmen saw themselves surrounded by an enemy they did not understand; an enemy that appeared willing to sacrifice itself to achieve its objective of ridding its turf of oppressors and exploiters who did not belong. All those folk ever did was take from the community. Seldom did they give anything back. As in the jungle, there was no front line against which to focus the forces that had been brought in to quell the disturbance. Detroit had become a place, during this most recent rebellion, where everyone was at risk, civilians and soldiers alike.

The national guard, virtually all white, young and inexperienced, possessed tremendous firepower which they used indiscriminately. They shot out the streetlights making it difficult to distinguish the friendlies from the foe. Backlit by burning buildings, their pale faces, like in the jungles of Southeast Asia, made them easily identifiable targets of opportunity for the supposedly large numbers of black snipers that crept across the rooftops firing down

into their massed numbers causing them to break discipline in the belief that their numerical and technological superiority could put things right again. They could not and so federales were sent in albeit with unloaded weapons, because the President did not want it said that any of his boys had killed anyone, to demonstrate the national commitment to restoring order. As Johnson would say later, "No society can tolerate massive violence anymore than a body can tolerate massive disease. And we shall not tolerate it." But the actual truth of the matter was that large numbers of Americans were disturbed by what they were seeing on their TV screens. The political climate of the country had begun to shift, becoming more conservative, retreating within itself as a way of coping with the changes that were occurring daily. The reins of power were slipping away. A sense of impotence and ennui were loose in the land—and TET was yet to come.

And then it was over. Whether it was due to exhaustion or the presence of some 17,000 law enforcement personnel is still not clear. But it was over. No new programs would be created. The war would see to that. Many of the young brothers who had taken part in riot activities would soon find themselves fighting again; this time in a war whose objectives were not as clear as they had been in Detroit. And they would take with them changed attitudes, a new and different consciousness that the big green machine would respond to with great difficulty further straining an army that, unacknowledged, was already in a state of collapse.

The primary significance of Detroit and the numerous other riots that took place between 1964 and 1967 was that they were all for naught. The sought-for change of national will called for by the Kerner Commission did not and has not yet come to pass. Indeed, if we might conclude anything, it is that, relatively speaking, the status of inconsistency and black powerlessness that was present in the United States before the riots is still with us today. The deaths, the arrests, the destruction of property in the community, much of which was owned by outsiders, was an injudicious use of the talents of black people forced by a society to resort to extreme means to seek a just end. Like the firebell in the night, the riots were the acts of a desperate people who sought only to acquire what others before them had achieved but which had been denied them: some semblance of influence or control over the events effecting their lives. Perhaps, though, they were better off in one manner of speaking. They did not need to create a series of illusions to shield them from the awful truths of their powerlessness. Yet they did make an attempt to point out, to make known to those with the means to make alterations in the asymmetry of life chance, that there is a danger in keeping a people powerless for too long.

## TOPICS FOR VIETNAMESE-U.S. RESEARCH COOPERATION: A VIETNAMESE PERSPECTIVE

Tran Quoc Vuong, Chair, Department of Archaeology,  
National University of Hanoi

The Center for Intercultural Studies affiliated with the National University of Hanoi is at present undertaking a number of research projects on Vietnamese history, folklore, and archaeology and is interested in cooperating with American scholars conducting research in these areas.

### A Study of East-West Cultural Interaction

The Center is undertaking a research project entitled "Vietnam: 100 Years of East-West Cultural Interaction," dealing with a period beginning at the end of the 19th century. The research examines the transformation and development of literature, music, the arts, theater, architecture, and the press in Vietnam from the colonial period to the present.

### Vietnam's Archaeology

Vietnamese archaeologists are researching the three following ancient civilizations of present-day Vietnamese territory: 1) The Dai Viet civilization, which originated in the Red River Delta and expanded southward between the 10th and 19th centuries. Related research topics include the production and trading of ceramics, and maritime archeology (including the port visits of Chinese junks); 2) The Cham civilization, which flourished between the second and seventeenth centuries. A related topic of interest is the relationship between Champa and other southeast Asian polities; 3) The Mekong Delta civilization (also known as the Oc Eo or the Phu Nam civilization) and the Khmer civilization, which flourished between the second and third century and the seventh and eighth century. In this area, Vietnamese scholars have worked closely with Indian, Australian, Polish and Japanese scholars.

Related to these three civilizations are the excavations of the three major sites at Dong Son in northern Vietnam, Sa Huynh in central Vietnam, and Dong Nai in the south. Japanese scholars plan to cooperate with Vietnam in these three excavations.

### Human Ecology

During the past ten years, the issues of human ecology and cultural values of Vietnam and Southeast Asia have caught the attention of Vietnamese scholars. However, Vietnamese research in these areas is still underdeveloped. The Center of Intercultural Studies and the Institute of Agricultural Sciences (chaired by Prof. Dao The Tuan) have jointly carried out a research project to examine the ecosystems of Vietnam and the agricultural systems of different regions in Vietnam, and to set up a non-state agency for rural development (FANO).

In addition to these ongoing projects, the Center and other Vietnamese research institutes encourage research in the following areas:

#### **Study of Ho Chi Minh**

After the commemoration of Ho's 100th birthday in 1990, the leading research institutes and the leadership of Vietnam have called for vigorous research on Ho Chi Minh's life and thought. While in the U.S., I discussed this issue with Archimede Patti, who was completing his book on Ho. Since works on Ho Chi Minh written by Vietnamese scholars abroad reflect, to some extent, the writers' political bias against communism, I believe that the translation of Patti's study on Ho Chi Minh into Vietnamese can significantly contribute to research on Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam.

#### **Study of the Vietnamese War**

Although the Vietnam War has been extensively documented in both American and Vietnamese history, American scholars have written more about the Vietnam war than Vietnamese scholars. It will be useful if both American and Vietnamese war participants and scholars could meet and cooperate on Vietnam war projects.

#### **Study of Modern Vietnam**

Ancient Vietnamese history is still a subject of interest in Vietnam. A number of American scholars have been working enthusiastically in this area. Among them are Keith Taylor at Cornell (conducting research on the Ly dynasty—11th to 13th century), Prof. Oliver Wolters at Cornell University (Tran dynasty (13th to 15th century), John Whitmore at Michigan (Le-Mac period), and Alexander Woodside at British Columbia (Nguyen dynasty).

#### **Study of Vietnamese Language**

Despite impressive developments in the study of Vietnamese, some areas worthy of exploration remain: the origins of the Vietnamese language, the influence of Southeast Asian and East Asian languages on Vietnamese (Mon-Khmer, Thai Malaysian or Indonesian or Malayo-Polynesian, Tibeto-Burmese, Chinese, etc.), and Vietnamese dialects. Professor Gerard Diffloth at Cornell University has been undertaking research on the origin of the Vietnamese language.

#### **Ethnology**

The Vietnamese consist of 54 ethnic groups with several linguistic families: Mon-Khmer, Thai, Malay, Tibeto-Burmese, Mao-Yao, Chinese, and Viet-Muong. Prof. Tu Chi, a prominent anthropologist, lamented in 1990 that not even one monograph had been written for each ethnic group. Ethnological research thus is a vast potential research area for both Vietnamese and American scholars.

#### **Folklore**

Vietnamese folklorists have overemphasized the collection of folk poems and literature. They should begin to pay more attention to the analysis of folk sayings, and should emphasize both traditional and modern folklore.

#### **Literature**

Vietnamese literature should be studied in conjunction with Vietnamese history. In this respect and American scholar, Neil L. Jamieson at George Mason University, is seemingly ahead of Vietnamese scholars, who have just begun to pay attention to the linkage between history and poetry. Jamieson's research on poetry and history in Vietnam will undoubtedly foster a better understanding on both Vietnamese history and Vietnamese poetry.

#### **Architecture**

Many historical sites of Vietnam have been left dilapidated. Recently, UNESCO has launched intermittent campaigns to restore the citadel and the imperial tombs of the Nguyen kings in Hue. Other sites still left unrestored include Cham towers and scattered traditional communal halls in Vietnamese villages.

#### **Religion**

Vietnam is a country where many religions have co-existed. However, the study of religions, both in the U.S. and Vietnam, has been sparse. In the U.S., Jayne Werner's book on Cao Dai and Hue Tam Ho Tai's work on Hoa Hao merely marked the beginning of research in this area. Recently, a publication house in California published *God-Man and the Viet Land (Than nguoi va dat Viet)*. However, the author, Ta Chi Dai Truong, wrote in Vietnam and sent the manuscript out of the country. A few books and a thesis by a Vietnamese scholar in France on the history of Catholicism in Vietnam have been circulated for quite some time. In Vietnam, the Institute of Buddhist Studies under Thich Minh Chau is researching the history of Vietnamese Buddhism. The study of the history of Confucianism in Vietnam is now in progress. The histories of Hinduism, Islam, and primitive religions in Vietnam have yet to be written.

#### **Sino-Vietnamese Studies**

Vietnam possesses plentiful Sino-Vietnamese materials of various forms. The Sino-Vietnamese Institute associated with the Institute of Social Sciences has established contacts with the Ecole Française d'Extreme Orient in order to preserve these materials. In the U.S., Prof. Nguyen Dinh Hoa at San Jose State University has conducted research on the works of Sino-Vietnamese studies written by Vietnamese both in Vietnam and abroad and has attempted to create a computer database for Sino-Vietnamese materials. American scholars who are interested in East Asian studies or the relationship between Vietnam and East Asia can cooperate with Vietnam in this area.

This list is by no means comprehensive. Other possible areas of research cooperation include economics, legal studies, and education. Research cooperation on Vietnamese studies has just begun.

#### **On International Studies**

International studies in Vietnam have been woefully underemphasized. In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, animosity, war, and political conflict barred the study of French and

English and discouraged any research on France and the United States instead of encouraging it. Despite diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, Vietnamese scholars have rarely studied these countries in vigorous manner. Regarding China, during the first three decades of independence, no research Institute was responsible for research on China; research was carried out in different Institutes, such as the classics section of the Sino-Nom Institute, the classics section of the Literature Institute, and the History Institute. It was only in the late 1970s, after the Sino-Vietnamese border clashes, that the Commission for Social Sciences established the Institute of Asia-Pacific for research on China. The institute later extended its research activities to cover the entire Asia-pacific region.

Regarding Southeast Asia, it was not until 1973 that a committee to study Southeast Asia was set up. Later, this committee was promoted to the status of Institute and became responsible for research and translation projects on Indochina and ASEAN countries. Its major foci include the comparative study of cultures, linguistics, and economics of the countries in the region. Vietnamese social scientists have initiated preliminary academic contacts with ASEAN countries. These contacts have developed into trilateral academic relationships between Vietnam and ASEAN and Australia, with special concerns with the historical production of ceramics and its trade routes, agricultural science, environment, maritime archaeology, and Cham studies.

International studies is undoubtedly an area in which Vietnamese scholars and both American and non-American scholars can productively and beneficially cooperate in order to achieve greater understanding of Southeast Asia.

## SCIENCE FICTION: THIS TIME IT'S WAR!

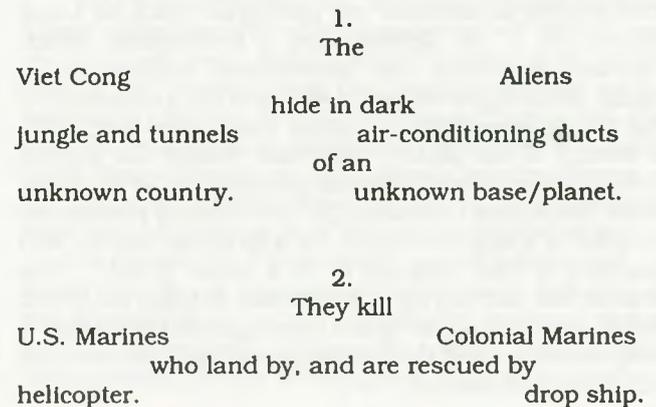
Alasdair Spark, *History, King Alfred's College*

"This time it's War!" So reads the poster for James Cameron's 1987 film *Aliens*. Perhaps because it was a sequel to Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1980), little has been written about the film, least of all in the context of Vietnam—most discussions dwell upon feminist implications. However, Vietnam was clearly a major influence on the movie, and I would recommend *Aliens* as a text to anyone teaching a course on the war. At the close of my own course students view it as an example of how the war has become mythologised within a popular genre, viz science fiction, and consider what that might say about such mythologization. Initially, most students are surprised at the choice of a popular film they have seen before, but never connected with Vietnam. Most come away convinced. So, what are the connections?

*Aliens* is a difficult film to summarize, but for those who have not seen it, Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) is the sole survivor of a spaceship whose crew, after landfall on a distant planet, were killed by a creature which lays its

eggs inside human hosts. Having escaped in the ship's lifeboat, at the opening of *Aliens* Ripley is rescued after years in suspended animation, only to find her story disbelieved, and the planet now colonized by the all-powerful Company. After contact with the colony is lost, Ripley reluctantly returns with a platoon of Colonial Marines (male and female), to discover that most of the settlers have been impregnated by a horde of aliens. A fierce battle ensues in which the platoon loses its dropship shuttle and is stranded on the planet, the colony's fusion reactor is damaged and about to detonate, and the Marines are picked off one by one until only Ripley, Marine Corporal Hicks, an android (Bishop), and a young girl survivor (Newt) are left alive. Newt is captured, and rescuing her, Ripley discovers and destroys the lair of the egg-laying Alien Queen. Escaping in another dropship with a wounded Bishop and Hicks, Ripley finds that the Queen has stowed away, and alien and human females fight a final battle.

Science Fiction confronted the Vietnam war from the beginning, drawing upon its remarkable ability as a genre to isolate and intensify elements of the war experience (see essays by H. Bruce Franklin and myself cited earlier in this column, in previous issues). A favorite allegorical structure has been to describe "future re-runs" of Vietnam, and *Aliens* falls into this category. Cameron's film was derived from *Alien* (itself derived from a 1943 short story by A.E. Van Vogt) and *Alien* like other SF/horror films of the 1980s, has links with Vietnam in the evocation of a claustrophobic jungle fear of the lurking other that can strike without warning. Unlike most others, its female protagonist is no mere victim, leading many feminist critics to praise the film, and therefore to fault *Aliens* for betraying this, by suggesting that women can only fight to protect children. However, this interpretation must be balanced against Vietnam elements in the film, both literal, and subtle. Some literal transferences give *Aliens* an "authentic" *mise en scene*, with details of behavior, rank, slang, weaponry, uniforms, and equipment which convince precisely because of a familiarity with images of Vietnam. Indeed, during production the crew gave the film the nickname *Grunts in Space*. Immediately before, Cameron had co-scripted *Rambo: First Blood 2*. Plot situations and characters derive from Vietnam, and put together all these items constitute a semiosis best expressed in the following diagrams:



3.  
 They troops are led by incompetent officers and betrayed by civilian bureaucrats.      Incompetent officers and betrayed by civilian bureaucrats.

4.  
 Soldiers learn not to trust their ally, the South Vietnamese.      to trust their ally, the android.

5.  
 The conflict is a struggle between males for territory.      struggle between females for children.

6.  
 Physical violation threatens by booby trap and bodies are penetrated by bullet and shrapnel.      by alien claw and alien creatures.

7.  
 Weapons are high-tech but the firepower fails.      ultra high-tech fails.  
 An atomic explosion does not occur a defeat.      resulting in a victory of sorts.

The source and manner of these references is significant. *Aliens* is a film about Vietnam in that it successfully taps into and exploits the codified mythology about the war which emerged and solidified in the 1980s, via the avalanche of film, novel, memoir, and oral history (most of it subsequent to the first film). *Aliens* therefore is not so much about the Vietnam war, as about America's perception and understanding of the war with a decade-plus of hindsight—it is a film about films about Vietnam. To give an example, the platoon is led by a cigar-chewing hard-as-nails black sergeant, a figure of Vietnam iconography established via portrayals such as Louis Gosset, Jr. in *An Officer and a Gentleman*, which represent honorable and professional soldiers in the ranks. Notably the officer in *Aliens* is the inexperienced and incompetent figure of legend, who causes the deaths of several of the platoon. All this reflects the general sympathy for Vietnam veterans provoked by the discourse of the 1980s, and contrastingly the Company bureaucrat Gorman is a negative figure; he tells Hicks that he isn't qualified to lead because he is a mere "grunt." This civilian, like the CIA agent in *Rambo*, betrays the grunt, and frustrates his use of full force against the enemy, a device surely rooted in a 1980s perception of the war, and the grunt as its victim.

*Aliens* presents interesting reversals of Vietnam situations, for instance, if the android Bishop represents the South Vietnamese (e.g., can he be trusted, is he our ally?), the answer is contra-mythologic—Bishop sacrifices himself. Most signally, the alien hordes are a pure enemy, to be slaughtered with impunity, since they are non-human (although one can read this as a direct parallel with "mere gook-ism"). John Rambo asked, "Do we get to win this time?" and *Aliens* replies, "This time it's war," promising the mother of all battles, but who wins? Throughout the film the aliens are superior; a few humans escape, and destroy the aliens, but only at the cost of incinerating the colony (using the means denied in Vietnam, an atomic explosion), provoking memories of the infamous phrase "it became necessary to destroy the town in order to save it. Ripley fights a private war to rescue Newt, parallel to the Alien Queen's own fight to save her children—female against female, mother against mother. This struggle can be read as anti-feminist, suggesting that motherhood is the central motivation for all females, regardless of species, but it does come after a film full of macho bravado met by ineptitude, and in which Ripley, supported by other female characters, constitutes a strong anchor. When Vietnam referentialities are appreciated, surely this indicates the establishment of the need for good reasons to fight, and for a proper, unswaggering realism about it. What Ripley's war represents is a judgment about what is, and isn't worth dying for, and ultimately one that steps outside gender. To conclude, it's only a movie, but there is an irony: Vietnam provokes fears of a repeat for America, while what guarantees that the movie war isn't over is the certainty of a sequel—*Alien 3* will be in your cinemas next year.

## MY LAST WAR

By Ernest Spencer, 458 Holiday Hills Dr., Martinez, CA 94553

I've done three wars and I've had enough. I survived Vietnam. I was a founder of Nuremberg Actions out at the Concord Naval Weapons Station where I helped win one against the Gipper, during his pathetic incursion into Nicaragua. Yea team! But, I got my ass kicked bad in this last one. So I'm hanging up the guns America. Fuck it. You turds are on your own.

"I don't give a shit what you say Ernie, you was on patrol out there at Orinda," Jerry my shrink said to me. I had just agreed to let myself be institutionalized for the next seven or eight months in a VA hospital. I'm glad ole Georgie and that half wit partner of his, Danny boy, think that the Vietnam Syndrome is behind us. As usual though, we fucked up Vietnam vets have failed to get the word. There is a long waiting list to get into the PTSD program. "Don't feel bad, Ernie," Jerry my shrink said to me, "the Gulf War fiasco done stirred up a whole lot of shirt for all of us. Jerry is a blood, disabled Vietnam vet and VA Vet Center counselor. He had just recounted for me how he went berserk while in a barber shop. It was

the afternoon that CNN broke the story live, on TV. Some Korean war vet started cheering. I don't have to give you the details, but after Jerry got done telling the clown what he does for a living and what he has to see very day, the guy apologized. Profusely.

What was I doing at the Orinda Bart station, that Jerry claims was a "patrol?" Just vigiling. I swear to god, I was just standing silently with a few other peaceniks, holding a sign, when I got assaulted. Two weeks in a row. Back in '87 we called ourselves the CONCORD FOUR. Every evening Lloyd, Margie, Jean and myself would meet out at the tracks and silently vigil. I resisted getting involved actively in this latest noble cause of ours as long as I could. Shit, man, if there's one thing that Vietnam taught me it's the survival one. All the flags waving, yellow ribbons and women having their first orgasms in god knows how long, while singing God Bless America, told me I had better stay low and shut up. But, I'm an old sentimentalist and a soft touch. When the shelter in Baghdad got bombed and I watched America's denial (blame the victim), I felt obligated. Yes, I know. I'm co-dependent. Lloyd was enraged. He called and suggested we reform the Concord Four. I felt like Gary Cooper going out there to Orinda Bart, the first time, on February 13. Yes, I know, an unlucky number. Why Orinda? Because Lloyd and Jean live there and it's the wealthiest neighborhood on the BART system. "the belly of the beast," as my girlfriend Pat says. I had dusted off my old piece, my weapon, and held it up for the public to see. "Veterans for Peace," is what it says. I am a provocative fucker aren't I? We showed up for the evening rush hour. Five to six-thirty p.m. Boy did we piss people off. But, as usual, we said nothing. It was too much for one upstanding businessman in a suit and tie. Donald Stone, besides the obscenities and the finger in my face, tried to punch me out. Too bad for Donnie this old gunslinger is an ex pug. His round house punches caught arms only. Yeah, I still remember how to keep em up high. What I didn't do was counter. Oh, he was so open for my famous overhand right, but I didn't. I don't know what's happened to me, but I've become an absolute sissy in my old age. I calmly called him brother and let him go. And of course the police show up after it's all over. I was so cavalier when I declined to press charges.

I had a very troubling series of dreams the night before week two. In it my lieutenants kept coming to me in the battle dress crying and hugging me. They kept telling me how much they loved and needed me. As usual, I was in a bar, the officers club, I think. I kept reassuring them that their old skipper would take care of them. I was in civvies. I was macho. I was "the Man", once again. Two of my lieutenants from Vietnam had written from the Gulf, around Christmas time. Their letters were very nostalgic. They're colonels now and were getting ready to lead their regiments into battle. They knew it was coming. And yes, they know their ole skipper is a fucking peace nut. It don't matter to them, they know what I did for them when it counted. You'd be surprised how understanding marines can be sometimes.

I had a bad feeling about going out to Orinda on February 20, week two of our once a week vigil. But, Margie called and she was counting on me being there.

Margie's a former Marine. She's not too macho. A real sweet grandmother, in fact. But she is addicted to peace. So I'm an enabler, I guess. I carry my feelings on my face. When I showed up at BART with my girlfriend, Pat, Lloyd and the rest of our gang was already there. Lloyd took one look at me and said, "What's wrong, brother?"

"I don't know Lloyd, I got a bad feeling about this," I said. It had been so long, I had forgotten. Towards the end of my tour in Vietnam (twenty three years ago), I had honed my senses to the point that I had become psychic. I knew when we were going to get hit and I was always prepared. I now attributed my feelings to the dreams I'd had the night before. Wrong. I watched Donald come down the escalator. We stood about 75 feet beyond the exit stations. He didn't see us until he went through the exit. Bingo! he went ballistic. Oh, dear friends, if looks could kill. He was carrying a big, heavy brief case and reached in and threw something that was plastic. Then he changed the briefcase to his right hand and started in with the middle finger of left like he was trying to masturbate his nose. He walked behind Helen who was on the left end of our short gray line and nailed her from the back, with his briefcase. Lloyd and I, being the two males, played our roles. We broke ranks and moved toward Helen. "Stop," Lloyd shouted. Donnie nailed Lloyd with his briefcase. Then, as though in a trance, he came onto me. I can only imagine what a woman being raped must feel like. He broke my finger on the first swing of his briefcase. Stupid me, my hands were open, instead of shut like I'd been taught. After several more blows from Donald I made an on the spot decision.

"Sir," I said, "This is two weeks in a row that you've assaulted me. I'm placing you under citizen's arrest." He went calm when I embraced him. I took him up against the wall and that is when it happened. What's it?

What really fucked me up in Nam was not the gunfights, which I had mentally prepared myself for. What fucked me up was what I had not prepared myself for, the shelling I had to take for 77 days at Khe Sanh, without being able to fight back. A BART employee in blue uniform started screaming, "Let him go! Let him go! You've got no right to arrest anyone." This incited the crowd, that turned into a mob, and it gave silent Donald new courage. The mob went absolutely bullshit. Businessmen in suits and stylishly dressed businesswomen circled me while I straddled Donald. Their screams filled the gentle Orinda air.

"You're a fucking traitor," they so proudly screamed, "We're telling the police that you started all this." I was so distracted that I didn't even do beaver shots on the women that loomed over me, circling, looking for an opening to kick me. And that is when "it" happened. I've never done wide awake flashbacks until then. NVA in full battle dress became superimposed over the figures of America's upstanding citizens in proper business attire. Then my old daemon from Vietnam screamed at me.

My daemon in Vietnam was my "second voice". It would guide me as I'd lead my rifle company on patrol. It would question me, by pointing out danger areas, things to be concerned with. "Who is the enemy!" that old voice kept screaming to me as the figures of my old enemy kept

flashing on and off the businessmen and women, who circled me like a pack of angry wolves. "Who is the enemy?" Indeed. No one got in a kick. There's one other thing about me that I'm noted for. "The look." I've had guys that tried to take me on during my old brawling days say after the fight that they knew I was going to kick their ass. My look hypnotized them. I kept making eye contact with those brave American warriors in suits and ties and they'd back up every time I did so. As soon as the police drove up, all those brave Americans disappeared like Danny did during Vietnam.

The cops took our statements, cited Donald and let him go. "Don't worry," the BART cop reassured me. "He's got real good IDs, and I told him if he did it again we'll arrest him." How reassuring that was. He also told me that he'd turn it over to the DA and they would contact me to her my side. Having been the victim of the Contra Costa County's District Attorney's officer during my concord days, I'm sure you all realize how confident I was that justice would prevail. Peace makes one so cynical, doesn't it?

As the trauma of the event began to wear off, the pain took over. Yes my friends, there is an adrenalin rush in combat and when I flashed back I got a good dose. I didn't even realize my finger was broken, my back and neck were severely strained and I was full blown PTSDed until several hours later. But, when I came down, what a crash.

After Jerry listens to the story, he tells me it was me that was responsible for my condition. "How many different ways do you know how to kill people, Ernie," he asked?

"How many ways are there?" I responded.

"Exactly," he said. "Ernie, you're a dangerous weapon just waiting to go off and one of these days one of them assholes out there is going to push you too far and you're going to really lose control. It's time for you to go into the hospital, my man." That prick made me break down and cry, when I realized that I have no power over this monster that possesses me.

"But, Jerry," I pleaded. "I been working on my shit for six fucking years now."

"Yeah, well it ain't been enough," he said. "And you got to learn to stay away from that shit that can trigger our condition. What would have happened to those fucking cowards in business suits if you'd have been carrying your M-16? Automatic, there would have been a whole lot of dead motherfuckers out there in Orinda, right?" Who am I to argue with my shrink? So I'm going to get my PhD in PTSD. I'm waiting to get into Menlo Park which for Nam guys is the equivalent of a law degree from Harvard or Boalt Hall. And fuck you George.

P.S. I checked and found out that the DA's office was going to let Donald off with just a terrible tongue lashing. Yancy was probably going to lick his ass. So I did my duty and went down to let them know that I was not just some hippie scum, like they think we all are. I took with me copies of the letters from my lieutenants. They let me talk to the newest assistant DA. He had just started a month ago. When he read the loving letter from one of my lieutenants on the official Marine stationery, he almost

fell out of his chair. "Holy shit," he said. I was an artillery FO with 1/4." 1/4 is one of the battalions commanded now by my former lieutenant. There's more. This new DA is a Latino. I'm Asian. He thanked me for "paving the way for guys like me to become officers in the Corps." I was the first if not only Korean rifle company commander in Nam. I told him about how his DA's office had all the time in the world to arrest me and book me and jail me during the Concord times. But, now when I come to the DA to request that Mr. Stone be charged with violating my civil rights, his office won't do a thing. "Can you believe what that mob did to me at Orinda," I asked him?

"Yeah, man," he angrily said, "I can't believe it. Them rich white folks with silver spoons in their mouths ain't got any of their kids or grandkids over there fighting. It's guys like you and me that's got to do it for them."

"Brother," I said, "if you feel that way, how can you handle it?"

"I just close my eyes to it," he said. "I concentrate on what I got to do to make it." He seemed so sad. I didn't let up, now that I had his attention.

"I used to be like that," I said. Then I remembered that famous old line that Richard Pryor used. Remember him? God, he was my idol at one time. Too bad he got greedy and tried to inhale Peru. Richard did the old routine where the old wino is lecturing the young drug addict. I said to Jorge, the young DA, "You know what your problem is, boy? You don't understand the white man. I do. That's why I'm in the position I am today."

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## METAPHOR AND WAR: THE METAPHOR SYSTEM USED TO JUSTIFY WAR IN THE GULF

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Metaphors can kill. The discourse over whether to go to war in the gulf was a panorama of metaphor. Secretary of State Baker saw Saddam Hussein as "sitting on our economic lifeline." President Bush portrayed him as having a "stranglehold" on our economy. General Schwarzkopf characterized the occupation of Kuwait as a "rape" that was ongoing. The President said that the US was in the gulf to "protect freedom, protect our future, and protect the innocent", and that we had to "push Saddam Hussein back." Saddam Hussein was painted

as a Hitler. It is vital, literally vital, to understand just what role metaphorical thought played in bringing us in this war.

Metaphorical thought, in itself, is neither good nor bad; it is simply commonplace and inescapable. Abstractions and enormously complex situations are routinely understood via metaphor. Indeed, there is an extensive, and mostly unconscious, system of metaphor that we use automatically and unreflectively to understand complexities and abstractions. Part of this system is devoted to understanding international relations and war. We now know enough about this system to have an idea of how it functions.

The metaphorical understanding of a situation functions in two parts. First, there is a widespread, relatively fixed set of metaphors that structure how we think. For example, a decision to go to war might be seen as a form of cost-benefit analysis, where war is justified when the costs of going to war are less than the costs of not going to war. Second, there is a set of metaphorical definitions that allow one to apply such a metaphor to a particular situation. In this case, there must be a definition of "cost", including a means of comparing relative "costs". The use of a metaphor with a set of definitions becomes pernicious when it hides realities in a harmful way.

It is important to distinguish what is metaphorical from what is not. Pain, dismemberment, death, starvation, and the death and injury of loved ones are not metaphorical. They are real and in this war, they could afflict hundreds of thousands of real human beings, whether Iraqi, Kuwaiti, or American.

#### **War as Politics; Politics as Business**

Military and international relations strategists do use a cost-benefit analysis metaphor. It comes about through a metaphor that is taken as definitional by most strategic thinkers in the area of international politics, **Clausewitz's Metaphor:**

#### **WAR IS POLITICS PURSUED BY OTHER MEANS.**

Karl von Clausewitz was a Prussian general whose views on war became dominant in American foreign policy circles during the Vietnam War, when they were seen as a way to rationally limit the use of war as an instrument of foreign policy. Clausewitz is most commonly presented as seeing war in terms of political cost-benefit analysis: Each nation-state has political objectives, and war may best serve those objectives. The political "gains" are to be weighed against acceptable "costs." When the costs of war exceed the political gains, the war should cease.

