

# VIET NAM GENERATION NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER-JANUARY, 1991-1992

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## IN THIS ISSUE

I spent November sick with bronchitis and flu. I couldn't write much or get on the phone. So the **Announcements, Notices and Reports** are slim in this issue. I didn't alert Bill Shields and William King and David DeRose and David Willson to our December deadline, so their columns aren't here. Sorry.

I did get to Alan Farrell, Renny Christopher, Alasdair Spark, Cynthia Fuchs and Tony Williams. In **Features**, Farrell recalls working with Montagnards, Christopher rounds up fiction in English by overseas Vietnamese, Spark brings the British into his science fiction column, and Fuchs examines Bette Midler's current war movie. Ben Kiernan, author of *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, reports on the present situation in Cambodia. Jerry Gold, vet novelist and publisher, writes about a nightmare from the Gulf War. There's a short story about a political scientist, by a newsletter editor. Tony Williams compares James Jones and W.D. Ehrhart in **Book Reviews**, with Nancy Anisfield on Jeff Danziger's *Rising Like the Tucson* and John Bradley on *Remembering Heaven's Face* by John Balaban.

In addition to contributions from the usual suspects, we feature some names we think you might not have heard before. Geographers Brady Foust and Howard Botts present us with a landmark study of race, ethnicity, and class among U.S. casualties from the war in Viet Nam. Robert Lawrence Schichler contributes his short story "Buffalo Bull," which satirizes the workings of the Selective Service System—in particular, the ordeal of the draft physical to which the simple, bespectacled, double-sighted protagonist, BS, must submit himself." Schichler notes, "Ridiculous as it may seem at times, the account is essentially accurate, based upon personal experience." And, from Dan A. Barker's as-yet-unpublished Viet Nam war novel, we feature a chapter titled "The Rescue." Dan runs a non-profit corporation called **The Home Gardening Project**, in Portland, Oregon. He helps people set up raised-bed vegetable gardens. He's promised to send us the rest of his manuscript, and we hope to publish more of it. Dave Luebke donated one of his cartoons to this issue. Dave is illustrating our reprint of Asa Baber's adult fairy tale *The Land of a Million Elephants* (which will be mailed to our subscribers in March), and we hope to feature more of his work in the future.

Enjoy.

## PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

I'd like to thank all our subscribers who have hastened to mail in their renewal checks, and especially those of you who managed to scrape together a few extra dollars to contribute to *Viet Nam Generation*.

I do have copies of Ernie Spencer's novel, *Welcome to Vietnam, Macho Man* for all of you folks who renew your subscriptions. They will be following close on the heels of this issue.

Dan and I are playing catch-up these days, as we try to put out several newsletters and journal issues in quick succession. We figure we'll be back on track by the second issue of 1992. This newsletter will be followed ASAP with the final journal issue of 1991, which will contain two lengthy historical essays dealing primarily with the early phase of American involvement in the Viet Nam war. We had planned to ship the issue along with this newsletter, but Dan's illness set us back a bit (him more than me, since he's still trying to finish off his course work for last semester). At any rate, we'll have it in your hands around the end of February.

I'm hoping that in 1992 I'll have a lot more time to devote to *Viet Nam Generation*. Dan and I have plans to expand our marketing capacity and try to get issues of the journal into bookstores. If anyone has ideas about how to do that, we'd love to hear from them.

We do need some volunteers to edit special issues of *Viet Nam Generation*. If there's a subject you think we ought to cover, and you want to take on the project of soliciting articles and putting together an anthology, we'd love to hear from you. Cynthia Fuchs is compiling an issue on Viet Nam war films, Skip Delano is still working on an issue on war crimes which I hear he's interested in expanding to include the Gulf War. Michael Bibby proposed two issues he'd be interested in editing—one on Viet Nam war poetry, and one focusing on "The Viet Nam War and Postmodernism." Dan Duffy and Steve Potts are still trying to put together an issue on teaching the war. Lady Borton is compiling two anthologies of Red River Press (the Foreign Language Publishing House of Hanoi) publications for *Viet Nam Generation*—one dealing with Vietnamese culture, and the other presenting the Viet Nam war from a Vietnamese perspective. Bob Brigham is working on an issue devoted to the history of the war.

Since Bill Ehrhart's book of poetry, *Just for Laughs*, was so well received, we're going to try putting out a few small chapbooks. The first will be by poet Horace Coleman, whose work you may remember from the First Casualty Press anthology, *Carrying the Darkness*. In fact, the collection took its title from one of Horace's poems.

My strategy is to send copies of everything we publish to our journal and newsletter subscribers, so you'll be getting copies of Asa Baber's book, Horace Coleman's chapbook, and whatever else we print. Why? Well, because I like you folks, and also because I hope you'll find our publications worth using in your classes. (We just got another order from UCLA this week for copies of the *GI Resistance* issue.)

As you've no doubt noticed, we've decided to spell "Viet Nam" (the name of the country) the way the Vietnamese spell it. ("Vietnamese," I am told, is an American word. The people who live in Viet Nam call themselves Viets.) We aren't hard-line about any of this, we're just trying hard to overcome our ethnocentrism.

Best wishes for 1992. Peace.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS, NOTICES, AND REPORTS

### TEACHERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE & UNION OF DEMOCRATIC INTELLECTUALS

Paul Lauter of the **American Studies Association** sent us a copy of the most recent **Teachers for a Democratic Culture Statement**, along with the "Minutes" of the recent meeting of the Organizing Committee for a **Union of Democratic Intellectuals**, which took place on November 23, 1991. Lauter comments, "There was a good deal of discussion of why there should or should not be two different initiatives, especially since many of us already had joined and plan to be active in TDC. (A course I'd personally recommend.) The liberal/radical dichotomy was viewed by many as dubious (what *dosuch* terms mean now?), though it does seem to be the case that UDI folk are more interested in questions about the functions of higher education in the global political economy and perhaps more directly in issues of race and gender. There will certainly be an effort for the two groups to cosponsor a spring conference. It may well be that, starting with somewhat separate constituencies and somewhat differing agendas, they will move either toward merger or toward a clearer differentiation of functions. Meantime, anything that helps pour water on the troubled Olins is all to the good."

Lauter, who serves on the Organizing Committee, asks American Studies Association members the following questions: "Should we (who?) try to formalize an ASA group? What do you think of the emergence of two initiatives (TDC & UDI)? Would a highly visible spring conference (on multiculturalism, PC, the Right as a cultural phenomenon, democratic education, and the like) be useful? How do you see form and process of local organizing?"

We here at **Viet Nam Generation** urge all of our subscribers and readers to go out and join the ASA forthwith. If there's one academic organization that spans all our interests, it's the American Studies Association. Unfortunately, it's been difficult to convince the folks who run ASA that the Viet Nam war and Viet Nam generation are important topics in American Studies (though there was at least one panel, and several papers which addressed the war at the 1991 ASA conference in Baltimore). We think the issues raised by TDC and UDI are extremely important. As scholars of the Viet Nam war, the Sixties, and the Viet Nam generation, we know how important it is to open up the canon, to engage in an intellectual debate with our students which includes politics, and to foreground discussions of race, class and gender. Join up and put the pressure on!

### Teachers for a Democratic Culture Statement of Principle

Colleges and universities in the United States have lately begun to serve the majority of Americans better than ever before. Whereas a few short years ago, institutions of higher education were exclusive citadels often closed to women, minorities, and the disadvantaged, today efforts are being made to give a far richer diversity of Americans access to a college education. Reforms in the content of the curriculum have also begun to make our classrooms more representative of our nation's diverse peoples and beliefs and to provide a more truthful account of our history and cultural heritage. Much remains to be done, but we can be proud of the progress of democratization in higher education.

A vociferous band of critics has arisen, however, who decry these changes and seek to reverse them. These critics have painted an alarming picture of the state of contemporary education as a catastrophic collapse. This picture rests on a number of false claims: that the classics of Western civilization are being eliminated from the curriculum in order to make race, gender, or political affiliation the sole measure of a text's or subject's worthiness to be taught; that teachers across the land are being silenced and politically intimidated; that the very concepts of reason, truth, and artistic standards are being subverted in favor of a crude ideological agenda. It is our view that recent curricular reforms influenced by multiculturalism and feminism have greatly enriched education rather than corrupted it. It is our view as well that the controversies that have been provoked over admissions and hiring practices, the social functions of teaching and scholarship, and the status of such concepts as objectivity and ideology are signs of educational health, not decline.

Contrary to media reports, it is the National Association of Scholars, their corporate foundation supporters, and like-minded writers in the press who are endangering education with a campaign of harassment and misrepresentation. Largely ignorant of the academic work they attack (often not even claiming to have read it), these critics make no distinction between extremists among their opposition and those who are raising legitimate questions about the relations of culture and society. And though these critics loudly invoke the values of rational debate and open discussion, they present the current debate over education not as a legitimate conflict in which reasonable disagreement is possible, but as a simple choice between civilization and barbarism.

Yet because the mainstream media have reported misinformed opinions as if they were established facts, the picture the public has received of recent academic developments has come almost entirely from the most strident detractors of these developments. These inaccurate accounts, moreover, appear in forums that rarely invite the accused parties to present their side of the story. As Michael Berube has pointed out, "recent literary theory is so rarely accorded the privilege of representing itself in nonacademic forums that journalists, disgruntled professors, embittered ex-graduate students,

and their families and friends now feel entitled to say anything at all about the academy without fear of contradiction by general readers. The field is wide open, and there's no penalty for charlatanism (quite the contrary), since few general readers are informed enough to spot even the grossest forms of misrepresentation and fraud."

There is blatant hypocrisy, furthermore, when the charge of politicizing the humanities comes from right-wing ideologues. Dinesh D'Souza, the author of the widely discussed and excerpted *Illiberal Education*, is a former domestic policy analyst of the Reagan Administration, a research fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, and a founding editor of the notorious *Dartmouth Review*, which received a \$150,000 grant from the Olin Foundation in 1991. Current National Endowment for the Humanities Chair Lynne V. Cheney boasts of being a "conservative populist" even as she excoriates her critics for politicizing education.

These contradictions were seen in the recent debate over the nomination of Carol Iannone to the National Council on the Humanities. In the wake of Iannone's defeat, Cheney and others have now predictably blamed the outcome on the intolerant forces of "political correctness." But it is Cheney who has proved herself consistently intolerant of any view of scholarship that does not agree with her own. What has gone unnoticed in the commentary on the Iannone case is the growing ideological one-sidedness of the National Council. In disregard of the "comprehensive representation" of scholarly and professional views explicitly mandated by Congressional legislation, the Council has been packed with such appointees as National Association of Scholars members Peter Shaw and Edwin J. Delattre and outspoken conservatives like Donald Kagan. As Richard Cohen wrote in the *Washington Post*, "Had Iannone written brilliantly in defense of feminism...., Cheney would have looked elsewhere." Since the Council oversees NEH grant-applications, purging it of a diversity of viewpoints makes it possible to deny grants to scholars who take the wrong political line in their work.

It is time for those who believe in the values of democratic education and reasoned dialogue to join together in an organization that can fight such powerful forms of intolerance and answer mischievous misrepresentation. We support the right of scholars and teachers to raise questions about the relations of culture, scholarship, and education to politics—not in order to shut down debate on such issues but to open it. It is just such a debate that is prevented by discussion-stopping slogans like "political correctness."

What does the notion of a "democratic culture" mean and how does it relate to education? In our view, a democratic culture is one that acknowledges that criteria of value in art are not permanently fixed by tradition and authority, but are subject to constant revision. It is a culture in which terms like "canon," "literature," "tradition," "artistic value," "common culture," and even "truth" are seen as disputed rather than given. This means not that standards for judging art and scholarship must be discarded, but that such standards should evolve out of democratic processes in which they can be thoughtfully challenged.