There is another metaphor implicit here: POLITICS IS BUSINESS, where efficient political management is seen as akin to efficient business management. As in a well-run business, a well-run government should keep a careful tally of costs and gains. This metaphor for characterizing politics, together with Clausewitz's metaphor, makes war a matter of cost-benefit analysis: defining beneficial "objectives", tallying the "costs", and deciding whether achieving the objectives is "worth" the costs.

*The New York Times*, on November 12, 1990, ran a front-page story announcing that "a national debate has begun as to whether the United States should go to war in the Persian Gulf." The *Times* described the debate as defined by what I have called Clausewitz's metaphor (though it described the metaphor as literal), and then raised the question, "What then is the nation's political object in the gulf and what level of sacrifice is it worth?" The "debate" was not over whether Clausewitz's metaphor was appropriate, but only over how various analysts calculated the relative gains and losses. The same was true of the hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where Clausewitz's metaphor provided the framework within which most discussion took place.

The broad acceptance of Clausewitz's metaphor raises vital questions: What, exactly, makes it a metaphor rather than a literal truth? Why does it seem so natural to foreign policy experts? How does it fit into the overall metaphor system for understanding foreign relations and war? And, most importantly, what realities does it hide?

To answer these questions, let us turn to the system of metaphorical thought most commonly used by the general public in comprehending international politics. What follows is a two-part discussion of the role of metaphorical reasoning about the gulf crisis. The first part lays out the central metaphor systems used in reasoning about the crisis: both the system used by foreign policy experts and the system used by the public at large. The second part discusses how the system was applied to the crisis in the gulf.

### **Part 1: The Metaphor Systems**

#### **The State-as-Person System**

A state is conceptualized as a person, engaging in social relations within a world community. Its land-mass is its home. It lives in a neighborhood, and has neighbors, friends and enemies. States are seen as having inherent dispositions: they can be peaceful or aggressive, responsible or irresponsible, industrious or lazy.

Well-being is wealth. The general well-being of a state is understood in economic terms: its economic health. A serious threat to economic health can thus be seen as a death threat. To the extent that a nation's economy depends on foreign oil, that oil supply becomes a 'lifeline' (reinforced by the image of an oil pipeline).

Strength for a state is military strength. Maturity for the person-state is industrialization. Unindustrialized nations are "underdeveloped", with industrialization as a natural state to be reached. Third-world nations are thus immature children, to be taught how to develop properly or disciplined if they get out of line. Nations that fail to industrialize at a rate considered normal are seen as akin to retarded children and judged as "backward" nations. Rationality is the maximization of self-interest.

There is an implicit logic to the use of these metaphors: Since it is in the interest of every person to be as strong and healthy as possible, a rational state seeks to maximize wealth and military might.

Violence can further self-interest. It can be stopped in three ways: Either a balance of power, so that no one in a neighborhood is strong enough to threaten anyone else. Or the use of collective persuasion by the community to make violence counter to self-interest. Or a cop strong enough to deter violence or punish it. The cop should act morally, in the community's interest, and with the sanction of the community as a whole.

Morality is a matter of accounting, of keeping the moral books balanced. A wrongdoer incurs a debt, and he must be made to pay. The moral books can be balanced by a return to the situation prior to the wrongdoing, by giving back what has been taken, by recompense, or by punishment. Justice is the balancing of the moral books.

War in this metaphor is a fight between two people, a form of hand-to-hand combat. Thus, the US sought to "push Iraq back out of Kuwait" or "deal the enemy a heavy blow," or "deliver a knockout punch." A just war is thus a form of combat for the purpose of settling moral accounts.

The most common discourse form in the West where there is combat to settle moral accounts is the classic fairy tale. When people are replaced by states in such a fairy tale, what results is the most common scenario for a just war. So:

#### **The Fairy Tale of the Just War**

*Cast of characters: A villain, a victim, and a hero. The victim and the hero may be the same person.*

The scenario: A crime is committed by the villain against an innocent victim (typically an assault, theft, or kidnapping). The offense occurs due to an imbalance of power and creates a moral imbalance. The hero either gathers helpers or decides to go it alone. The hero makes sacrifices; he undergoes difficulties, typically making an arduous heroic journey, sometimes across the sea to a treacherous terrain. The villain is inherently evil, perhaps even a monster, and thus reasoning with him is out of the question. The hero is left with no choice but to engage the villain in battle. The hero defeats the villain and rescues the victim. The moral balance is restored. Victory is achieved. The hero, who always acts honorably, has proved his manhood and achieved glory. The sacrifice was worthwhile. The hero receives acclaim, along with the gratitude of the victim and the community.

The fairy tale has an asymmetry built into it. The hero is moral and courageous, while the villain is amoral and vicious. The hero is rational, but though the villain may be cunning and calculating, he cannot be reasoned with. Heroes thus cannot negotiate with villains; they must defeat them. The enemy-as-demon metaphor arises as a consequence of the fact that we understand what a just war is in terms of this fairy tale.

#### **Metaphorical Definition**

The most natural way to justify a war on moral grounds is to fit this fairy tale structure to a given situation. This is done by metaphorical definition, that is, by answering the questions: Who is the victim? Who

is the villain? Who is the hero? What is the crime? What counts as victory? Each set of answers provides a different filled-out scenario.

As the gulf crisis developed, President Bush tried to justify going to war by the use of such a scenario. At first, he couldn't get his story straight. What happened was that he was using two different sets of metaphorical definitions, which resulted in two different scenarios:

**The Self-Defense Scenario:** Iraq is villain, the US is hero, the US and other industrialized nations are victims, the crime is a death threat, that is, a threat to economic health.

**The Rescue Scenario:** Iraq is villain, the US is hero, Kuwait is victim, the crime is kidnap and rape. The American people could not accept the Self-Defense scenario, since it amounted to trading lives for oil. The day after a national poll that asked Americans what they would be willing to go to war for, the administration settled on the Rescue Scenario, which was readily embraced by the public, the media, and Congress as providing moral justification for going to war.

#### **The Ruler-for-State Metonymy**

There is a metonymy that goes hand-in-hand with the State-as-Person metaphor: **THE RULER STANDS FOR THE STATE.**

Thus, we can refer to Iraq by referring to Saddam Hussein, and so have a single person, not just an amorphous state, to play the villain in the just war scenario. It is this metonymy that was invoked every time President Bush said "We have to get Saddam out of Kuwait."

Incidentally, the metonymy only applies to those leaders perceived as illegitimate rulers. Thus, it would be strange for us to describe the American invasion of Kuwait by saying, "George Bush marched into Kuwait."

#### **The Experts' Metaphors**

Experts in international relations have an additional system of metaphors that are taken as defining a "rational" approach. The principal ones are the Rational Actor metaphor and Clausewitz's metaphor, which are commonly taught as truths in courses on international relations. We are now in a position to show precisely what is metaphorical about Clausewitz's metaphor. To do so, we need to look at a system of metaphors that is presupposed by Clausewitz's metaphor. We will begin with an everyday system of metaphors for understanding causation:

#### **The Causal Commerce System**

The Causal Commerce system is a way to comprehend actions intended to achieve positive effects, but which may also have negative effects. The system is composed of three metaphors:

**Causal Transfer:** An effect is an object transferred from a cause to an affected party. For example, sanctions are seen as "giving" Iraq economic difficulties. Correspondingly, economic difficulties for Iraq are seen as "coming from" the sanctions. This metaphor turns purposeful actions into transfers of objects.

**The Exchange Metaphor for Value:** The value of something is what you are willing to exchange for it. Whenever we ask whether it is "worth" going to war to get Iraq out of Kuwait, we are using the Exchange Metaphor for Value plus the Causal Transfer metaphor.

**Well-being is Wealth:** Things of value constitute wealth. Increases in well-being are "gains"; decreases in well-being are "costs." The metaphor of Well-being-as-Wealth has the effect of making qualitative effects quantitative. It not only makes qualitatively different things comparable, it even provides a kind of arithmetic calculus for adding up costs and gains.

Taken together, these three metaphors portray actions as commercial transactions with costs and gains. Seeing actions as transactions is crucial to applying ideas from economics to actions in general.

### Risks

A risk is an action taken to achieve a positive effect, where the outcome is uncertain and where there is also a significant probability of a negative effect. Since Causal Commerce allows one to see positive effects of actions as "gains" and negative effects as "costs", it becomes natural to see a risky action metaphorically as a financial risk of a certain type, namely, a gamble.

### Risks are Gambles

In gambling to achieve certain "gains", there are "stakes" that one can "lose". When one asks what is "at stake" in going to war, one is using the metaphors of Causal Commerce and Risks-as-Gambles. These are also the metaphors that President Bush uses when he refers to strategic moves in the gulf as a "poker game" where it would be foolish for him to "show his cards", that is, to make strategic knowledge public.

### The Mathematicization of Metaphor

The Causal Commerce and Risks-as-Gambles metaphors lie behind our everyday way of understanding risky actions as gambles. At this point, mathematics enters the picture, since there is mathematics of gambling, namely, probability theory, decision theory, and game theory. Since the metaphors of Causal Commerce and Risks-as-Gambles are so common in our everyday thought, their metaphorical nature often goes unnoticed. As a result, it is not uncommon for social scientists to think that the mathematics of gambling literally applies to all forms of risky action, and that it can provide a general basis for the scientific study of risky action, so that risk can be minimized.

### Rational Action

Within the social sciences, especially in economics, it is common to see a rational person as someone who acts in his own self-interest, that is, to maximize his own well-being. Hard-core advocates of this view may even see altruistic action as being in one's self-interest if there is a value in feeling righteous about altruism and in deriving gratitude from others.

In the Causal Commerce system, where well-being is wealth, this view of Rational Action translates metaphorically into maximizing gains and minimizing losses. In other words:

### Rationality is Profit Maximization

This metaphor presupposes Causal Commerce plus Risks-as-Gambles, and brings with it the mathematics of gambling as applied to risky action. It has the effect of turning specialists in mathematical economics into "scientific" specialists in acting rationally so as to minimize risk and cost while maximizing gains.

Suppose we now add the State-as-Person metaphor to the Rationality-as-Profit-Maximization metaphor. The result is:

### International Politics is Business

Here the state is a Rational Actor, whose actions are transactions and who is engaged in maximizing gains and minimizing costs. This metaphor brings with it the mathematics of cost-benefit calculation and game theory, which is commonly taught in graduate programs in international relations. Clausewitz's metaphor, the major metaphor preferred by international relations strategists, presupposes this system.

### Clausewitz's Metaphor: War is Politics, pursued by other means.

Since politics is business, war becomes a matter of maximizing political gains and minimizing losses. In Clausewitzian terms, war is justified when there is more to be gained by going to war than by not going to war. Morality is absent from the Clausewitzian equation, except when there is a political cost to acting immorally or a political gain from acting morally.

Clausewitz's metaphor only allows war to be justified on pragmatic, not moral, grounds. To justify war on both moral and pragmatic grounds, the Fairy Tale of the Just War and Clausewitz's metaphor must mesh: The "worthwhile sacrifices" of the fairy tale must equal the Clausewitzian "costs" and the "victory" in the fairy tale must equal the Clausewitzian "gains."

Clausewitz's metaphor is the perfect expert's metaphor, since it requires specialists in political cost-benefit calculation. It sanctions the use of the mathematics of economics, probability theory, decision theory, and game theory in the name of making foreign policy rational and scientific.

Clausewitz's metaphor is commonly seen as literally true. We are now in a position to see exactly what makes it metaphorical. First, it uses the State-as-Person metaphor. Second, it turns qualitative effects on human beings into quantifiable costs and gains, thus seeing political action as economics. Third, it sees rationality as profit-making. Fourth, it sees war in terms of only one dimension of war, that of political expediency, which is in turn conceptualized as business.

### War as Violent Crime

To bear in mind what is hidden by Clausewitz's metaphor, we should consider an alternative metaphor that is not used by professional strategists nor by the general public to understand war as we engage in it.

#### **WAR IS VIOLENT CRIME: MURDER, ASSAULT, KIDNAPPING, ARSON, RAPE, AND THEFT.**

Here, war is understood only in terms of its moral dimension, and not, say, its political or economic dimension. The metaphor highlights those aspects of war that would otherwise be seen as major crimes.

There is an Us/Them asymmetry between the public use of Clausewitz's metaphor and the War-as-Crime metaphor. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was reported on in terms of murder, theft and rape. The American invasion was never discussed in terms of murder, assault, and arson. Moreover, the US plans for war were seen, in Clausewitzian terms, as rational calculation. But the Iraqi invasion was discussed not as a rational move by Saddam Hussein, but as the work of a madman. We portrayed Us as rational, moral, and courageous and Them as criminal and insane.

### War as a Competitive Game

It has long been noted that we understand war as a competitive game like chess, or as a sport, like football or boxing. It is a metaphor in which there is a clear winner and loser, and a clear end to the game. The metaphor highlights strategic thinking, team work, preparedness, the spectators in the world arena, the glory of winning and the shame of defeat.

This metaphor is taken very seriously. There is a long tradition in the West of training military officers in team sports and chess. The military is trained to win. This can lead to a metaphor conflict, as it did in Vietnam, since Clausewitz's metaphor seeks to maximize geopolitical gains, which may or may not be consistent with absolute military victory. Indeed, the right wing myth that the Vietnam War was fought "with one hand tied behind our back" uses the boxing version of the sports metaphor. What is being referred to was the application of Clausewitzian principles in Vietnam to limit our involvement in that war.

### War as Medicine

Finally, there is a common metaphor in which military control by the enemy is seen as a cancer that can spread. In this metaphor, military "operations" are seen as hygienic, to "clean out" enemy fortifications. Bombing raids are portrayed as "surgical strikes" to "take out" anything that can serve a military purpose. The metaphor is supported by imagery of shiny metallic instruments of war, especially jets.

### The First Days of the War

All these metaphor systems were apparent in the TV coverage of the first days of the war. The Fairy Tale: American soldiers were "heroes." They had used their magic weaponry to smite the demonic enemy. There was voluminous TV reportage on the magical quality of the weapons.

Sports: Commanding officers told their troops "This is our Super Bowl." The actual Super Bowl half-time activities mixed war and sports imagery interchangeably. Pilots returning from bombing runs gave each other "high-fives" and waved their index fingers in the air proclaiming "We're number one!" Casualty estimates were given in the form of a scoreboard. The major American tactic was named after a football play.

Cost-benefit: Within hours of the first bombing, Pentagon officials and Republican politicians started declaring that the enormously expensive development of weapons over the last fifteen years was "well worth it" and a sound investment.

### Medicine: Endless pictures of surgical strikes.

In short, the War brought the basic metaphors into full view. Those things highlighted by the metaphors were shown vividly and often. But what was hidden by the metaphors was largely undiscussable.

## Part II: Application of the Metaphors

### Is Saddam Irrational?

The villain in the Fairy Tale of the Just War may be cunning, but he cannot be rational. You just do not reason with a demon, nor do you enter into negotiations with him. The logic of the metaphor demands that Saddam Hussein be irrational. But was he?

Administration policy was confused on the issue. Clausewitz's metaphor, as used by strategists, assumes that the enemy is rational: He too is maximizing gains and minimizing costs. Our strategy from the outset was to "increase the cost" to Saddam Hussein. That assumed he was rational and was maximizing his self-interest.

At the same time, he was being called irrational. The nuclear weapons argument depends on it. If rational, he should follow the logic of deterrence. We have thousands of hydrogen bombs in warheads. Israel is estimated to have between 100 and 200 deliverable atomic bombs. It would have taken Saddam Hussein at least eight months and possibly five years before he had a crude, untested atomic bomb on a truck. The argument that he would not be deterred by our nuclear arsenal and by Israel's assumes irrationality.

The Hitler analogy also assumes that Saddam is a villainous madman. The analogy presupposes a Hitler myth, in which Hitler too was an irrational demon, rather than a rational self-serving brutal politician. In the myth, Munich was a mistake and Hitler could have been stopped early on had England entered the war then. Military historians disagree as to whether the myth is true. Be that as it may, the analogy does not hold. Whether or not Saddam is Hitler, Iraq wasn't Germany. It has 17 million people, not 70 million. It is economically weak, not strong. It simply was not a threat to the world.

Saddam Hussein is certainly immoral, ruthless, and brutal, but there is no evidence that he is anything but rational. Everything he has done, from assassinating political opponents to invading Kuwait can be seen as furthering his own self-interest.

### Kuwait as Victim

The classical victim is innocent. To the Iraqis, Kuwait was anything but an innocent ingenu. The war with Iran virtually bankrupted Iraq. Iraq saw itself as having fought that war partly for the benefit of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, where Shiite citizens supported Khomeini's Islamic Revolution. Kuwait had agreed to help finance the war, but after the war, the Kuwaitis insisted on repayment of the "loan." Kuwaitis had invested hundreds of billions in Europe, America and Japan, but would not invest in Iraq after the war to help it rebuild. On the contrary, it began what amounted to economic warfare against Iraq by overproducing its oil quota to hold oil prices down.

In addition, Kuwait had drilled laterally into Iraqi territory in the Rumallah oil field and had extracted oil from Iraqi territory. Kuwait further took advantage of Iraq by buying its currency, but only at extremely low exchange rates. Subsequently, wealthy Kuwaitis used that Iraqi currency on trips to Iraq, where they bought Iraqi goods at bargain rates. Among the things they bought most flamboyantly were liquor and prostitutes, widows and orphans of men killed in the war, who, because of the state of the economy, had no other means of support. All this did not endear Kuwaitis to Iraqis, who were suffering from over 70% inflation.

Moreover, Kuwaitis had long been resented for good reason by Iraqis and Moslems from other nations. Capital rich, but labor poor, Kuwait imported cheap labor from other Moslem countries to do its least pleasant work. At the time of the invasion, there were 800,000 Kuwaiti citizens and 2.2 million foreign laborers who were treated by the Kuwaitis as lesser beings. In short, to the Iraqis and to labor-exporting Arab countries, Kuwait is badly miscast as a purely innocent victim.

This does not in any way justify the horrors perpetrated on the Kuwaitis by the Iraqi army. But it is part of what is hidden when Kuwait is cast as an innocent victim. The "legitimate government" of Kuwait is an oppressive monarchy.

### What is Victory?

In a fairy tale or a game, victory is well-defined. Once it is achieved, the story or game is over. Neither is the case in the gulf crisis. History continues, and "victory" makes sense only in terms of continuing history.

The president's stated objectives were total Iraqi withdrawal and restoration of the Kuwaiti monarchy. But no one believes the matter will end there, since Saddam Hussein would still be in power. General Powell said in his Senate testimony that if Saddam withdrew and retained his military strength, the US would have to "strengthen the indigenous countries of the region" to achieve a balance of power. Presumably that means arming Assad of Syria, who is every bit as dangerous as Saddam. Would arming another villain count as victory?

What could constitute "victory" in the present war? Suppose we conquer Iraq, wiping out its military capability. How would Iraq be governed? No puppet government that we set up could govern effectively since it would be hated by the entire populace. Since Saddam has wiped out all opposition, the only remaining effective government for the country would be his Ba'ath party. Would it count as

a victory if Saddam's friends wound up in power? If not, what other choice is there? And if Iraq has no remaining military force, how could it defend itself against Syria and Iran? It would certainly not be a "victory" for us if either of them took over Iraq. If Syria did, then Assad's Arab nationalism would become a threat. If Iran did, then Islamic fundamentalism would become even more powerful and threatening.

It would seem that the closest thing to a "victory" for the US in case of war would be to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait; destroy just enough of Iraq's military to leave it capable of defending itself against Syria and Iran; somehow get Saddam out of power, but let his Ba'ath party remain in control of a country just strong enough to defend itself, but not strong enough to be a threat; and keep the price of oil at a reasonably low level.

The problems: It is not obvious that we could get Saddam out of power without wiping out most of Iraq's military capability. We would have invaded an Arab country, which would create vast hatred for us throughout the Arab world, and would no doubt result in decades of increased terrorism and lack of cooperation by Arab states. We would, by defeating an Arab nationalist state, strengthen Islamic fundamentalism. Iraq would remain a cruel dictatorship run by cronies of Saddam. By reinstating the government of Kuwait, we would inflame the hatred of the poor toward the rich throughout the Arab world, and thus increase instability. Even the closest thing to a victory doesn't look very victorious.

If we weaken Iraq's military, the result would most likely be civil war within Iraq. This has been considered by the U.S. administration, which has decided that it could not allow either a Shiite victory (which would strengthen Iran) or a Kurdish victory (which would threaten Turkey). This means that we would not prevent a defeat, and most likely, a slaughter of Shiites and Kurds by Saddam Hussein's Sunni minority. Would this be "victory"?

Considering the tens of thousands of man hours that have gone into the planning how to "win" the war, very little time and effort has been spent clarifying what "winning" would be.

### The Arab Viewpoint

The metaphors used to conceptualize the gulf crisis hide the most powerful political ideas in the Arab world: Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism. The first seeks to form a racially-based all-Arab nation, the second, a theocratic all-Islamic state. Though bitterly opposed to one another, they share a great deal. Both are conceptualized in family terms, an Arab brotherhood and an Islamic brotherhood. Both see brotherhoods as more legitimate than existing states. Both are at odds with the state-as-person metaphor, which sees currently existing states as distinct entities with a right to exist in perpetuity.

Also hidden by our metaphors is perhaps the most important daily concern throughout the Arab world: Arab dignity. Both political movements are seen as ways to achieve dignity through unity. The current national boundaries are widely perceived as working against Arab dignity in two ways: one internal and one external.

The internal issue is the division between rich and poor in the Arab world. Poor Arabs see rich Arabs as rich by accident, by where the British happened to draw the lines that created the contemporary nations of the Middle East. To see Arabs metaphorically as one big family is to suggest that oil wealth should belong to all Arabs. To many Arabs, the national boundaries drawn by colonial powers are illegitimate, violating the conception of Arabs as a single "brotherhood" and impoverishing millions.

To those impoverished millions, the positive side of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was that it challenged national borders and brought to the fore the divisions between rich and poor that result from those lines in the sand. If there is to be peace in the region, these divisions must be addressed, say, by having rich Arab countries make extensive investments in development that will help poor Arabs. As long as the huge gulf between rich and poor exists in the Arab world, a large number of poor Arabs will continue to see one of the superstate solutions, either Arab nationalism or Islamic fundamentalism, as being in their self-interest, and the region will continue to be unstable.

The external issue is the weakness. The current national boundaries keep Arab nations squabbling among themselves and therefore weak relative to Western nations. To unity advocates, what we call "stability" means continued weakness.

Weakness is a major theme in the Arab world, and is often conceptualized in sexual terms, even more than in the West. American officials, in speaking of the "rape" of Kuwait, were conceptualizing a weak, defenseless country as female and a strong militarily powerful country as male. Similarly, it is common for Arabs to conceptualize the colonization and subsequent domination of the Arab world by the West, especially the US, as emasculation.

An Arab proverb that was reported to be popular in Iraq before the US invasion was "It is better to be a cock for a day than a chicken for a year." The message is clear: It is better to be male, that is, strong and dominant for a short period of time than to be female, that is, weak and defenseless for a long time. Much of the support for Saddam Hussein among Arabs is due to the fact that he is seen as standing up to the US, even if only for a while, and that there is a dignity in this. Since upholding dignity was an essential part of what defined Saddam's "rational self-interest", it should be no surprise that he was willing to go to war to "be a cock for a day." Just surviving a war with the US makes him a hero in much of the Moslem world.

#### **What is Hidden By Seeing the State as a Person?**

The State-as-Person metaphor highlights the ways in which states act as units, and hides the internal structure of the state. Class structure is hidden by this metaphor, as is ethnic composition, religious rivalry, political parties, the ecology, and the influence of the military and of corporations (especially multi-national corporations).

Consider the "national interest." It is in a person's interest to be healthy and strong. The State-as-Person metaphor translates this into a "national interest" of economic health and military strength. But what is in the "national interest" may or may not be in the interest of

many ordinary citizens, groups, or institutions, who may become poorer as the GNP rises and weaker as the military gets stronger.

The "national interest" is a metaphorical concept, and it is defined in America by politicians and policy makers. For the most part, they are influenced more by the rich than by the poor, more by large corporations than by small business, and more by developers than ecological activists.

When President Bush argues that going to war would "serve our vital national interests", he is using a metaphor that hides exactly whose interests would be served and whose would not. For example, poor people, especially blacks, are represented in the military in disproportionately large numbers, and in a war the lower classes and those ethnic groups will suffer proportionally more casualties and have their lives disrupted more. Thus war is less in the interest of ethnic minorities and the lower classes than the white upper classes.

Also hidden are the interests of the military itself. It is against the military's interest to have its budget cut, or to diminish its own influence in any way. War justifies the military's importance and its budgetary needs. The end of the cold war promised to reduce the size and influence of the military. This war has guaranteed the continued influence of the military. Given that Air Force General Brent Scowcroft heads the National Security Council and that he played a major role in advising the president to go to war, it would appear as if the military played a decisive role in maintaining its own influence.

#### **Energy Policy**

The State-as-Person metaphor defines health for the state in economic terms, with our current understanding of economic health taken as a given, including our dependence on foreign oil. Many commentators argued prior to the war that a change in energy policy to make us less dependent on foreign oil would be more rational than going to war to preserve our supply of cheap oil from the gulf. This argument may have a real force, but it has no metaphorical force when the definition of economic health is taken as fixed. After all, you don't deal with an attack on your health by changing the definition of health. Metaphorical logic pushes a change in energy policy out of the spotlight in the current crisis.

I do not want to give the impression that all that is involved here is metaphor. Obviously there are powerful corporate interests lined up against a fundamental restructuring of our national energy policy. What is sad is that they have a very compelling system of metaphorical thought on their side. If the debate is framed in terms of an attack on our economic health, one cannot argue for redefining what economic health is without changing the grounds for the debate. And if the debate is framed in terms of rescuing a victim, then changes in energy policy seem utterly beside the point.

#### **The "Costs" of War**

Clausewitz's metaphor requires a calculation of the "costs" and the "gains" of going to war. What, exactly, goes into that calculation and what does not? Certainly American casualties, loss of equipment, and dollars

spent on the operation count as costs. But Vietnam taught us that there are social costs: trauma to families and communities, disruption of lives, psychological effects on veterans, long-term health problems, in addition to the cost of spending our money on war instead of on vital social needs at home, as well as the vast cost of continuing to develop and maintain a huge war machine.

Barely discussed is the moral cost that comes from killing and maiming as a way to settle disputes. And there is the moral cost of using a "cost" metaphor at all. When we do so, we quantify the effects of war and thus hide from ourselves the qualitative reality of pain and death.

But those are costs to us. Recall that something can be a cost to us only if it is one of our "assets." The "cost-benefit" metaphor therefore rules out certain possible costs. Consider the oil spill in the gulf and the oil well fires, which are major ecological disasters to the region. It was known in advance that Saddam Hussein would cause the spill and start the fires if we invaded. The American military decided that these would be "acceptable costs." What that means is that American soldiers would not be affected that much. But since the ecology of the region is not an American "asset", it could not be a significant "cost" to the US. Had the oil spill and fires occurred in Florida or Texas, the assessment of "cost" would have been very much higher.

What is most ghoulish about the cost-benefit calculation is that it is a zero-sum system: "costs" to the other side count as "gains" for us. In Vietnam, the body counts of killed Viet Cong were taken as evidence of what was being "gained" in the war. Dead human beings went on the profit side of our ledger.

There is a lot of talk of American deaths as "costs", but Iraqi deaths aren't mentioned. The metaphors of cost-benefit accounting and the fairy tale villain lead us to devalue of the lives of Iraqis, even when most of those actually killed will not be villains at all, but simply innocent draftees or reservists or civilians, especially women, children and the elderly.

### **America as Hero**

The classic fairy tale defines what constitutes a hero: it is a person who rescues an innocent victim and who defeats and punishes a guilty and inherently evil villain, and who does so for moral rather than venal reasons. Is America a hero in the Gulf War?

It certainly does not fit the profile very well. First, one of our main goals was to reinstate "the legitimate government of Kuwait." That means reinstating an absolute monarchy with an abysmal record on human rights and civil liberties. Kuwait is not an innocent victim whose rescue makes us heroic.

Second, the actual human beings who are suffering from our attack are, for the most part, innocent people who did not take part in the atrocities in Kuwait. Killing and maiming a lot of innocent bystanders in the process of nabbing a much smaller number of villains does not make one much of a hero.

Third, in the self-defense scenario, where oil is at issue, America is acting in its self-interest. But, in order to qualify as a legitimate hero in the rescue scenario, it must be acting selflessly. Thus, there is a contradiction

between the self-interested hero of the self-defense scenario and the purely selfless hero of the rescue scenario.

Fourth, America may be a hero to the royal families of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, but it will not be a hero to most Arabs. Most Arabs do not think in terms of our metaphors. A great many Arabs see us as a kind of colonial power using illegitimate force against an Arab brother. To them, we are villains, not heroes.

Fifth, America had been supporting and supplying arms to Saddam Hussein prior to his invasion of Kuwait, during years when he was no less villainous to the Iraqi citizenry. Classic heroes don't help out and provide arms to well-known villains.

America appears as classic hero only if you don't look carefully at how the metaphor is applied to the situation. It is here that the State-as-Person metaphor functions in a way that hides vital truths. The State-as-Person metaphor hides the internal structure of states and allows us to think of Kuwait as a unitary entity, the defenseless maiden to be rescued in the fairy tale. The metaphor hides the monarchical character of Kuwait and the way the Kuwaiti government treats its own dissenters and foreign workers. The State-as-Person metaphor also hides the internal structure of Iraq, and thus hides the actual people who will mostly be killed, maimed, or otherwise harmed in a war. It also hides the political divisions in Iraq between Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds. The same metaphor also hides the internal structure of the US, and therefore hides the fact that it is the poor and minorities who will make the most sacrifices while not getting any significant benefit. And it hides the main ideas that drive Middle Eastern politics.

### **Final Remarks**

Reality exists. So does the unconscious system of metaphors that we use without awareness to comprehend reality. What metaphor does is limit what we notice, highlight what we do see, and provide part of the inferential structure that we reason with. Because of the pervasiveness of metaphor in thought, we cannot always stick to discussions of reality in purely literal terms.

There is no way to avoid metaphorical thought, especially in complex matters like foreign policy. I am therefore not objecting to the use of metaphor in itself in foreign policy discourse. My objections are, first, to the ignorance of the presence of metaphor in foreign policy deliberations, second, to the failure to look systematically at what our metaphors hide, and third, to the failure to think imaginatively about what new metaphors might be more benign.

It is in the service of reality that we must pay more attention to the mechanisms of metaphorical thought, especially because such mechanisms are necessarily used in foreign policy deliberations, and because, as we are witnessing, metaphors backed up by bombs can kill.

\* \* \*

Postscript: On March 6, 1991, President Bush went before Congress and declared victory in a war he justified as follows: "The recent challenge could not have been clearer. Saddam Hussein was the villain; Kuwait the victim."

## POETRY BY STEPHEN HIDALGO

### The rhetoric of bombs

The rhetoric of bombs  
takes the floor again  
to decide for us  
the election of '92  
a slapstick travesty,  
a bad burlesque.  
I watch the war, knowing  
the stock responses,  
but cannot give them.