We understand the problems in any organization claiming to speak for a very diverse, heterogeneous group of teachers who may sharply disagree on many issues, including that of the politics of culture. What we envision is a coalition of very different individuals and groups, drawn from many academic disciplines, bound together by the belief that recent attacks on new forms of scholarship and teaching must be answered in a spirit of principled discussion. The very formation of such a group will constitute an important step in gaining influence over the public representations of us and our work.

It will also be a way to take responsibility for the task of clarifying our ideas and practices to the wider public—something, clearly, we have not done as well as we should. We need an organization that can not only refute malicious distortions, but also educate the interested public about matters that still remain shrouded in mystery—new theories and movements, such as deconstruction, feminism, multiculturalism, and the new historicism, and their actual effects in classroom practice.

We therefore announce the formation of **Teachers for a Democratic Culture** and we ask all who subscribe to this statement and would endorse its publication to send their name and address to Gerald Graff and Gregory Jay, Teachers for a Democratic Culture, Box 6405, Evanston, IL 60204. (312) 743-3662. Fax (312) 743-4548. We welcome contributions of \$25.00 for faculty and staff, \$5 for students.

#### Original Signatories

Gerald Graff, U of Chicago \* Gregory Jay, U Wisconsin/Milwaukee \* David Shumway, Carnegie Mellon U \* Houston Baker, U of Pennsylvania \* Jane Gallop, U of Wisconsin/Milwaukee \* Jonathan Culler, Cornell U \* Wayne Booth, U of Chicago \* Lauren Berlant, U of Chicago \* Don Bialostosky, U of Toledo \* William Cain, Wellesley College \* David William Cohen, Northwestern U \* Cathy Davidson, Duke U \* Jill Dolan, U Wisconsin/Madison \* Margie Ferguson, U of Colorado \* Nancy Fraser, Northwestern U \* Stanley Fish, Duke U \* Zeldia Gamson, U Massachusetts/Boston \* Marjorie Garber, Harvard U \* Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Harvard U \* Barry Glassner, U Southern California \* Barbara Johnson, Harvard U \* Paul Lauter, Trinity College \* Lawrence Levine, U California/Berkeley \* Lawrence Lipking, Northwestern U \* Wahneema Lubiano, Princeton U \* Andrea Lunsford, Ohio State U \* Steven Mailloux, U of California/Irvine \* Ellen Messer-Davidow, U of Minnesota \* David Miller, U of Alabama \* Eleanor Miller, U Wisconsin/Milwaukee \* Mary Minock, Wayne State U \* James Oakes, Northwester U \* Constance Penley, U California/Santa Barbara \* Jeffrey Rice, Great Expectations Bookstore \* Bruce Robbins, Rutgers U \* Richard Rorty, U Virginia \* Edward Said, Columbia U \* Joan W. Scott, Princeton U \* David Simpson, U of Colorado \* Hortense Spillers, Emory U \* Judith Stacey, U California/Davis \* Harold Veaser, Wichita State U \* Alan Wallach, William and Mary \* Immanuel Wallerstein, SUNY Binghamton \* Kenneth Warren, U of Chicago \* Hayden White, U California/Santa Cruz \* Garry Wills, Northwester U \* Richard Yarborough, UCLA

**Organizing Committee for a Union of Democratic  
Intellectuals  
November 23 1991  
Proposed (Annotated) Agenda**

[*Viet Nam Generation* editors' note: The Agenda and Minutes of the UDC Organizing Committee meeting are not polished documents submitted for publication. Rather, they are the working notes of this committee, which our newsletter editor requested from Paul Lauter, and which he graciously supplied. We publish them here because we feel they document an extremely important process. We urge our readers to join the American Studies Association, TDC, and the newly formed UDI and to take an active part in defining the university's mission in the United States.]

1. Aims and Scope of Activity of the organization

Under this heading we discuss, both in broader and more specific terms why we come together, what we intend to do and some of the ways we wish to do it.

Commentary: To counter the conservative attack on multiculturalism and other new currents in the university and other cultural sites may explain why now such an organization, but it cannot define its larger aims. Keeping Grossberg's warning against a reactive, single issue group in mind, here are some other possible aims:

a) To defend and extend the democratic gains of the past two decades in universities and other cultural sites. These gains include, but are not confined to, the massive entrance of women, African Americans, Latinos and Asians in higher education. These gains are under attack under the sign of the "budget crisis" but also more pointedly in the Bush administration's intention to circumvent the civil rights act by administratively rolling back all sorts of affirmative action programs, particularly in education and employment.

b) to be national clearing house and defense organization for dissenting faculty and students who may suffer politically-inspired tenure reviews, suspensions and other types of repression.

c) to be a center for disseminating to a wider public, through publications, media appearances and other means, the importance of extending diversity—in politics, culture and social composition—in various institutional sites.

d) to actively propose and advocate various curriculum reforms as well as hiring policies that facilitate the democratization of culture.

e) to be a place where academic and non academic intellectuals can exchange views, experiences and undertake joint action. There would be, in principle, no limitation to the scope of issues to be explored. These issues may embrace national policies that affect cultural life, including international, economic as well as social and cultural questions.

2. What would we do?

a) hold national and regional conferences and symposia, jointly sponsored, where possible, with other groups on one or more of the larger issues that are of interest to our members and the communities, academic and otherwise, within which they work and live.

b) actively intervene at the legislative as well as administrative level, nationally and locally, on issues designated as priorities by members.

c) be well informed on practical, day to day instances of political discrimination (ideological, identity, intellectual orientation) in employment, curricula and other issues and be prepared to act in various ways.

d) And this is a crucial one. [*Name deleted*] wants a radical group and Teachers for a Democratic Culture might be the broader, more inclusive organization. Others have expressed similar sentiments. If so, what does this mean in the current context? If not, why not?

**"Minutes" of meeting at ASA convention**

About 40 people attended, and a number of others asked to be informed about what happened. I'm simply going to reproduce below the notes I took as the meeting went on, somewhat combining comments. I'm sending this to attenders and others who wanted to be informed, and I'll share it with both national initiatives.

1. A national grouping like Teachers for a Democratic Culture should be an umbrella for local efforts focused on local issues.

2. Such an organization should not be restricted to academics. It is particularly important for any local or national organizations to reach out into communities rather than to remain isolated on campuses.

3. It's important to reach the mass media with what we have to say and through them the general public. That is more possible than we are usually aware of; we do have access not only to progressive journals like *Zeta* and *The Nation*, but even to mainstream media like the *LA Times*. Organizationally, we should therefore involve media specialists.

Also, we can't concentrate only on print media; we need to explore and use opportunities in the electronic media.

It is possible to organize press briefings on controversial issues—e.g., for newspaper editorial boards—especially if the briefers have some standing in the community.

It's important to get to know local reporters who are working on stories of concern to us. They like to get material fed to them.

College PR people can be important resources, both for contacting and influencing media.

Columns that review local press—e.g., Doug Ireland's in the *Village Voice*—can be useful in influencing media.

Many papers look for people with credentials who can write book reviews. Don Lazere, for example, has regularly reviewed books like Kimball's for the *LA Times*.

4. The upcoming political/presidential campaign presents many opportunities—e.g., to ask candidates about their positions on key issues.

5. We need to be proactive, not merely reactive. We cannot afford to let groups like NAS characterize us and establish the agenda. It's important, that is, to move the debate to our side, to focus on our way of talking, as distinct from the definition of the problem as "political correctness."

For example, it's important to find ways of talking about the Right that realistically characterizes their positions in terms accessible to most Americans: e.g., exclusionist, elitist, that they're trying to impose standards of correctness, that they want to continue boring students.

It's particularly important to connect with real anxieties American people feel. Ignorance leads to fear and that blocks receptivity.

6. We need to seize possibilities raised by particular opportunities. The one discussed at some length was the New York State report on changing the secondary school social studies curriculum—"One Nation, Many People—A Declaration of Cultural Interdependence." (It can be obtained from the NY State Dept. of Education, Albany, NY 12222). The Right attacked it; where was a coordinated response from supporters of multiculturalism, especially well-known faculty?

7. In a sense the Right has "stolen" the past. It's important to present alternative views of American history.

8. We should seek more opportunities to connect with secondary school teachers. There are many such opportunities—e.g., as resources for in-service education.

9. Question raised at the end (and left unresolved): Should we formally establish a "Task Force on a Democratic Culture of the ASA"?

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Please send comments—esp. on organization questions, to me and I'll try (eventually) to circulate them. Paul Lauter, English Department, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 06106 (FAX: 203-297-2257; Bitnet plauter@tncc)

### CANADIAN WOMEN VET'S PLAY

From PeaceNet: *Battle Fatigue* by Jenny Mundy was first produced by Mulgrave Road Co-Op Theatre, and toured Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1989. You can read the full play in the Spring 1990 issue of *Canadian*

*Theatre Review*. Playwright Jenny Mundy says: "I met and interviewed women who were photographers in the Air Force, war brides, nursing sisters, radio broadcasters, clerks, and women who stayed home.... I hope *Battle Fatigue* will help to remind all of us of the relevance of the experiences of veterans, both men and women."

### DIEU-THU VO

Dieu-Thu Vo, M.D. visited the Vietnamese Students Association at Yale on December 7, 1991, to give a slide show of her recent tour of Viet Nam. Dr. Vo, a New Yorker born in Hue, travelled Viet Nam this year as a medical researcher on a Keane-Haas Fellowship from the Department of Internal Medicine at Cornell Medical School, investigating the spread of dioxin from Agent Orange through the population. She gathered 50 blood samples from each of several regions of the country. She paid 5,000 dong, the price of a kilo of rice, for each 3 cc sample. The samples from each region will be mixed together and tested as a unit for dioxin level, since each assay costs \$2000. The results of the sampling will be plotted against a present map created from U.S. records of dioxin dumping, and against future epidemiological data from Viet Nam. Dr. Vo is aware that there are problems in health statistics from Viet Nam. Farmers, for example, often do not report babies born dead, or deformed babies whom they killed shortly after birth. She may not be aware that the impression of many who served with the U.S. military in Viet Nam is that such records as the military may have kept of Agent Orange application are less than complete. But these are quibbles, only relevant to a stupid courtroom situation where some poor soul has to prove that his liver cancer came from a specific batch of poison that left a particular factory on a certain date. Let's hope the government of Viet Nam doesn't have to apply for U.S. help with this problem in the same adversarial arena that U.S. veterans have had to resort to. It's clear that the 17th Parallel and the area around Saigon received a lot of poison. Vo's direct investigation of the presence of dioxin in the blood is clearly a step towards responsible public health measures.

Dr. Vo's slides included tourist shots and medical clinics. She toured the Imperial ruins at Hue and the coast at Nha Trang, she watched the bicyclists at Hanoi and the motorscooters of Saigon. She pointed out the dilapidation at Hanoi and Hue, and all the fresh paint at Saigon. She took pictures of hotel rooms, for prospective travellers. At all the cities she stayed in clean, adequate accommodations for three to five dollars/day, and in the countryside she stayed where she could. At no place in the country did her expenses exceed \$10 each day. The total expenses of the trip were above \$2000 for two months. Travel is slow, as most roads are bad, but the vehicles she travelled in are new Japanese trucks. The one road she showed us in good condition was a part of what the U.S. called the Ho Chi Minh trail. Physicians she worked with in the countryside told her of surgery underground during the war, using coconut milk for saline and U.S. parachute cords for sutures, abandoning patients in mid-operation to flee from bombs. They told

her how good it was to shoot an elephant and eat its meat, though they could only get to the top half of the dead animal. I've read that the African bushmen climb into the beast and hollow it out, but the NVA probably didn't have the benefit of *National Geographic* in their homes. Her informants remarked that the trunk was the best part, because it is full of chewy collagen. Though Vo speaks Vietnamese, she needed an interpreter to speak to country people. She showed us slide after slide of lovely, alert children, but told us that most of them suffer from malaria and malnutrition. In the clinics she visited, the technicians wore masks but not gloves to draw blood, a sight to make any U.S. health worker cringe. They have gloves, but they don't use them. Viet Nam does have one reported HIV positive, a woman who has had sex with two Vietnamese men returned from overseas.

Dr. Vo is involved with a fund that proposes to subsidize U.S. citizens to travel Viet Nam to start and finish projects that take at least two months. The fund offers an \$18 per diem, medical insurance, and \$500 upon return to the U.S. for transitional expenses. The fund will not pay for travel to Southeast Asia from the U.S.. For more complete information, contact Dieu-Thu Vo, M.D. at 420 East 70th St, #15R, NY NY 10021-5320.

## Doo Dah

A press release for posterity: The Veterans for Peace will be participating in the Doo Dah Parade in Pasadena, CA this Sunday, December 1, at 10:00AM. The Doo Dah Parade started as a parody of the Rose Bowl and all that is reverent. We have decided to take this opportunity to make our statement about the absurdity of war and graphically present some of the true costs. Sorry the notice is so short, but join us if you can. We will assemble at the corner of Holly and Raymond in Old Pasadena. There is a parking garage at Fair Oaks and Walnut, and there should be street parking. For those who get there early, a pancake breakfast will be served (for an unknown cost). The Veterans for Peace will be wearing black and white shirts and hats with a dove on them. If you can't spot the shirts, just look for our TANK. Hope to see you there. Peace.

## WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS AND DEMILITARIZED ZONES AVAILABLE

Bill Ehrhart writes: I have available for sale the following books: 18 copies of *Winning Hearts and Minds: Poems by Vietnam Veterans*, 1st Casualty Press, 1972 (1st printing); 10 copies of *Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans*, 1st Casualty Press (2nd printing); 49 copies of *Demilitarized Zones: Veterans After Vietnam*, East River Anthology, 1976 (only printing).

These two anthologies are both seminal and hard to find. Rare book seller Ken Lopez offers copies in his *Vietnam War Literature Catalogue and Supplement* for \$75, \$25, and \$45 respectively. The two printings of *WHAM* are identical, except that the 2nd printing carries the title on the spine while the 1st printing does not. All of my copies are in excellent condition.

I will sell my copies for \$12 each, postpaid, any number of books per order, until my supplies are exhausted. Make checks payable to W.D. Ehrhart, and send orders and checks to W.D. Ehrhart, 6845 Anderson St., Philadelphia, PA 19119. If I cannot fill your order, I will return your check.

## POW-MIA

Buy the December 1991 *Atlantic*, Vol. 268 No. 6, and read the cover story, *The Pow/MIA Myth: How the White House and Hollywood Combined to Foster a National Fantasy*, pp. 45-81. VGN subscriber and contributor H. Bruce Franklin demolishes with facts and figures any possibility of there being now or ever having been any U.S. POWs or MIAs left behind in Viet Nam. He explains that Richard Nixon started the myth on purpose to fan support for his policies. Subsequent administrations have fed the myth to justify the embargo on Viet Nam. Franklin doesn't explain that these cynical public relations strategies became a sop for ordinary citizens who have been forced by the war to distrust the government but can't bring themselves to accept that individual soldiers might ever have done anything wrong. The guys who created millions of Vietnamese KIAs and MIAs for no particular reason became poor joes imprisoned by evil Asians. It's a load of beans. If you want to see a beat-up, malnourished, trapped and abandoned Viet Nam veteran, all you have to do is volunteer at the local prison or hit the park and start asking winos for a DD-214. There are plenty of miserable vets in Viet Nam, but they aren't U.S. citizens. Franklin's article is something to clip and keep in your wallet, to xerox and hand out to the folks wearing the hat, to slip under the driver's side windshield wiper of every car that has the bumper sticker, and to paste on every municipal flagpole that flies that maudlin, lying, evil black flag. The article comes from a book on POW/MIAs that Franklin will publish next spring. The book was to be about a laundry list of U.S. fantasies, and POW/MIA was going to be only the first chapter, but it grew and grew. Franklin is already the author of marvellous books on Melville, science fiction, and prison literature, but I think this one's going to put him on Donahue. The letters column in the *Atlantic* will be juicy for a few months, at least. Maybe the author could be persuaded to do a book-signing at the Wall next Memorial Day.

## MAIL FROM WYOMING

**3 Dec. 91:** One bit of odd news. It looks like part of the Cowboy poetry world (which I do not consider myself part of despite the fact that I am a native Wyomite) and the Nam poetry are starting to overlap. John Dofflemeyer of *Dry Creek Review* published two Nam poems about a year ago & they baffled some of his readership, but the response was generally favorable. Anyway, he and Bill Jones of Lander, Wyoming and Rod McQuarry of somewhere in Nevada are putting together either an anthology or a war poems issue of *Dry Creek*. I only know about this because they asked to include some of my work, which I agreed to. I've only met Jones, who was a

cop for several years after returning from Nam, got in a wreck, pensioned off, moved to Wyoming & got into the Cowboy poetry circuit. He's a decent guy & I'm sure they're sincere and won't be printing doggerel that ticks like a cheap watch. However, the fusion of cowboy poets and Viet Nam material boggles my little mind, although in some ways it's logical. You can't get much farther away from academic poetry than Nam poems or Cowboy poetry. It's an amazing world. On that note I'll sign out. Take care.

Jon Forrest Glade 314 S. Cedar, Laramie, WY, 82070 is editing "the University of Wyoming's student art/lit mag *The Owen Wister Review*." The latest issue went to press on 9 Dec. '91. See his poems in the the Fall '91 issue of VGN.

## Two Books by MURRAY POLNER

Murray Polner sent Kali and I each a card, offering to help out with editorial work. We'll take him up on it. A book packager and newsletter editor, Polner is the author and editor of the following books:

**No Victory Parades: The Return of the Vietnam Veteran** (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971, paperback 1972)

A study of the war's impact on the men who fought it, concentrating on soldiers from lower-middle and working class families. The veterans who spoke out in the book were hawks, doves, and what Polner called "the haunted." Their varying "political" attitudes became secondary as they tried to explain what their war experience had meant to them. They were in agreement only in that they had been betrayed by both hawks and doves, by both Washington and the home front. "Never before in American history," Polner concluded, "have as many loyal and brave young men been as shabbily treated by the government that sent them to war; never before have so many of them questioned as much, as these veterans have, the essential rightness of what they were forced to do."

**When Can I Come Home? A Debate on Amnesty for Exiles, Anti-War Prisoners and Others** (Doubleday Anchor, 1972). Edited by Murray Polner

Among the legacies of the Viet Nam War were the tens of thousands who refused to serve, or serving, refused to fight. Hundreds went to prison, others deserted, and some 50,000 fled into exile into Canada and various European countries. This book raised the question of whether, when the war was over, these men should be amnestied and set free. The issues Polner raised were not simple: Would amnesty imply admission of wrong by the government? Can we expect obedience to the law in the future if we excuse some offenders? How do Viet Nam veterans, members of the black community—and the resisters themselves—feel about amnesty?

## PEACE EDUCATION RESOURCE CATALOG

### Youth and Militarism

**The Draft: It's Impact on Poor and Third World Communities:** Produced by AFSC San Francisco this Pamphlet discusses the discriminatory impact of the draft during the Viet Nam War. \$0.10, 100/\$7.00

**If the Army is Not Your Choice:** A small cartoon booklet especially for high school aged youth. Makes the point that you don't have to go into the military and you may be a conscientious objector without knowing it. \$0.10 10/.80

**Some Say "No":** A collection of statements about non-registration and draft resistance from various perspectives. \$0.25 1; 100/\$15

**You and the Draft:** A Third World perspective on the draft, including the "poverty draft," the kinds of wars you may fight, and military life for Third World people. \$0.15, 100/\$15

**El Servicio Militar Obligatorio y tu:** Perspective del Tercer Mundo sobre la conscripcion. \$0.15 cada uno, 100/\$10

**Register for the Draft: What if You Don't:** Produced by the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, this pamphlet explains possible consequences of failing to register for the draft, penalties and alternatives. \$0.15, 10/\$1.00

**Before You Join the Military... Read This:** Produced by the Militarism Resource Project, this brochure is for young people, parents and teachers. It covers military service and the problems of the Military Delayed Entry Program (DEP). \$0.20, 20+ .15 ea

**High School Military Recruiting: Recent Developments:** Produced by the Militarism Resource Project this is a comprehensive article on deceptive military recruiting practices in high school. \$0.50, 10 or more \$ 0.40

### New Youth and Militarism Resources

**Some Facts About Selective Service Warning Letters:** A new leaflet "Some Facts About Selective Service Warning Letters," addresses the concerns of the millions of young people who have received letters from the government alleging that they have failed to register for the draft. The leaflet provides basic information about the legal significance of these letters and options for responding to them. Produced jointly by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) National Youth and Militarism Program, the National Lawyers' Guild Military Law Task Force, and the Committee Opposed to Militarism and the Draft. \$0.25 each or 0.15 each for orders of 10 or more.

**Latino/a Youth and the Military: A Fact Sheet** Offers current information about the status of Latino/a youth in the military today, including information on the recruitment of Latino/a youth. Latino communities and the Viet Nam War, Racism on the Job, and the possible use of Latinos in future wars. \$0.25 each or \$.15 each for orders of 20 or more.

**Students Guide to High School Military Testing:** Discusses the pitfalls of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) exam that is offered free of charge to high school students. \$0.20 each or \$0.15 each for orders of 20 or more.

**Many Recruiters Use Fraud to Sell the Service:** Military Recruiting: Quotas and Corruption" Reprint of an investigative news series reporting on fraudulent behavior by military recruiters. Reprinted from *The Hartford Courant* (December, 1989). \$0.75 each

To order: American Friends Service Committee Literature Resources 1501 Cherry Street Philadelphia, PA 19102 To order by phone call: (215) 241-7048 or 7167

## PEACE STUDIES

The Peace Studies Association, an organization of college and university programs for the study of peace, justice, global issues, and security, will be holding its Fourth Annual Meeting from February 27 - March 1, 1992 at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The theme of the conference is "Conflict and Change in the 1990s: Redefining Power, Democracy, and Development." Sessions will focus on such topics as multiculturalism and the university; consequences of the Persian Gulf War; the ramifications of the break-up of the Soviet Union for peace and justice; global stratification in the post-Cold War era; conflict and change due to changing demographics in the U.S.; the environment and sustainable development; and peace and pedagogy.

## BREAKING RANKS WITH THE GULF WAR

Over 2500 US soldiers filed for Conscientious Objector discharges during the Gulf War — the fastest rise in CO applications in US history. The government reacted harshly to these applications. The Army, for a time, refused to accept many applications. The Marine Corps ignored their own CO processing regulations. All branches of the military imprisoned some Conscientious Objectors. In the end, nearly 100 COs were imprisoned. A couple of dozen are still there now.

### Who they are...

Unlike the stereotype (white, middle-class, hippie), Gulf War Conscientious Objectors came from all walks of life. Most of the applicants were young enlisted personnel, 20 to 24 years old. A number were officers with ten or more years of military service. Ninety percent of the applicants were men, though there were a number of vocal and resourceful female resisters. African-American resisters comprised the largest ethnic group, but there were many white, Latino and Asian resisters also. Many CO applications were based on secular beliefs. Also represented were applications based on Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and other faiths.

Most of the COs had joined the military out of high school, drafted by the need for a job and financial aid for college. Encouraged by their recruiters, war was not something to worry about; the military was there to provide them with a job, training, travel, adventure and money for college. Many reservists were wrongly told that reservists were not sent to war. This isn't to say that young people enlisting were oblivious to the fact that soldiers carry guns. They knew this. Most, however, had never considered whether they could kill another human or not. Faced with combat training in boot camp, many realized that they had made a mistake by enlisting, but by then it was too late. The military had their signature, their agreement to take orders, for eight years each.