Irony bleeds to numbness,  
emptiness replaces anger:  
no life appears  
beneath  
the surface,  
blocked by signs,  
choked with yellow sashes.

America's own streets are  
battlegrounds  
long neglected.

When will we repay  
such an unwieldy deficit?

### The War is Over, Abroad

Except what we can ignore:  
A few kidnappings, oil fires,  
Attempted assassinations,  
Local insurrections,  
And unreturned hostages.  
Now it's time to attack  
Problems on the home front,  
Transportation and crime:  
Transportation for life  
Of a "criminal" population,  
Accompanied by criminal neglect  
Of the problems in our streets.  
While the "real" issue remains  
A lower tax on capital gains.

Stephen Hidalgo, English, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556-0368

## THE SPEED OF DARKNESS AND "CRAZED VETS ON THE DOORSTEP" DRAMA

By David J. DeRose, Theatre Studies, Yale University

The brief appearance of Steve Tesich's play *The Speed of Darkness* on Broadway last Spring started me thinking back upon one of my favorite (*sic*) sub-genres of Vietnam War Drama: the "Disturbed (Crazed) Vet on the Doorstep" play. Tesich's play is about the unexpected reunion of Joe and Lou, two Vietnam veterans who have not seen each other in eighteen years. Joe is a family man and successful businessman, a construction contractor who has just been named South Dakota's Man of the Year. Lou is a vagrant—one of the "Missing In America" as he likes to call himself; he has been following the touring replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial from city to city across the nation. When "Son of Wall" arrives in Sioux Falls, Lou arrives with it, materializing unexpectedly on Joe's doorstep.

Since David Rabe's startling *Sticks and Bones* in 1969, Vietnam veterans have been appearing on doorsteps with some regularity in American drama. Rabe's play is one of two early examples of this sub-genre to appear in 1969: the other is Lyle Kessler's regrettable *The Watering Place*. While Rabe's *Sticks and Bones* shoved an ugly war in our faces, *The Watering Place* was just plain interested in shoving ugly—at whomever's expense.

Critically acclaimed at the time of its first production, but since forgotten, Kessler's play is a carefully crafted vehicle of commercial exploitation. Like rape flicks which glamorize sexual violence while claiming to condemn it, *The Watering Place* paints a seductive and irresponsible image of evil in the guise of a traumatized Vietnam veteran. The play is set in an American family home. Several months have passed since the family's only son, Ronald, has died in a Vietnamese POW camp, leaving his pregnant widow, Janet, to live with his parents. Enter "Sonny," a recently returned veteran who shared a prison hutch with Ronald and witnessed his death.

Appearing out of nowhere and for no identifiable reason other than to victimize his ex-buddy's family, Sonny does his very best to drag every skeleton out of the family closet. He discovers that Janet is not, in fact, pregnant: she lost the child in a miscarriage on the day she learned of Ronald's death. She has been wearing a pillow under her clothes for six months to spare Ronald's mother the pain of losing both son and grandson. The older woman has been on the verge of a nervous breakdown since news of her son's death. Ronald's father is a veteran of two world wars who takes great pride in being supreme pater familias: all-knowing, all-powerful, all-protective. He has little respect for soldiers who fight "chinks" in Southeast Asia, rather than "krauts" in the fields of Europe, and recognizes Sonny as an immediate threat to his authority.

Sonny is a creature of motiveless and all-too-convenient evil, who easily seduces Janet with tales of how Ronald kept him alive in the POW camp by sharing

intimate fantasies about her. He just as easily emasculates the father by taking control of the women in the household, undermining the older man's authority, and eventually breaking his hand in a challenge of physical strength. Sonny destroys the mother's last tie to sanity by exposing the pillow she took for her future grandson; he then impregnates Janet with his own evil seed. The quintessential crazed vet, Sonny, having accomplished his pure evil, leaves as suddenly as he had appeared.

Similarly psychotic vets appear on the doorstep of American family homes in Michael Dorn Moody's *The Shortchanged Review* (1976), and George Szanto's *After the Ceremony* (1977). In Moody's play, for instance, the father is once again stripped of his authority and masculinity while his new wife is seduced and his step-daughter introduced to heroin. In what the psychotic vet/son assumes is the ultimate act of revenge upon all dirty, peace-loving hippies, he shoots a rock-star to death. All this takes place among long, masturbatory monologues on the horrors of war.

It was not until the late 1970s that the homecoming vet was treated in a responsible manner by three fact-based dramas: Tom Cole's *The Medal of Honor Rag* (1977), Adrienne Kennedy's *An Evening with Dead Essex* (1978), and Emily Mann's *Still Life* (1979). These three plays address issues of marital re-adjustment, survivor's guilt, PTSD, racial discrimination, and substance abuse among recently-returned veterans and their families. Not only do these plays vary from the "crazed vet" syndrome in their attitude toward homecoming veterans, they are also radically different in the theatrical manner in which they choose to represent the stories of those veterans. None of these plays, for instance, utilizes the conventional homecoming motif nor the domestic family setting. Cole's play, while conventionally melodramatic in some ways, takes place away from the home in the psychiatric ward of a VA hospital. Both Mann's play and Kennedy's are documentary in style, taking place in clearly abstracted and theatricalized spaces, using projected images and actors with written sources in hand. Clearly these writers felt that the issues surrounding the readjustment of Vietnam veterans could not be expressed in the stereotypical homecoming format. Other similarities between the three plays also suggest that these are dramatic presentations of clearly different intent than the "crazed vet" plays: for instance, two of the three plays deal with minority veterans; two of the three were written by women; two were based on cases widely publicized in the media; two end with the violent, public self-destruction of the veteran; all three were drawn from real-life incidents and individuals. These are all characteristics unique to these three plays, and totally exclusive of "crazed vet" drama.

In 1983 with *Strange Snow*, Stephen Metcalfe successfully combined the Vet at the Door motif with a sympathetic and responsible treatment of the self-destructive veteran. *Strange Snow* is one of three plays by Metcalfe—the other two are *Sorrows and Sons* and *Spittin' Image* (both 1986)—which deal with the death of a young man in Vietnam and the attempts of his family and friends to come to terms with his absence. In

*Sorrows and Sons* a college student and his father fight over the young man's inability to excel in school and sports. Devastated by the death of an older son in Vietnam, the father now resents the younger son's inability to fill his brother's shoes. In *Spittin' Image* (also performed under the title *Jackknife*), that same college student is unexpectedly visited by Megs, an eccentric Vietnam veteran who has served with the student's older brother and who was a witness to his death. Desperately alone, Megs has come to visit the young man because he is the "spittin' image" of his older brother. Megs, like the boy's father, hopes to take some comfort in that similarity.

*Strange Snow* (adapted for film as *Jackknife*) finds Megs once again knocking unexpectedly on someone's door. This time, it is the door of a third Vietnam veteran, Dave, who was with Megs when their mutual friend was killed in battle. As in *Sorrows and Sons* and *Jackknife*, the characters in *Strange Snow* are trying to come to terms with the death of someone dear to them. Their interaction is based on a search for explanations and an attempt to place blame. But there are no explanations, nor can blame be placed, and all three plays must end in an act of forgiveness.

Overlaid on the reunion of Dave and Megs in *Strange Snow* is a love story between Megs and Dave's sister, Martha. (One might see this love story as a rather benevolent new twist on the violent seductions of wives and daughters perpetrated by intrusive character's like Kessler's Sonny.) The rather conventional dramatic plotting of this nerd-meets-spinster love story exemplifies and draws attention to the manner in which Metcalfe attempts to frame the plight of his Vietnam survivors within such pre-cast dramatic narratives as the traditional love story, the domestic drama, or the classic father-son confrontation. In doing so, Metcalfe creates rather generic instances of mourning which do not so much reflect the specific circumstances of the U.S. war in Vietnam and its displaced U.S. veterans as they do the suffering of all those who have lost friends and family in unexpected tragedy. *Strange Snow* is a fine play, but it is not, in the final analysis, specifically about the Vietnam war. Perhaps this fact explains its commercial success.

A little-known play which does reflect the specific circumstances of post-Vietnam readjustment is James Duff's *Home Front* (1985), the only other Vet on the Doorstep play of the 1980s. This unassuming domestic drama about a recently-returned Vietnam veteran living in his parent's home is true to the experience of many vets in that important issues and heart-felt emotions are left mostly unexpressed, while un-aided resentment and misunderstanding between the vet and the other family members breeds tension and violent hostility.

Duff's play serves as an interesting, realistically-drawn counterpoint to Rabe's much earlier, highly stylized *Sticks and Bones*. The peculiar thing about *Home Front* is that, written in 1985—sixteen years after Rabe's play—it is still set during the war, in the immediate aftermath of a young man's tour of duty. Only with Steve Tesich's *The Speed of Darkness*, first produced at the Goodman Theatre of Chicago in 1989 and restaged at the Belasco Theatre in New York last spring, does an American

playwright take on the issue of disturbed veterans who are still showing up on doorsteps twenty years after returning from Vietnam.

Steve Tesich is not usually perceived as a heavyweight in dramatic circles: he is best known for the kind of warm, fuzzy "aw-shucks" American family dialogue which garnered him the Best Screenplay Oscar for *Breaking Away*. *The Speed of Darkness* has its fair share of this style of quaint Americana—Joe, for instance, calls his teen-age daughter Mary by the pet name "Marsee" (as in "Mares eat oats and Does eat oats"?). And yet *The Speed of Darkness* falls more into the mold of a classical Greek tragedy than Tesich's usual sentimental comedy. With the characters of Joe and Lou, the playwright is working on a dramatic scale which eventually overpowers the sweet and sentimental tone of the family interaction. There is a raw emotional power to Tesich's portrayal of these two men, and a symbolic stature to their shared crime, which supersedes the play's early touches of melodrama and cliché.

Lou's appearance at Joe's door is motivated not just by the arrival of the traveling Wall, but by an article he has read in the local newspaper of a proposed real estate development which would turn a wilderness area—a breath-taking mesa which overlooks the town—into a stylish housing development. Lou knows, as does Joe, that if the development proceeds, their mutual crime, a long-hidden act of hatred, will be uncovered. Only at the very end of the play does Joe reveal the nature of that crime: twenty years earlier, when he and Lou had just returned from Vietnam to a hometown which held them in contempt, the only work they could find was illegally dumping trash and disposing of toxic waste by night. As Joe says when accepting the Man of the Year award, "I'd like to thank all of you now because it was your trash and filth and waste that you wanted taken somewhere, anywhere, and buried out of sight that gave me my fresh start in life." In a bitter act of symbolic vengeance upon the country for which they fought in a war which left them both psychologically scarred and physically sterile, Joe and Lou poured barrel upon barrel of toxic waste into the crevices of the mesa, forever contaminating the land. "It was like dumping death by the barrel," Joe eventually tells his unbelieving family, "...but no matter how much we tried to hate, it still wasn't enough. We wanted to hate more. There was more venom in us than in all those oil drums put together. The kind of hate that desecrates life."

In the years that have passed since these events, Lou has become another statistic of the Vietnam war: one of the urban homeless. Joe, on the other hand, married a woman who had been made pregnant by another man and started a family, burying his hatred deep within himself. He eventually became an upstanding member of the community. As his name suggests, he is seen by all as "a regular Joe."

But, when the secret of the mesa threatens to destroy Joe's carefully constructed life, and when, in an act of self-sacrifice, Lou shoots himself in Joe's living room, accepting responsibility for their crime, the strain of being a "good Joe," of being a respected pillar of the community he once wished to poison, becomes too much for Joe. As he himself comments late in the play, "the

thought of having to wake up and having to be 'Joe' again and having to be 'Joe' the whole day is too much for me. I used to be good at it. I could do 'Joe' real good. I just don't feel like doing him anymore." Joe eventually makes a public confession, and while his community applauds his courage, he is not taken into their embrace. He becomes an instant outcast.

Tesich has given both Joe and Lou the kind of detailed, personal moments which make them absolutely real on stage. Lou is best defined by the story of his first visit to the Vietnam Memorial where he is stunned to discover that he is not listed among the casualties of the war. He is arrested when he tries to scratch his name into the Wall with a can opener. The privacy of Joe's pain is expressed in a conversation he has with his teen-age daughter's adoring boyfriend. When the guileless young man casually prods Joe about his Vietnam experience, Joe lashes out with "What's it like to fuck my daughter, Eddie?" When the young man is unable to answer, Joe responds "It's personal. Is that what it is? ... It's more personal than what happened to me in the war? Is that what you're telling me? ... I'm public property{?}"

"Moments like these are as specific and individual to the private experiences of the characters as they could be. And yet, Tesich also gives both Joe and Lou their moment of transcendence, where they take on a mythic stature and speak on behalf of an entire generation. Lou's moment comes at the instant of his death, when he pulls a gun from his knapsack, puts it to his mouth, and calmly tells his friend Joe, "I'll tell you what I'm gonna do for you, buddy. I'm gonna die for your sins. You're free." In this moment, Lou addresses the wishes of a nation which would like to be "free" of the "sins" of Vietnam which are upon us all, a nation which wishes it could locate and destroy a willing scapegoat like Lou. At the play's conclusion, Joe tries to free himself of the past by his public confession. Speaking on behalf of all ostracized Vietnam veterans, he both asks the forgiveness of the townspeople and in turn publicly forgives them. But the American people, it is made clear, are not yet willing to join Joe in an act of mutual healing. They would rather bury him along with Lou.

Finally, the symbolic imagery of Tesich's play makes me once more hearken back to unfortunate plays like *The Watering Place*. In *The Watering Place*, we had Janet's unborn baby / pillow, which by the play's conclusion had been replaced by Sonny's evil seed. In *The Speed of Darkness*, there is again a baby, carried by Joe's daughter Mary, and named after Lou. But, thankfully, there is no suggestion of a seduction, nor any possibility that this baby is Lou's. For the baby is nothing more than a sack of old rags and earth which Mary carries with her as part of a high school assignment in responsible parenthood. The only "seed" which is sown in this play is the poison which Joe and Lou "shot ... into those dark holes" of the mesa—a sterile seed of hatred and pain, not of evil. If Mary, or any of her generation, have been impregnated in this play, it is by the experience she now carries with her into adulthood and parent by virtue of having been touched by Lou's life and her father's.

## REMF BOOKS

David Willson, Librarian, Green River Community College

Hathaway, Stephen. *A Kind of Redemption: Stories*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991.

Stephen tells me that the story most Vietnam vets like best in his collection of eleven Vietnam-related stories is "Grote Apart." (p. 76) It's my favorite, too. I don't have to look deep into my soul (or anywhere else) to figure out why. The first sentence says plenty about a problem I share with Grote, not a problem I am eager to talk about, especially with grunts. But a problem I was glad to read that another REMF was also tortured by. "Quite unexpectedly, and after nearly fifteen years, Timothy Grote has begun to imagine that he performed heroic acts in Viet Nam." Grote goes on to tell us about his war. ". . . [N]obody shot him or stabbed him with a bayonet or threw hand grenades or shot rockets at him. Nor did he shoot, bayonet, grenade, or rocket anybody else. No snakes, rats, centipedes, or panthers bit him, he didn't take drugs. He wasn't disobedient. He didn't get very many medals." Grote is tormented by a tour of duty that everyone would be quick to tell him was a piece of cake. I sympathize with Grote, and with Hathaway. Hathaway's story was one of the forces which drove me to research the military records of every Willson back to Abner Willson in the War of 1812 (so far). They were all braver than I, even my father who was a clerk-typist in the Marines in World War II, typing courts-martial. He also spent 17 days in the worst fighting on Iwo Jima, not that he ever discussed it with me. But enough about me, even though I found much of me in Hathaway's stories.

The title story deals directly and painfully with a young man and his father, a World War II veteran and a survivor of the Bataan Death March. We of the Vietnam generation will always seem pygmies in the eyes of that generation of men. They tell us that we must put the Vietnam Syndrome away, that it is dead. Hathaway reminds us that this claim is bullshit. Also he discusses family history. "Not that Grote cares a fig about genealogy, the dreary province of gimcrack notability. Who and what those people were in the dim recesses of the past doesn't inspire in him anything more than idle curiosity." (p. 109 "Grote Discovers Himself Trapped in Time")

I suspect I'll never be this dispassionate about the past, mine especially. I sometimes wish Abner Willson hadn't successfully stood off the attack of a boatful of Indians in the War of 1812 (although if he hadn't, there would have been no REMF and no *REMF Diary*, at least not from me.) In my own tour of duty I never even entered Indian country, let alone fought any Indians.

Frazer, Michael. *Nasho*. West Melbourne, Australia: Aires Imprint, 1984.

The Australian soldiers in Vietnam didn't call REMFs by that name. But soldiers always have a name for the rear echelon. The Australians used "Base Wallahs" or "Pogos".

The called Vietnam the Funny Place, Funny Farm, and Queer Country. The Vietnamese were called Nigel Nog, or just plain Nigel, or just plain nogs.

When I first arrived in-country and received my permanent duty station, I noticed large young men with odd uniforms and weird hats going through the mess line. They sounded English to me. I asked who they were and was told they were Australians. Why were they here, I asked. "They are afraid that if this war is lost, Asians will take over Australia. That's the Domino Theory," I was told. I don't remember Australians much after that, but several thousands of them died in Vietnam.

*Nasho* is a novel by a man who spent 253 days in Vietnam as a National Serviceman, between 1969 and 1971. He was a base wallah, and so is his hero, Peter Turner. Much of the novel is in diary form, which I especially appreciated.

The Vietnam section doesn't start until page 156, because the author gives us plenty of army training and Australian duty first. The Vietnam section is preceded by a glossary which defines Pogo: "Derogatory term for a soldier posted at base whose job is inside the wire perimeter, i.e. he doesn't have to go out and do the fighting. The term pogo comes from pogo stick, slang for prick." (p. 159)

The book does have a plot, but even though I've read it twice, I've not quite figured it out. The strength of the novel is that it is the only one of its sort. Turner writes news releases for Australian newspapers, and vets all photographs before they are sent from AiC Saigon to the Australian newspapers - and many of the photos are included in *Nasho*, which isn't typical for a Vietnam War novel.

This is *the* novel to read if you are curious about the Australian effort in the Vietnam War. The epilogue (p. 296) tells us how the Australians felt about their service. "They had risked their lives in a foreign war, fought on behalf of their country. Now, at home, years later, they were embarrassed to talk about it."

Primm, Sandy. *Short Time; Stories*. St. Louis: The Cauldron Press, 1977.

At the last Popular Culture Association Conference in San Antonio, the author of one of the most elusive pieces of Vietnam War Literature, an item so elusive that it is not listed in John Newman's book, popped up from nowhere. Appropriately, he surfaced at the bibliographic group hosted by John Baky. Sandy Primm wasn't clutching a copy of his book, *Short Time*, to his chest. He didn't need to. He introduced himself to me as Sandy Primm, and off-handedly mentioned his little book. I embraced him in a bearhug and barely stopped short of kissing him. "The lost is found," I cried!

One of his small and beautiful stories had appeared in Demilitarized Zones, but I had never seen *Short Time*, not even in a library. Sandy did not have a copy with him in San Antonio, but a few weeks later I received one from him in the mail. I was not disappointed.

*Short Time* is a REMF work of prose poems, or very short stories, which work together to make a succinct and moving novel of Sandy's tour of duty.

The first story I turned to was on page 4, "HG, USARV, Long Binh," because I'd been stationed there, too. I wanted to see how well he did with that special duty station. Sandy did not let me down:

**HG, USARV, Long Binh**

A monstrous prefab complex thru which the pair of old mamasans wander. They are janitors. With effcient [sic] little pushes of their fan-like Vietnamese brooms, they sweep up piles of dirt or WHAP-WHAP-WHAP, one smashes a big waterbug and pops it, still squirming, into her mouth, chews it up, and then smiles at us roundeyes.

Sandy's "Yates' ARCOM" (p. 24) perfectly captures the power of the army clerk. "There was a sergeant down the hall who didn't like what we were doing so we sent him to Nam. He'd just come back and didn't have the slightest idea where those orders came from."

One of Sandy's stories even mentions Louisville ("Going and Coming Back"), site of the next Popular Culture Association Conference. I hope to see him there so I can tell him in person how fine his book is.

## POETRY BY PETER DESY

### The Dreamers

Combat is all right if the other men  
are dark or lighter. If the women  
are hairy, this will ease our

burden, such animals are they.  
If they live in huts with no power  
lines, this is another plus.

• • •

Always bomb the bridges, the walkways  
of persistent memories, linking lives  
and times, under which the moon floats,

starting human dreams. The other  
learning places—in and under trees,  
in sleeping places, at the edges of gardens—

the private sanctuaries of desire or  
fascination; strafe these,  
with our blonde eyes on the spidery

cross hairs of sights with dead centers,  
these places where hamburgers and pizza  
have yet to be invented.

Their brown-eyed, dark-skinned gods  
won't interfere. Our god of light  
stands with a flashing sword

we've forged from gold and given  
others like it to the marines, each  
with one foot on a beach somewhere.

We might be afraid they could dream  
us away, the way we left off dreaming,  
because we were afraid

of the worst dream of all,  
that we've stopped living,  
that there's something we've forgotten.

*Peter Desy, 2802 Kensington P. W., Columbus, OH 43202*

## VOICES FROM THE PAST: THE SEARCH FOR HANOI HANNAH

*Don North*

We called her Hanoi Hannah. She called herself Thu Houng, the fragrance of autumn. But her job was to chill and frighten, not to charm and seduce.

*How are you, GI Joe? It seems to me that most of you are poorly informed about the going of the war, to say nothing about a correct explanation of your presence over here. Nothing is more confused than to be ordered into a war to die or to be maimed for life without the faintest idea of what's going on. (Hanoi Hannah, 16 June 1967)*

The wartime words of Hanoi Hannah, part of the loud soundtrack for the Vietnam war. It may have been the first war fought to a rock n'roll background, but for American GIs, along with the beat came the message: disinformation from the enemy in Hanoi and misinformation from the US Army in Saigon. Even so, radio brought music and messages with a familiar sound to soldiers who thought the war was the end of the earth, and to many it didn't matter who was broadcasting; Radio Hanoi or US Armed Forces Radio.

It was my first return to Vietnam since the war and mixed into the list of economists, generals and journalists I asked to interview was Thu Houng, the lady we knew as Hanoi Hannah. The meeting was arranged. We would meet on the roof cafe of the Rex Hotel in Ho Ville for coffee at ten.

As an ABC News correspondent during the war I tuned into her broadcasts regularly. Like attending the "five o'clock follies" (USMACV's daily briefing), Radio Hanoi's broadcasts in English were just another source of information or disinformation to be checked out and sorted in the communications pudding of the Vietnam war. Some days on Radio Hanoi you just might hear useful information like a message from a US POW or the first hint of a policy shift in Hanoi's Politburo, but mostly it was highly exaggerated reports of the war and curious messages to American GIs from Hanoi Hannah. Not much news worth reporting.

*American GIs don't fight this unjust immoral and illegal war of Johnson's. Get out of Vietnam now and alive. This is the voice of Vietnam Broadcasting from Hanoi, capitol of the Democratic republic of Vietnam. Our program for American GIs can be heard at 1630 hours. Now here's Connie Francis singing "I almost lost my mind" (Hanoi Hannah, 12 August 1967).*

In Vietnam you habitually tuned into whatever newscasts your transistor radio would pick up. It was reassuring to know that you were not missing a big offensive somewhere in the next Province and that you could spend another few days on that elusive pacification story in Xuan Loc. BBC was the first choice for radio news and most reliable, but often hard to pick up. On US Armed Forces Radio even a major battle could sound like a minor skirmish if it didn't favor US or ARVN forces, but you learned to read between the lines of their newscasts. Sometimes you would hear your own TV or radio reports from Stateside broadcasts, picked up and rebroadcast over US Armed Forces Radio, as long as they didn't mention American setbacks or were critical of Washington policy.

Radio Hanoi could be heard in most areas of South Vietnam, particularly at night and I would often join groups of American GIs around 10:30pm having a few beers before bed and setting the dial for Hanoi Hannah for a few laughs.

The GI's radio was, after his rifle, his most valued possession. Like his rifle butt, the radio was usually wrapped in frayed black tape for protection. GIs would laugh and hoot over Hannah's attempts to scare them into going home or her suggestions to frag an officer. If their unit was mentioned a great cheer went up and they pelted the radio with empty beer cans.

We would ask each other how the hell could she know what she did. Inevitably, the stories of her insights and military intelligence grew with each telling and she was often credited with broadcasting Viet Cong offensives in advance and within hours of battle knowing the names and hometowns of dead American soldiers.

*Now for the War News. American casualties in Vietnam. Army Corporal Larry J. Samples, Canada, Alabama... Staff Sergeant Charles R. Miller, Tucson, Arizona... Sergeant Frank G. Herrera, Coolidge, Arizona.... (Hanoi Hannah, September 15, 1967)*

Former US Marine Ken Watkins joined me on the Rex roof for the meeting with Hanoi Hannah. Ken is now a counselor at the Vietnam Veterans Outreach Center in Houston, Texas. He had returned to join a group of veterans from Garberville, California to build a health clinic in Vung Tao. Ken had been confronting many old ghosts of his Vietnam duty in the past weeks. Hanoi Hannah would be yet another phantom to encounter face to face. Ken was a regular listener of Hannah's during his time as a Corpsman with the U.S. First Marines based at Marble Mountain in 1966. Ken recalled, "The signal was pretty good around Danang and we would tune in once or twice a week to hear her talk about the war, a war I was beginning to question and wanted to hear discussed.

U.S. Armed Forces Vietnam Radio didn't talk about the war really, they ignored the issues or public attitudes at home. Hanoi Hannah didn't necessarily make sense and there was a certain awkwardness; she used American English, but really didn't speak our language in spite of her hip expressions and hit tunes, even tunes that were banned on U.S. Army radio. The best thing going for her was that she was female and had a nice soft voice."

"Any of her broadcasts you particularly remember?" I asked Ken while waiting for Hannah to arrive. "Whenever she named our unit, the First Marines, and where we were, that always stands out in my mind. Some of us thought she had spies everywhere or a crystal ball."

"Do you still feel anger toward her, Ken?"

"Sure, some antagonism, add it to the Vietnam list, but this trip back is about coming full circle on a lot of things and she is another voice from the past I want to confront in person."

So an old Marine and an old journalist waited that sunny Saigon morning on the roof of the old Rex for the real Hanoi Hannah to appear, waiting for reality to sweep away years of bitter old images in the mills of our minds.

Dragon Lady? Prophet? Psi-warrior par excellence or what? Like so many of the phantoms encountered in Vietnam she was not what she seemed.

She was not phantom. She didn't look like a dragon lady and she was on time. A pleasant looking woman, slim, well groomed and attractive showed up at 10:00am sharp on the Rex roof accompanied by an escort from the External Affairs Press Office. The wartime sounds of Radio Hanoi came flooding back.

*We Gotta get out of this place, if it's the last thing we ever do. We gotta get out of this place, surely there's a better life for me and you. (An Eric Burden song... regularly heard on Radio Hanoi, banned on US Armed Forces radio.)*

Don: Thu Houng, you played a lot of American rock music, where did you get it?

Hannah: Yes, yes, we bought the music from progressive Americans who came to visit Hanoi. We also have our own music, but I think that the GIs like to listen to American music, it's more suitable to their ears.

Don: Have you ever heard from those GIs who heard your broadcasts and to whom you became a household name?

Hannah: After the war we received one letter from an ex-GI who said he listened to our broadcast and now that the war was over he is back home and wanted us to know about it. I am sorry that I forget his name, it has been quite a long time now.

Don: What prompted your government to begin your broadcasts to American soldiers?

Hannah: Because the GIs were sent massively to South Vietnam, maybe it's a good idea to have a broadcast for them. It wasn't a new idea. During the war against the French we had this kind of broadcast for the French soldiers.

Don: What about the foreigners who helped you during the war?

Hannah: The Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett helped us from time to time and a French woman, Madelaine Riffaud. We did several interviews with Cora Weiss and Jane Fonda. We asked Jane Fonda if she would like to meet American pilots in Hanoi, but she refused, she didn't want to. I saw the pilots sometimes and we broadcast statements but I never interviewed them either. They were authorized to listen to our broadcasts. And we broadcast tapes sent to us from Americans against the war. These were most effective I believe. Americans are xenophobic, they will believe their own people rather than the adversary, even a friendly enemy voice.

Don: Did you ever evaluate the effects of your broadcasts?

Hannah: No, during the war it was difficult to get feedback except through foreign news reports but we knew we were being heard.

Don: What were your main aims?

Hannah: We mentioned that GIs should go AWOL and suggested some frigging, or that is fragging. We advised them to do what they think proper against the war.

Don: But there were few, if any, defections of Americans, did that surprise you?

Hannah: No, we just continued our work. We believed in it. I put my heart in my work.

Don: Many American soldiers think you received excellent intelligence on their unit positions and battle readiness and casualties. What was the main source of your information on US troops in Vietnam?

Hannah: US Army—*Stars and Stripes*. We read from it. We had it flown in everyday. And we also read *Newsweek*, *Time* and several newspapers. We could also intercept the AP and UPI wires and of course we had the news from our Vietnam News Agency and we rewrote it. We had many sources of news. We took remarks of American journalists and put it in our broadcasts, especially remarks about casualties...high casualties. There was the list of Missing in Action, those who were killed on the battlefield, we read the news with the native place.

Don: Sometimes the North Vietnamese Army when they killed Americans would find letters to their families. Did you ever get such letters and read them?

Hannah: No. Maybe the Army, but not our radio station.

Don: Do you remember any articles in particular that you used?

Hannah: Yes, Arnaud DeBorchegrave in *Newsweek*. I remember we used his articles. And Don Luce about the tiger cages in South Vietnam. We would often say to the GIs that the Saigon regime was not worth their support.

Don: Did you ever announce attacks before they took place? Many soldiers in Vietnam thought you did?

Hannah: No, but, um, I don't think...for example, if we made a sum-up of war news maybe the GIs will guess something. I don't know. We never informed that such and such a battle would take place. That we would not do.

Don: You never gave any hints of what would take place?

Hannah: Well, in our talks we said that if they were in Vietnam, how could they avoid the war zone and maybe they will get bad chance, maybe killed. But it's not that such and such a battle took place.