There were two things all resisters had in common. First, they all refused to take part in the slaughter of Iraqi children, women and men. Second, they had all survived a boot camp experience devised to brainwash them to kill or to support killing when ordered to do so.

## Conscientious Objector laws in the USA

While enlistment contracts in the USA contain a provision barring conscientious objectors from joining, the military recognizes that some individuals' beliefs change after they sign a contract. As a result, each branch of the military has a regulation which offers discharges or reassignment to "noncombatant duty" to individuals who are morally, ethically or religiously opposed to all war. An individual's beliefs must have changed since their enlistment and their opposition must be to all war.

While the regulations appear straight-forward, there are many loopholes advantageous to the military. First, the interpretation of CO is a narrow one — not recognizing objection to particular wars or types of war. Second, the processing of applications rests within an individual's command structure. Some commands refused to accept applications, some have taken a year or longer to process applications, and some have denied CO applications without legal justification. Third, all regulations allow the military to send most COs into combat situations, (just without arms), while their applications are being processed.

## The resistance

Beginning with Marine Jeff Patterson's August refusal to board a plane bound for Saudi Arabia (Jeff sat on the tarmac and refused to get up), the military saw resistance within its ranks grow at a rate never seen before. Charges against Jeff were dropped and he was given an other-than-honorable (OTH) discharge, but not before a 20 October press conference where seven more soldiers publicly stated their refusal to fight in the Gulf.

By early December over 1,000 soldiers had filed CO discharge applications. The Marine Corps was hit especially hard by the number of resisters. In the Bronx, NY, first five and later seven members of a single Company of 150 soldiers filed for CO discharges. By the end of December, the Army was experiencing problems of its own. In Germany over 40 US soldiers applied for CO status. Pressed for troops and striking back at the resisters, on 28 December the Army handcuffed and forcibly deployed Specialist David Carson. David and at least seven other Army soldiers, all with pending CO discharge applications, were forcibly deployed from Germany to Saudi Arabia. Due to public pressure, charges were never filed against them.

With the arrival of call-up notices at the homes of 30,000 Individual Ready Reservists in mid-January, a whole new wave of military resisters was born. Dozens of churches declared themselves sanctuary for COs. University Baptist Church in Seattle, University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley and the Riverside Church in New York City took leading roles in harboring COs. Joining the effort to protect military COs, Amnesty International recognized Sgt George Morse at Ft Riley, Kansas, as a

"prisoner of conscience" — their first recognition of a prisoner in the USA since 1987. AI now recognizes 28 imprisoned COs as individuals whose human rights the US government has infringed.

At the time of writing in November, we are only a few weeks away from the introduction of some legislation in Congress to protect conscientious objectors. The first piece of legislation would establish a review process for COs who were unjustly treated during the Gulf War. The second would significantly revise the CO regulations to allow for selective objection and establish strict timelines by which the military would have to process CO applications. While this is an uphill battle, many organizations are pushing for it to become law.

We all are deeply indebted to the COs in the military. Often with little hope of avoiding jail, they spoke out against US military intervention and set a positive example for other soldiers to follow. Our task is to fight for their release from prison and to work to ensure that US military forces are never used offensively again.

Michael Marsh, War Resisters League, 339 Lafayette St, New York NY 10012 USA (tel +1 212 228 0450; fax 228 6193). Reprinted from *Peace News*, December 1991, 55 Dawes St, London SE17 1EL tel +44 71 703 7189. FAX +44 71 708 2545. Email gn:peacenews or gn:warresisters

## RETRACTION

Contributing Editor Tony Williams asks that I make it clear that in his review of Paul Fussell's *Norton Book of Modern War* in the Fall '91 issue, he did not write the sentence, "It [the anthology] is relevant to our continuing destructiveness and provides good context for Vietnam War literature." I wrote that. What Tony wrote was, "It is a highly relevant production for a continuing age of twentieth century destructiveness and a relevant context against which to view Vietnam literature."

## SANDBAG COUCH

On 12-2-91 John Bennett of the African Collection, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, sent me an undated, no-page-number clipping from the *Washington Post*. It's a box article with the by-line Nancy L. Ross, datelined New York, about a sofa of sandbags offered for sale in that city by an Italian national, Gaetano Pesce. "As a memento of Desert Storm," he filled sandbags with foam and stacked them on a metal frame. A dribble of foam "sand" seems to leak from one bag. There's a photo with the article, of five stacks of sandbags, that may be the furniture in question. The 8 1/2 foot "January 16 Sofa" is offered at \$65,000 by Lorry Parks Dudley, director of the Peter Joseph gallery, in a fall show of Pesce's work. Pesce is 52 and was trained as an architect. His designs are mass produced in Italy by Cassina and marketed in this country by Atelier International.

## SCIENCE MAGAZINE ON "JASON"

The 29 November 1991 issue of *Science* featured an article titled "Jason: Can A Cold Warrior Find Work" (Vol. 254: 1284-1286). The article's subtitle reads: "For more than 30 years, a secretive band of top-flight academics has been proposing, analyzing, and critiquing some of the most innovative ideas in national defense." This group, which calls itself "Jason," after the Greek hero, is "one of the most influential yet little known science clubs in the world..." According to *Science*

this exclusive cadre of about 45 academic scientists, mostly physicists, has been meeting every summer for more than 30 years. Its members—a veritable star map of physics—gather in secrecy to solve practical problems for the government, usually the DOD. Over the decades, the group has developed ideas that are far better known than the group itself.... In exchange for creativity, Jason's government sponsors have to accept the group's uncompromising independence.... the members of Jason choose their own projects, have no financial or political stake in a projects success, and, most important, feel free to say that a proposed project is dumb. (1284)

*Science* published this article to "bring this little publicized group out of the shadows," and to speculate on its future now that the arms race seems to have ended. But the scientists involved in Jason apparently are reluctant to talk about their work. What *Science* did uncover, however, will be disturbing to progressives (though it didn't seem to bother *Science* much). Apparently Jason's members have been turning to problems outside the realm of defense and are now working on solutions to the "the flow of illegal drugs across U.S. borders..."

In a page-length sidebar to the main article, *Science* ran another story: "**Vietnam: An Awkward Time to Be a Jason.**" Those of you familiar with the *Pentagon Papers* might remember that it was the Jasons who advised the U.S. government "to throw an electronic barrier across the Ho Chi Minh trail" (1285). Though the article mentions that some Jasons resigned from the organization because they refused to support the war effort, other Jasons were ready to pick up the slack:

Jason got wind of a proposal by Roger Fisher, a Harvard Law School professor interested in arms control: block the trail with a high-tech barrier. Eager to do something constructive about the war, Jason developed the idea under the leadership of William Nierenberg, past director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Jason's version of the barrier was... an acoustic curtain that would betray passing troops and trucks.

The plan was to seed a 100-kilometer strip across Vietnam with bomblets—little more than cherry bombs—and acoustic sensors. When a soldier's boot or a truck tire triggered a bomblet, the sensors would pick up the report and send a signal to a central computer, which would pinpoint its source. Air strikes would then be dispatched to cut off the infiltration. (1285)

Apparently, the Pentagon was pleased with the Jason scheme and actually put it into action. *Science* quotes a proud Kenneth Case: "The detectors could hear soldiers peeing." Physicist Case claims that the barriers were a resounding success in Khe Sanh. Why? Well, they prevented the Marines from being cut off by providing information on where enemy troops congregated—thus allowing the U.S. to accurately aim artillery and carefully drop bombs. You go figure it out. *Science*, neglecting to point out that there was no American "victory" at Khe Sanh, allows this to pass without comment.

The implications of Jason's switch to non-defense related research are interesting. I wonder if we can look forward to a line of "bomblets" at the borders of the U.S., geared to keeping out illegal aliens and drug runners. [Kali Tal]

## SEASSI

If you want to learn Vietnamese, go to the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute in Seattle. I don't have time to write it up properly for this issue, so look at the article in the Fall '91 issue about how great it was at Cornell last summer. For full information write to Laurie Thomas, Coordinator, SEASSI, Thompson 320, DR-05, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, 98195, telephone: 206-543-1816 or 206-543-9606, FAX 206-685-4256. Tuition is \$1600, housing and meal plan for the nine weeks is \$900. Fellowships available. I'll be there. Renny Christopher might be, and we're pushing Alan Farrell to go. David Willson, Jean Jacques Malo and Susan Jeffords live nearby. Do you really want to go through life without speaking Vietnamese?

## COMMITTED TO MEMORY: MESSAGES AT THE WALL

The Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum of American History presented "Committed to Memory: Messages at the Wall" to the public on 10 November 1991. The panelists included Laura Palmer, author of *Shrapnel in the Heart: Letters and Remembrances from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, a book based on the letters and on interviews with some of the letter writers; Carole Page, one of the letter writers featured in *Shrapnel in the Heart*, active in bringing together people whose letters or interviews are included in the book; editor of the newsletter "From the Heart"; Sue (Xuan) Burns, a Viet

Nam native and widow of a South Vietnamese army officer killed in action, now married to an American, and working with Carole Page to draw attention to the common legacy of history and emotion that Vietnamese and Americans share; Dwight Edwards, a Viet Nam war veteran, executive director, Vietnam Veterans Health Initiative Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Health, former director, Olney Vietnam Veterans Outreach Center, Philadelphia; Jim Wallace, Director/curator, Smithsonian Institution's Office of Photographic Services, editor, designer, and director of photography for the book *Reflections on the Wall*; Edith Mayo, Curator, Division of Political History, National Museum of American History with particular interest in women's history, politics, civil rights, and voting rights in the twentieth century. The program was moderated by Patrick Hagopian, Fellow, National Museum of American History, and a Ph.D. candidate at Johns Hopkins University, researching the social memory of the Viet Nam War.

## SPECIAL ISSUE OF HUMANITY AND SOCIETY

A special issue of the Journal of the Association for Humanist Sociology, *Humanity and Society*, was published in November 1991. The issue is entitled *Political Prisoners and the Repression of Human Rights in the United States*. Guest editors of the issue are Richard A. Dello Buono, Rosary College, and Kathryn Stout, Northeastern Illinois University. Contents: "Political Prisoners as an Emergent Contradiction of State Repression," Kathryn Stout and Richard A. Dello Buono; "Political Prisoners in the United States: The Hidden Reality," Jan Susler and Michael Deutsch; "History of the Afrikan Prisoner," Sundiata Acoli (New Afrikan political prisoner), Leavenworth Federal Prison; "Swords Into Plowshares," Fr. Daniel Berrigan; "Verdict of the Special International Tribunal: On the Violation of Human Rights of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in U.S. Prisons and Jails," Members of the Special International Tribunal; "The Criminalization of Women Fighting Back Against Male Abuse: Imprisoned Battered Women as Political Prisoners," Shelley Bannister; "Prisoner/Patient Struggles: A View from the Inside," Alan Berkman, M.D. (political prisoner); "Guillermo Morales Speaks from Exile" (Puerto Rican independentista fighter living in Cuba); "Incarceration of a Movement Lawyer: Letter from Linda Backiel"; "Little Rock Reed vs. the Ohio Parole Authority: A Letter to the Humanist Task Force on Political Prisoners"; and a bibliography of resources including books, selected articles, videos, and organizations.

*Humanity and Society* publishes articles on a wide variety of topics: studies of inequality (class, race and/or sex); war, peace and international relations; aging and gerontology; family, sex roles and sexuality; urban and environmental studies; political sociology and political economy, health and mental health; social theory, sociology of knowledge and science; humanism and human rights; crime and deviance; ethnic and intergroup relations and others. Articles may be theoretical and speculative, critical essays, or analyses of data utilizing various qualitative and quantitative research strategies.

Theoretical orientations may be eclectic, Marxist, critical theory, symbolic interactionism, humanistic sociology—i.e., oriented towards a more humane and egalitarian society. For specific examples consult recent issues. Progressives and activists working in all areas are encouraged to submit articles for publication to *Humanity and Society*. Proposed articles should be sent to the editor along with a \$10 submission fee.

*Humanity and Society*, the official journal of the Association for Humanist Sociology, was first published in 1977 and has been published quarterly since 1978. It is a peer-reviewed journal with abstracts of published articles appearing in *Sociological Abstracts*.

The philosophical view of the Association for Humanist Sociology is that people are not merely products of social forces but are also shapers of social life, capable of creating social orders in which everyone's potential can unfold. The Association arose in 1976 out of a shared sense of disenchantment with conventional sociology. Its members include sociologists, scholars in other disciplines, political activists, social practitioners and others united not out of shared politics but out of a common concern for "real life" problems of peace, equality and social justice.

A subscription to *Humanity and Society* is included with membership in the Association for Humanist Sociology. Annual membership dues, based on income: \$25 (under \$15,999); \$30 (\$6,000 to \$24,999); \$35 (over \$25,000); \$50 (annual donor); and \$100 (annual sponsor). Domestic institutions may subscribe to *Humanity and Society* at the annual rate of \$40. Subscriptions and article submissions should be directed to: Dragan Milovanovic, Editor, Dept. of Criminal Justice; Northeastern Illinois University, 5500 N. St. Louis Ave., Chicago, IL 60625-4699.

To purchase the special issue, send \$10 (make check payable to Association for Humanist Sociology) and send to Richard A. Dello Buono, Ph.D., Sociology Dept., Rosary College, 7900 W. Division St., River Forrest, IL 60305.

## WELCOME HOME

*Alan Farrell was asked by his college to speak at a ceremony to recognize those in the community who served the U.S. in Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Here is what he told the crowd.*

The text for today, good people, comes from the Book of the Prophet Joel, Chapter 3, verses 9 and 10:

Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: Let the weak say, I am strong.

Well, we had another war out there, good people. And the time came to "Wake up the mighty men." I have

to tell you now, that it is my impression that war is not fought at all by mighty men. But mostly by scared kids. We don't wage war with mighty men in America. We send scared kids. That's probably why we are so bad at it. And good for us.

I was a scared kid myself when I went to war. And a scared kid when I came back, by the bye. And though I am no longer a kid, I still get scared. But I know one thing you don't: I know just how scared I can be and I know what is worth being scared of. And you can't scare me no more than that.

Now, out there—and in this room today—some of our own scared kids are back. And they know the great secret: just how scared you can be and of what. And you can't scare them no more than that.

And they're not the only scared kids. Nine hundred odd of you, seems to me, stumble up and down beneath these dying oaks. And you're scared, too. Scared of Dad, scared of Mom, scared of teacher, coach, roommate, girlfriend... French. Later you'll be scared of job, boss, neighbors, wife, kids, IRS, cancer, and on and on. There's no end to the list of things to be scared of. And maybe being scared of death isn't even the worst thing. But it sure is the last thing. And that, I guess, makes it special. Can't scare you no more than that.

We gather here today to honor brothers of ours who have faced fear, some here in classes or on the fields, some in the desert. To recognize small victories over the terror of day to day living; over the host of things which conspire to deny life a meaning; over inertia and indifference and, well... human nature.

I guess I find myself talking today about war... with no intent, though, to speak only to those who have known it. It is rather to suggest that those of you who do duty's bidding, who own up to life's struggle already know, in kind if not degree, what what can be expected of you. Right here is where, if anywhere, we make mighty men. Here. This funny little old place, this "good school of the second rank," as Mr Chips used to say about his beloved Brookfield, has been sending scared kids off to wars since 17 goddamn 76. Good wars, bad wars; long wars, short wars; wise wars... dumb wars; won wars... lost wars.

Always our scared kids have gone and always come back here. Sometimes they found the words to say what was on their minds; sometimes not. Sometimes they found the words tell us that the human values we burnt into their hearts sustained them; sometimes not. Sometimes they found the words to say just how scared they had been; sometimes not. Heroes? I doubt it. Patriots? Some, maybe. Scared kids, I say, who for a second—here, at Cherry Point, at Fort Bragg, in Riyad, in Basra—for a second had to consider the end of things. And what they wanted to be, forever!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We welcome brothers and friends back today from a war, at least I do, as if to a new world, though this is still the one they went out from. Yet the world looks different when you have been scared to death. And I speak of all men and women who have been afraid for their lives, here in America or there in the desert. And we must ask, as they are surely asking now, what remains

when fear has devastated our inner world? What things emerge from the crucible unscorched?

The fact that a number of them wrote me and perhaps you, the fact that they have come back here today tells, I think, just what is permanent—to them anyway—just what they value. And that should, I think, convey a message of hope for you other guys, my other scared kids, who still have Dad, Mom, teacher, coach, roommate, girlfriend... French to contend with.

And somehow in the cataclysm, each time, every time, those scared kids—even in their darkest moments—were caught up short, by... what? A sense of duty, of honor, of comradeship. A sense that notions of tolerance, generosity, degree, individual worth deserve preservation. A sense that a man or woman can impress the stamp of will on nature and events; that for all its value, some things are more precious than life, some ideas fit to die for. However reluctantly.

Unlike most of you, I have seen scared kids stand up, under fire, in the teeth of death, only a whisker less scared but a shade more determined than their fellows, and issue the ages-old challenge: "Follow me!" And leadership, we know, is often no more than that naive and misplaced faith in the power of human will against the clamor of chaos—War or Wall Street... or French. Doesn't matter—and the simple determination to take the first step... first. Follow me!

Unlike most of you, I have seen those scared kids cling to one another, stick together, stand beside each other for the simplest of reasons: that they had shared a meal, a chore, a joke, a lesson, a song... a dream. And now they would share a fate.

After each of our wars we have dared to hope no scared kid would ever again have to go. And been wrong every time, alas. But here at Hampden-Sydney we have never been silly enough to suppose that the values we harbor, the way we teach, the tradition we follow would not be needed by each succeeding class, generation, age, whatever their destiny, peace or war. God give us that we never fail to do that.

I don't know why we fight wars, good people. I don't know why we fought this one. I don't know if it was a good one. And I can't even swear we won, though that's what I have heard. I only know that I am glad to have my scared kids back. And oh-so-proud of them. I have a soft spot, you see, for scared kids.

Now, with your permission I would like to read out the names of some of our friends and brothers from Hampden-Sydney College in Hampden-Sydney, Virginia who went off to this War in the Desert, as we have called it.

#### Friends of the college:

Cpl Melvin L Gilmore, Hampden-Sydney and the United States Marine Corps

Cpl Matthew Jager, Hampden-Sydney and the United States Marine Corps

Joseph A Hazelgrove, Hampden-Sydney and the United States Air Force (Jody's father)

Leroy F Williams, Hampden-Sydney and the United States Army (Orson's father)

#### Brothers in the college:

CWO Don Whitmore, Hampden-Sydney College and the United States Army

PFC Doug Allen, Hampden-Sydney College and the United States Army

Cpt Harold Gielow, Hampden-Sydney College and the United States Marine Corps

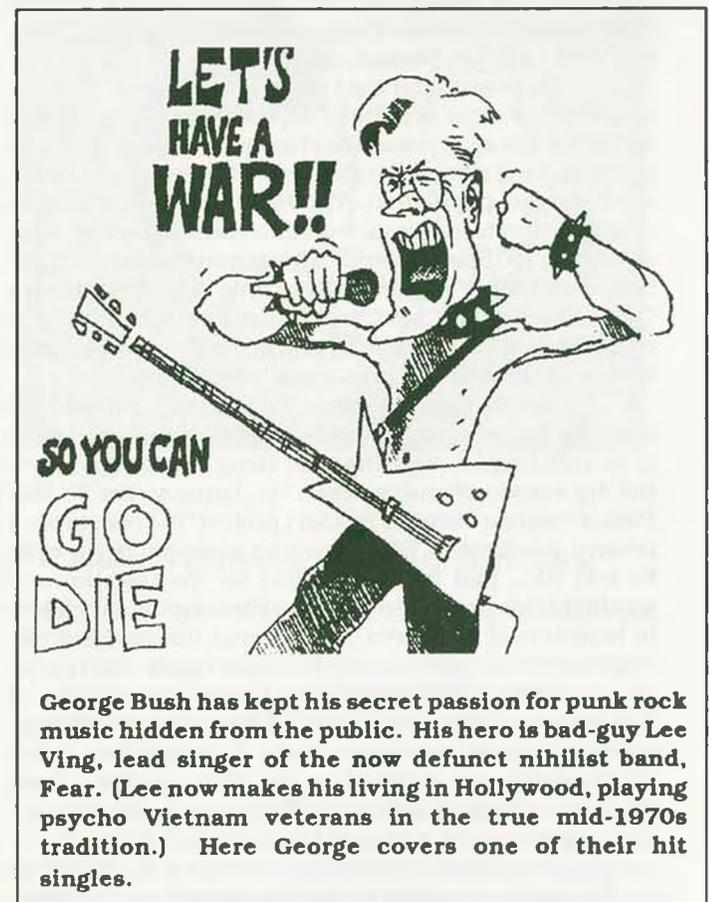
#### And three whom we recognize here today:

Cpl Alston Middleton, Hampden-Sydney College and the United States Marine Corps

L/Cpl J P Sullivan, Hampden-Sydney College and the United States Marine Corps

L/Cpl Geoffrey Steadman, Hampden-Sydney College and the United States Marine Corps

*Alan Farrell is chair of the Department of Modern Languages, Hampden-Sydney College, and a Contributing*



George Bush has kept his secret passion for punk rock music hidden from the public. His hero is bad-guy Lee Ving, lead singer of the now defunct nihilist band, Fear. (Lee now makes his living in Hollywood, playing psycho Vietnam veterans in the true mid-1970s tradition.) Here George covers one of their hit singles.

Cartoon by David Luebke

## FEATURES

### BEHIND THE PEACE AGREEMENT IN Cambodia

Ben Kiernan, History, Yale

Three factors explain the recent acceleration of the Cambodian peace negotiations. A long-term factor was the world's continuing isolation of the Phnom Penh regime. Since the Vietnamese overthrow of Pol Pot's genocidal Khmer Rouge in 1979, the UN has embargoed Cambodia, trapping its people in poverty and threatening the economy with strangulation. The USA, Australia and all other Western nations refused aid, trade and diplomatic relations with the only anti-genocidal Cambodian political force, while aiding its enemies. It was clear this policy would continue until the Khmêr Rouge were brought back into the Cambodian political arena.

A second, more immediate factor was the realization that despite this, the State of Cambodia government of President Hen Samrin and Prime Minister Hun Sen had the upper hand on the battlefield. The Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge were not making headway, nor were their US-backed allies.

Two years after the 1989 Vietnamese withdrawal, all 30 Cambodian provincial capitals and all but two of 100 district towns, remain in Phnom Penh's hands. So do all the lowland rice-growing areas: over 90% of Cambodia's territory and population. The failure of the opposition offensive revealed Hanoi's achievement. Starting from scratch in 1979, and despite an international embargo of both countries, Viet Nam had not only helped establish a Cambodian government and return the nation to near normalcy, but also trained and armed a Cambodian force to defend the country from the Khmer Rouge.

The *Bangkok Post* of 2 April 1991 quoted Thai military sources as saying that "the Khmer Rouge seem to be suffering far more than the Heng Samrin side since the dry season offensive began" in January. On 20 May *Post* columnist Jacques Bekaert probed "the resistance's present weakness": "Hun Sen was probably right when he told us... that it is impossible for the resistance to conduct large-scale operations in the country, much less to launch vast offensives." The Khmer Rouge, he wrote, "still cannot occupy and maintain large tracts of territory."