*Now for our talk. A Vietnam Black GI who refuses to be a victim of racism is Billy Smith. It seems on the morning of march fifteenth a fragmentation grenade went off in an officers barracks in Bien Hoa Army Base killing two gung ho lieutenants and wounding a third. Smith was illegally searched, arrested and put in Long Binh Jail and brought home for trial. The evidence that clearly showed him guilty of all charges and specifications was this: being black, poor and against the war and the army and refusing to be a victim of racism. (Hanoi Hannah, 30 March 1968)*

Mike Roberts, 41, Detroit, Michigan remembers Hanoi Hannah. Mike was a Marine, in a Hawk Missile Battalion just outside Da Nang through 1967 and 1968. He summed up the black veteran's attitude to Hannah's broadcasts: "I remember June 1967, I was sitting in a tent with about thirteen guys from Charlie Company. We were all on mess duty and we were gambling, drinking and having a good time—shootin' craps, talking about the world, man, listening to music and you know one guy kept saying, 'Sshh, sshh, be quiet,' and everybody says what, what, and he says 'There's a riot in Detroit!' I guess the governor called in the troops... there was some loss of life. There was no feeling of, you know, what were they rioting for? What possibly could they want? We all knew what they wanted, you know what I'm saying. So of course we would feel some sort of empathy for the folks back home... the guys in the street who were struggling or rioting."

"Armed Forces Radio didn't give you an in-depth account of what was happening?"

"Hanoi Hannah comes on soon after that, and she knows what guard unit was called in, what kind of weapons were used...you know what I'm sayin'. That's when it starts to hit home.... We knew what kind of fire power and what kind of devastation that kind of weapon can do to people, and now those same weapons were turning on us, you know, our own military is killing our own people. We might as well have been Viet Cong...you know what I'm sayin'?' It was just bad news, but Hanoi Hannah picked up on it and she talked about it. And clearly if she knew about it, Armed Forces Radio did too. They knew more than they had broadcasted. That was really the first time I started hearing Hanoi Hannah call upon Blacks, you know, to rethink their situation there. Why are you fighting? You have your own battle to fight in America. We were smoking herbs, you know, and we decided to listen to Hanoi Hannah. Now most of the guys that I hung out with didn't stay up all night waiting for Hannah to come on. But there were times when...like during bunker watch at night...we wanted to listen to Hanoi Hannah...to see what she had to say. But we didn't really see her as our friend...someone who is looking out for our best interest and would keep the Viet Cong from killing us if they had a chance."

Tom Wallis spent eight years in Vietnam and Thailand with the US Army Special Forces. During his time in the Central Highlands Tom particularly remembers one broadcast.

"We had a young Lieutenant who had just turned twenty-two years old and we wanted him to come down and celebrate his birthday at headquarters. He got in a sampan with a couple of security guards and they started down the river. One of the enemy reached out and handed them a grenade and killed two of them in the boat. We found the boat later and there was a birthday card bought at an American PX pinned to his chest that said 'Happy Twenty-First Birthday Lieutenant...this will be your last.' A day or two later we picked up Hanoi Hannah saying that, uh congratulations to Lieutenant so and so, it's too bad he won't make his twenty-third birthday."

Jim Maciolek served at Lai Khe with the First Division in 1966. "When we heard Hannah mention our unit we would give a toast to her and throw our beer cans at the radio. If she knew where we were, so did everybody else. But Armed Forces Radio was on constantly, too. It was run by the U.S. military so we heard what they wanted us to hear. I think I would have liked to hear about opposition to the war that was being staged back home. That way I would have been better prepared when I got back home...seeing hippies, people chanting slogans, people with black arm bands...that was all new to me."

Hanoi Hannah could always be assured of at least the POW captive audience "authorized" to hear her broadcasts in the Hanoi Hilton. A speaker wired into every room made Hannah's commentaries impossible to ignore, although some tried. Lt. Commander Ray Voden, of McLean, Virginia endured her broadcasts for almost eight years after being shot down over Hanoi on 3 April 1965. "Hanoi Hannah's broadcasts often stirred up argument among the POWs, there were near fist fights over the program. Some guys wanted to hear it, while other guys tried to ignore it. Personally, I listened because I was never influenced and usually gleaned information, reading between the lines. They always exaggerated our aircraft losses, often claiming hundreds of U.S. planes shot down around Hanoi when we had not heard anti-aircraft fire for weeks. Once they piped in the BBC news by mistake and for once we really heard what was going on in the world. The music was the best part of Radio Hanoi and sometimes playing American tunes that were supposed to make us homesick had the opposite effect. One time they played "Downtown" by Petula Clark and everyone started dancing and yelling for an hour...just went wild. Another one that gave us a hoot was "Don't Fence Me In"...by Ella Fitzgerald I think. I taped Christmas messages for Radio Hanoi a few times, most of us did...it was not big deal, but they would make life miserable for you if you didn't. I've no hatred for them now. They were doing their job and I was doing mine. But, no, I wouldn't go out of my way to meet Hanoi Hannah if I was given the chance today."

Gerry Clark, Detroit, had been in country just two weeks when he heard Hanoi Hannah. "After welcoming our unit Hanoi Hannah said she had a surprise for us. She said that in honor of Ho Chi Minh's birthday there

would be an enemy attack. Just then I heard small arms fire in the distance. It grew steadier and louder until it became a full-scale attack on the Da Nang Air Base."

George Hart, Boston, remembers Hanoi Hannah's broadcasts that mentioned specific GIs by name and said their girlfriends were sleeping with someone else back home. A few days later he remembers the soldiers named got "Dear John" letters from home confirming what Hannah had said.

Just as most vets remember a specific Radio Hanoi broadcast above all others, I do too. But it wasn't by Hanoi Hannah. It was broadcast by her male counterpart, Nguyen Van Tung, who sounded like an actor—Peter Lorre—the popular villain of the Hollywood screen. It was also the first Hanoi Radio broadcast I ever heard, four weeks after arriving in Vietnam. It was recorded late one night in An Lac, a US Special Forces Camp in the Central Highlands. I still have the tape after twenty-five years.

*You are new here and we don't expect you to believe us when we tell you just how bad it is. But just a sample of what you can expect was written up by a bona fide American correspondent for the New York Times on June 20th about some fighting less than fifty miles from Saigon. 'Zone D is all they said it was. It is a flat, scary jungle, thick with scrub trees and tall grass... hot and wet with intermittent rain and strong tropical dragon flies and Viet Cong sniper bullets.'* (Nguyen Van Tun, Radio Hanoi, 30 June 1965)

An Lac is about one hundred miles west of Nha Trang. I had been on patrol with US Special Forces advisors and the Montagnard Irregulars they were trying to train and motivate. It was pretty quiet, no contact and it had been raining hard for over a week keeping the supply plane that was my ticket out from coming in.

At night after the perimeter had been secured there wasn't much to do but play cards, read, drink Ba Moi Bao beer and listen to the radio. Up in the Central Highlands of Vietnam Radio Hanoi boomed in loud and clear.

Each evening I drank Ba Moi Bao with members of the A-Team and listened to Radio Hanoi. Each morning we all swore not to do it again. The Ba Moi Bao was said to be laced with formaldehyde and produced monster hangovers.

The Radio Hanoi broadcasts, while funny at the time, also tended to stay with you like a Ba Moi Bao headache.

*You are a long, long way from Fort Riley now and there is no Jersey Coffee in town on Washington Street where you can sit around the counter, eating hamburgers and sipping coffee without having to be afraid a bomb might go off, like it did in that restaurant in Saigon a few weeks back. Like I said you are new here and really don't know what LBJ and company have let you in for by sending you across the Pacific to invade Vietnam, because the local stooges and the more than sixty thousand American troops who came before you couldn't stop the South Vietnam liberation forces. But you will learn the hard way. Ask some of the guys that have been around a while. This isn't Washington*

*Street in Junction City. You can get killed here. Get out while you are still alive and before it's too late. (Nguyen Van Tung, 30 June 1956).*

I had been at the Mekahn Restaurant that Tung was talking about in his broadcast. The Mekahn was a floating restaurant tied up on the Mekong River dockside in Saigon. The bomb went off about ten o'clock when it was full of customers, many of them Americans. A Claymore mine tied to a tree was detonated three minutes later aimed at the survivors of the first bomb as they clambered down the gangplank toward shore. I arrived about 45 minutes after the blast, just in time to see 40 mangled bodies being loaded into ambulances and the Saigon Fire Department washing rivers of blood off the sidewalk with firehoses. Yes, Hanoi Hannah and her partner Nguyen Van Tung often knew how to invoke the images of war most painful to Americans in Vietnam.

The combination of his Peter Lorre delivery and the fact he hit the right buttons for me at the time in his psy-war commentary made him an enigma for twenty-five years. He didn't sound Vietnamese and many of the Special Forces Team listening that night guessed he was a turncoat Frenchman affecting an Oxford accent. I was to hear him many times during the course of the war, but never as clear as that night in An Lac and never with the same impact as that first broadcast.

I played the tape in Hanoi. They recognized his voice. Nguyen Van Tung was retired but known to be living in Hanoi. An address was found and I set off with my cyclo driver on a Sunday afternoon to face another voice from my past.

If I had been a man from Mars dropping in for tea, Nguyen Van Tung would not have been more surprised. He turned up his hearing aid and I played the tape of his broadcast heard in An Lac 25 years ago.

"Do you remember making that broadcast?" I inquired.

"Yes, of course, I was an announcer at Radio Hanoi. We made special programs for American GIs," he replied in his carefully enunciated style.

"Have you ever met any of your American listeners before?"

"No, sorry but I have not. It is a great pleasure to meet you here in Hanoi."

His eyes glistened with tears. Who wouldn't wonder at a foreign stranger, an American in Hanoi, walking in playing back your words from a night's broadcast 25 years in the past?

Nguyen Van Tung is 67 and in good health except for his hearing problems. He lives comfortably in downtown Hanoi with his wife and son's family. From time to time he teaches English to private students. He had studied French and English as a schoolboy in Hanoi and then his father arranged for him to study English at the prestigious St. John's Boys School in Hong Kong, which explains the Oxford accent fighting against the earlier French.

Nguyen Van Tung remembers well the years when Hanoi was under siege and he broadcast daily to the enemy. Words of conciliation and forgiveness do not come easily to the old wordsmith who used to hector the American enemy daily during more than ten years of war.

To frighten, not to charm and seduce.

*How are you, GI Joe? It seems to me that I escaped death many times in Hanoi... the planes, the bombs... the house next door to me was bombed out... even a room on my house was blown down. But my family escaped because they were out of town.*

Don: Mr. Tung, what would you say if you had the chance to broadcast again this night to American troops? Go ahead, say what you want.

Tung: We were fighting for a just cause. All people want to be free and independent and do what they like. We know your history, Washington, Lincoln... great men. But those following them, well, we distinguish clearly between the American people and those who made the war. There's no reason the Vietnamese people and America can't be good friends. Our government changed policy and we are now glad to have friends cooperate in mutual understanding and benefit. However, the U.S. government has a responsibility to heal the wounds of war. We didn't make that war and I deem it reasonable that the U.S. government reconsider its policy and shake hands with Vietnam. There will be many benefits if we can be friends together on an equal basis. There is no reason to be enemies, the world should be in peace and we should enjoy our lives.

Today the "Voice of Vietnam" still broadcasts from the same old ramshackle building at 58 Quan Su Street in central Hanoi. The equipment too has survived the war years and generation of patient repair. Only the announcers are new. A new staff of Hanoi Hannahs in their early twenties can be heard on Radio Hanoi's English service today. From 1600 hours Hanoi time until 2:00am, "Voice of Vietnam" can be picked up around the world on 12035 KHZ on the 25 meter band.

*The Kampuchean people fully support the new policy of national reconciliation. The Kampuchea United Front for National Construction and Defense says the cessation of all foreign interference must be emphasized in order to guarantee the Pol Pot clique will not be permitted to return to power. ("The Voice of Vietnam," broadcast 1600 hours, Hanoi, 4 April 1989)*

The broadcasts are certainly less strident these days, reflecting the fact that Vietnamese are not fighting anyone for the first time in 50 years. There is also a state of shock in the Hanoi leadership these days as "misguided comrades" from Poland to Rumania thump their collective noses at Lenin.

Another reason for the lower decibel rhetoric being beamed out from Hanoi to the world may be the presence of an American advisor. Ms. Virginia Gift peers sternly over her bifocals at the confusion of Radio Hanoi's newsroom. Antique typewriters clatter in unison and outside the window carpenters pound hammers, shoring up the crumbling building. Ms. Gift is employed by the Government of Vietnam to improve the English skills of Hanoi civil servants.

This generation of Hanoi Hannahs, it seems, learned English from Russian textbooks. Twice a week Virginia Gift attempts to "de-Stalinize" the Radio Hanoi newscasts.

"The main problem with their English is they learned it from Russians. They use a lot of Stalinist terms and double-talk that mean nothing to most English listeners. So I try to purge the Marxist gobbledegook and substitute straight English vocabulary. They learn fast and if it helps the world understand where the Vietnamese are coming from today, well then it's worth all my trouble."

There were in fact many Hanoi Hannahs who worked here at Radio Hanoi during the war between 1965 and 1973, but Thu Houg was the senior and most frequently heard Hannah. Together, with Nguyen Van Tung, they wrote and taped three commentaries a day for broadcast to the American troops.

After the war, Hannah, or Thu Houg moved to Ho Chi Minh city in 1976 with her husband, an officer in the North Vietnam Army. Hannah began her career with Radio Hanoi in 1955, when North Vietnam as an independent country began broadcasting to the world in several languages. She had been an English student at Hanoi University and was hired as the first English voice of Radio Hanoi at age 25. Her broadcasts directed toward American soldiers began in 1965 just after the U.S. Marines landed at Da Nang.

She does not like being compared to Tokyo Rose of World War II. Yes, she had read about Tokyo Rose but never studied her broadcasts or tried to emulate her style. Tokyo Rose was Iva Toguri, an American-born Japanese caught in Tokyo after Pearl Harbor and forced to broadcast. (As with Hanoi Hannah, there was no single Tokyo Rose. Twenty-seven different English-speaking Asian women, most Americans, broadcast to American troops during the Pacific War. But it was Iva Toguri who was singled out by muckraking journalist Walter Winchell and with the enthusiastic support of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, she was convicted of treason. Iva Toguri spent eight years in prison before being pardoned by President Gerald Ford in 1977).

Tokyo Rose had been folksy and down-home American in her broadcasts. Hanoi Hannah maintained a friendly but correct and distant approach with her listeners. There was always a Vietnamese formality just under the surface of her voice as she suggested defection might be a good idea.

Interviewing Hanoi Hannah was like being Dorothy parting the curtains hiding the Wizard of Oz. The great and terrible Hanoi Hannah behind the façade we constructed turned out to be a mild-mannered announcer who spoke English and read *Stars and Stripes*.

As they say, in wartime, truth is the first casualty. By zapping the truth through an ostrich-like policy—censorship, deletions, and exaggerations—U.S. Armed Forces Radio lost the trust of many GIs when they were most isolated and vulnerable to enemy propaganda. It wasn't that Hanoi Hannah always told the truth—she didn't. But she was most effective when she did tell the truth and U.S. Armed Forces Radio was fudging it. If we didn't know before, Vietnam should have taught us the communications are now so pervasive in this shrinking world that suppression of information is impossible. Accuracy and honesty in broadcasts are essential, not just because it's morally right but because it's practical, too.

After the war there was little recognition in Vietnam of her contribution to the war effort. Few of her countrymen have ever heard of her, there were no medals or honors and she herself modestly plays down her role in the war effort.

Don: You know, you're better known in the U.S. than you are here. Has the government ever recognized your work? Did you ever get a medal?

Hannah: Everybody got a medal.

Don: What did you hope to accomplish by your broadcasts?

Hannah: Well, I think that our earnest hope was the GIs would not participate in this war, that they would demand to go home. That they would see this war is not in the interests of the United States. I mean the people, the GIs, the families.

Don: And what effect do you think you really had?

Hannah: Well, we think the broadcasts did have some effect, because we see the antiwar movement in the U.S. building up, growing and so we think that our broadcast is a support to this antiwar movement. It's been over twenty years now. I am happy with what I've done.

Don: How do you see Vietnam and its place in the world today?

Hannah: It's an interesting stage. We are approaching normality. Things are much improved. There's a policy now of opening the doors to the outside world. It's better for Vietnam and the world. Because our fight has been for such a long time we are isolated from the world, even after reconstruction we don't have much attention from people outside. Things are better now between the U.S. and Vietnam and I hope relations will continue to improve, to normalize.

Don: Do you see any role for yourself to better relations with the U.S.?

Hannah: Well, I'm taking retirement now, but I'd be happy to do something to help relations between the U.S. and Vietnam. I would like to see America some day.

Don: What are you curious about in the U.S.?

Hannah: It's difficult to tell you. I just want to be a tourist and see the people and the land. I have always compared our traditions of liberty, like those of Abraham Lincoln and Ho Chi Minh. I just want to see it with my own eyes.

*As a features writer for the Hong Kona China Mail, Don North's first assignment as a war correspondent was in North Borneo with the British Royal Marines and Gurkas fighting the Army of Indonesia. For two years he was a freelance cameraman and writer in Vietnam and Indonesia and became Vietnam Staff Correspondent for ABC News in 1966. The Mel Gibson role in the feature film **The Year of Living Dangerously** is in part based on North's experiences in Indonesia. In 1967 he won the Overseas Press Club Award for his reports of Vietnam combat. During the Tet Offensive in January 1968, his report of the Viet Cong attack on the U.S. Embassy was the first broadcast on television in the United States.*

In 1970, North was named *Cairo Bureau Chief* for NBC News and specialized in covering terrorism in the Middle East. He returned frequently to Vietnam. During the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, he covered the advance of Israeli forces in the Golan Heights and at the Suez Canal. For three years North worked as a producer on the 26-part series, *The Ten Thousand Day War*, a television history of the Vietnam war which was first broadcast on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. This series has been shown in many countries around the world and on Arts & Entertainment and commercial broadcast outlets in the United States. North has appeared as news anchor for CBC Montreal, KTTV Los Angeles and as host of numerous documentaries. He established Northstar Productions, Inc. in Washington, DC in 1983 and has produced television news and documentaries about El Salvador, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and Lebanon.

## HOLLYWOOD CONFIDENTIAL: I

Fred Gardner

The phone rings and a guy in my office says, "It's David Horowitz."

I haven't spoken to David Horowitz since the end of the '60s, when we both worked at *Ramparts*. Since then, with another former *Ramparts* editor, Peter Collier, this little creep has written a series of best-selling portraits of ruling class families—*The Rockefellers*, *The Fords*, *The Kennedys*—and boasted in print about voting for Ronald Reagan. Horowitz and Collier say they once believed fervently in left causes and institutions (from the Soviet Union to the Black Panther Party), and when they discovered these institutions to be corrupt and murderous they had to denounce them and come out for the other side.

There are many flaws in this "logic." For openers, there aren't just two sides in this world (the fake left and the cruel right). And sure it's demoralizing to learn that the party that supposedly stands for equality is run by opportunists and actually stands for privilege. But that wouldn't lead a real radical to endorse the all-out pursuit of privilege. It should lead you to call for a movement that's serious about establishing equality. Horowitz and Collier were never radicals for a minute. Their goal was and is personal success. It's no coincidence that they were "left" in the '60s and "right" in the '80s.

"What's up, David?"

"We're doing a book on the Fondas and we want to interview you."

I had known Jane Fonda around 1970, when she was getting involved in the antiwar movement.

"Is this an authorized biography?"

"No, Peter Fonda's doing his own autobiography, and Jane has commissioned Scheer to write a book about her." That would be Bob Scheer, the *Ramparts* editor, a glib namedropper who used to fly first-class in 1968 and stay at the fanciest hotels while pretending to be some kind of "movement" spokesman. Scheer invariably got

lower-ranking people to do his work for him as "research," etc. and then took all the credit. Now he's an *LA Times* writer and *Playboy* interviewer.

They invited Bob Scheer to the revolution they invited Bob Scheer for what that's worth they invited Bob Scheer to the revolution they invited Bob Scheer but he sent Jeff Gerth

I told Horowitz it all seemed like another lifetime. I didn't want to talk to him, but my scene with Jane had been misrepresented previously and I was concerned that it was about to happen again, big time. There are these two blockbuster bios in the works, each with a different bias, and the chances of either one getting the story straight—my small piece of Jane's larger story, her interaction with the GI movement—are nil.

That evening I dug through a carton of old notebooks to see what I could remember about Jane.

I mentioned the Horowitz call to a few people. They all said, "You mustn't talk to Horowitz!" and reprimanded me for saying Scheer was just as bad.

Oh, of course Bob Scheer is "better" than David Horowitz—he's against the arms race, etc. But in a way he's worse, because he can pass for some kind of "progressive," he sows more confusion, turns more people off. Bob Scheer is an exploiter and a snob, a "radical" journalist-gourmet who exudes contempt for working people in the nitty-gritty and leaves you feeling burned, ignored or otherwise put down. (I haven't seen the man operate since '68. He may have changed. I'm assuming he hasn't.)

Scheer will undoubtedly have better access to Jane's associates, and his book will be more influential than Horowitz and Collier's. It may have some interesting material, but not the *real* stuff. Scheer has too many personal conflicts of interest to tell the truth about several aspects of Jane's life (his wife Anne left him for Tom Hayden in '68). The biography he produces will certainly have Jane's approval, will seem politically correct to the Big Chill types, will be a big seller. And to the extent that it deals with the antiwar movement, it will be one of the most widely read accounts.

And all I find in the carton are these old songs.

### *The Movement Envoy visits Madame Binh*

There's a lady in Paris  
and we suppose her word is good  
but her time is precious  
it is measured in blood

And you wanted to meet her  
so you went and said you'd been sent  
Now come on, tell all the people  
just what she said not what you think she meant

Movement envoy  
who made you our messenger?  
Sometimes it seems like six of you  
makes half a dozen of Kissinger

There you are on the airwaves  
yeah you're always speakin for me  
well just because I clench my fist  
does not mean I agree

Hey, next time you go to Paris  
and I know you will go there again  
Why not stroll through the Bois?  
Why not sip some wine by the Seine?

Why not visit the Louvre?  
check out Winged Victory  
She's got nothing to prove  
but so much to say about history

### The First GI Coffeehouse

By 1967 the Army was filling up with people who would rather be making love to the music of Jimi Hendrix than war to the lies of Lyndon Johnson. People were serving because they'd been drafted. Or they "volunteered" because they'd gotten in trouble with the law, or been told they needed an honorable discharge in order to get a job. Almost everybody went in ambivalent about whether the war was worth it—the risk, the interruption to their lives. What they saw in Vietnam generally convinced them that it wasn't, because the government "we" were supporting didn't have much support from its own people.

The leaders of the new left had been generally contemptuous of GIs prior to '67. They themselves had other options—graduate school, Canada, jail, a note from the doctor. I figured they were simply overlooking the forces that drove working-class men to join. I couldn't acknowledge that the left had an anti-working-class orientation. In 1967, I still believed that the left was *my side*, the side that was against the war, for equality, etc.

I had this idea to set up hip coffeehouses in army towns. (When I'd been stationed at Fort Polk in '63-64, the only places to hang out in the nearby town of Leesville, aka Diseaseville, were seedy, segregated bars serving watered-down drinks for a dollar a shot, a rip-off.) But I was married with two kids and a job, had no experience running a business, wasn't free to do it myself. I tried to convince some of the "Resistance" leaders in Palo Alto to set up a coffeehouse at Fort Ord, but they thought everybody should just go to jail. By making a big deal about how moral they were, staying out of the army, they implicitly put down everybody who went in. One of their leaders also scolded me with the reminder, "Coffee is a poison."

Tom Hayden, who ran SDS from behind a facade of "participatory democracy," advised me that soldiers were "no better than cops," and that my plans for getting in touch with them provided no "blueprint for converting them." Other SDSers said that their various "community organizing" projects were too important to leave. The fact is, all their projects were folding, but they wouldn't admit it.

My marriage fell apart and I decided to set up the first GI coffeehouse myself. I found a partner, Donna Mickleson, a friend of a friend. We went to Alan Myerson, director of The Committee, San Francisco's wonderful cabaret, for advice. He sketched a floor plan and strongly

urged us to install the rheostat next to the cash register (so that one person could control the lighting on stage while running the register). Another guy who appreciated the coffeehouse idea right away was Bill Graham, who gave us cartons full of Fillmore posters... And in September we headed for Columbia, South Carolina, near Fort Jackson.

On our first day in town we went to a real estate agent to rent a house to live in. We told her "our kids" would soon be arriving, but of course were envisioning soldiers and organizers crashing there, smoking grass and listening to *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The agent recommended two places: one on York Drive, which bordered on piney woods, and one on Waccamah. We visited the one on York first and told the agent we liked it, no need to check out Waccamah. She said, "That's probably best, because Mrs. Westmoreland might be a little reluctant to rent to a family with young children. She thinks someday her house will be a national shrine." Donna and I looked at each other and went "Mm-hmm." We wanted to open for business before the local power structure figured out all the implications of our enterprise.

We found a perfect location on Main Street, a pseudo Hawaiian bar that had been closed down by the authorities. It was next to the Elite Cafe, a block from the cavernous, moribund USO. We hired a local contractor to bring it up to code. Donna painted a psychedelic sign declaring us to be the "UFO." On the walls we hung Fillmore dance posters and personality posters—Bogart, Monroe, Cassius Clay, Bob Dylan, Stokely Carmichael—and Toulouse Lautrec and a cannabis plant and Lyndon Johnson holding up a hound dog by the ears. We attended the South Carolina state fair (for whites) and the Palmetto State Fair (for blacks) and made arrangements with the prize-winning bakers to prepare homemade pastries for us. Soldiers strolling by saw us working and helped get the place open. So did Judy Olasov and Jim Redfern, students at the University of South Carolina. We encountered the usual hassles: the Health Department wouldn't allow homemade pastries, and they made us plaster over a beautiful old red brick wall. An official of the State Law Enforcement Division also made us take down the "Young Aphrodites" poster, stating "We don't want no breasts around here."

By January '68 we were officially open and hundreds of GIs were hanging out at the UFO whenever they could get off post. They helped staff the place and provided the music on week nights, jamming. On weekends we brought in musicians through a booking service or hired good local acts. Patrons were free to hang out, to read, to play chess or cards, to rap, to dance, to flirt, to discuss what was going on in their lives or the world at large. GIs added their artwork to the walls and hundreds of records to our collection. The UFO was the only integrated place in town, not just white and black, but GIs and students too. The staff paid attention to the restaurant end of things, and made sure that nobody was holding (drugs). In those first few months we would get hassled only for the overflow crowd on the street, or turning up the hi-fi set so loud that customers in the Elite could hear faint strains of "All along the Watchtower."

The UFO was like a magnet for dissident GIs—the kind who wore granny glasses and flashed peace signs. Once these guys got a sense of their numbers, they started writing accounts of their experience (which we helped circulate as leaflets) and planning an action to express their view of the war. Nobody from the UFO staff was in on the planning of it. We were, however, asked to notify our contacts in the media, whose presence, it was thought, would keep the brass from overreacting.

The plan was to go, in uniform, to the chapel across from post headquarters, and pray for an end to the war. The GIs would thus establish—if they weren't busted—that it was safe to express antiwar sentiment, setting a precedent for more and larger chapel meetings. If they were busted, they would let the American people know that opposition to the war was growing within the military. (The Tet offensive was raging, Senator Eugene McCarthy was gaining ground on Lyndon Johnson in the primary polls. Visible displays of dissent within the Army were to convince a lot of voters, and a large sector of the ruling class, that the war wasn't worth it.)

The GIs felt righteous about the chapel meeting. What could they be charged with? Would the Army deny elementary freedom of speech and assembly to Americans who were supposed to risk their lives fighting for "freedom" in Vietnam?

The Army responded by closing the base (a few reporters got in anyway), ringing the chapel with military police and announcing, when 30 GIs showed up on the evening of Tuesday, February 13, that the meeting was canceled. Two soldiers—Bob Tatar and Steve Kline—dropped to their knees and started praying. They were busted for disturbing the peace. Charges were subsequently dropped. Others who started yelling "Why should we fight for that fascist General Ky?" and "We want to have a free meeting!" were hustled away, but never charged.

Soon after, Tom Hayden phoned me at the UFO. He was very friendly, referring to soldiers as "our new constituency," and offering to help recruit staff and money and legal support for more GI coffeehouses. He also said that he was putting together another trio of "movement people" to escort some POWs home from Vietnam, and would I be interested? I had enough sense to refuse the Vietnam trip (the movement envoys were putting the POWs in a vicious bind). But I gladly accepted his offer of support. I still didn't really *get it* about the role of the left.

#### *Carolina Twilight*

This once took place down in the south  
the year was '68  
in a twice All American city  
in the Palmetto state  
don't ask what I was doing there  
it's too hard to explain  
but this evening I was walking towards  
the Capitol on Main

It was a pleasant evening  
maybe March the 24th  
Honeysuckle in the air  
like you don't get up north  
and then this girl comes up to me  
and stands right in my way  
she says You are a Scorpio, right?  
When is your birthday?

I told her when my birthday was  
which proved yes she was right  
her smile was like the temperature  
here eyes were like the light  
she said her name was Debbie  
and her age was just 16  
her parents called her crazy  
and she said they were mean

I asked her how she could tell  
and she just laughed out loud  
she said it's very obvious  
how come you ain't proud?  
I said I don't believe in heaven  
stuff and I don't believe in hell  
she said Just like a Scorpio,  
I know your kind real well

That Debbie she seen through me  
like Owens Corning glass  
and I can still see her walkin' away  
faded blue jeans round her ass  
Didn't know how to call her back  
I didn't have a line  
she might have been just right for me  
I should have asked her sign

#### **Enter Jane**

In the spring of '68 Tom Hayden and his sidekick Rennie Davis set up an operation coyly named "Support Our Soldiers" to establish coffeehouses staffed by peace-movement organizers in the town adjoining army training bases. I headed for Waynesville, MO, with Judy Olasov to set up a coffeehouse near Fort Leonard Wood, and some new "movement people" were dispatched to run the UFO.

Soon thereafter I started hearing from GIs at Fort Jackson who said the UFO wasn't the same. It turned out that the new proprietors were taking down posters that were more or less groovy (Marilyn Monroe) and replacing them with posters they considered right on (Eldridge Cleaver). They replaced the hi-fi set and record collection with a juke box weighted towards Country & Western. (A woman named Leni Zeiger would explain, "We're trying to get white working-class GIs.") They replaced the soldier-musicians with politically correct, incredibly boring acts such as Barbara Dane. They offered to help GIs get their funky little newspapers lithographed and filled with dispatches from the National Guardian and Liberation News Service (thus over-fertilizing small, indigenous efforts that would have grown organically). Above all,

they put moral pressure on GIs to take part in open acts of resistance, which resulted in the soldiers getting busted or given punitive reassignments, while the civilian lefty organizers gained status within the movement for being involved in a "struggle." This pattern of using GIs as pawns came to prevail as the movement people took over and extended the GI coffeehouse network. Hayden and Davis wound up raising money for their summer "action" in Chicago by taking credit for and invoking the ostensible success of the GI movement.

I continued to regard the new left as "my side," the side that was against the war, for equality, etc. When I'd see evidence to the contrary, I'd blame this classy individual or that opportunist. When I tried to argue for my original concept of the coffeehouses as places for GIs to take it easy (as opposed to bases for proselytizing), I was told that I was "apolitical" or "too concerned with the restaurant end of things" or "merely a do-gooder." Logically, I dealt with my increasing confusion by increasing my use of weed and opium-soaked hash (provided by my GI friends, of course).