Their allies fared little better. On 31 August Bekaert wrote that the rightist KPNLF was "fast collapsing": "Military experts say that maybe no more than a few hundred men still obey orders. The Sihanoukists... have their own troubles and probably no more than a few thousand men—at best—still under control."

The Khmer Rouge acted ominously. At a Thai border meeting reported in the *Bangkok Post* on 17 May, a Khmer Rouge official tried to present a moderate face, but suddenly "beat a retreat with his aides" when a second cadre arrived, "dressed in Chinese khaki army fatigues." This cadres, a "hardliner," "spoke forcefully and with obvious authority," predicting: "When there are

no more Vietnamese in Cambodia, we will take the rich people to work in the fields." He added: "Mr. Pol Pot did not have bad ideas and wanted equality for everyone. There was no poverty and all were equal until the Vietnamese came and tried to grab our land."

As the peace agreement approached, a Spanish aid worker was shot three miles from the UN refugee camp in northeast Thailand known as O'Trao, controlled by Khmer Rouge guerrillas. The attackers "spoke Cambodian and wore Khmer Rouge uniforms." "It was the most serious attack on a Western aid worker in 12 years of international relief work on the border," Reuters reported.

Then on 30 September came the "coup d'etat" in Site 8, the showcase Khmer Rouge camp in Thailand. The 20 "moderate" camp leaders disappeared into a prison at Khao Din, a Khmer Rouge zone inside Cambodia. Five new Khmer Rouge military officers instructed the families of the disappeared to follow. They refused, but the changeover spread "panic" among the 44,000 refugees in the camp, who fear a forcible repatriation to Khmer Rouge zones where they face mines, malaria, and lack of rice and medicine. "This has struck the fear of God into them, like it's back to the old days," said a UN official. The UN-trained civilian police force in Site 8 was also replaced by armed Khmer Rouge soldiers. The UN received "similar reports that pressure is being exerted on the population of the O'Trao camp." At the UN on October 17, after a Chinese veto, the Security Council's Perm-5 members (the USA, the USSR, China, Britain and France) backed down from a commitment to warn the Khmer Rouge against forcibly moving refugees.

The third major ingredient in the Cambodian peace process was China's achievement of its strategic goals in countries neighboring Cambodia, allowing Beijing to capitalize on its predominance in mainland Southeast Asia to ensure the Khmer Rouge and their allies a share in Cambodia's political future despite their comparative military weakness.

China's goals in Southeast Asia have long centered on its rivalry with Viet Nam. Shunned by the United States, and abandoned by the USSR, Hanoi has recently been forced to turn to China. At the Seventh Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party in June 1991, Hanoi acceded to China's demand for the head of reformist Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach. Hanoi was finally prepared to remove him because of his inability to deliver the needed diplomatic reconciliation with the USA. The USA had continually spurned Vietnamese overtures and concessions such as the Cambodian withdrawal, and Beijing reaped the reward.

Soviet aid to Viet Nam had also been drastically reduced. The August coup attempt in Moscow, weakening the position of Gorbachev's reform communists, was also a blow to their counterparts in Viet Nam, overruled by hardliners who now saw China's communists as a necessary ally. China's relations with Viet Nam, and with Laos, have been patched up by the military.

The February 1991 coup in Thailand against the elected Chatichai government was welcomed by China as "correct and just." China has developed a close relationship

with the Thai army in a decade of international aid to the Khmer Rouge via Thailand.

In April the new strongman in Bangkok, Army Commander Suchinda Krapayoon, told a US senator that he considered Pol Pot a "nice guy," just as in 1985 the Foreign Minister of the previous dictatorship had described Pol Pot's deputy, Son Sen, as "a very good man." Last May the new Thai PM, Anand Panyarachum, pointedly told Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan: "Sixteen years ago, I was also accused of being a communist and now they have picked me as Prime Minister. In any society there are always hard-liners and soft-liners, and society changes its attitude to them as time passes by." Pol Pot himself met with Suchinda just before the June 1991 Cambodian negotiating session in Thailand, where Pol Pot played a backroom role.

With arms purchases of US \$283 million in 1985-89, Bangkok ranked sixth among China's clients for major weapons. Burma, the other state quick to recognize the overthrow of Thai democracy, is also high on the list of China's arms customers. Burmese dictator General Saw Maung visited Beijing in August. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* reports that China has become "Burma's most important trade partner," while Burma is "China's chief foreign market for cheap consumer goods."

China has abandoned its former "party-to-party" relations with Southeast Asian insurgents, for army-to-army relations with governments. Beijing is in a stronger geopolitical position than ever before. Its main rival is Tokyo. Japan's role in the Cambodian peace process in 1990-91 at times threatened to sideline the Khmer Rouge. China's new, flexible posture aims to prevent that, and to broker the negotiations itself.

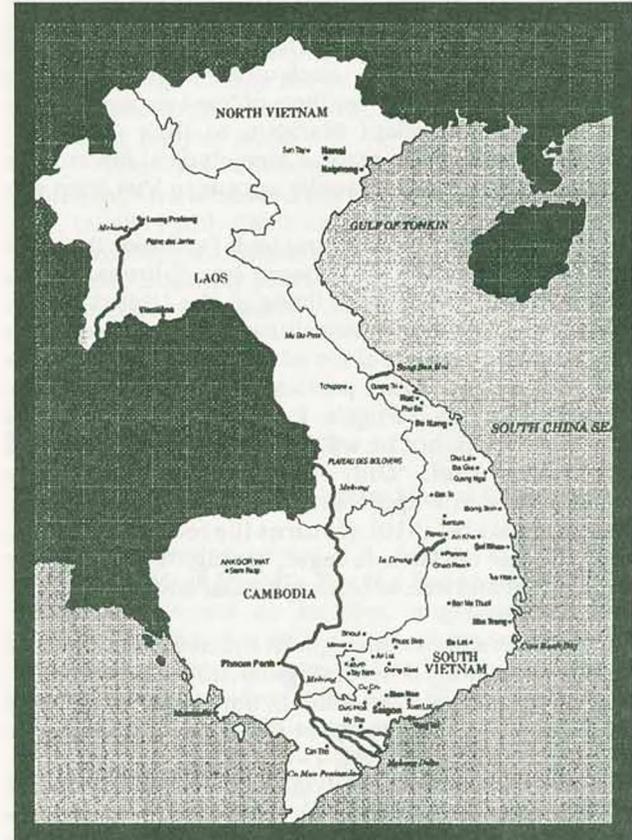
This interplay of factors has forced some departures from the 1990 UN Perm-5 Peace Plan for Cambodia. Firstly, a ceasefire was observed by all non-Khmer Rouge forces from 1 May, defying US opposition to such a step-by-step approach. Secondly, instead of being totally demobilized, the Phnom Penh army has been allowed to retain its relative numerical predominance with the agreement to demobilize 70% of each army. However, this does not include Khmer Rouge troops and arms caches hidden from UN view in remote areas.

The comprehensive voting system for the 1993 elections, to be based on proportional representation in each of 20 provinces, will make it harder for the Khmer Rouge to win seats in the new National Assembly than the national proportional system originally planned. But there is little sign of UN preparedness to effectively monitor the campaign in remote areas controlled by the Khmer Rouge, to prevent intimidation of voters and stuffing of ballot boxes. The Khmer Rouge could win at least some seats, and regain a role in Cambodia's government if their allies emerge with a plurality.

Further, Hun Sen was obliged to drop his demand that the peace agreement provide for a genocide trial of the Pol Pot leadership. And the UN legitimized the Khmer Rouge as a political force, allowing it to establish an office in Phnom Penh and to appoint the onetime President and Deputy Prime Minister of the Pol Pot regime (Khieu

Samphan and Son Sen) as members of the Supreme National Council, which embodies Cambodian sovereignty. The country faces several more years of living dangerously.

*Ben Kiernan is author of How Pol Pot Came to Power (1985).*



## FICTION: VIETNAMESE EXILE WRITERS

Renny Christopher, Literature, University of California, Santa Cruz

There is a growing body of fiction in English by Vietnamese exile writers. The most striking thing about these writers, taken as a group, is their desire to keep their pasts alive in the present. Rather than writing about experiences of assimilation in their new cultures (whether the U.S. or France), they focus on the past. For this reason I call them "exile writers" rather than "immigrant writers." Their works should be required reading for any American interested in the war shared by the U.S. and Viet Nam.

Tran Van Dinh's first English-language novel, *No Passenger on the River* was published in 1965 (NY: Vantage Press), but it is his second that I want to address here. *Blue Dragon, White Tiger: A Tet Story*

(Philadelphia: TriAm Press, 1983) is a novel about biculturalism and identity, about the penetration of Western culture into Viet Nam, about one Vietnamese man negotiating his own identity, and his country's, and coming to find that, ironically, he can only be "truly Vietnamese" in exile in the West.

Offering a self-image that counters Western orientalist images of Vietnamese is Dinh's project. He presents Viet Nam and Vietnamese culture unmediated by Western stereotypical perceptions; even while he is striving to translate that culture for a Western audience to understand, he refuses to alter or adulterate his own perceptions of his homeland. The characters of the novel contradict themselves and each other, their lives are too consumed with the very conflicts of "east vs. west" in the form of trying to adapt Marxism to their Confucian society, for them to be seen as stereotypical inscrutable Asians of the type who usually appear in Viet Nam war fiction.

The novel's main character is Professor Tran Van Minh, who is suspended between two cultures. As the novel opens in 1967, he is living in the United States, teaching at a college in Massachusetts, having been away from Viet Nam for most of his adult life. By the end of the novel, Minh will have participated in the National Liberation Front's struggle for liberation, and in its triumph in 1975, but he will have become disillusioned, and decided that, "Only with freedom can I be a Vietnamese, can I appreciate the Vietnamese culture, wherever I may be" (310). He turns the revolution against itself with his decision to leave, saying, "I shall remain independent and free, according to your advice, respected Uncle Ho" (305).

Minh's quest throughout the novel is a quest for identity. His identity is never singular, but always multiple. He is Professor Tran Van Minh in both America and Viet Nam, but he is also the poet Co Tung (a pseudonym meaning "Lone Pine Tree").

This novel will seem a little alien to most American readers, operating as it does on fate (in the persons of the three women in Minh's life), and with a narrative style that some readers may find annoying. But it is a deliberately crafted, carefully constructed novel with a didactic purpose; it will repay the careful reader well. (It's become one of my favorite novels on the war).

**This Side, The Other Side**, by Minh Duc Hoai Trinh (Montrose, CA: Occidental Press, 1985) is a novel in English by a writer living in France. It is an interesting novel that displaces the political conflicts of the war onto familial conflicts and reconciliations.

According to the biographical information appended to the novel, Trinh, the daughter of a mandarin, was born in Hue. She was involved in the war against the French, then went to France in 1953 to study journalism. In 1964 she returned to Viet Nam as a journalist, eventually going to Paris to cover the peace negotiations from 1968-74, after which she became a professor at the Buddhist University Van Hanh. She now lives in Paris, and was once president of the P.E.N. Center of Vietnamese Writers Abroad.

Like Tran Van Dinh, Trinh's class attitudes inform her writing. The main character, Bui, is a peasant

from a village near Hue who is seduced by a middle-class man who takes her to Hue and educates her, then leaves her, but provides for her by sending her to a friend, the widow of an ARVN general, in Saigon. Bui becomes a bar girl (but not a prostitute), and with her earnings is able to bring her family to Saigon, but on a trip back to Hue to exhume the remains of Bui's father, Bui's mother and younger brother are killed during the Tet offensive of 1968. Although Trinh has made the main characters of her novel peasants she presents their opportunity to move into the middle class as a positive event that almost makes the war worthwhile. Trinh's novel is a romance; her notion of peasants and peasant life is a romantic one, as can be seen in a scene where Bui and her mother and other peasants work to empty a fish pond for a wealthy woman, in which the tireless peasants work with unflagging cheer.