The coffeehouse network grew and in due course there was a national conference of GI organizers at a church in Louisville, Kentucky. The chairperson would not allow me to speak, she said, "because founders of organizations always exert conservative influence." Musing on this ahistorical assertion, I got involved in a lunchtime basketball game with some local bloods in the church's gym. When I returned to the conference I was criticized for taking part in an activity not open to women. The "women's caucus" then ordered the men to hold a special session to "struggle" with their male chauvinism. The guilt-ridden jackass men trundled down to a room in the basement where they took turns confessing to the most superficial crimes. ("I used to call them chicks, but I'll never do that again...") I refused to confess, and took a little mescaline to get me through the rest of the day. Either I hallucinated it or a black marine from Camp Pendleton—flown in the by chairperson to praise her Oceanside operation—wept as he told the movement heavies that they were using him as a pawn in their game. He walked out and I followed him.

I moved back to San Francisco to try to make it work with my ex, and of course it didn't. I spent a year covering the Presidio Mutiny Case, the court martial of 27 prisoners who had staged a nonviolent sitdown at the stockade after a harmless fellow prisoner was killed by a guard. It must have been the spring of 1970 when I met Jane Fonda at a party after a preview of Antonioni's disastrous American movie, *Zabriskie Point*. Somebody had told her that I'd started the GI coffeehouses and she found me in the kitchen and started asking a lot of serious questions. For much of the past ten years she had been in France, married to Roger Vadim, the film director, an older man. Now she wanted to throw herself into what was happening in the U.S. She felt that she had missed out on the '60s somehow; she wanted to make up for lost time. I told her that I was going in the other direction, away from the movement, but that I would send her a map of the coffeehouses, which she could visit if she felt so inclined.

Next thing I knew she was getting thrown off Fort Lewis and telling interviewers I had turned her on to the GI movement. It felt very strange. Usually we're denied credit for things we do. In this case I was being "credited" for something I hadn't done.

By the summer of '70 I didn't want to hang around San Francisco (my ex was involved with a woman), I had been driven out of the movement, I thought "maybe they're right, maybe I'm not political after all." I moved to New York and started taking pre-med courses at night. Jane was in the city making *Klute*. I got a message to come and see her at an East Side brownstone.

It was Judy Garland's apartment, a penthouse. The bedroom walls were mirrored. Jane said, "I turned a hell of a trick in the Hotel Americana!" (as a hooker in *Klute*).

I asked her why she'd been saying I had influenced her. "It was obvious from all your questions," I reminded her, "that you were getting into radical politics. Why go around attributing it to a man?"

We talked all night. The only thing to eat in the kitchen was carrot juice, yoghurt and little bottles of pills marked B, L and D for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

A masseur arrived at the crack of dawn and Jane said, "I'm prepared to give up everything for the revolution, but the last thing I'll give up is my massage." I think she was being ironic. In any case, I was on my way out of there. My life was such a mess, my viewpoint too illegitimate, I certainly didn't want any part of the media attention this woman commanded. And I sensed that she was really looking for the Alpha Male of the movement—Huey P. Newton? Tom Hayden? She gave me a guitar and I sang No no no it ain't me, babe.

#### The FTA Show

One night Jane showed up at my place on Barrow Street and tried to talk me into getting involved again with the movement. She made me an offer I could have and should have refused. She was planning to take an antiwar cabaret show around to the GI coffeehouses. The idea for the show had come from a man I respected, Howard Levy—the Army doctor who had done two years in Leavenworth for refusing to train Green Berets in the healing arts. Alan Myerson of the Committee was going to direct, Peter Boyle, Dick Gregory, Gary Goodrow and Swamp Dogg (Jerry Williams) had all signed on. I was offered the job of stage manager and liaison to the coffeehouse staffs. I figured it might be a chance to reassert my original concept.

At the last rehearsal, Myerson requested a song to fill in the blackouts between the sketches. It went something like this. (Jane could really sing, by the way.)

#### *Foxtrot tango alpha*

In Leesville, Louisiana  
and Waynesville and Fayetteville  
and a Texas paradise called Killeen  
I've heard this expression  
just three little words  
but I can't find out what they mean

"Future teachers of American?"

"Free the Antarcticans?"

Why write that on latrines?

F... T... A...

help me,

tell me what it means

There were a number of verses and it ended like this:

I went out to that base  
they took one look at my face  
and sent out an order to bar me  
I said Foxtrot, tango, alpha  
help me...  
Free the army.

Of course the soldiers sang a different last line.

It was a mistake to think I could breeze into town with the FTA show and influence the way the GI coffeehouses were being run. In fact, the staff honchos seemed more uptight than ever. At Fort Bragg they insisted on some kind of struggle session which ended with hapless Donald Sutherland promising to read Karl Marx.

The way people related to Jane Fonda—try though she might to be plain Jane—was not pleasant to observe. Everybody wanted something—money, an appearance, a favor, a quote, a picture, a connection, a mention, an endorsement. At the same time, they bombarded her with charges of "elitism" designed to maximize her guilt.

There were photographers everywhere, constantly. What the movement leaders wanted most of all was publicity, and of course Jane could deliver it. Something about her response to all the demands—the earnest alacrity with which she tried to please everybody—reminded me of Candy, the heroine of a satirical novel by Terry Southern that came out at the end of the '50s. Candy was a well-meaning young woman who had a thing about Daddy and was always saying "Good grief!" as her illusions got popped. Could the Candy character have been based on Jane? Jane had left college in '57 and was in Paris, hanging around the *Paris Review* crowd, where she met Vadim and would certainly have met Southern.

#### What the GI Movement Accomplished

After stage-managing the FTA Show in several military-base towns, I had had it. I quit. Jane was planning to take the show to Asia and to make a film of it; she asked me to reconsider. Our goodbye scene was played out on the stoop of a friend's house on Liberty Street in San Francisco, on a cool grey afternoon. I explained why I had quit; the show was raising money and briefly restoring credibility for a GI coffeehouse network that no longer served the interests of GIs. The main activity of the civilian "GI organizers" had degenerated into forming defense committees, complete with rallies and buttons, for soldiers they themselves had coaxed into trouble. They were circulating a "People's Peace Treaty," even though GIs were prosecutable under military law for signing it. They were pushing a lettuce boycott, as if GIs had any way of stopping the Pentagon from buying scab

lettuce. (They justified such ludicrous tactics in the name of "consciousness raising"—as if GIs needed to have their consciousness raised about their powerlessness.) And their so-called GI newspapers were full of attacks on "lifer pigs"—the working class of the army, NCOs and specialists, the cooks and file clerks and leaders of the real unit of combat, the squad.

At this time, the summer of '71, I no longer felt so all alone, having hooked up with some likeminded people who had been driven out of women's liberation by classy opportunists. I told Jane she shouldn't take the show to Asia, she should just drop it, it was serving a bad purpose. I told her she was supporting a fake left whose effect was to turn the American people off the idea of revolutionary change, which is why "enlightened" ruling-class types supported it. She said she had every intention of taking the show to Asia and making the film. I said, "What I'm giving you isn't advice, it's instructions. From the American people." She did not think I was being ironic. "That's the most presumptuous thing I ever heard," she declared.

Jane took the FTA show to Asia and made a film of it which was so bad it got pulled from the theaters almost immediately. (Alan Myerson had been replaced by a more politically correct woman director. While the FTA film was being edited in Hollywood in '72, Jane sent several emissaries to San Francisco, requesting the rights to use the theme song. I refused, and they used the song anyway, without paying me a dime.)

This story is about the GI movement, which was infinitely bigger than the GI coffeehouses and other visible manifestations of dissent. It was mostly *invisible*, in fact, because both the soldiers and the ruling class wanted it that way. American GIs—showing the greatest flexibility, using a variety of subtle, brilliant tactics, going out on countless "search and avoid" missions, which were the peace marches that ultimately mattered—brought the war to an end. But we have been subjected for 20 years to an incessant rewrite, pouring on us from above like acid rain, washing out our own experience, killing the fish in our lakes of memory.

Here's what we have to remember: "They have set up separate companies for men who refuse to go out in the field," [letter from a soldier stationed near Cu Chi.] "It is no big thing to refuse to go. If a man is ordered to go to such and such a place, he no longer goes through the hassle of refusing; he just packs his shirt and goes to visit some buddies at another base camp. Operations have become incredibly ragtag. Many guys don't even put on their uniforms any more... The American garrisons on the larger bases are virtually disarmed. The lifers have taken our weapons from us and put them under lock and key... There have also been quite a few frag incidents in the battalion."

Two lifers who think that it matters  
sip beer and watch tracers glow  
they say you could hear monkeys chattering clearly  
when they first got here years ago

But now the jungle is silence  
oh maybe a parrot might squawk  
The night's just waiting for violence  
The lifers drink and talk

And I'm thinking of singsonging monkeys  
Tygers parading and night  
Wind in the bamboo warm and funky  
in the mellow yellow moonlight

Those monkeys of old Indochina  
died when their trees were attacked  
and crying they tried to getaway safe  
on some poor 111's back

No I'll never forget McCormick  
lost out on patrol  
peace sign on his helmet liner  
camouflaging his soul

"By every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state of approaching collapse," wrote Colonel Robert D. Heintz, Jr., in 1971, "with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and noncommissioned officers, drug-ridden and dispirited where not near-mutinous." Heintz's overview of the military situation appeared in the June, 1971, *Armed Forces Journal*. My scholarly friend Howie M. laid it on me when I told him that my documentation from that time consisted mostly of song lyrics.

According to Heintz, the Marine Corps' leading historian, "Word of the death of officers will bring cheers at troop movies or in bivouacs of certain units. In one such division, the morale-plagued Americal, fraggings during 1971 have been running about one a week..." Heintz quotes a major, saying, "Another Hamburger Hill [an operation in which grunts die en masse] is definitely out." Desertion rates are soaring, he reports, re-enlistment rates plummeting. "As early as mid-1969 an entire company of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade publicly sat down on the battlefield. Later that year, another rifle company, from the famed 1st Air Cavalry Division, flatly refused—on CBS TV—to advance down a dangerous trail... Combat refusal has been precipitated again on the frontier of Laos by Troop B, 1st Cavalry's mass refusal to recapture their captain's command vehicle containing communication gear, codes and other secret operation orders..."

Soldiers refusing to fight is the most upsetting image to all of the ruling class. Much of what they have been promoting the last 20 years—the volunteer Army, the Rambo version of Vietnam, the resurgence of patriotism—has been in direct response to the specter of GIs deciding the war wasn't worth it.

#### It's a Wrap

After I quit as stage manager of the FTA show, and advised Jane to drop it, my place was taken by a guy named Jim Skelley, who had been a leader of the Concerned Officer's Movement in San Diego and had gotten out of the Navy as a conscientious objector. He was a big guy with a handlebar mustache, from Long

Island, the son of a policeman as I recall. One day in the spring of '72 Jim came to visit me in San Francisco. He sat around our kitchen table, rapping with my friends, who all liked him right away, and after an hour or so the big man said, "look, I have a confession to make. Jane sent me here to get you to sign over the rights to the FTA song." She was making a film of the show's Asian tour, and intended to use the song in the film. Skelley said he felt ashamed of himself for having come under false pretenses. We told him we liked him anyway, he hadn't betrayed anybody, relax, Jim...

Another emissary came a month or two later, Donald Sutherland, and went through a similar routine. Jane had left him, he told us, because he lacked political sophistication, and he wanted to hear our critique of the left. He listened with a goofy stare fixed on Pam E., who had been a prom queen. He didn't get it at all. He mumbled some inane apology about his latest movie being financed by General Electric. We didn't understand why that was so terrible. Donald explained that GE made nuclear power plants and military hardware. We said we thought all the corporations were connected through the banks, we didn't distinguish between the "good" and the "bad" ones, we thought they were all pernicious, and that almost everybody had to work for the Man directly or indirectly, and would until we took power and changed things. On the ride to the airport, Donald pulled out a piece of paper—the rights to the FTA song—and asked me to sign. I told him that Pam was taking home \$100 a week as a social worker, and she wanted to work full-time trying to build our little party. Could he get us enough money so she could take off a year?

Never heard from him or any of them again. The FTA movie came out and a few of us went to see it, but left after about five minutes, turned off to put it mildly. We discussed the possibility of suing, but realized we couldn't afford to.

You say it's for the cause just sign this clause  
it's a statement more than a contract  
well how can you pretend that you're really my friend  
when you treat me just like a low-level contact

You come around and propose a little game  
and you ask if I know how to play it  
and I say yes of course only then you inform me  
the first rule is never let on, never say it

Oh that hurts but you've forgotten, you ain't in charge  
We ain't too grateful for your presence  
even though you claim to know all the soldiers,  
workers, and Phillipino peasants

Well go back down to Hollywood town  
and tell your real boss, he wouldn't take less  
and recall my advice is it's nicer to be  
employed by G.E. than B, B and S

In the years since my political split with Jane, I haven't gone out of my way to follow her progress. But I haven't had to, the media always has the latest. In fact just today Geri said she read that Jane and Ted Turner

had to be seated all the way across the room from Tom Hayden when the Assemblyman showed up at a Hollywood fundraiser for some save-the-earth outfit.

Jane and Tom first got together in '72, when he was living at a Berkeley commune called "The Red Family." I think she had already taken her famous trip to North Vietnam and smiled her fatal smile at the anti-aircraft gun. She and Tom soon segued into electoral politics (his lifelong game plan) by means of the "IndoChina Peace Campaign," which had links to George McGovern's presidential campaign. They denounced "Nixon's war" and claimed they wanted to end it mainly so that the POWs would be freed. They became increasingly patriotic, and by the time Tom ran in the Democratic primary for John Tunney's Senate seat, with the Bicentennial in full swing, they were flag-wavers. Tom got more than 40 percent of the vote, and if his timid campaign managers hadn't stopped Jane from discussing Tunney's thing for teenage girls, he probably would have won.

Went down to a neighborhood bar the other night  
this old student leader showed  
This round's on me I wanna win the primary  
And I need your vote... yeah...  
Smile, Jesus loves you

Get back get back in the system  
That's the real theme of this campaign  
get a coat and a tie and remember to smile  
think positive, don't be negative  
don't be hostile don't be angry

Went to see Woodward playing Redford  
Dustin Hoffman played by Carl Bernstein  
Martha Mitchell who really blew the whistle  
never got mentioned, she got no credit  
on the silver screen

Get back get back in the system  
Martha was a crazy drunken dame  
not a nice respectable reporter  
Watergate shows nothing's changed  
(except for a few bigshots somewhere)

Get back get back in the system  
Invisible forces can be felt  
Act your age, find your own space,  
play the game with the hand you were dealt  
don't complain don't be bitter don't be angry

Down at my neighborhood bar the other night  
this old movement leader showed  
This round's on me I wanna be the nominee  
Gonna need your vote... well...  
make mine Cuervo Gold, make it a double

Here's to you student council leaders  
old generation and new  
I hoped by now we'd have taken power  
from you and overthrew  
your system your system your system

The culmination of Jane's goody-goody trip came with the making of *On Golden Pond*. *People Magazine* showed us the rebel daughter and her staunch old dad, reconciled by a lake in Maine; Hank and Tom trolling for bass while Katharine Hepburn (the classy surrogate mother sent by central casting) bakes apple pies with Jane (whose real mother had committed suicide when she was 11). There follows, some months later, the Oscar acceptance speech: tuxedoed Tom in the audience with the kids, Jane saying an earnest loving dutiful Hollywood goodnight to dear old dad (who kept marrying them younger and younger, bequeathing his daughter a series of same-age friends). The perfect American American American family family family family family family family family, together while mine and yours and evidently even theirs kept breaking down.

The script that Jane seemed to be living out—a script like those we all grew up on, with New Deal values, a hero and a heroine and a World War II backdrop—called for Tom Hayden to succeed in electoral politics and do all the good deeds that the enlightened faction of capital aspires to: Disarmament, Peace and Freedom, alternative sources of energy, Signing, Recovery, Literacy and aerobics for all. But something started going wrong, the plot wasn't right, or the casting. The hero should not have had a seat bought for him in the state assembly, he should have won it fair and square. There is no script doctor to call in. Depressed, but in deepest denial, she gets obsessed with her body again, takes up bodybuilding at Gold's Gym and emerges as the fitness queen of America. She builds a chain of workout studios, making huge profits off the sad, sedentary reality of urban life in America. When some female Workout employees file suit over their less-than-the-men wages, a black woman manager is made to take the rap in the media. Jane becomes a multimillionaire behind her video trip and starts talking as if "winners" in our society actually *deserve* their positions of privilege.

I tuned in to the Barbara Walters special to hear Jane's much publicized apology to Vietnam vets. Most of what Jane said sounded sincere but rehearsed. Tom's name was not mentioned, obviously by pre-arrangement with the interviewer. Jane reaffirmed her patriotism and her good intentions at the time she went to Vietnam. Then she added: "I just saw *Good Morning Vietnam*, and I thought, 'if only I'd had Robin Williams with me when I went to Vietnam to write my material.'" And watching this, I recalled the cameras always pointing at her and thought: if your life is a movie, then your identity really does depend on who's writing your script.

Tom was perfect for her in the '70s. Ted is perfect for her in the '90s.

They call it the city of angels, baby  
that don't mean that everybody who lives there is  
Can't pretend that I resent you  
being' his or even his  
Oh Jane, you come walkin' cross my mind  
from time to time  
out west to back east  
of all your directors I directed you the least

## POETRY BY DENNIS FRITZINGER

### Charlie Don't Surf

charlie don't charlie don't, charlie don't surf  
charlie don't charlie don't, charlie don't surf  
charlie don't charlie don't, charlie don't surf  
Charlie Don't Surf

when i went over to vietnam  
after i got in that war-torn land  
i met up with a guy named murf;  
first thing he told me, is "charlie don't surf."

charlie don't charlie don't, charlie don't surf  
charlie don't charlie don't, charlie don't surf  
charlie don't charlie don't, charlie don't surf  
Charlie Don't Surf

i was crawling on my belly thru the mud one day  
after that morning it looked like play  
there was shrapnel everywhere but me  
i looked up and what did i see?

a funny little guy not 5-foot-2  
a think white beard and a big stick too  
he said, "i'm uncle ho and i've come to see  
if you yank surfers are as good as me."

he gestured left, and underneath a tree  
was a brand-new surfboard, just right for me  
i grabbed it up and he led the way  
to what appeared to be the local bay

now many's the eye that may deceive  
and a person's word may be hard to believe  
but 30 foot waves came crashing in  
and i tell ya, they made one helluva din

he said, "you chicken?" and rushed on out  
i followed him quick, for i had no doubt  
for a california man, in his natural pride,  
could show uncle ho one helluva ride

ho took off first; he was pretty quick  
he did some things that were awful slick  
like walking the nose and hanging ten  
then he came back and did them again

but i said nothing, and soon he did see  
you can't beat a californian so easily  
i was so hyped up when i did my show  
i coulda sold ice to an eskimo

i did everything that'd ever been seen  
till ho he was looking awful green  
but he doubled his efforts, and soon i saw  
that he was well-seasoned, he was not raw

he turned his head with a terrible smile  
and showed me my tricks, hanoi style  
he did at least one, to show he was boss,  
while wolfing down rice with the local fish sauce

but i smiled too, i would not run  
and did more tricks in the setting sun  
and when at last the sun sank low  
i could see we were in for one helluva blow

the storm came quickly, rain and wind  
and uncle ho signaled that we should end  
we'll take up tomorrow said he  
for you're pretty good for a yank, i see

i shook my head and i signaled no  
and i rode right out in the teeth of the blow  
and uncle ho followed, for he had pride  
but this time luck was not on his side

for there, in the middle of the final set  
came A FIFTY-FOOT WAVE, the biggest yet  
ho wiped out in the crash and foam,  
and me—i just rode the big wave home

so all you beach boys, i'll tell you free  
a tip a short-timer once gave to me  
if there's one thing we know on this God's Green Earth  
it's Charlie Don't Surf

charlie don't charlie don't, charlie don't surf  
charlie don't charlie don't, charlie don't surf  
charlie don't charlie don't, charlie don't surf  
Charlie Don't Surf

*Dennis Fritzinger is editor of LZ Friendly, 350 Barrows Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. This poem previously appeared in The Zephyr, the California State VVA newspaper.*

## THE ALL VIETNAMESE CHINESE MERCENARY BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

*By Paul Ohmart*

During the six month period between August 1968 and February 1969, while serving with the US 4th Infantry Division in Vietnam, I was temporarily assigned to oversee two companies of Chinese mercenaries stationed in Nha Trang.

These companies had been created by a verbal arrangement between the commanders of the 5th Special Forces Group and the 1st Log Command, both headquartered in Nha Trang. It was felt that there needed to be some security forces available to protect the city, as well as the 1st Log compound, in case of an attack similar to the one experienced during the 1968 Tet Offensive.

While no US troops could be spared there were a large number of ethnic Chinese in the Cholon district of Saigon. Most had lived in Canton in southern China and, when the communists took over, a large number of ethnic people left China to go to North Vietnam. The French were in power at the time and they cut a deal whereby the Chinese were given control of an entire province along the Chinese-Vietnamese border in return for their support of French rule. When Vietnam was partitioned, people were allowed a period of time to move to the North or South before the borders were closed off. At this time about half of the Chinese population of the province left, en-masse, to again flee the communists and settled in Saigon.

When they arrived in South Vietnam the Chinese were feared by the current regime headed by the Diem family. It was believed that they would represent a political force which would not be sympathetic to the Diem's interests.

To keep the Chinese out of the political scene they were not allowed to become South Vietnamese citizens. This meant that they could not vote and that they could not enter the armed services. This latter situation also appears to have been desirable from the point of view of the Diem regime since a large racially cohesive group of people armed with military training and experience was not viewed any more favorably than the same group armed with the vote.

But times changed and, as the military situation in Vietnam deteriorated, there came a pressing need for more troops. The US was able to get the Vietnamese government to agree to allow Chinese troops to be recruited, trained, armed, and organized into mercenary companies. These companies were to be located away from the capital and run by the US Special Forces who would guarantee that they did not get involved in any political activity or palace coups.

The group I was assigned to in Nha Trang was one such company. It was paid out of a non-accountable Special Forces slush fund for which no financial records were kept. This was not to provide secrecy for some politically sensitive mission but simply to avoid having to get any approval to establish the companies. In fact, when the US forces left Nha Trang there was some kind of stink about some 500 Chinese who seemed to have been formed into an armed force operating in the city for several years and yet no one had any record of their existence.

The compound where they were headquartered was located in the southern part of the city and contained both administrative buildings and barracks. And a basketball court.

It seems that when the first concrete foundation was laid in the camp, for the main headquarters building, it was observed that the resulting area was just the right size to play basketball on. While somewhat smaller than a regulation court, it was still large enough to provide lots of room to play and so work began immediately on pouring the foundation for the headquarters building, a few yards away, with the leftover cement. Regulation backboards, nice ones like the pros used, were soon obtained and installed and the game was afoot.

One of the lesser publicized local institutions was that of the Tong. The Tong was the Chinese equivalent of the Mafia and it operated at all levels of Chinese society. And it was feared. As might be expected, the top members had a certain prestige in the community. They were wealthy and powerful and were often seen both on and off the compound. In fact, the head of the Tong was also the president of the local basketball association.

Now, as anyone knows, it is necessary for a team to have other teams to play with. The problem was that we didn't have all that many basketball teams in Nha Trang. There were, however, a number of units around the country that had teams, American, Australian, Vietnamese, Korean, and so on. The only problem was how to get them. This was resolved by someone who needed to make a trip to another part of the country, on strictly official business, who was told just to present a copy of his orders at the 5th Special Forces Headquarters air strip to get on the next flight they had going in that direction. It was pointed out that our clerks could type up orders that looked as good as those typed up by someone else's clerks, and that if the section specifying the mission was filled in with those magic words "Top Secret, Need to Know Only," that they would never be questioned.

Thus it came about that small teams of Chinese mercenary basketball players would show up at the 5th Group air strip dressed in fatigues, with weapons, packs, and official secretive orders, from some US high command or other, which were not to be questioned. They would quietly get aboard the next plane for their destination and, upon arriving, would form up, briskly trot off the field, and disappear, only to show up a couple of days later to reboard a plane for the return trip. Their packs contained basketballs, uniforms, and other supplies necessary to the successful accomplishment of their mission.

The all Vietnam basketball tournament was probably inevitable. For a period of two weeks our compound was turned into something roughly between the NIT and Chinese New Year. Brightly colored banners flapped in the breeze, tables filled with trophies were admired, the tea shop (built along one side of the court with windows that opened on the entire length) did a bonanza business. Spectators were able to observe the games from bleachers and, for the opening ceremonies, three full colonels representing the local US commands were present at the invitation of the Tong, which had made arrangements with the local authorities and kept order. The members of the Tong really enjoyed their basketball.

*Paul Ohmart, 1422 "A" Bonita Avenue, Berkeley, CA. The All Chinese Mercenary Basketball Tournament first appeared in Dennis Fritzingler's LZ Friendly, Vol. 3 No. 7 (August 1990).*

## (NOT MUCH OF A) WAR STORY

By Norman Lanquist

At least most who were there, and some who watched us go, have enough sense to know we sure weren't all heroes—that, God forbid, least of all. What's more, a lot of the real in-country boonie rats who came back still can't get their own personal horrors out of their waking dreams, least of all recall much of what anyone else was doing outside of the Recon That Changed Their Life twenty years ago. And a lot of Saigon Commandos and fellows who almost went, and wannabes who wish they'd gone, well, by the time they'd made their ETS, and retold the stories a few times they'd heard others tell... Sure, of course, it didn't take too many years before they'd started to believe their own lies. It happens; a man can disappear in his own smoke screen. Some said that it was the ones who never told anyone anything, who'd seen too much, maybe done too much. Some little brothers realized that when the changed man who'd swaggered off to Asia two years before, took 'em aside that first week home and told 'em real quiet just what it was—that was what to believe, not the self-made legends or the easy talk it all turned into in the months after that.

No, we weren't all walkin' the point on every patrol in the Highlands; nor was every man a Huey door gunner a few clicks over Laos; not every one was scanning the shore on riverine duty on the Delta either. Most went when they were called and went where they were sent, and some were cooks and some were clerks. And a bunch of us, damned if we didn't wake up and find we'd gone and signed up on purpose when that'd been the furthest from our minds. And as a matter of fact, no, we weren't all high school dropouts or young and dumb patriots who went to Vietnam on the Senior Trip. They didn't just need grunts. So they got as many college boys as they could; but the best man at my wedding somewhere in the middle of it all, just sort of wasn't there one day, and word was that when he'd been up to Vancouver the summer before he'd made some contacts... But be glad you weren't in the training cadre; imagine, sergeant, not only trying to make soldiers of these boys, but officers, and God forbid, leaders: from the frat house to the barracks—in how many weeks? But war is hell, in goofy ways no one could've guessed who wasn't there. And best laid plans half the time don't turn out worth a shit and things took a funny turn. We were in Alabama and sweltered in the Southern summer in the greenest place I'd ever been and next thing I knew we were on the fast track with a secret clearance and every kind of round there was, looking Puff the Magic Dragon in the mouth. And it was adjustable headspace at Edgewood and Aberdeen when they bussed in nurses for us to dance with and fuck and flew our girlfriends in.

Then we took the Vietnam Village in the snow with blanks one cold and clammy day under cover of fog off Puget Sound that winter. I carried the M-60 not-very-damn-light machine gun and an Eleven Bravo MOS then, and weeks later passed a written test for the MPs in which I wasn't and made rank to work in a mail room, Sixth Army Command, Pacific Area, to support a wife and half

a child. That year I must've sent a thousand mothers' sons to RVN; I handled your orders, see, from the Colonel's office next door and as fast as these two very nice civilian ladies could type 'em up before they went home for the day, I got 'em from the kids in the print shop and sent 'em out to where you were if you hadn't been where you were going yet, and off you went: Eye Corps, most likely. Next thing I knew I'd got on this very special roster, and it wasn't HQ Co KP for once, and I was riding shotgun Courier Escort for secret stuff on the longest and blackest night I'd ever seen, chasing the sun across the sea to Da Nang. And it was swaggering with a loaded side arm and Dodge City everywhere we went, drinking "33" with half-cracked LRRPs at the Plaza with a grease gun and an AK under the bed.

We'd stayed in town off an alley by the banana tree a mile from Ton Son Nhut; someone was stabling their red race horse in the vacant lot across from the Conex shed. We'd been leafing through old Playboys the last guy'd left, and I added the current one from the States for the next tenants. We'd turned in for the night when the shooting broke out; semi-auto fire exchange outside. I guess that was the night we'd been smokin' up on the roof, but we grabbed the forty-fives, slipped the safeties off and hit the floor, figuring it was us they were after. But it all blew over. Next day nothing. That fine little shiny pony was still cropping grass and weeds under the same green tree, and the little temple by the pond in the backyard garden looked the same. "What was that all about?" we asked. "Oh, just the local gangs" as far as we could find out. "No, no! No VC here!" Did we want to ride along for a drive up to Hue? No, we guessed we didn't. But we grabbed flight for Bangkok, and staggering home, damn near woke up in the Philippines. Yeah, sure we met a girl or two, and paid for a lot of Saigon Tea at a roof-top bar and made promises while we watched the flares till the money ran out.

Before dawn the morning after we left for the States, Second Tet began and the airport was mortared. I returned to paranoia and hysteria in San Francisco of the '60s, my apartment a block from the Pacific in shambles, my wife half-crazy. She'd been at work; we'd been robbed—everything. Was it the druggies down the hall? The gang from the corner Seagull Bar? We'd never know. I still had the pistol, but no ammo, but there was no one to shoot anyhow. That week, too, they'd found a body just down the beach as the sun set somewhere West of Guam where I'd just been.

The plane to 'Nam had seats for two of us behind the crew, the under cargo bay filled with coffins full of ammo. That's why we never saw an airport on that longest night. We parked miles away on the runway's end at Midway and everywhere we fueled. They flew those coffins back home full.

I wasn't at My Lai, and my old grunt unit was at Ben Cat, they said, and I never torched a hooch, but I wish I'd seen Nha Trang.

My last duty was a funeral escort from Oakland where I'd left from, some weeks before, where I'd return to leave the green suit behind a few weeks from then. I took one downed bro I'd never met home for the last time and gave his mom the flag, "from a grateful nation" I was

told to say. They told his family not to open the coffin, but before the mass, God forbid, they did. The head was bandaged; that at least but they said his brass was wrong. He wasn't Infantry. The priest wore red that day to raise the cup as the sun streamed in the window.

"Were you in Vietnam?" No one asks much any more. "Yeah," I say, when they do. "Were you in the war?" My Vietnam wasn't Full Metal Jacket or Platoon or Hamburger Hill; that was someone else's Vietnam—a lot of people's. And those are movies anyhow. "Were you in the war?" We all were.

When I saw my dad, he said, "I'm glad you got back okay."

Of course.

"I'm glad you didn't have to kill anyone," he said.

I spend my days now, a long-haired greybeard in black clothes, with crowds of kids born in those last days, like my children were. It took some years of holding down a steady job before I got into the Harley life. I'm on my second big one now, a stretch-frame long-fork shovelhead, a lot of chrome, a lot of black. I do what I need to, and ride when I can, and shoot the forty-five with friends for fun. My kids, the ones I spend time with, they don't know about anybody's Vietnam. They were playing war or clutching toys or watching Sesame Street while we watched the choppers take our people off the roof of the American Embassy that day. They can't know. Maybe we should tell 'em—or maybe we shouldn't. Maybe we owe 'em. Those girls we met in bars, teenage widows then? "Reeducation Centers" if they were lucky. It's not even Saigon anymore.

"Were you in Vietnam?" We all were.

*Norman Lanquist is a college teacher of writing in Southeast Arizona. **Cruel Embroidery** first appeared in **body art quarterly**, Great Britain. Lanquists' publications include three chapbooks as well as poems, prose and photography in the biker press, in academic journals across the country. He was an editor of the **Gila Review** and has read from his work at colleges, conferences, cafes, bookstores and prisons from San Francisco to Montreal to New Orleans and San Antonio. He is a Harley rider and a member of the **Easyriders** magazine Biker Hall o'Fame. A Vietnam veteran (US Army), he carried an Eleven Bravo MOS and pulled courier escort duty from Sixth Army Command, Presidio, San Francisco. A novel, **Long Roads**, is in progress. (**Not much of a War Story** first appeared in **Outlaw Biker**.*

## POETRY BY NORMAN LANQUIST

### Cruel Embroidery

Firedrakes and water serpents, too, that breathe with human bone.  
In acid greens and shocking orange.  
Across each shoulder bear the promised pearl.  
Contend with birds, plumed like no one's  
Ever seen outside a violet fevered dream.

Chills and sweats, ten thousand bees that yield  
Vermillion's ache for irezumi.  
Lead quaking to a steaming Asian bath.  
Can only far-away yakuza men now recall  
Stern samurai bushido Way?

Among us all, though, move the secret ones whose  
mark

We sometimes see, they sometimes proudly show:  
Winged horse and unicorn, wheels and amaranth,  
Bleeding hearts, tears—their loyalties and ogres—  
Yet crawl their scapula and spine.

They meet and recognize the mark;  
They all know the fresh ones' scabbings itch.  
The shoals of skulls hint gruesome death in life.  
Tigers' bursting skin reveal the hollow earth,  
The hell within: each marked man and woman's  
private walking hell.

Oh, horrorshow nightmarestares of needles' pricking  
reversed—

From inside, from inside—that no artist's hands  
attend!

The pictures form themselves through sweating blood;  
our inmate

Goblins emerge, take grinning shape and  
Occupy the map we once thought our flesh:  
The hairy beast leers now manifest from captured  
bellylands,

The anaconda now your leg, frontiers of hands  
Now belong to demons' claws—

That what's drooling dark inside is now  
On fanged display for all.

Jeering at us then, could holy water seas begin to  
exorcise—

Dare contain their rage and fears?  
Set free (the host is left a gutted tenement)  
What could their hoof bring to us but grief ungentled?  
Those tattooed are wise:

The devil named is devil tamed;  
Immobilized in light, red spiders squirm only by  
Their masters' muscles' twitch:  
These owners pinned 'em down for once and all  
And tagged 'em on their daily skin.

Is out and in the very same sewn up by colored line?

Covered eyes regard us from around his hip.

Blue wing swallows flit for us who know him well,  
While anchors hold him safe and firm.

In the sun we see the cross and rock he bares,  
While eagles take him through the hours.

Her breasts in truth become the crescent moon,  
And fawns lie down within the roses of her loins:

They bear their stars before them;

Flaming angels guard their hearts, each moment's a  
premiere.

**ANOTHER TALE OF  
THERE AND BACK AGAIN; OR  
PERSONAL COMMENTS ON WAR AND  
PEACE BY AN EX-WARRIOR USING  
J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S THE LORD OF THE  
RINGS AS A PALANTIR, A SEEING-  
STONE, TO REALITY; OR  
CONFESSIONS OF AN ORC**

By David Connolly

*This is a tale of war and peace, of good and evil, of Orcs who became Vietnam Veterans Against the War, our war, all war.*

We had set in for the night with our backs to the river, using, by the book, any natural barrier as a part of your perimeter which will not impede egress from your position. We had no sooner dug our holes than the whisper came down the line. The first man, the platoon sergeant, probably said Viet Cong, but the next and those who followed him used our name for them. We knew what the whisper said before it floated down to us. "Orcs, across the river." I could almost picture the page that line came from as I turned that way in my hole and found myself trying to read down the page in my mind when someone opened up and the RPGs, rocket-propelled-grenades, began to scream in, exploding within our lines. Burkett, in the next hole, was yelling to me above the explosions; "That's the way it happened to them... the RPGs are arrows... Boromir will die tomorrow."

Another part of their war became a part of mine.

The Tolkien trilogy will always be a part of my war experience and one of the things I have used to come to terms with that experience. It was in Vietnam that I first read *The Lord of the Rings*. I was a nineteen year old infantryman, the product of a close, urban, Irish Catholic, pro-IRA, working class family, already sick at heart over what my country and I were doing to a people whose lifestyle and struggle I had come to see as being closely related to that of my heritage. The idealistic heroism and heroic idealism of the majority of the members of The Company and indeed of many of the characters in this saga had forced me to begin to compare myself, as a warrior, to other warriors from my family and my people whose deeds and beliefs I would speak of in the same terms. I fear that my GranDa and his celebrated relation, James Michael, would have seen me wearing the black garb of those of the wrong tower. And I still, in my estimation, have not convinced my father, who returned from the "Last Good War" with a dead hand and a horribly scarred arm, that his America could have produced, and could be again producing in our hemisphere, a horror the like of Vietnam.

That horror made us as close as most brothers. If we were smart enough to forget the stupid words we had learned as children, our differences, whether racial, political, or sectional, were as easily overlooked or

conquered as those of Gimli and Legolas. Like brothers, we shared everything. It took little time for the trilogy to make the rounds even though our reading time was limited to snatch as can. For my squad and others, the soldiers of the National Liberation Front, the Viet Cong, were at once the Orcs. We had admitted to ourselves even then that the association was superficial, owing solely to the fact that we still hoped, almost beyond hope, that we would turn out to be the good guys.

With the shared reading and the shared experience of the war, the parallels between our war and that of Middle Earth began to form quickly. Every new area we worked in was assigned, according to an event which transpired there or some topographical landmark, a name from the tale. Every basecamp or firebase we sought shelter from the night in became The Last Homely House. Each stretch of open savannah became the Gap of Rohan. But only the Michelin Rubber Plantation, out of the many areas of rubber, because of a great evil we had once faced within it, became Mirkwood.

We had our own Mithrandir, one of the oldest grunts I met in Vietnam (he was 25), who had survived, and was still haunted by, a hand to hand encounter with what became to us a Balrog, an NVA regular who, "no shit, had to be six fucking feet tall!"

Any and all of those men who had the misfortune to be short of stature and long on infantry training were automatically Hobbits, our tunnel rats, whom we lowered head first into the myriad entrances to Moria that virtually littered the landscape in some parts of that much warred upon land. Too often, these children of this children's crusade were pulled back from the depths dead, shot at close range by an Orc who then wormed his way to safety within these mazes. Khazad-Dum is a name that is known and feared beyond the confines of Middle Earth.

Those of us who were neither Hobbit nor Wizard, according to our build, stalking ability, fighting prowess, or merely ego, fancied ourselves as being Gimli, Legolas, Faramir, or even Strider. Sadly though, we came to realize that we were more the like of Boromir. Our motives for fighting, racism and revenge, like his, were impure. The heroes from my war rode home horizontally; the rest of us live and try to make amends, somehow, sometimes only with tears and confessions. Too many, far too many, in fact twice as many as fell there, have followed the Lord Denethor, opening the door to the next life with their own hand, in their grief, guilt, or madness.

Through this nightmare which served for our youth, the game went on. We clung to almost anything that would slice through the seemingly endless boredom and sheer drudgery of war when there was no contact with the enemy, and the freezing, debilitating fear when there was. We would discuss, in whispers, in jungle clearings, the Hobbits and their trek from the Shire or their initial escape from Shelob at Cirith Ungol. No one would ever steer the conversations toward the Hobbits cringing in abject fear of the Black Rider or their escape flight into Shelob's waiting snare. We knew only too well that our own treks turned too often into the same. One by one, in the same way we went to and came from that war, we learned Sam's lesson from Ithilien. We were not killing

that intricate facade which had been carefully formulated by those who trained us to elicit a desired response, then drilled into us like a bullet; we were killing other human beings, people too much like us. We grudgingly respected the Viet Cong. We saw them, with their ability to strike and vanish, seemingly at will and at ease, as possessors of some special magic and had to wonder, as Sam did, over a dead one, on his life, his beliefs, his cause. The only truthful reason I could give for trying to kill him, except for revenge, was to keep from being killed by him. There was no political problem between us. I had long ago questioned the fact that I was fighting for *my* country in *his* country, and the people of the countryside of Vietnam had made it quite clear that freedom for them meant freedom from me.

Such was the Viet Cong's quest, to expel that which was the cause of the blight on his land. He, like the Southrons and the Rangers, needed no political rhetoric to spur his hatred for his enemy. War builds hatred between its participants, a wall of hatred with the strongest of brick and mortar, the bodies and blood of family and friends. The Viet Cong saw his land and almost all of his culture which wasn't already ravaged by the outsiders *again* being given to foreigners. He saw the children of his land *again* being killed and maimed at an incredible rate and *nothing* engenders hatred like a dead child.

We hated him also, with the same intensity of passion with which we came to love one another, as children in great danger will. If the young men of America learned anything at all of value in Vietnam, we learned that our culture's idea of manhood, with its cold, distant, pseudo-affection toward other men, was worthless. Sam's display of deep feeling for Frodo did not embarrass me, nor would it embarrass any other man who has experienced the building of feelings for each other which occurs within those who undergo together the deprivation, danger, and ever-present threat of death which are a part of war. I learned the hard way to profess my feelings for my brothers face to face. I knew from experience that if I did not do it then, when they were whole, I would have to whisper or scream into their ear as I held their broken bodies, hoping there was enough life left in them to hear my goodbye.

There is much about war that is constant, but that Frodo-to-Sam, Merry-to-Pippin, Gimli-to-Legolas type of relationship was more apt in Tolkien's war, "the war to end all war," and in mine, than in my father's. We saw no end of the war but to die and no reason to fight but to live. In order to survive at all in war, there must be a bond between comrades. My comrades, the like of whom I have rarely found since, went like the days, a few dumped right back on the streets as if nothing had transpired since they left, many on stretchers, with their clinking bottles, wan, pain-wracked faces, seeping stumps, and bleak futures, and far, far too many in waterproof body bags. Our hatred grew. We hated America no less than Nam and the Viet Cong at this point, for what we were experiencing and what we were, but we were *there*. Too many of us, with our hearts now grown as cold as a Barrow Wight's and with eyes that appeared to be Orkishly slanted even after leaving the jungle's gloom,

wholeheartedly embraced the gospel for ending the war, "Kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out." We truly became as Orcs, wantonly burning and hewing our way across the countryside toward too many a Helm's Deep.

Such was our unquest. What was to be our heroic "test of manhood," our generational "big one," turned out to be a vortex of voodoo and villainy from which at times I can still feel the pull. Our rallying cry was not "Elbereth Gilthoniel," but "Body Count." There were too few Pelennor Fields. Instead, there was the sneaking ambush and the blitzkrieg raid and the grossly uneven chases of the Asian rabbit and the Occidental hounds, of many Orcs in U.S. camouflage opposing a single Indochinese Isuldur. There was no Dunharrow for the young and the old to escape to. The retribution for losses on both sides was ruthless, ugly, and final.

From Tolkien's treatment of the losses of Merry and Pippin, I ken that the loss of a friend in his war was no less painful or traumatic than it was for me. Again, there is much about war that will never change. But unlike his tale and the war which closely followed his, he could not, in all likelihood, give a single definitive reason for enduring such. In my case, I also cannot. Tolkien's war, with its futile, wasteful, irresponsible trench warfare and its total destruction within the area of fighting, must have made him wonder about the end toward which he was fighting. Such feeling shows through clearly in the overall view of his tale with its theme of the subjugation, without the hope of a total defeat, of evil. The nature of my war, the guerrilla war, lends itself to instant, unexpected death or injury. I have experienced that type of loss and injury without the belief that such trauma was undergone for the sake of my people, as the Viet Cong could believe, or for the deliverance of the land I was told I was fighting for. We in Vietnam did not even have the benevolent ignorance of the populace the Rangers had in Middle Earth. In Vietnam, where the government did not truly own the hearts and minds of its people, we were hated and fought by a very substantial part of the population.

The war was not just waged against the people of Vietnam. Much of the journey of Frodo and Samwise through the foul reek of the dead lands of Mordor was familiar to me, as it surely must have been to Tolkien. His war was fought across stretches of "No Man's Land" where no living thing could survive. Much of my war was fought in areas which were a modern "No Man's Land" due to constant bombing and Agent Orange spraying. Tolkien's words describing the desolation of Mordor never fail to bring pictures of places in the Delta and the area around Tay Ninh to my mind, where still, I would imagine "not a single blade of grass will grow," places where we unknowingly wallowed in what would change our genes, mark our children with deformities, and kill many of us from Agent Orange associated maladies. Frodo's annual pain is not literary device, but a reminder that for the participants, wars do not end with the final shot or the signatures of non-participants on a mere piece of paper.

There was no personal conclusion to the war in Vietnam for the soldiers who fought there, no final cataclysmic battle; the calendar ended our individual

involvement. We were lifted out of the jungle on our 366th day, made as visually presentable as possible, and dumped back on our doorstep. Unlike the Hobbits, Tolkien, and my father, we had no rambling return in the company of trusted comrades with the time for a collective coming to terms with what had just taken place; we were not even given a proper time to mourn or rejoice.

We were home, reeling from the changes which both we and the country had undergone. The government was at war here also. Like Sam's beloved trees, there were things as basic to us being torn up by the roots. The Black Panthers were being hunted down and executed for having the unmitigated gall to perpetrate a revolution that ultimately amounted to the feeding of hungry children. The college campuses had standing military forces which were as well armed and almost as quick to fire in some places as we had been in Vietnam. The cities were as volatile and as hard to control as those we had just subjugated during Tet and for some of the same reasons. The people were not getting enough of what they were producing in both countries and too much of what had gone to the aged and the needy was now going to a war which neither people supported. Both sets of cities were controlled with the same methods and with some of the same personnel. The 82nd Airborne was pulled from their riot control duty during the 1968 religious unrest in Saigon and flown back to Detroit to crush the rioting there. The clandestine police forces were very busy at both ends of the world and many were jailed for mere gossip. Many were jailed and many were beaten, in their homes or in the streets, for speaking out against the war, as was their right, or for "hatching plots," which were sometimes merely frank discussions, against the continuance of the war.

Those of us who had worked out our experience to some degree decided that a "scouring of the Shire" was in order. Thus began what we would like to believe was our true quest, though like Frodo and Sam, we were on an honorable unquest also. Like them, we were bringing an incredibly evil thing back to the place of its birth for its undoing. Like them, this evil thing had a hold over us for we had given part of ourselves, some as literally as Frodo, to augment its power. But like them again, our love for each other and for the things we had left behind when we took up what we thought to be righteous quest, won over the power of evil.

Where we went the "sheriffs" gathered but they were at first confused. We were not the "bounders" they had first thought us to be. Either by the way some of us were marked, or by our outlandish gear, or by the light of Galadriel which we now felt shining in us, they knew us to be different. At worst, they took us in hand, usually with gentleness, for some of us were maimed; at best, they listened and decided not to act at all. Our neighbors, who had been lucky enough not to feel "the Eye" close at hand but whose awareness of it had been growing, joined us and our part, our country's part, in that travesty was ended.

So again we turned homeward, but too soon it seems. Despite Tolkien's warning, given to us through Gandalf, we left the broken foundation of our "Dark Tower" and it

has been rebuilt and the darkness is again spreading. It is not the wizened, bearded Lord of Darkness we were told started our war who has issued war forth from his gate this time but one more the like of Saruman. This time, he is known as "The Great Communicator," a mellifluous meliorist, who lulls us with inanities while people again die in an unjust war, just to our south, and the earth and water, leaf and stone of our children is covertly bartered or poisoned by his minions.

Many of us who survived the last war have turned to their work, like Frodo, be it public or private; many have turned to the land and our young trees, as Sam did, to try to nurture a better tomorrow. But many still stand guard, like Masters Meriadoc and Peregrine, to keep the darkness out and to remind us of the darkness outside which roams from country to country like a foul pestilence, snatching our sons from our midst.

Maybe in the Fourth Age, we can return to our "Rosies" with a final "Well, I'm home." Maybe in the Fourth Age, the rulers of this world will come to realize that their struggle for the world's resources can be settled without the death of children. Maybe in the Fourth Age, with the help and guidance of a kindly, old ex-warrior and his "fairy tales," we can make warriors, who never really want to be such once they are, and war, which ultimately serves only the darkness, as useless as sleep is to the Elves.

David Connolly, 237 L St., #1, S. Boston, MA 02127

## FILM: BUDDY COUNTS

*Cynthia Fuchs, George Mason University*

Male bonding, man.

Boys-becoming-men-together is probably the most conspicuous theme and frequently used plot device in U.S. films about the Vietnam War and its stateside aftermath. While it might look a lot like Standard War Movie Cliche #101A, male bonding is something else in a post-Vietnam context. Ostensibly, it means breaking boundaries, going outside the law to effect moral order as personal loyalty. For instance, the team of Riggs and Murtaugh in 1987's *Lethal Weapon* and its 1989 sequel, embody A Special Relationship. They get to win this time. Standing up for each other before anything else, these vets-turned-cops challenge such prosaic evils as corrupt command structures and a national failure of will.

Only male buddydom can achieve such transcendence. (Perhaps needless to say, well-intentioned wives, mothers, and girlfriends of the Sally Hyde variety just "can't understand.") It's about bodies, of course, whether dead or virile. The long shadow of Rambo notwithstanding, Vietnam War films tend to replace the lone hero (typically and ruefully remembered as John Wayne's Ur-Sergeant) with a more egalitarian group ethic. In more generally defined "squad" films like Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986) or John Irvin's *Hamburger Hill* (1987), for instance, a pervasive distrust of authority compels group bonding in the name of survival.

If they recall the one-from-every-ethnic-food-group diversity of such WWII films as *Bataan* (1943), the thrust of the recent Vietnam War squad films is more expressly to subvert military and governmental hierarchies, certainly an understandable impulse after mondo-betrayals like Vietnam, Watergate, and Iran-Contra. Unlike its WWII precursors, post-Vietnam movies assert that the System is unsalvageable. All that remain are the hallowed intimate connections born of shared frustration, disillusionment, and revenge.

But as Susan Jeffords points out in *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War*, representations hardly dispense with all pernicious systems. In the case of the *Lethal Weapon* films, problematic macho stereotypes are repressed, then recreated in the form of a sensitive, afflicted, and specifically interracial friendship, displacing a not-so-covert homoeroticism onto plenty of hyper-hetero camaraderie; that is, violent action. By positing this moralized space outside military or civilian institutions, these movies offer buddy loyalty as the excuse for all other transgressions. Anything goes, in the name of Righteous Indignation. In fact, it's precisely the trip outside command structures that makes the guys' mission crucial, heroic, and heart-warming.

Richard Donner's *Lethal Weapon* is currently marketed in a video box featuring a portrait of its Vietnam vet buddies: Martin Riggs/Mel Gibson looks straight at us, while Roger Murtaugh/Danny Glover is slightly profiled, his face turned toward us, with his gun raised within the frame. "Glover carries a weapon," the ad copy reads, "Gibson is one. He's the only LA cop registered as a *Lethal Weapon*." This difference between the black and white partners probably seems more sinister than it did before the Rodney King beating, but the point is not lost in any case: while Murtaugh's gun is prominently displayed, Riggs needs no such sublimation.

The film itself is packed with big time bonding, via action and varieties of hysteria based on the notion that neither man wants to work with a partner: in High Concept terms, it's a match made in heaven. Suicidally depressed and living alone in a trailer since his pretty blond wife's death, Riggs is a *Three Stooges* aficionado and perpetually gonzo-kinetic: he repeatedly puts revolvers in his mouth and considers pulling the trigger. In the far corner: happily married, be-familied in suburbia, but anxious over his impending middle age, Murtaugh is generally cautious on the job.

They meet cute when a scruffy-looking Riggs pulls out his gun in police headquarters. Thinking he's some punk, Murtaugh jumps him, only to end up on the ground with Riggs's foot in his face. Initiation ritual, FNG style. In fact, Vietnam figures prominently not only in the many-faceted cop plot (they hunt down ex-Air America bad guys who still run heroin from Asia via their old CIA connections), but as well in the particular experience these guys bring to their bonding moments.

After a long first day and dinner at his new buddy's house, Riggs remembers his time in the Phoenix Program: crushing his beer can, he says, "When I was 19 I did a guy in Laos from 1000 yards out with a rifle shot in a high

wind." Murtaugh asks, "Did you really like my wife's cookin'?" "No," says Riggs. Bonding over the wife's burned roast: no doubt about it, these boys are smitten.

For the rest of the film, Riggs' weapons prowess conflicts with Murtaugh's midlife crisis. (It's really all about that lethal weapon.) While discussing a case over the din on the shooting range, Murtaugh shows off. He plugs the target dead on. Riggs outdoes him by drilling a smiley face through the same male outline. While racial differences are clearly no problem, Riggs' overt and alarming homophobia only seems to underline their jokey mutual attraction. When Murtaugh tries to pat out bomb-caused flames on Riggs' jacket, the latter pushes him off, saying, "What are you, a fag?"

The repressed body connection finally emerges to ensure their buddied relation: shot down and considered a "corpse" by the villains, Riggs hides in the bushes to pick off villains in a desertscape. The mission: to help Murtaugh retrieve his kidnapped nubile young daughter. In the process the guys are both captured and tortured (Riggs without a shirt), until they escape and return to Murtaugh's home to confront the last and worst of the bad guys, psycho-albino Mr. Joshua (Gary Busey).

Riggs and Joshua kick it out in a muddy, bloody Martial Arts free-for all, while Murtaugh shouts encouragement from the sideline. The last shot belongs to the buddies together: they take out the odious Joshua with a slo-mo revolver barrage, both encased in Murtaugh's poncho: one (body) for all.

In *Lethal Weapon 2* (also directed by Donner), Riggs' notoriously insane and boyish behavior is somewhat curtailed when he meets and has sex with the white secretary for evil South African diplomats. Where in the first film Riggs has mourned his wife, so that his Vietnam background (and apparent PTSD) are camouflaged by personal tragedy, here the resolution of his rage is more emphatically displaced onto the homoerotic bond between Riggs and Murtaugh, as mediated by fast-talking pipsqueak accountant Joe Pesci.

In fact, the film goes to great lengths to create a climate for the men's relationship that is at once "politically correct" and traditionally structured as a romance. Everyone can hate white South African diplomats, especially those trafficking in gold and murder; these all-purpose villains are on a par with Nazis (as the film emphasizes: their ship is from Hamburg, Riggs calls them the "Master Race," and the one he deems "Adolph" has slick bangs not unlike Hitler's). Given Riggs' history, it's no surprise that his fury at the kewpie-doll secretary's murder takes him "outside the law": "I'm not a cop tonight Rog," he says. "This is personal."

With no women in sight (Murtaugh's long-suffering wife has been sent off to her mother's), the men go into action. What is notable here is that Riggs' anger impels Murtaugh's, despite the fact that the villains have much earlier invaded Murtaugh's home (that he thinks their ski masks are "hoods" suggests a connection to US-brand racism). The black man, who is also a confirmed family man and political moderate (he is nonplussed by his family's tuna boycott), only takes action against the South Africans when inspired by his hysterical white partner.

This implies Riggs' higher moral calling, Murtaugh's small-minded slowness, or the confusion of motives that typifies cop vengeance movies. The text can only contain the incoherence of Riggs' authority by hinting at the men's intimacy, mediated as a reaction to violence in two sequences. The first concerns Murtaugh's rescue from a toilet rigged with a bomb: neither can say the words, but as they face possible death, Riggs says, "I know" as they look into each other's eyes. The homo-attraction reappears with the final image, where Murtaugh cradles a near-dead, beaten and bloodied Riggs in his arms.

Impending death allows these images of private male-on-male contact, linking violence and sexuality. When Murtaugh joins Riggs to "fuck" the villains, they define penetrable Otherness as the limit of male self-identity. Riggs and Murtaugh define their alliance by shooting all the bad guys before they embrace each other...until the sirens sound, that is, and Riggs tells Murtaugh to let go, because "I don't want anyone to see us like this."

## POETRY BY BILL SHIELDS

### ghost poem

I've died  
too soon

my blood  
scarcely mattered

I was married once  
had children

divorced  
remarried

& before all that  
I went to Vietnam

& after all that  
I went to Vietnam

I saw the earth  
splashed in blood

souls stabbed out  
of living bodies

children dead  
in their mothers' stomachs

human bodies blended  
with high speed steel

I only believed  
in myself

& today  
I forgot

### a pure ghost poem

I don't want to hear  
your version of Vietnam

until you have the courage  
to hold your dying mother's head

as she fills your lap  
with bloody vomit

& dies in your arms

think of that moment  
for twenty odd years

remember what you said  
or more importantly, what you didn't do

dream of your cowardice  
your absolute fear

& smell the room she held you  
inhale the blood & hair

walk in her bones  
till your wife finds you

crying in a back room  
or a garage

I'll be there  
with you

bawling  
like a newborn

### miles of bones

58,000 suicides  
is a lot of bullets

wrecked cars  
ruined veins

dead bottles  
kids without fathers

American flags  
& miles of dirt dug

58,000  
the number of Vietnam

veteran suicides . . .  
it equals the names

on the Wall  
today: 7/09/91 8:10 p.m.

tomorrow  
we'll exceed it

more suicide  
than combat death

If you can't feel  
this pain

you're already  
dead

all these  
bodies

floating  
home

### jingoism

I never wore a yellow ribbon  
& I've bled for this country  
no flag either  
or "WELCOME HOME HEROES" bumper sticker on my  
car

I can't find one good thing to say  
about American teen-agers firing extremely high-tech  
weaponry  
against a virtually unarmed enemy  
A parade for our heroes?  
A parade for death?

What was the body count anyway?  
How many Iraqi children died with our metal in their  
bones?

I'm not going to make a nineteen year old kid a hero  
for having the innocence to kill  
I have two Purple Hearts myself  
for being young & stupid  
& that is not an excuse  
to fill a coffin

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Contributing Editor to the Vietnam Generation  
Newsletter. Look for his review of work from Jon Forrest  
Glade and Richard Wilmarth in the Books section of this  
issue.*

## AND HE BLESSED ME UNAWARE: VETERANS EVE 1989, MAKING AT LAST A PERSONAL PEACE WITH VIETNAM

By Gretchen Kay Lutz, English, San Jacinto College  
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On November 10, 1989, at the Vietnam war memorial, I witnessed four former servicemen pay tribute to their enshrined comrade. As I stood back from the wall, I watched and listened to these veterans, my contemporaries, but very distanced from me. The men, dressed remnants of their old fatigues, passed among themselves a half-gallon jug of cheap, paper-bag-wrapped wine, and memorialized their dead friend by attempting to affix under his name a faded Polaroid photo of him as he had lived—young, pale, barechested, reclining in repose in tropical heat. I, a woman, dressed in 1989's fashion in wool, leather, and fur, stood back in the Washington cold, unnoticed.

The men spoke, as men our age will, especially when alone, unobserved, and warmed by wine, in benign profanities: "I was probably the last son-of-a-bitch to see him alive." Utterances of assent. Silence. And then the question, "If it could be your name up here on this wall and him here tonight, which would you choose?" One began to answer, "Shit, man, I'd rather be the name there..."

But then one of them noticed me.

Perhaps I had sobbed aloud. Certainly tears streamed down my face. The big one, the leader, spoke and said, in embarrassed apology for their indelicate language, "Oh, excuse us, ma'am."

Realizing then from his words the separation between them and me—they were young soldiers again in that past when their friend had lived, and I was a forty-year-old woman in the present—I said, "No, no, I am just so moved by you." Then I entered into the light where they stood. I reached up and embraced the big one, and one of the others joined. We rocked and sobbed together for only a moment.

Then drawing back, the big one assumed the dignity of his full height, took his index finger to my lips, kissed it, and pressed the kiss down on my forehead. "You have just been kissed by the Bear," he said.

By then, my companions had come walking past on their way back to our waiting taxi, so I joined them.

At that time, I could not speak to my friends about what had happened. They were some of my teaching colleagues and their husbands, friends with whom I am close enough to have told virtually all of my secrets. But they are all just enough years older than I, I felt them—however irrational it might seem—not to understand what it is to be a member of the Vietnam generation. And upon this questionable assumption that they simply would not understand, I rationalized my reticence, telling them later the narrative, but not the meaning of being blessed by the Bear.

Because I am usually a flippant smart-aleck, the sort one would expect to appropriate Oscar Wilde's tone if I repeated his observation that now "life imitates art," I further felt daunted by the thought of telling anyone that I had myself been Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. My friends would think I was being ironic if I had told them that years ago I had murdered the albatross, but that now, because, as Coleridge's Mariner confesses, "a spring of love [had] gushed from my heart," the curse had been lifted; the Bear had blessed me.

I could not expect others to understand that for more than twenty years I have felt ashamed that my sin was the same as the Ancient Mariner's. His is not the sin of malicious evil, of deliberate, mean-spirited violence. His rather is the sin of unthinking, indifferent, mindless action. And so is mine.

But I had not realized the nature of my sin nor the depth of my guilt until that Veterans Eve by the wall. Now, thinking back, I understand why I have avoided anything and everything that brought to my consciousness the Vietnam war. I have not seen one of the Vietnam movies, not the *Green Berets* nor *The Killing Fields*, nor any of the others one might imagine on a continuum between those two. I have not read any of the books on Vietnam, though I have declared that I really intended to. I have chosen to remain oblivious to the war. Remain. That is the word. Remain oblivious. When my male counterparts were there fighting, or even when they were at home contemplating the prospect of going to that war, or later remembering their time there, I was oblivious—oblivious not to the facts of what was going on there—I followed the news—but oblivious to the truth of what it was like to be in a young man's circumstance.