A parallel plot to Bui's story is that of her brother, Thuong, who has been drafted by "the other side." Thuong, the peasant, is the communists' ideal man, but Loc, the son of the middle class, while devoid of socialist fervor, is the humanitarian who takes care of Thuong when he suffers bouts of malaria (58). It is Loc, who, after Thuong's death in the Offensive, eventually meets Bui and her surviving siblings, and takes Thuong's place as their older brother and protector.

Thuong dies and Loc is wounded in the Tet Offensive of 1968. Loc becomes a Hoi Chanh (a defector). He finally finds a sense of belonging when he meets Thuong's now-bourgeois family in Saigon. Loc has unsuccessfully tried to become a peasant; Thuong's sister Bui and her family have successfully made the transition to middle class. Trinh clearly sees upward mobility as the only possible direction, and, in her analysis, this makes communism an impossible system for Viet Nam.

**This Side, The Other Side** is, by Western standards, not a very compelling novel. The characters are flat, point of view shifts appear from nowhere, and the writing seems simplistic. It's a romance, in both the Vietnamese and Western senses of the term. Nonetheless, it is interesting for the apolitical way it deals with the subject of the war.

Vo Phien was a professor of literature and a publisher in Viet Nam, a prolific author and the winner of the Vietnamese National Literary prize. He came to the U.S. in 1975, and is the founder and editor of Van Hoc Nghe Thuat, a literary journal published in Vietnamese. Three of his stories, as translated by Huynh San Thong, Phan Phan, and Vo-Dinh Mai, appear in the collection **Landscape and Exile**, edited by Marguerite Bouvard (Boston: Rowan Tree Press, 1985).

"A Spring of Quiet and Peace" addresses the issue of adjusting to the new climate—literal and figurative—of America. The story begins with a nostalgic scene portraying the "peanut-husking bee" at Tet "[b]ack home" (1). A second section describes the narrator's current situation—living in Minnesota, where it is sub-zero and snowing. The physical landscape of America disrupts his cultural landscape; he fears he will not be able to celebrate Tet under these conditions.

The narrator constructs the alien landscape of America as a barrier to the preservation of his traditional customs. This sentiment is typical of Vietnamese exile literature—this narrator wishes to preserve his culture, and adapt it to his new landscape, rather than to shed it like an old skin and assimilate to a new culture.

He experiences further cultural dislocations when spring finally comes, and young women sunbathe nude or nearly-nude. He also sees more painful paradoxes, when he meditates on what the arrival of spring will mean to him, not only without Vietnamese cultural markers, but also without the war, whose absence allows him real freedom.

The tone of this story is one of grief for all the things lost in exile, things that the wonders of the new land can't compensate for, and, most of all, the damage inflicted on the human soul by a feeling of rootlessness. To be in exile is, for this narrator, to be "outside the circle of all cares and concerns;" no longer a member of his old culture, and not yet a member of the new.

"The Key" is a wrenching story that speaks of the ties that continue to bind the exiles to their home country, and the regrets that the refugees will carry with them for life. The narrator hears a story from a man who tells of his family's decision to leave behind his senile 93-year old father. The family has left money and valuables locked in a wardrobe—any family member who does not get out will use this wealth to care for the old man, or if all family members escape, neighbors will be given the wealth and asked to care for him. But the man discovers, when he is on his escape boat out at sea, that he has mistakenly taken the key to the wardrobe with him. Those left behind will have to smash the wardrobe, which will disturb and upset his elderly father.

The key thus becomes the symbol for the regrets the refugees carry. Because the refugees cannot return home, they have no second chances. All their actions are locked into permanence, irrevocable, unmalleable. The key, rather than symbolizing the possibility of openings, of new beginnings, symbolizes for the exiles the closing, the locking up of their past. The past has become unreachable, except in memory. The refugees can play their scenes of regret over and over in memory, but cannot reach back through the locked door of exile to right what they perceive to be the wrongs they have done.

It is interesting that, despite the fact that Phien writes in Vietnamese, and publishes in Vietnamese-language magazines in the U.S., his stories are marked by phrases like, "in my country....". Phien, like the Vietnamese exile writers who publish in English, seems to be trying to reach a Euro-American audience, and educate them about the place that he still considers to be "my country"—Viet Nam. Phien, like many other exile writers from many countries, is isolated from his native language. At least one other writer wants to reach an English-speaking audience. Tran Dieu Hang, a writer who has published Vietnamese-language novels in the U.S., has told me that she wants very much to publish in English, but feels she can only write effectively in her native language. A scholar at Schreiner college, Qui-Phiet Tran, is writing a study of Tran Dieu Hang's work. His

study is being written in English. Who knows how many writers of their generation may be in the same position?

But there is now emerging in the U.S. a generation of young Vietnamese American writers who have grown up in America, but who carry the heritage of the Vietnamese experience of the war. Elizabeth Gordon is one of these; she is the daughter of a Vietnamese mother and a GI father. Her story "On the Other Side of the War" appears in the anthology *Home to Stay: Asian American Women's Fiction* (edited by Sylvia Watanabe and Elizabeth Bruchac, Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1990). This story focuses on the question of American racial identity. Gordon's is really a very slight story, although clearly the product of a talented young writer. If she continues to write, she may produce a very interesting body of work.

There are others who are writing, and perhaps publishing on a local level (for example, two writers in my area, Lucille Hanh Clark and Hue-Thanh Bergevin, are both publishing in campus publications and both working on novels). Someday soon, we will see a new generation of Vietnamese exile writers at work.

## Film: MOM'S IN NAM

Cynthia Fuchs, English, George Mason University

By proclaiming recent U.S. history a sequence of major wars, Mark Rydall's *For the Boys* makes a certain statement. It's not an incisive, angry, or trenchant statement. Nor is it a rally round, gun's up statement. Rather, it's recuperative, mushy-headed, and conciliatory, caught in that nebulous nonspace which supports the "boys" but wonders a little about what they're doing (and not because they might kill people, of course, but because they might get killed). Tracing a national evolution from World War II to Korea to Viet Nam through Gulf-War-colored glasses, *For the Boys* comes up with this revelation: war's hell but hey, it builds character.

The main character in this movie is in fact not the All-American warrior, but his All-American Mom, tenuously founded, but well-shellacked. After the opening credits are spread over a series of Old Glory close-ups, star and executive producer Bette Midler appears as Dixie Leonard, a retired song'n'comedy babe, now buried under mounds of rubber face makeup. The flashback structure that follows underlines the film's function as vanity production: Dixie/Bette does it all. Embodying decades of U.S. history, she loses her husband to WWII, her career to the Cold War (via blacklisting), and her son to the Viet Nam War.

Which is not to say that she loses her self-righteous spunk. As she recounts her exalted life story for the reverent young man (Arye Gross) sent to escort her to an awards ceremony for her ex-partner, Eddie Sparks (James Caan), Dixie's heartwarming gumption seems to ooze beyond the suddenly inadequate screen frame. Add to this her mausoleum-like house, gravelly voice, and appalling *Enemy Mine* lizard-face makeup, and Dixie

seems more and more like a sci-fi monster glad for the chance to tell its side of the story.

Indeed, as this ostensibly anti-war movie has it, Dixie is the resident alien in the manly world of patriotic combat. Made by Midler's All-Girl Productions, *For the Boys* implies that what look like increasing moral complexities can be reduced to a question of sexual difference: boys like war, girls don't (or, as Midler puts it in an interview, "I think women are just the greatest creatures. They instinctively understand everything"). Homebody-at-heart Dixie resents that men get killed overseas; flamboyant schmoozer Eddie gets into the be-all-you-can-be hoopla.

Ambitious Dixie leaves her young son Danny to join Eddie mid-tour near London during WWII. He wears a bad wig and rolls his eyes a lot; she wears an officer's jacket and heels, and flutters her hands a lot. It's a perfect match. She also out-trashes him verbally, then launches into spectacular and brash boogiewoogie-ish schtick. Her polished performance and clean-cut kid audience sustain the myth of the Second World War as uncomplicated straight-shooter. If only all wars could be like this.

But even WWII quickly becomes fraught in this increasingly schizophrenic movie. Eddie serves as a literal and metaphorical pimp, a self-promoter whose career depends on USO extravaganzas. During a show for troops in North Africa (which looks much like Utah here), he directs his giggly "friend" Vicki, a miniskirted contortionist dancer, to some U.S. general's tent, then arranges for Dixie's husband to be flown in, so that the couple's reunion is part of the show. That the husband is played by *Full Metal Jacket's* Cowboy (Arliss Howard) resonates uncomfortably alongside his offscreen death (registered by Dixie's polite grief in the obligatory Arlington Cemetery scene). The "dead meat" scenario is, after all, the shape of things to come.

Next war up is Korea, where the increasing moral consternation appears as onscreen corpses. The set-up for this confusion comes when, surrounded by starving Koreans (aka "gooks"), Dixie's uncle Art (George Segal) mouths off to a reporter about U.S. policy: "Lady," he says, "This whole war's a joke." Eddie won't tolerate such PR heresy, and with their conflict the movie seems on the verge of examining substantive issues like responsibilities, motivations, economics, and ethics. Not to worry. This potential glitch leads directly (within the film's logic) to Dixie and Eddie's firsthand experience of troop death, securing audience sympathy and eliding politics. Caught in rain and mud, she holds a soldier's hand as he spurts blood all over her and then dies. This scene in turn leads to a night of supposedly compassionate sex between the principle players. Predictably, in the morning Eddie gazes out the tent door and talks about his wife and family (he's SUCH a heel) while "tough broad" Dixie enacts noble cover-her-breasts anguish: "A bunch a guys got killed and we got laid."

Cut to peacetime. Their conflict continues, as the be-daughtered Eddie covets Dixie's son. While they become fifties' television stars (a la Lucy and Ricky), Danny becomes their battleground: Eddie tells him how to rate brunettes over blonds, and Dixie wrings her hands over

the boy's lack of formal education. As if moved by cosmic forces, Danny grows up to be a Citadel valedictorian who goes to Viet Nam.

To follow him there, the movie must go through considerable narrative convolutions. Dixie decides never to speak to Eddie again when he fires her Uncle Art as a blacklisted Commie. Danny takes Eddie's side. But Dixie caves in when Mr. USO arranges for a last tour to Southeast Asia. Miraculously performing at Danny's base camp (where the troops play ball with little Vietnamese kids), Dixie soothes a group of savage GIs by saying stuff like "Shut the fuck up," singing a John Lennon song ("In My Life"), and dancing with a black guy.

As this alarming display of American motherhood suggests, the film is irrecoverably impervious to sense. Read: anything goes. The scene leads to the inevitable cry of "Incoming!" and the ultimate hysterical specter: a son dying in his mother's arms in Viet Nam.

This gruesomely slo-mo image doesn't quite conclude *For the Boys'* ideological trajectory, however. If the sobbing Dixie-in-pietá-mode incarnates the horror of war, the glory of it gets a last shot in the film's final scenes. She agrees to go to Eddie's ceremony, eventually forgiving him because he cries onstage about Danny's death. The lost son unites everyone into a kind of Human Condition and politics are (conveniently) superfluous when Dixie joins Eddie on yet another flag-bedecked stage.

Obscuring its own irony, the film thus moves from WWII to the Gulf War, which reinstates jingoistic parading as a means of self-definition. And if the Gulf is unmentioned, such absence seems merely a plot device: Dixie's maternal tragedy is made clearer by Viet Nam than by the Highway of Death. Finally ascending as the ur-mother, she shares the stage with the enfeebled Eddie and dancing Asians.