Certainly I was aware of the facts of the war. Precocious darling that I was as a teenager, I had a better command of the facts of current events than many adults. As far back as 1965, I had even exploited that knowledge when I had won a U.I.L. Ready Writing Contest by suggesting that Senator Wayne Morse, one of the first to oppose the war, might be viewed by history as a successor to those statesmen Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* lauded for having made the courageously moral decision when they knew that doing so would make them outcasts.

By the time I was a junior in college, as many of the male graduates of the highschool class of 1966—my class—were either in Vietnam or soon would be there, oblivious to the predicament of those young men, my counterparts, I had skewered a whole flock of albatrosses.

Even as I devoted myself to sorority, band, history, and literature—in that order—I knew why most of my male college classmates were in ROTC. It was better to go to war as an officer than as an enlisted man. I knew that, but I certainly didn't get it. Even when my main boyfriend had flunked out of school and subsequently had rushed to enlist rather than be drafted, I was more vexed that his failure had betrayed me, leaving me dateless on the weekends, than I was concerned for what might happen to him.

That trombone-player-turned-Airman was soon replaced in my life by a much more glamorous man, glamorous because he was older, because he had seen the world while in the Navy, and especially glamorous

because he had served in Vietnam with the Marines as a hospital corpsman. Unlike the mere boys my own age, here was a man who could tell war stories. He was using his GI benefits to ace his way through Texas Christian University, and then to go on to medical school. To our eventual bitter regret, during our senior year I married him, at his insistence, this veteran and surgeon-to-be. I had donned another albatross as I eventually came to realize that I had fallen in love with the image of, the idea of this "great catch" and not the man himself.

Thinking back now, I see that Vietnam pervaded much of what happened to us at TCU then, even though at the time one probably would not have deemed it so from looking at us. For us Horned Frogs—even the many, including me, who had moral and religious objections to the war—hippie-style protest was not fashionable, mainly because hippie fashion was not fashionable. It was still important to us to be able to drape our coats over the back of our chairs so that the Neiman-Marcus labels showed at the very same time that our counterparts at places like UT-Austin thought it important not to get haircuts and not to bathe. And despite what those who had affected the hippie fashion might say about those of us who adhered to what was later to be called preppie, I think we were not less committed to peace and justice. We wore black armbands, and observed a quiet Moratorium day with the quite literal blessing of our ordained minister chancellor. We felt no need for indecorous rebellion.

Years later, when I was talking with a friend about our contemporaneous college days, he confirmed my surmise that for many of his fellow students at UT, the hippy dress was at least as much fashion statement as political statement. He tells of having encountered a radical rally on campus. He noticed that many in the crowd that shouted assent to the exhortations of the radical leader were wearing t-shirts on which were printed an upraised clenched fist. Curious about the t-shirts and the meaning of the rally in general, my friend questioned a young woman who had been jumping up and down, shouting with the crowd in support of the radical message, whatever it might have been. My friend was not close enough to the speaker's podium to hear or understand. At any rate, he interrupted the coed long enough to ask her what the t-shirt she was wearing meant. She responded breathlessly, before going back to cheering with the crowd, "I don't know, but you can buy them right over there for \$5.00. They come in red, black and green."

In contrast to my contemporaries elsewhere who were blowing up the ROTC building, my personal main concern was blowing up 1500 helium-filled red, buff, and green balloons for sorority rush. While I was focused upon such crucial matters as making sure the balloons stayed up long enough and that our cast performed convincingly the skit and songs for the Raggedy Ann and Andy theme party, one of my sorority sisters got a long distance phone call. Linda was shocked to hear the voice of her fiancé Jim who was at that time a helicopter pilot in Vietnam. He told her that he was being held by the enemy and that she should get in touch with Senator John Tower to help him. For a few days after the call, we were all very concerned and all-too-excited about being in on such a dramatic episode.

I do not remember whether Linda called John Tower or not, but I do remember that we soon learned that Jim had been given a medical discharge and was on his way home. Soon our excitement about the phone call was supplanted by our excitement that Linda and Jim would be married right away.

It was not until a couple of years later that I came to understand the significance of what had happened that day of the phone call. I heard that Linda was getting a divorce from Jim. It turned out that in Vietnam he had had a schizophrenic break. He had made the phone call from an Army hospital. Because he was a paranoid schizophrenic, he had thought he was being held by the enemy. After his discharge and subsequent marriage, Jim was still undergoing treatment. As long as he took his medication, he was fine. But when the paranoia would overtake him, he would refuse to take the medicine. One day Linda came home to discover that Jim had thrown their decorated Christmas tree off the balcony of their sixth floor apartment. On another occasion Linda learned that Jim had delivered on a silver tray a single long-stemmed rose and a loaded pistol to a bank officer who had turned down his loan application. When I later talked to Linda herself, I learned that she was heartbroken. She still loved the sane Jim, but when he lost himself, she was afraid of him and found herself forced to leave him.

By this time, after being married to the veteran-now-medical-student for a few years, I was beginning to see through a glass darkly, what the Vietnam veterans around me had lived through. One more albatross was yet to come into my sights, however. I was teaching English at Galveston's Ball High School and was playing the part of responsible adult rather well, I thought.

That was the time when "relevance" was the education buzz word. Students would and should learn only what was of immediate interest—relevance—to them. Following this theory, I reasoned that nothing could be more relevant to juniors and seniors in high school in the early Seventies than the Vietnam war, so I devised a unit on war poetry. We read war poetry ranging from Lovelace's "To Lucasta" through Owens' "Dulce et Decorum Est" to Jarrell's "Death of the Ball Turret Gunner." My scheme worked. For once the kids stayed in their seats, fell quiet and listened.

It was not until years later, when the Sunday newspaper reported the dedication of the Vietnam war memorial, that I remembered the war poetry and those kids who would come to know for themselves war in a way I never would, no matter how much poetry I read. As I scanned the newspaper's list of the dead from Texas, I searched the Galveston listing for familiar names. There I found Gonzales, Rodriguez, Johnson, but I could not tell, I could not remember if those particular young men had been there in my English classes. I did not know them.

For the first time I understood that I did not know any of them, and I never had. At once and for the first time the guilt of my ignorance bore down upon me. I cried with shame.

After that I knew why I could not stand to see *Platoon* or *Full Metal Jacket* or even John Wayne's *Green Berets*. It was not my delicacy that caused me to shrink from the violence in the works of art; it was my shame that when the real life the works imitate was going on, I did not get it. I had never put myself in the place of those young warriors. What is worse, I had exploited both the glory and the suffering, imposing upon the veterans an interest in them as idealized tragic heroes, characters of fiction, not life.

And so I stood this November, viewing that solemn work of art, the memorial wall. And as I walked along, looking at the names, real life emerged out of art in the form of the Bear and his comrades. As I looked on them, vicariously I imposed myself back there in time and place with them in their memories. But when the Bear spoke to me, I understood that I was, from their view, alien—alien in time, in place, and in gender. But because I wanted to share their pain and love with them, even if I could never really know it, they let me join for a little moment their tableau.

Then, without knowing the nature of my shame but sensing my need for absolution, the Bear reached out to bless me.

*Gretchen Kay Lutz, San Jacinto College Central, 8060 Spencer Highway, P.O. Box 2007, Pasadena, TX 77505-2007*

## POETRY FROM BILL JONES

### The Body Burning Detail

Three soldiers from the North  
 Burned for reasons  
 of Sanitation.  
 Arms shrunk to slippers  
 Charred buttocks thrust skyward  
 They burned for five days.  
 It was hard to swallow  
 Difficult to eat  
 With the sweet smoke of seared  
 Flesh, like a fog,  
 Everywhere.

Twenty-five years later  
 They burn still.  
 Across sense and time  
 The faint unwelcome odor  
 Rises in odd places.  
 With a load of leaves  
 At the city dump  
 A floating wisp of smoke  
 From the burning soldiers  
 Mingles with the stench  
 Of household garbage.

Once, while watching young boys  
Kick a soccer ball,  
The Death Smell filled my lungs.  
As I ran, choking  
Panic unfolded  
Fluttering wings  
Of fear and remorse.  
A narrow escape.

A letter, snatched from the flames  
The day we burned them  
Is hidden away  
In a shoebox  
With gag birthday cards,  
Buttons, string, rubber bands.  
A letter from home?  
The Oriental words,  
Delicately framed  
Are still a mystery.

### Heathen Killer

#### I

A rear headquarters non-combatant  
Christens the search and destroy  
Missions in curious olive drab lingo.  
An officer no doubt.  
"Captain Ashley speaking, sir.  
I didn't ask for this job."

At Khe Sanh, we lounge  
on sandbags, drink Kool-Aid,  
And watch the screaming fighters  
Come like clockwork  
From Da Nang, Pleiku, Chu Lai  
And giant carriers criss-crossing  
The South China sea.  
Sky Hawks and Phantoms  
Climb almost straight up,  
Dive and circle,  
Drop tumbling silver  
Cannisters of jellied fire  
That flash in the sun.  
We cheer the more spectacular  
Rolling orange mushrooms;  
The Greatest Show on Earth.  
"This," says Chief,  
"Is one crazy white man's war."

Clever enough name,  
I suppose,  
For a military operation.  
"Heathen Killer"  
There is certainly a significant amount of killing  
Though most of it  
On the wrong side.

#### II

On mail call days  
The photographs I share  
Of new cars and picnics,  
Smiling blue eyed people  
Eating wedding cake,  
Are always returned  
Without comment.  
Chief never gets any mail.  
Never.  
He eats sliced peaches,  
C-ration apricots and pears,  
While I sort stacks  
Of perfumed letters.  
"Got any pineapple bits?"  
He knows the answer.  
I always steal  
More from supply  
Than I can eat.

On a mud hill jungle firebase,  
Drunk on desert memories,  
Rage and contraband whiskey,  
Chief packs his trash,  
Lurches toward concertina wire,  
A sea of elephant grass  
And the Reservation far beyond.  
Gang tackled from behind,  
The fight is on.  
He beats Dino's eye shut  
And busts the Wetback's lip  
Before nylon parachute cord  
Binds him to a stake/tree.  
Next morning, he surveys  
The swollen purple faces,  
And sullen stares.  
"Nothing personal, boys".

His round face split  
In a yellow toothed grin.  
We smile back,  
Crazy goddamn Indian,  
In spite of ourselves.

#### III

The squad draws straws to wake him,  
Fists flailing at unseen  
Dancing demons,  
Until we learned to jab  
A stick in his barrel chest  
And run for our lives.  
We stack our weapons  
At Dong Ha,  
Innocent as children,  
Pile the deadly war toys  
As offerings.  
Frag and bandoliers  
For warm Black Label,

Showers, clean clothes,  
 And dehydrated steaks.  
 Chief buys a portable tape player  
 And one tape  
 In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida.  
 We hear the drum solo,  
 In our sleep,  
 Over and over  
 Like a bad dream  
 Struggling for life.

"Where's Chief," Gunny asks?  
 At morning muster, we stand  
 In the nauseous  
 Aftermath of green beer  
 For the Skipper's pep talk.  
 The words rise like bile  
 From his monotone speech.  
 "NVA Regiment  
 Air Assault  
 Operation Heathen Killer."

"Chief ain't up, Gunny"  
 "Well go get him," he says.  
 But nobody moves.  
 "Why don't you go, Gunny?"  
 (a voice from the ranks)  
 To wake Chief from a big drunk.  
 No stick was long enough.  
 Gunny stares at his clipboard.  
 A wise man weighing options.  
 "Naw," he says  
 "Let the wild son-of-a-bitch sleep."

## IV

In the afternoon we shuffle  
 Aboard the waiting choppers  
 To the dull thump of whistling engines  
 Pounding hearts and psychedelic drumbeats.  
 Chief stands by the door gunner,  
 Head bobbing to the strains  
 Of The Iron Butterfly,  
 And watches the seething pockmarked jungle  
 Flow green beneath us  
 As giant rotors throb  
 Banking the great bird North  
 To the red clay of Con Thien  
 The Place of Angels  
 Street Without Joy  
 Operation  
 "Heathen Killer."

At Dawn, Barret is still alive.  
 Hang on, we urge.  
 It is our turn to beg.  
 But he grows weary  
 And slips away.  
 In the distance, medevac choppers  
 Hum above the fog shrouded valleys.  
 We wrap him and the others,

In plastic ponchos  
 Gently, as if it mattered,  
 And load them in the bellies  
 Of thrashing helicopters.  
 We stand in postures  
 Of absurd bravado  
 And weep in the prop wash.

"Go get the Skipper," Chief says.  
 And we peer over the edge  
 At the source of the moans.  
 A Gook officer, wounded,  
 Has saved himself  
 On an out-cropping of rock  
 And looks up in a half-smile  
 Of recognition and hope  
 Even as the pistol barks.  
 The Skipper, hollow-eyed,  
 Passionless, walks away.  
 He never says a word.

## V

In the night,  
 Barret is hit,  
 Lays dying,  
 Calling our names in the darkness,  
 Knowing we will come.  
 The Gooks know it too  
 And use the plaintive sobs as irresistible bait;  
 A favorite slope trick.  
 They kill Doc first,  
 Then Wilson,  
 And the new replacement kid  
 Whose name we never learn.  
 Barret is begging now.  
 Let him die, I pray,  
 Before my turn.  
 As Chief crawls out  
 Stone-faced to save us all,  
 I change my prayer.  
 Grenades arch soundless.  
 he catches the bouncing baseballs  
 And tosses them back.  
 Lt. Mac, a good catholic boy,  
 Fingers black rosary beads.  
 "Mother of God," he breathes.

The new chevrons and Silver Star,  
 Pinned on by the battalion commander,  
 Are sweetened with a week of R&R.  
 A big mistake, we smirk,  
 And are rewarded with stories  
 Of an AWOL Chief busted, in a Hong Kong  
 Back-street whorehouse,  
 By an unsuspecting cop.  
 Poor bastard . . .  
 Trying to roust a sleeping Indian  
 From the Binge of the Century.  
 We celebrate Chief's return.  
 Walk to the LZ

Bearing gifts of canned fruit.  
 Beaming, he embraces us all.  
 A little thinner from a red line  
 Bread and water brig.  
 "Still a slick sleeved private."  
 He brags.  
 The officers shake their heads,  
 Go back to map reading,  
 And peer through binoculars.

## VI

One image remains.  
 near Laos, the night wind  
 Alive with sing song  
 Oriental voices,  
 Mortars fall from a back sky,  
 We press out faces in damp  
 Fresh earth and pray aloud.  
 On this, our last day  
 The mortars stop.  
 And in the silence,  
 Sick with sorrow,  
 We knew they are coming.  
 The word passes  
 in hushed tones;  
 A whispered holy sacrament.  
 "Fix bayonets".  
 A hoarse cry from a distant hole,  
 "Gooks in the wire.  
 Fix bayonets."  
 In the brief ghost light  
 of a pop flare,  
 I see Chief's face,  
 Flush with the blood  
 Of ancient Arizona warriors,  
 Smiling  
 Triumphant.

*Bill Jones, Cowboy Poet, P.O. Box 691, Lander, WY 82520, appears in the The Dry Crick Review and the Owen Wister Review (University of Wyoming). A collection with Rod McQueary will soon appear, published by John Doffelmeyer of The Dry Crick Review.*

## POETRY BY JON FORREST GLADE

## Fireflies

James and I had eaten, sold  
 or given all the acid away  
 by a quarter to twelve.  
 When the cops arrived,  
 one minute after midnight,  
 there was nothing they could do.  
 It was in us not on us,  
 so fuck your warrant  
 and your brand-new law.

Matchheads ignited like Hiroshima  
 and left trails in the dark  
 more brilliant than the tracers  
 I would later fire  
 in Southeast Asia.

It wasn't the vodka or the amphetamines  
 so much as too many choruses  
 of "Bartender's Blues."  
 James would shut down the bar,  
 gas up his car,  
 and find himself someplace new.  
 He bartended himself to death  
 and died in a nursing home,  
 a thin old man of thirty-one  
 who warned strangers, "Man,  
 you gotta take care of your health."

Sometimes, when the shrapnel moves  
 and I can't sleep, I question James'  
 assumption that God takes care of drunks  
 and people on LSD.  
 Flipping matchsticks across the lawn,  
 we weren't even fireflies,  
 but we thought we were the dawn.

## Adventure Calls

In grade school, I was shown episodes  
 of a travelogue, "Adventure Calls."  
 I remember beautiful French Indochina.  
 The narrator called the city of Hue  
 "the Paris of the Orient."

Today I'm taking snapshots  
 of bullet holes in the walls  
 of French Colonial buildings.  
 There are ruins all over Hue,  
 and the Perfume River  
 smells just like shit.

**Displaying the Flag**

Back in the jungle,  
 we would divide the contents  
 of a fallen man's pack.  
 Take his cigarettes, his lighter,  
 packets of pre-sweetened kool-aid,  
 ammo, camera, transistor radio,  
 C rations and paperback books.  
 The CO would write a letter home,  
 describing heroics  
 which had never happened,  
 and mail it to the bereaved.

Lately, I can't stand  
 to drink in the Legion,  
 where I've heard the same lies  
 so long they've grown comfortable.  
 Because, now, my fellow vets  
 are fat and forty,  
 and believe in POWs in Vietnam  
 the way some people believe in UFOs.  
 There's nothing wrong  
 with displaying the flag,  
 but I'm not up  
 for another round of beer and shots,  
 and I don't want to sit here  
 and listen to how America  
 is finally standing tall  
 and help re-write history  
 on a field of blue.

*Jon Forrest Glade, address. See Bill Shields' review of his  
 Photographs of the Jungle in the Reviews section of this  
 issue.*

**POETRY BY LEROY QUINTANA****Hopper**

Hopper came twice within a step of dying  
 Once was in Brooklyn while working as a hodcarrier  
 fifty stories up  
 The people below small as insects  
 when the scaffolding teeter-tottered under him suddenly  
 The second time was in the Nam,  
 bullets whispering violently by  
 as he pushed himself as deeply as possible  
 against the ground  
 Fifty stories below  
 the smallest of insects as large as automobiles  
 darting on a blade of grass

**Brownie**

Brownie had been a prisoner of war in Korea  
 So thin he looked almost starved  
 His dark eyes hard, forgiving, somehow indifferent  
 Softspoken if he said anything at all  
 It was said he had been tortured  
 We students of the Catholic school were forever selling  
 Christmas seals, magazine subscriptions, statues  
 The nuns would tell us God had spared Brownie's life  
 and that he should be eternally grateful  
 But he always politely turned us down  
 Sister Rita talked about him as though he was a heathen,  
 a Communist. He never bought so much as a raffle ticket.

**A Restaurant in Munich**

A restaurant in Munich  
 Something in the summer afternoon—  
 The sadness of a day in fall  
 The sadness of these men who became men  
 in a war the year I was born  
 These the men who bore weapons of steel  
 blue as their eyes for the father land  
 Eyes that have stalked men, perhaps my uncles  
 through the sights of their rifles  
 They laugh manly laughs, tease the homely waitress,  
 raise tall glasses of beer golden as their hair  
 Somewhere in this country there stood a bridge  
 that long ago was destroyed by dynamite  
 Grandfather's nephew broken  
 as the good bread of this noon

*Leroy V. Quintana teaches English (film, creative writing,  
 and composition) San Diego Mesa College. He is married  
 to Yolanda, has a daughter Sandra, and daughter Eltsa,  
 and a son Jose.*

**STILL THE STREET WITHOUT JOY**

By Robert Flynn, English, Trinity University, San Antonio,  
 Texas

There is only one road north out of Da Nang to Phu Bai  
 and Gia Le, and beyond Hue, Quang Tri, Dong Ha, Camp  
 Carroll, the Rock Pile, Khe Sahn. Just north of Da Nang  
 that one road passes through the mountainous Hai Van  
 Pass that GI truck drivers used to call "the pucker factor."  
 It is six and a half miles up to the pass, six and a half miles  
 down and under the best conditions it took the tankers  
 and sea-land vans of the military convoys an hour and a  
 half of grinding through the hairpin turns, sitting ducks  
 for ambushes.

The first time you saw the Hai Van was from the back  
 of a guntruck escorting a convoy. The day before a convoy  
 had run into an ambush and the driver of the guntruck  
 had been killed trying to get the truck's guns into position

to take up the fire and permit the other trucks to escape. The crew was surly and clouds obscured the pass and a waiting ambush that never got close enough to hit anything, but you could not ignore the beauty of the waterfalls above and the ocean crashing on the rocky shore below.

Once a truck lost its brakes coming down from the pass. The bobtails that were supposed to push overloaded trucks up to the pass and then get in front to act as brakes as the trucks came down from the pass were unable to catch the truck. The driver risked his life running the truck into a rice paddy rather than driving the out-of-control truck through the village of Lang Co where carts, peasants and children crowded the road.

Another driver lost his brakes coming down the Hai Van and the heavy truck overturned on the shoulder of the road, high above the rocky shore below. When you saw him the driver was lying on his back beside the road, uninjured but so shaken he was unable to stand.

Vietnam is peaceful now and there are few trucks and even fewer cars on what the French called "The Street Without Joy." Neat concrete houses with tile roofs cover Red Beach, where once trucks lined up for a last check before attempting the pass. The old U.S. bases are but scraps of memories and metal: piles of rusting wire, crushed steel helmets, shells, casings, GI cans, airplane parts. At Phu Bai some concrete remains. Camp Eagle is barren and appears salted. Along the highway, artillery shells with fuses removed are occasionally used for mile markers.

You think you find Camp Baxter. There was never much at Camp Baxter and there is even less now. Even the name Camp Baxter is gone. Back in the world most people never heard of it. Those who did have perhaps forgotten, but it was named for PFC Larry Baxter, of Pierce City, Missouri, who drove a truck carrying 5,000 gallons of gasoline. It wasn't a glamorous job, not the kind that brought promotions or medals. It was just a job that someone had to do.

You don't know anything about Baxter. His race or religion. You don't know whether he was drafted or volunteered. You don't know how he felt about the war. Or about his country. All you know is what he did. Baxter's truck was hit by a rocket propelled grenade and set afire. Baxter could have jumped out of the blazing truck and saved his life, but that would have trapped the trucks on the road behind him. Disregarding his own safety, Baxter drove the vehicle through intense enemy fire and despite being critically wounded, drove the tanker over an embankment ensuring his own death but saving the lives of his comrades.

Baxter was posthumously awarded a Silver Star, not much of an award for one's life, but a camp was named for him. Now that too is gone, having had an even shorter life than Baxter. You don't have many heroes left. One by one they crumbled on feet of clay, and you have become too old or wise or eccentric to consider rock musicians, athletes or actors as heroes. Larry Baxter is one of your heroes and you will never forget, even though Camp Baxter is gone.

Last summer you rode "The Street Without Joy" for perhaps the last time. The road passed quickly, impossibly fast. The Hai Van was sunny, beautiful. You felt a disappointment you were unable to explain. You had come to relive a feeling, to locate, pin down, maybe define a moment that did not come. Suddenly, in the Hai Van, you saw a truck bed that seemed to be in the same spot you had seen an overturned truck during the war, the shaken driver lying beside it. It was unlikely to have been the same one, but you were so startled you could only stare, frozen, unable to snap a shot, and had to make a return trip for the photograph.

On the return trip there were no clouds and a few trickling streams had replaced the waterfalls. A cheerful American talked of the glorious craggy coast, the picturesque mountain road, the exotic stone fortress that predated the French. He saw nothing, nothing, and you were filled with a rage you had not known for a long time. He knew nothing, nothing of what you knew, and he will someday be followed by thousands of tourists who will know no more than he knows. You wished for an M-16 so you could poke it into the point of his jaw just below his ear, so that for a moment he would know.

Robert Flynn, 101 Cliffside Drive, San Antonio, TX 78231, is author of *A Personal War in Vietnam* (Texas A & M Press, 1989).

## BOOK REVIEWS

Dan Scripture is Vietnam Generation Book Review Editor. Please send him queries about reviews at College Eight, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064, FAX 408-459-3518, phone 408-459-4790, phone message 408-459-3518, or by E-mail on Bitnet at scriptu@ucsd.ucsc.edu.

**Marilyn B. Young. *The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990*, New York: HarperCollins, 1991. Pp xiv, 186. \$25.00**

Reviewed by Dan Scripture, Vietnam Generation Book Review Editor.

This history will undoubtedly find a place in college courses concerning the Vietnam War. It is a good book, an accessible book, in its politics a fundamentally progressive history. The title is accurate but mildly misleading: to most historians these days, there are three wars, referred to as the first, second, and third Indochina Wars, or the French, American, and Chinese Wars, respectively. Young's history is concerned mostly with the first two of these wars, and their relationship to American foreign policy. She deals much more briefly, although capably, with the short but important war with China in 1979, and with the post-American War period in general.

The text is thus largely a carefully documented and organized narrative of American policy toward Viet Nam since near the end of WWII. Young locates the War in the context of the continuing global project of the United States, what she calls in her preface "the enterprise of reorganizing the post-World War II world according to the principles of liberal capitalism." It is to Young's great credit that she does not lose sight of this larger framework, since, as she points out in the same preface, that although she discusses the various possible responses to the original question, "Why are we in Vietnam?" she has "interpreted the 'why' as 'how,'" and "come to believe that in the daily, weekly, monthly, yearly progress of the war lay many of its most decisive reasons and irrationalities." This interpretation is, of course, a normal step for an historian, but as it leads into the careful examination of the everydayness of politics, diplomacy, and war, it is also the step where the less knowledgeable and less experienced often find themselves lost. For this reason especially the book will make a good text for undergraduates, although there are other strengths: it is well-written, well-edited, and well-produced. It is documented carefully and clearly, and has an excellent index. Unfortunately the bibliography, though extensive, lists only those works consulted but not referred to in the notes, and is hence titled "Additional Bibliography." The practice is becoming normal, but is unhandy, especially for students. The book has a collection of illustrations and photographs from unusually diverse sources: combat photography

from the NLF perspective, for instance. Major actors and their writings, other historians and their writings, are introduced directly into the text in ways that help students to follow up certain lines of investigation and thought, at the same time helping them get a sense of the principal actors and many of the principal scholars. The text is a true narrative history nonetheless, never descending into tendentious scholarly argument of the kind that is opaque to students, however much it may exhilarate professionals.

The major weakness of this book is the brevity of the treatment of the 1975-1990 period, mentioned above. The main outline is there, to be sure, but more on the internal and external politics and struggles, still ongoing, of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam would have been helpful. There is not much in this chapter (covering 15 years, versus eleven chapters for the previous 19 years) that would help one to understand the reason behind the continuing flow of refugees from Viet Nam, its enormous military establishment (one of the sixth or seventh largest in the world, until very recently), the reason for its abject poverty and economic difficulties, or the long-maintained "re-education camps." Nor is there much that helps one understand why Viet Nam dominates its neighbors, Cambodia and Laos, especially Laos, or why, as the newspapers reported recently, Viet Nam and China are negotiating privately about a settlement in Cambodia, one that, if made, would pre-empt a UN settlement, if China uses its veto in the Security Council.

Also, there are two other problems; however, neither of them are attributable to Young alone. First, a seemingly minor one, but one which I believe is a good symbol of Western ethnocentrism: Vietnamese words and names are spelled without diacritics. This is the equivalent of leaving a vowel or two from every English word printed in the book; this practice is irritating and distracting to readers of Vietnamese, like me. It is clearly ethnocentric, and perhaps racist, since the diacritics are supplied for the French. Back in the days of the linotype machine, there was perhaps an excuse, but with computerized typesetting, this practice is inexcusable and unacceptable, especially from a major textbook publisher. Lady Borton's *Sensing the Enemy: An American Woman Among the Boat People of Vietnam* was published with diacritics by Dial/Doubleday in 1984. After all, there are probably now more native speakers of Vietnamese than of French in the United States, and there are certainly more speakers of Vietnamese in Viet Nam than there are speakers of French in France, just as there always have been. Vietnamese is not a minor, obscure language.

The major weakness of the *The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990* is one it shares with nearly all other books in English in the field, although it is less vulnerable than others to the following criticism: it is a history of Western involvement in Viet Nam. Its scope and perspective is Western, and primarily American. Young is clearly aware of and knowledgeable about the Vietnamese perspectives: there are many well-chosen Vietnamese sources and voices in her text, and in her Acknowledgements she reveals that she co-teaches a course on the history of Viet Nam in which the American war is only a chapter. There seems nothing to complain of in the scope and perspective of the book, until we reflect that American scholars write

histories of many countries and many wars, setting the framework, historical scope, and perspective in ways appropriate to the country (or countries) concerned, rather than by the framework of American involvement. It is all rather like beginning a history of Great Britain with the American Revolution. So in effect I am complaining because Young did not write a different book, one I suspect she could, or even might be writing. This complaint is of course unfair, but somewhere there has to be a place to say that it is time again for some American scholar to write a political history of Viet Nam the country, not Vietnam the war. I have used Young's excellent book to point to a need, and I hope she will forgive me. The last substantial American history of Viet Nam was by Joseph Buttinger in 1968, and it remains useful and reliable, even though it is marred in a number of places by globalist Cold War politics in its later chapters. The problem is the general unwillingness and inability of Americans to imagine themselves into the historical perspective of others, especially Asians—and this problem, it seems to me, is at the root of our involvement in Viet Nam. From the Vietnamese perspective, the American War can be seen as an anomalous ten-year distraction in a 2000-year on-and-off conflict with China, the permanent problem. For this reason, the Vietnamese still regard Americans as at least potential friends, and the American War as an expression of our interest in them, however ignorantly conceived and barbarously executed.

**Barbara Cohen. *Vietnam Guidebook*, Houghton Mifflin 1990, Second Edition 1991. \$18.95**  
**Daniel Robinson and Joe Cummings. *Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: A Travel Survival Kit*. Lonely Planet, 1991. \$15.95**

Reviewed by Dana Sachs, 70 Cumberland St., San Francisco, CA 94110, 415-647-2534.

When I went to Vietnam in early 1990, I carried two "guidebooks": a four or five-page Xeroxed list of hotels and restaurants which my travel agent had procured from another traveler, and a scribbled set of notes by a couple I happened to meet in Bangkok who had just returned from Vietnam. Those few pages offered nothing in the way of explanations of culture or history, and hardly anything on how an independent traveler would get from one city to the next, but I felt lucky enough to have them. At that time one could find French and German guidebooks on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, but English-speaking travelers relied on information we could glean from each other to help us along the way.

In the past year, two English-language guidebooks to Vietnam have appeared. Barbara Cohen's well-researched *Vietnam Guidebook* provides package tourists and business travelers with information on the country's most important sights, as well as background material on culture and history, walking tours of major cities, and a short section on the monuments of Cambodia's Angkor Wat. The Australia-based Lonely Planet Publications has come out with *Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: A Travel*

*Survival Kit*, a guide geared toward independent travelers, who need more specific information on getting from place to place without spending much money. Anyone planning a trip to Vietnam would do well to pick up one or both of these books.

Barbara Cohen served as an army psychiatrist, a major with the U.S. Army Medical Corps at the 95th Evacuation Hospital at Danang from 1970 to 1971, an experience which left her fascinated by Vietnam and its people. I say this not only as a reader of her book, but also as a classmate. Cohen and I spent the past summer studying Vietnamese together at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute in Cornell this year, and became friends. The author's curiosity permeates *The Vietnam Guidebook*, and gives it a high degree of sensitivity toward the customs and culture of the Vietnamese people. Cohen also makes a point of dealing with the issues and concerns of returning U.S. veterans of the war, as well as those of Vietnamese returning to visit family from abroad.

Cohen's book provides good reading for people curious about the rituals of daily life in Vietnam, with particularly interesting sections on urban and rural lifestyles. "Following a long day's labor in the field . . . a woman might delight in chewing a quid of betel," Cohen writes, going on to describe in detail the use of betel, a habit that's a very important part of rural life but which might very easily escape the notice of Westerners passing quickly through the countryside.

Nearly half of *The Vietnam Guidebook* is dedicated to general background information on Vietnam, with sections on everything from the war with the United States to the country's current health care system to a selection of popular riddles translated into English. Readers who are already well-versed in the enormous body of literature that has been published on Vietnam in the 20th-century will probably find points to quibble over in Cohen's historical sections (or in the Lonely Planet passages for that matter), but both provide concise, thorough introductions to the period.

My major criticism with the background section of Cohen's book lies in the author's reluctance to explore controversial topics. Her "Government and Politics" chapter, for example, seems more like a middle school primer on government structure ("The People's Supreme Court, which supervises all local courts, is the highest court of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam") than a serious attempt to clarify how the government functions. Information on the controversial "re-education" camps or a look at how the Communist Party has dealt with calls for a multi-party system would provide readers with important information without necessarily offending anyone in Hanoi. After all, as Cohen herself points out, highly placed government officials are themselves moving in the direction of reform, if not democracy. Of course, middle-school primers also serve an important purpose, and *The Vietnam Guidebook* will give prospective travelers important basic information on the structure of the society.

Most of the remainder of Cohen's book is dedicated to a city-by-city guide to the country. The detailed walking tours of major cities will be particularly helpful

to tourists who want to spend some time exploring on their own. This section of the guide should also be of interest to people in the planning stages of their trips, giving them a chance to do a little armchair traveling before deciding which parts of the country they actually want to visit. *The Vietnam Guidebook* is an excellent source of information on planning a guided tour, making it clear that even with a government guide, tourists can have a good degree of control over what they do on their journey through the country.

*The Vietnam Guidebook* makes absolutely no assumptions about the travel experience of its readers. "At certain times of year, watermelons, coconuts, pineapples, and other fruits are sold on the roadside," Cohen writes, and continues with this go-ahead: "You may request the tour van to stop to purchase these refreshments." If this book tends to lead the tourist by the hand, the Lonely Planet guide to Vietnam goes in the opposite direction. While Cohen's voice is that of the patient tourguide, that of Lonely Planet author Daniel Robinson is more like an older brother watching out for his enthusiastic but sometimes foolish siblings. One section covering the demilitarized zone (DMZ), warns travellers that the former battlefields are not playgrounds: "At many of the places listed in this section you will find live mortar rounds, artillery projectiles, and mines strewn about. *Never touch any left-over ordnance. . . . Don't become a statistic!*"

Besides descriptions and explanations of important sights, the *Travel Survival Kit's* well-organized discussions of major towns and cities offer handy orientation guides, lists of hotels and restaurants in different price brackets, locations of post offices and banks, tips on how to get around towns, and hard information on inter-city transportation schedules and fares, often including the duration of travel between two points. Descriptions of places of interest may be somewhat perfunctory for smaller or more remote towns but for the larger cities they tend to be very detailed, and, as in the notes on the Cu Chi tunnels, occasionally make for fascinating reading.

At present, the Lonely Planet book is the most comprehensive guide to travel in Vietnam. It is also probably the most frustrating. Restrictions on travel mean that much of the country, and many of the areas discussed in this book, remain off-limits, especially to independent travellers. Many travellers, myself included, have been held and fined by Vietnamese officials for going into "closed" areas. Indeed, Robinson has had his own problems with the authorities, the only mention of which is the somewhat cryptic, "I should add that the circumstances of my own detention and expulsion from Vietnam do not bode well for individual travel in the north," which is hidden within the Hanoi section of the guide.

Hopefully some of those restrictions may soon be lifted, but many travellers using the book to travel through Vietnam now may find figuring out what's possible and what's impossible something like solving a complicated puzzle. For example, a section on internal travel permits at the beginning of the book mentions that the northern towns of Lang Son and Cao Bang are "closed

at present," but the section on the northern region discusses these towns without any mention of their being off-limits. Readers should rely on the latest word from travellers they meet along the way to find out what they might be able to do.

As for print quality, *The Vietnam Guidebook* contains some inexcusable errors, especially for a rather expensive book. Several times, the reader turns the page to find, rather than a continuation of the previous sentence, the beginning of an entirely new paragraph. As a sourcebook on the country, though, *The Vietnam Guidebook* is probably the better of the two. An excellent index makes it possible to flip through the book and read everything mentioned on sweet potatoes, silk-worm raising, and, of course, Saigon. Lonely Planet's index, on the other hand, suffers from the fact that only places and points of interest—not historical material—are included. Ho Chi Minh himself doesn't even get a mention. After nearly 20 years in the guidebook business, though, Lonely Planet does know how to construct a high-quality, durable book, with some beautiful full-color illustrations.

*Dana Sachs is a Bay Area journalist looking for a way to get back to Vietnam. Her travel essay "Vietnam is a Country" appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, Image section, Sunday, November 18, 1990, p. 64.*

**Robert Bly. *IRON JOHN: A Book About Men.* Addison-Wesley, New York 1990. Pp. 268. \$18.95**

Reviewed by Daniel Egger, Yale Law School, 129 Nicholl Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

Iron John has a thesis: U.S. fathers fail to give their sons what they need to be men. Young men need initiation into adulthood, to be welcomed among the fathers of the world, or they rage and sulk alone through life.

Robert Bly was a Movement leader, and the war in Vietnam stands behind this book. Bly views the radical break in generations which characterized the Vietnam War at home as a consequence of the long-broken connection between fathers and sons. Modern history provided the dynamic, but the war brought a crisis. Distrust of the father, a quiet reality of U.S. life, became riotous rebellion as a consequence of the war, where all distrust proved justified. Bly says, "The older men in the American military establishment and government did betray the younger men in Vietnam, lying about the nature of the war, remaining in safe places themselves, after having asked the young men to be warriors and then in effect sending them out to be ordinary murderers." (at p.95) That rift has never been healed, or even acknowledged and mourned.

The story of the lives of U.S. men which Bly tells is easily recognizable. As men grow up, they seek without clear direction to do what society expects. They work dutifully, but even as they "succeed" they find feelings freezing up and vitality drifting away. Friendships fade and they slip into isolation. By the time they reach 45 or 50 they are numb inside. Children find them foolish and wives find them dull.

It doesn't matter that a man may have done everything "right." The John Wayne stories he told himself in his twenties about what it means to be a man, the understanding of toughness as stoicism and denial, just do not work for a lifetime. If he allows himself his feelings, they are: disappointment that he doesn't enjoy the anticipated pleasures of manhood, and anger that his father did not give him what he needed as a boy. He feels loss. In short, he grieves.

Bly has spent the last few years talking about this problem to groups of men. He offers them traditional initiatory solutions. The meetings are part poetry reading, part spiritual retreat, part group therapy. That his book has become a number-one best seller in the United States suggests he has indeed tapped a deep well of unspoken pain.

Bly's exposition in his book follows his technique in the face to face meetings. Bly tells a fairy tale, which like all fairy tales comes down to the present from an initiatory culture. He recounts a bit of the story, pauses to give an interpretation, quotes a poem on a related theme, talks about his own ideas, then returns to the tale again. It is a controlled meander, as if he wishes less to persuade than to sensitize his audience, and remind them to turn for verification to the inner world which has always been the true home of myth and poetry. Bly takes seriously the poet's traditional sacred responsibility as preserver and transmitter of the collective memory of spiritual experience.

Bly began to recognize the crippled inner life of men in U.S. culture when he was in his mid-40s. He had achieved success as a poet, but he had never written a word about his father. Bly began a process of self-investigation, supplemented by formalized discussions with other men, perhaps an outgrowth of veterans' rap groups. He concluded that in almost all cultures boys are taken from their parents and deliberately initiated into manhood by the older men of society. These men acquire roles which encompass the full range of men's inner experience.

The father cannot himself be the initiator; as Bly says, "It's too tense; after all you're both in love with the same woman." However, in "traditional" (for want of a better word) societies fathers do have a vital role to play, as protectors and educators of their children. Yet in our culture fathers fail even in this more limited role. Not that it is a personal failing on their part. Bly stresses that it is not a question of personal blame but that individual failings are part of a larger pattern. In the special mythology of the U.S., says Bly, all you need to do to become an American man is reject your father. In situation comedies, in popular media, fathers are portrayed as weak and ridiculous. In this atmosphere it is little wonder that older men lack the confidence, or even the knowledge needed, to be more generous.

In Bly's view their failure has to be seen to have its roots in the modern collapse of millenia-old ways of living and working. Bly dates the roots of the present grief to the rise of industrialization in the early nineteenth century. Once, young men could work alongside their fathers. This is the characteristic way fathers teach their sons; not face to face, but shoulder to shoulder. Now most sons hardly know what their fathers do at work. Fathers

disappear early in the morning and return in the evening exhausted, irritable, frustrated from the demands and abuses of the workplace. They are even mean or drunk. Or they simply run away, and make their absence complete. Thus the father boys see is not so admirable, nor what one would want to emulate: he is almost pathetic.

Yet in our society, parents are often the only models boys have. Caring relations between men have broken down at every level, not just within the family. Men rarely rely on one another. Nor do older men feel an obligation to help and encourage younger men as they come along. On the contrary, competition rules almost every relation between men.

Most men have no successful initiatory experiences. The drill instructor is not a true initiator; he may train our bodies, but he cares nothing for the life of our soul. One relationship roughly analogous to that of initiator exists in our culture: the academic or corporate mentor. The relationship of student to mentor can be highly charged, unstable, and often ends in betrayal. Yet those who are lucky enough to find a mentor have found far more than most men.

It is interesting to examine the phenomenon of the counter-culture from the point of view of these ideas. Whether through long hair or search for alternative philosophies and states of consciousness, its male adherents acted out their rejection of the Fathers and everything they stood for. But driving that rejection was the grief of shattered illusions.

Interestingly, the most successful and permanent manifestation of counter-culture rejection of the ways of older men has proved to be feminism. Feminism's critique of male aggression, misogyny, and the self-destructiveness of male roles has much to commend it, and many, if not most, younger men have found themselves drawn to its ideas. However, feminism represents an accurate critique of male roles in industrial capitalism but does not offer men a full alternative vision of manhood.

As Bly points out, men cannot be initiated by women. Bly talks about a phenomenon he encounters everywhere he goes — the "soft man," who has rejected every aspect of the male roles which might be associated with violence and aggression. Bly points out how one-sided this response is. It leaves men ashamed of their natural strengths, their sexual hunger, their wildness, their necessary forcefulness. Caught in a web of guilt, U.S. men respond to inappropriate violation of their boundaries by being passive, or "nice." The result, a sense of playing a role to give women what they think they want, but without bringing any heart to it, may be poisonous to love.

Bly speaks over and over of how easily men can shame women and women men in our culture. It is for this reason that most meetings Bly conducts are for men only, so that men, free from fear of being belittled or misunderstood, can speak about their inner life to other men.

Bly and his gatherings have been misunderstood by many feminists, female and male, who believe he is advocating some kind of return to macho values. This is untrue. Bly wants to help men to thaw out, to feel what

they are, in order that they may begin to look for more adaptive ways of being with one another, their wives, and their children.

In this respect, Bly is directly in the great healing tradition of the poets. As everybody knows, Dante awoke to find himself at midlife in a dark wood, not knowing where he was or where he was going. It was not Beatrice who helped him to find himself and reintegrate his fragmented being, but his mentor, Virgil. But his reunion with Beatrice did come, after the long journey.

There is a tragic irony to Bly's book which perhaps he himself has not fully considered. Unlike the meetings he has held around the country, where his own forceful presence brings emotion to the surface, the book is read and experienced in isolation. Bly identifies the need for direct, man to man acknowledgment of grief and loss. He makes a compassionate plea that older men take up the challenge of helping younger men by giving them personal recognition of their struggle. But his book merely describes such nourishment; it cannot provide it. In fact, as Bly well knows (since he has obviously sampled Gurdjieff Work and Jungian analytic practice, using an inconsistent hodgepodge of their techniques himself) all esoteric ideas depend for their efficacy upon personal transmission from the mouth of the teacher to the ear of the student. His book reads like an edited transcript of a face to face meeting, but it is impersonal and inert on the page. It is easy to picture thousands of men reading his book alone in their rooms, nodding in agreement, but unable to do anything on their own to ease their sadness or change the nature of their predicament. To acknowledge inner problems, but do nothing towards a cure, may even be counterproductive, as ideas powerful in the air become vulgarized and dated on the page.

**Lynda Van Devanter and Joan A. Furey, eds. *Visions of War, Dreams of Peace: Writings of Women in the Vietnam War*. Warner Books, 1991. Pp. 214. \$9.95**

**Delores A. Koenning. *Life After Vietnam: How Veterans and Their Loved Ones Conceal the Psychological Wounds of War*. Paragon House, 1991. Pp. 389. \$22.95**

Reviewed by Sandy Primm, Rte. 6, Box 456, Rolla, MO 65401.

But we're still here— condemned to stay—  
To fight the memories that rage today—  
For safety's sake, we've zipped our shells.  
To hide in our worlds of living hells.  
from "Cordwood," Penny Kettlewell

Survivors of calamities other than war may find these books of interest. After all, doesn't everyone hide behind masks?

Both these books focus on how to see behind disguises and how to reach deeper truths which can offer happiness and insight to the afflictions of a complex world. The poetry of *Visions of War, Dreams of Peace* is

unexpectedly moving, in part because most of these poems have been written by women who were nurses on active duty during the U.S. war in Vietnam.

Many of these poems are awkward and sentimental, many rely on limp rhymes, many wear their hearts on their sleeves. Most ache with wounds that will never heal. The authors' courageous struggle to face the eternal suffering of war, to try to find words to express how others' suffering has deeply moved them, gives some of these works a rough edge that cuts the reader to the soul.

This is from "Montagnard Bracelets," about a once popular souvenir of the largest hill tribe in Vietnam:

I used to wear them a lot  
And never paid much attention  
To the spots that I thought  
Were a flaw in the metal.

It was only last year  
When I polished them  
And part of the spot came off  
That I realized  
It was his blood.  
- Sara J. McVicker

Handling the closeness of death gives *Life After Vietnam* an urgency which transcends this particular conflict. Delores Koenning's book will help anyone who suffers from unexpected tragedy realize how to move ahead, how to cope.

Hundreds of organizations have sprung up to help U.S. veterans of the war in Vietnam. For many the pain of this war will never end, nor will the pain of the War in the Gulf end easily for others.

Each chapter of Koenning's book deals with a particular kind of loss suffered by veterans and their families—physical, emotional, chemical, sexual, spiritual—it's all here. If your affliction isn't covered, this book will give enough clues to know where to start a search for healing.

Some may wonder what makes Vietnam veterans different than their fathers who faced the "duration plus six months" of World War Two. A chapter here explains the unique psychological after-effects of the Indochina war, on U.S. veterans and their families.

Another chapter deals with spiritual recovery, compound grief and memory healing. Not light reading, but essential stuff and, ounce-for-ounce, this book is cheaper and works better than booze.

**Richard Wilmarth. *poised for war*. Sabotage Press, 71 Richmond Street, Providence, RI 02906. Write for price**

**Jon Forrest Glade. *Photographs of the Jungle*. Chiron Review Press, St. John, KS, 1990. Pp. 48. \$6.00**

Bill Shields, Contributing Editor, Vietnam Generation, PO Box 47, Youngstown, PA 15697.

I wouldn't mind this guy as a neighbor.

That was my first thought when I read *poised for war* by Richard Wilmarth. The poems are generally short, very understated, & above all, thoughtful—there's a man giving great care to each word, each event. Quietly with a tremendous wit.

While many of the poems walk the human ground of war, grasping the ennui of American culture after Vietnam & The Gulf Excursion, we also get short filmclips of Wilmarth's World:

**another foolish question**

how can i not be happy  
when the most beautiful woman  
new jersey has ever produced  
is sitting next to me in my car  
and wants to be there  
and is listening to my story  
and is anticipating the climax

But it's his war poems I like best; they have this sense of fatigue, a pure resignation to 'em that is all too true. The poem "the haze" knows: "I wasn't much good/when everyone was dying/but I did show up/ at the funerals/ although I don't remember/ many of the details"

That sense of powerlessness as the wheels of war spin hard outside of our bedroom windows is primary in Wilmarth. Glimpses of a life outside our own.

Bewildered & ashamed, we look on.

Especially so in his poem "a father thinks about the upcoming war" as it ends:

and now he doesn't know anymore  
because at the office they're taking bets  
on when this war is going to start  
and when this war is going to end  
but all he can think of are his sons  
and them getting the call  
getting the letter in the mail  
saying goodbye  
and he's angry  
and he's scared  
because he knows it's possible  
because he knows it's happened before

Unpretentious writing, to be sure. & very, very real. I'm a fan of Wilmarth & it's a joy to see a small collection of his work readily available.

Jon Glade has written a most honest & impressive first book about Vietnam & that long walk back from the war. His poems define Realism with an unflinching look, whether it be as a young trooper in the A Shau Valley, or as a member of a veterans rap group in Wyoming.

Sadness prevails from the opening poems:

All these years later,  
I think the problem  
was not with our film,  
or our eyes, or our minds,  
but with our anticipations.  
We weren't looking for beauty in Vietnam  
and consequently couldn't see it.

The poems are quick takes, Polaroids of the landscape. Vivid pictures of man's memory shot on a page with a macro lens. A few bleed when held. Next frame.

Glade saw and lived the futility of Vietnam; his poem "Blood Trail" is a straight, unblinking look:

We followed the blood trail  
and found only an abandoned pack.  
The Lieutenant took the cash,  
the men divided the food,  
intelligence was sent the love letters  
and I got the credit for a probable kill.  
Intelligence reported the letters  
were from a woman in the southern provinces.  
Which meant she was arrested,  
beaten, raped, locked in a tiger cage,  
forced to eat her own excrement  
and beaten again.

If she confessed, she was executed.  
If she refused to confess, she was executed.  
It was a funny war.  
I shot a man.  
I killed a woman.

"Blood Trail" is arguably one of the best Vietnam poems ever written; it encapsulates our involvement—the American experience - in 24 lines that rap hard on our consciousness.

Glade stays on the trail and never wavers.

I know the feeling first hand of walking thru the house at 4:00 a.m. fresh from a night filled with Vietnam . . . & I know how hard it is to write about it. Glade's courage in his work is readily apparent; he writes a hard line.

The last poem, "The Weight of the Sheets" ends with:

There are no guns in my house  
and no tricks up my sleeve.  
I'm all over that now,  
I claim I believe,  
but my wife says  
I curse and cry  
and talk in my sleep.  
And I know for a fact,  
that sometimes my scars  
cannot bear  
the weight of the sheets.

Buy two copies of this book—one for yourself & one for your son.

These reviews have appeared, in slightly different form, in the *Small Press Review*. Look for poems from Bill Shields and Jon Forrest Glade in the Features section of this issue.

**George Bailey, *Germans: The Biography of an Obsession*, revised edition, Free Press, 1991; ISBN: 0-02-901455-7; \$24.95**

David M. Luebke, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC

Imagine a series of luxurious chats, extending into several evenings, with a seasoned American journalist who had devoted a lifetime to reporting on German affairs, who has known and interviewed many of its principle figures, and who has a weakness for rambling narratives interwoven with often reckless speculations about national character as a causal force in history. Such is the nature of George Bailey's memoir-cum-ethnography, which accounts for both the charms and frustrations of its structure (more on its content later).

*Germans* was originally published in 1972, but soon disappeared when the publisher went bankrupt. The new edition is revised only to the extent that it includes a segment written between 1989 and 1990, when the Wall came falling down or, as Bailey would have it, when World War Two finally ended. The volume might have benefited from even more revision. It is jam-packed with amusing, sometimes informative vignettes, but Bailey's roundabout discursive style usually succeeds in submerging their effect. For example, Chapter 10 (entitled "Berlin") begins with an account of the restoration of the Ullstein publishing house (the Nazis had closed it as a "Jewish" concern), moves into an ethnographic discussion of suicide in Germany, shifts to the story of an unscrupulous young journalist who, in August 1950, concocted the spurious "Stalin Plan" for the German Democratic Republic, and switches finally to a discourse on the ambiguity of treason in a politically divided country, all by way of concluding with Theodor Adorno's quip that "a German is a man who never tells a lie unless he believes it"; one learns little about Berlin withal. Moreover, there is little adhesive *between* chapters. A lively, coherent narrative of the abortive Rhenish separatist movement after World War One ("La Tragédie Rhénane") is sandwiched between yet another episode on the Ullstein family and a reminiscence of Vienna that doubles as a thumbnail ethnography of Austrians. For good measure, Bailey throws in a disjunct chapter on a meeting between Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Axel Springer, dean of the West German yellow press (Chapter 22). One comes away with the impression that Bailey is a raconteur whose recounting has gotten the best of him.

This tendency often makes it difficult to discern Bailey's arguments. He claims as his main point the idea that "the various German tribes are widely...different from one another," with the consequence that it makes no sense to generalize about them; but Bailey neglects the topic until Chapter 15 and 21 ("North and South"). Otherwise, he tends to disregard his own, rather sophomoric verdict (are the Breton, Norman, Alsatian and Provençal French any less heterogenous?). Chapter 17, for example, makes the self-contradictory suggestion that "the Germans have been wandering around in an inner diaspora for centuries, condemned to a spiritual exile imposed by the absence of any political...unity" (if

so, how can we speak of *the* Germans?). A related theme is the truism that Germany is less a place than a battlefield of ideas and superpowers. If there is a unifying point to the new, final segment (Chapters 22 through 25), it is to vindicate the arch-conservative political views of Axel Springer, whose tabloid *Bild* never ceased to hold high the banner of reunification.

I have no objection to ethnographies based on journalism (Hedrick Smith's *The Russians* is a successful example of the genre). Moreover, memoirs are often invaluable sources of historical and ethnographic insight, notwithstanding their great potential for self-serving distortion. But Bailey's book fits neither bill. Part of the trouble is that his autobiographical moments tend to negate the force of his ethnographic observations (and *vice versa*); another problem is that Bailey was never close enough to centers of power in postwar Germany to reveal its inner workings. He is best known for directing Radio Liberty during the mid-1980s, a story that deserves full treatment, but is relegated to eight pages in Chapter 22. To his credit, Bailey approaches his subject with sympathy. The reader will find little of the triumphalism common among his generation of American journalists in Germany. Perhaps Bailey is spared from too sanctimonious a view of American policy in postwar Germany by his experience as a U.S. Army resettlement officer, forcibly deporting Russian civilians and deserters to almost certain imprisonment under Stalin. But these qualities fail to rescue the book; indeed, they sometimes produce too charitable an evaluation of the Federal Republic. If you want a broad-stroke portrait of postwar Germany, better to read Ralf Dahrendorf's classic *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Gordon Craig's *The Germans*, or, more recently, the essays of Peter Schneider.

### Books Received

We list books received since the last issue of the *Newsletter*. Some of these books will be reviewed in an upcoming issue.

**Ablex Publishing Co., 355 Chestnut St., Norwood, NJ 07648-2090**

Morris, Richard & Ehrenhaus, Peter, *Cultural Legacies of Vietnam: Uses of the Past in the Present*, \$24.95: Vietnam War Literature/Criticism

**Basic Books, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022**

Ehrenfeld, Rachel, *Narco-Terrorism*, \$19.95: Right Wing Maniac Anti-Drug Propaganda

Leed, Eric J., *The Mind of the Traveller: Cultural Studies*

Lifton, Robert and Markusen, Eric, *The Genocidal Mentality: Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Threat*, \$22.95.

**Beacon Press, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108**

Daly, Mary, *Gyn/Ecology*, \$14.95: Women's Studies.

Ginsburg, Faye & Lowenhaupt Tsing, Anna, *Uncertain Terms: Negotiating Gender in American Culture*, \$24.95: Womens Studies/Anthropology

**Brunner/Mazel, 19 Union Sq., New York, NY 10003**

We plan to review the entire Brunner/Mazel Psychosocial Stress Series in an upcoming *Newsletter* issue.

Ochberg, Frank M., *Post-Traumatic Therapy and Victims of Violence*

Lindy, Jacob, *Vietnam: A Casebook*

Report of Findings from the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Survey, *Trauma and the Vietnam War Generation*

**Citadel Press, 600 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022**

Whitmer, Peter O. with Bruce VanWyngarden, *Aquarius Revisited: Sixties Literature*

**Columbia University Press, 562 W 113th St., NY NY 10025**

Faderman, Lillian, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in 20th Century America*, \$29.95: Lesbian Studies

**Doubleday, 666 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10103**

Miedzian, Myriam, *Boys Will Be Boys: Gender*

**Lawrence Erlbaum, 365 Broadway, Suite 102, Hillsdale, New Jersey 07642**

Bornstein, Marc H., *Cultural Approaches to Parenting: Psychology*

**Feminist Press, 311 East 94 St., New York, NY 10128**

Arnold, June, *Sister Gin: Sexual Abuse Literature*

Burdekin, Katharine, *The End of This Day's Business: Feminist literature/ Science Fiction*

Burdekin, Katharine, *Swastika Night: Holocaust Literature by non-survivor/ Literature of Trauma/ Feminist Literature*

Hunter, Anne E., ed., *Genes and Gender VI: On Peace, War and Gender: Feminist Theory/ War/ Gender*

Karmel, Ilona, *An Estate of Memory: Holocaust Literature/ Feminist Literature*

Rathbone, Irene, *We That Were Young: World War I Literature/ Feminist Literature*

Smith, Helen Zenna, *Not So Quiet...: World War I Literature/ Feminist Literature*

**Grove Weidenfeld, 841 Broadway, New York, NY 10003-4793**

Stanton, Bill, *Klanwatch: Civil Rights*

**Harmony Press, 201 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022**

Wertsch, Mary Edwards, *Military Brats: Cultural Studies*

**Johns Hopkins, 701 W 40th St., Baltimore, MD 21211**

Whitfield, Stephen, *The Culture of the Cold War: Cultural Studies/Anticommunism/Cold War*

**Kent State University Press, Kent, OH 44242**

Lilly, Paul Jr., *Words in Search of Victims: The Achievements of Jerzy Kosinski: Holocaust Literature*

**Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70893**

Lentz, Richard, *Symbols, the News, and Martin Luther King: Civil Rights/ Popular Culture/ Media*

**Peter Lang, 62 W 45th St., New York, NY 10036-4202**

Itzkoff, Seymour, *Triumph of the Intelligent*, \$25: Cultural Studies

Itzkoff, Seymour, *The Form of Man*, \$25: Cultural Studies

Itzkoff, Seymour, *Why Humans Vary in Intelligence*, \$25: Cultural Studies

Itzkoff, Seymour, *The Making of the Civilized Mind*, \$25: Cultural Studies

Lynch, Michael, *Creative Revolt*, \$42.95: Afro-American Literary Theory

Peake, Thomas, *Keeping the Dream Alive*, \$36: Afro-American History

**McGraw-Hill, PO Box 441, Hightstown, NY 08520**

Pizzo, Stephen, Mary Fricker and Paul Muolo, *Inside Job: Savings and Loan/ Contemporary Politics*

**William Morrow, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016**

Dunnigan, James F. & Austin Bay, *A Quick and Dirty Guide to War: War/ Political Science*

**New Directions, 80 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10011**

Liebowitz, Herbert, *Fabricating Lives: American Studies/ Autobiography*

**Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016**

Corballis, Michael, *The Lopsided Ape: Cognitive Science*

Bartov, Omer, *Hitler's Army: Holocaust Studies*

**Penguin, 375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014**

Hendricks, G.C., *The Second War*, \$7.95: Vietnam War Literature

**Frederic Praeger, 1 Madison Ave., NY NY 10010**

Amato, Joseph A., *Victims and Values: A History of Suffering*, \$14.95.

Sigal, John J. & Morton Wienfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth: PTSD*

**Presidio Press, 31 Pamaron Way, Novato, California 94949**

Leib, Franklin Allen, *Valley of the Shadow: Vietnam War Literature*

Mayer, Bob, *Eyes of the Hammer: Drug War Literature*

**Random House, 201 East 50th St., New York, NY 10022**

Bolger, Daniel, *Feast of Bones*, \$4.99: Cold War Spy Literature

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## END NOTE

The "staff" of *Vietnam Generation* is still just me and Dan (an occasional friends we can rope into coming over and stuffing envelopes). Every word you read in every issue is typed by our hands, with the exception of a few articles which are submitted in electronic format.

Dan and I also keep track of subscribers, read and answer all the letters and phone calls we receive, and keep up with the various bureaucratic tasks that running a nonprofit corporation requires (maintain the books, fill out tax forms, apply for mailing permits, etc.). We fold fliers, stuff, stamp, address and label bulk mailings, and sort the envelopes by zip code, rubber band them into the appropriate packages, and put the coded stickers on the bundles. Then we stuff them into mailbags and carry them to the post office (along with accompanying forms).

When we aren't otherwise occupied, we read submissions and edit them. We send promising articles off to other readers. Then we remind late readers to send in their reports. We read the reports and accept or reject submissions.

Sometimes we sit around and think up new topics for future issues. Then we find writers and rope them into submitting their work. We meet people we think will be great special editors, and browbeat them into taking on that responsibility. Then we teach our special editors how to browbeat other people into writing for their special issues.

What else do we do? We try to keep up with all the conferences and other events relating to the field. We set up exchanges between *Vietnam Generation* and other periodicals, keep up with new book publications, work hard to stay on the reviewer lists maintained by publishers, and, most of all, keep the network of correspondence and information exchange up and running. (I personally write and answer over 2,500 letters a year.)

We work for the sheer love of the project. Dan is a full-time graduate student; I am a full-time consultant. Every special editor, every author, every occasional envelope-stuffer has donated their time and effort. No one gets paid but the printer and the U.S. Postmaster.

So if your subscription isn't processed properly, or we don't answer your call promptly, or your letter to us seems to have gone off into the great void, it's almost certainly my fault. And if it's not my fault, it's Dan's fault. (Only rarely can we ever blame one of our special editors for anything. They're a remarkably responsible and competent bunch.) We mean well, we try hard, but we're overwhelmed and we can't keep up with everything. Have patience, give us another call, send us a reminder. We'll do our best to meet your needs.

—Kali Tal

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