## SCIENCE FICTION: THE VIET NAM WAR IN BRITISH NEW WAVE

Alasdair Spark, History, King Alfred's College

That American science fiction should relate to the Viet Nam War may seem obvious; less so is the relationship of British SF. Yet, the reaction against the War largely came from the so-called "new wave" in SF, many of whom were British, and a distinctive British tone exists. The American author Norman Spinrad made a perceptive point:

I was in Europe during a piece of the Viet Nam War . . . the war had created a lot of European anti-Americanism, which of course was to be expected. But the tenor of it was peculiar. The real gut feeling had little to do with the plight of the Vietnamese. It was a feeling of sorrow, of loss, of betrayal. Europeans felt diminished by what America was doing . . . let down by something they had believed in. (6)

Indeed, events in Viet Nam seemed to many British SF writers accurately to disprove the benign vision of the future held by American SF. As J.G. Ballard noted in 1969, while American SF had once been:

an extrovert, optimistic literature of technology. . . the new science fiction, that other people apart from myself are now beginning to write, is introverted, possibly pessimistic rather than optimistic, much less certain of its own territory. There's a tremendous confidence that radiates through all of modern American science fiction of the period 1930 to 1960, the certainty that science and technology can solve all problems. This is certainly not the dominant form of science fiction now. (59)

To an established writer such as James Blish this was precisely not SF, because of its "excessive emphasis upon the problems of the present, such as overpopulation, racism, pollution and the Viet Nam War, sometimes only slightly disguised by SF trappings." The new wave did hope to re-name the genre "speculative fiction," although the new wave itself was imprecise. Harlan Ellison punningly referred to the "nouvelle vague." The term was first applied to SF in association with the British magazine *New Worlds*, from 1964 under the editorship of Michael Moorcock, and featuring British and American authors such as J.G. Ballard, Brian Aldiss, Thomas Disch, Keith Roberts, John Clute, and John Sladek. In the US, a major forum was the anthology *Dangerous Visions*, edited by Harlan Ellison in 1967. Common to both was a frustration at established SF and the SF establishment, fuelled by a dissatisfaction with contemporary America. Its subject matter was often described as "inner space," and focused on what Samuel Mines [L 234] primly described as "crude tastes," but expletives and graphic sexuality were part of an attack upon SF by young writers who aimed to take it out of its insulated world, and expose it to the heat and light of the politics of the Sixties. In effect, just as the Black Power movement came to think of the struggle in the urban ghettos and against the War as inextricably linked, so many new wave writers would come to believe that struggle against what Ellison call the SF ghetto and the Viet Nam War were also part of a radical continuum.

Therefore, those who saw Viet Nam as a portent of a malign future took Che Guevara's exhortation to "create a thousand Vietnams" and inverted genre formulae such as human-alien relations, or technological visions of the future. The latter was common in British SF, but a specific British mechanism was to insert the unfamiliar into the familiar, and place Viet Nam in the English—not the American—landscape. In Ballard's "The Killing Ground" (first published in *New Worlds* in 1969), the USA has twenty million men in arms, waging a losing war against National Liberation Armies in "continuous fighting from the Pyrenees to the Bavarian Alps, the Caucasus to Karachi. Thirty years after the original conflict in South East Asia, the globe was now a huge insurrectionary torch, a world Viet Nam." One front is the banks of the

Thames, as besieged Americans huddle in their base camp. The quiet incident at the center of Ballard's story concerns three American POWs captured by rebels at the memorial to President Kennedy at Runnymede. As impediments to the advancing NLA patrol, the American POWs are shot in the back of the head, ironically counterpointing the elderly graffiti on the plinth, "Stop US Atrocities in Viet Nam." Five minutes later the patrol are themselves dying in an English meadow.

Michael Moorcock achieved the same effect more significantly in *A Cure for Cancer* (1971), the third novel in the Jerry Cornelius cycle. Cornelius confronts the invasion of Europe by American troops intent on restoring order, although at home things have collapsed, and the American Army units are once again encircled by American Indians. London is subject to bombing, napalming, and defoliation by the US Air Force. Cornelius passes Hyde Park:

Jerry recognized nebutyl ester, isobutyl ester, tri isopropanolamine, salt, picloram and other chemicals and he knew that the park had got everything—Orange, Purple, White, and Blue. 'Better safe than sorry.' He pulled up outside Derry and Toms... A boy and girl ran out of the smoke, hand in hand, as he entered the store; they were on fire, making for the drinking fountain on Kensington Church street. (193)

In its focus in a devastated London, this evokes the Wellsian tradition of British SF, but in a future where America offers not liberation but death. The US commander General Cumberland (classmate of General Westmoreland) speaks of:

a wave back there and it's coming in fast, and that wave is American strength, gentlemen, American strength, American manhood, American know how, American guts, American money, American dynamism, American bullets, American guns, American tanks, American planes, American freedom, American efficiency... American love, American humor, American health, American beauty, American virility. (170)

But not, it would seem, American SF.

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 Norman Spinrad, *The Star Spangled Future* (New York) 1979.

## A DREAM OF TWO WARS

Jerry Gold, Black Heron Press

For a number of years after I returned to the United States from Viet Nam, I had a recurring nightmare. In it, I was somewhere in the Middle East, sand and scrub all around, white sky, boiling sun. I had escaped, alone, from a fortress. The fortress, I remember, was the color of the sand, and perhaps was built of sand, sand compacted, made concrete-like. The fortress was very old. I remember feeling that it had been constructed, or might have been, by the Crusaders. As I said, I had escaped from it, alone. My captors, whoever they were, had not tortured me, though I believe they did in some way mistreat me. But this, the mistreatment, happened before the dream began. At least, I have no memory of dream-experiencing maltreatment at the hands of an enemy. Somehow I escaped. I think I killed somebody in my escape. I believe I killed him my hands. Writing this, I feel again that heart-pumping, nickel-tasting, adrenalin rush that I remember from my dream when I held my hands just so.

Now I was outside the fortress. Its wall were very high and sloped slightly inward and stretched for hundreds of meters before making a right-angle turn, before becoming other walls. I was in uniform - I do not remember what the uniform looked like - for I was in the army, the American army, I assume, though perhaps not. I was armed with only a .22 caliber rifle, hardly a weapon at all. I do not know how I acquired it.

I was on the outside, having escaped, and I was essentially weaponless—rather, I was armed with a weapon large enough to anger the enemy but not so large that I could defend myself with it—and I had to get back inside. For I had left my friends inside. They were prisoners and were being mistreated and worse, and while I had done my soldier's duty by escaping when I had the opportunity, I knew I had to go back and try to get them out. And, as I say, I was armed with something that only resembled a weapon, and I was terrified.

I was so scared I could hardly bear it. My heart was racing and my breath came so fast I could not catch enough air to fill my lungs, and the sweat, the sweat, I was rolling in it, it slicked my hair, it salted my eyes, it flowed off the tips of my fingers like melt in the sun. I knew I was going to die. I had left my friends and I was going to go back for them and I was going to die inside the fortress without freeing them.

Of course, I knew what the dream was about even if I did not understand the meanings behind all of its symbols. It was survivor guilt. Most of the men I knew in Viet Nam had died there. If I were to attempt to rescue them—from what? from death? Who, really, was the enemy? - I, too, would die. Yet I had to try. I searched for a way back into the fortress.

I think I made it to the top of the wall once or twice. But I never, ever, got any farther. Not once. Always, without fail, I woke up or was shouted awake by my wife (I had warned her not to touch me when I was in a

nightmare; to her credit, who continued to sleep with me). I did not die. Instead, we got up, took the sheets off the bed, put on dry ones, I towelled off, and we went back to bed.

I think I understand why the dream was set in the Middle East. I am aware of the notion that horrific dreams are often situated in places unusual to the dreamer. I had never been to the Middle East. But I had wanted to go. There were two wars in the Middle East during the period of our war in Indochina. That, I believe, is why I wanted to go there. To be a soldier again, but, somewhere where the reasons for fighting were clear, or seemed to be, and the war would not last forever. I wanted to fight in the Middle East in order to gain back a part of myself that had died in Viet Nam, though I know I would lose the rest of myself.

If the purpose of my dream was to reconstruct my past in such a way that I could accept it, was the nightmare also one of a collective kind? Are we revising our history in order to mythologize it, to make it into something that portrays us as we would like to see ourselves? "We could have won in Viet Nam if we had been allowed to fight." "We are a kinder, gentler people . . ."

This myth, I think, has propelled us into the desert. It is a myth become hypothesis: we are testing it, to determine if it is the right myth, the one that will tell us that we are a righteous and invincible people once again. About one thing President Bush and his Defense Department spokesmen are right: the Persian Gulf is not Viet Nam.

But we are in the Persian Gulf because we were in Viet Nam.



## THEY CALL ME CHILLY

Dan Duffy

They call me Chilly at the Greek's, because I was known to sleep in the outside stairwell next door on winter nights when I was too confused to make it home. The brothers never said boo when I started coming in clean for work, not word one all these years, just began charging me for coffee and leaving the regular number of sugars. They introduced me to their mother, who is there sometimes. On Christmas I have the Catholic sisters on Wooster Street pray for her intentions. She is Orthodox and I was a Protestant, but it gets the point across.

I work in the offices over the furniture store across the street. This month it is a woman in Santa Barbara, Grenada, who cans jellies and makes doughnuts in her kitchen. USAID, the development organization, is giving her half the money to build a bigger kitchen out back, a concrete slab with a corrugated metal or fiberglass clad steel structure. That is what we call a facility for a process line, abroad and here. Where I live in the woods is zoned against them, but Westbrook nearby is full of small factories, and the other towns too. Most country people worldwide get their cash in such places. Thoreau had a pencil factory like that, and Robert Frost set half his nature poems in Vermont's small mills.

I find machinery in the U.S. for people with small factories in poor countries. I know what they need. I worked for a development agency in a poor country overseas from 1966 to 1975. I did research in the field, identifying local leaders, small politicians, entrepreneurs, and influential opinion leaders for a computerized portrait of that whole part of the country. I liked the work, interviewing, walking out into the villages alone at dawn, trading information with people. It's 1990, and I get work from the same international development group, still in research. Now I work the U.S. I haven't risen through any ranks in life. I don't actually have a job. I'm grateful for my contract work. I lived in a hole in the ground outside of town in the 70s, drinking some years, others not at all.

U.S. process machinery is built to supply a continental market without using labor. I could pick up the phone and get five quotes on two lines that would make 5,000 doughnuts an hour and 3,000 gallons of preserves and employ one man part-time. But the executive in Santa Barbara wants to work up to making 50 dozen doughnuts a day and 200 pints of jelly. She now employs her family and wants her neighbors to work for her, too. After a week on the phone I found a place in Georgia that the national Baptists opened after the Civil War that makes small-production preserves process equipment. The idea was that the ladies at local congregations in the broken states on the losing side could work together and make a little money selling jelly to the North. It worked out, and is still a good idea. In the same week I also found the company in Seattle that makes the doughnut machines you see in the window at tourist places, or on the street, very reliable Rube Goldberg devices that make product at just the rate my client needs.

I started being unemployed in Viet Nam in 1972, when my program stopped. I stayed on in Cholon, the Chinese-speaking part of the old capital, at an orphanage, and walked out to a listening post in China with three spooks after Saigon fell.

What I did in the war was draw a fucking map. No, I'll try to say this without saying "fucking" once. When the Maryland cops picked up Ollie North naked in Bethesda at two in the morning, waving his automatic, I hear all he said for hours was "Fuck." I don't know if Ollie did ops himself in the program or he is just thinking too much about his contract workers, but he is clearly still locked in the obscene things we did. Ollie was an executive. I was in research. He was Army, I was USAID, we were both ultimately CIA. What I did was draw a map, finger people, identify targets in every village for assassins who came around later. They came in the dark, alone, silent, without a uniform, and gutted the body so it would stay sunk in a paddy. The idea was to sap the political will of the communists by killing them all.

When the Cold War ends all over and we recognize Hanoi, I'm going straight to the new embassy to talk about trade. It's hard to guess what Viet Nam can sell to the U.S. I haven't looked into the rice market. I suspect that Viet Nam would have to grow some standard rice and take the commodity price, a tough strategy without a lot of cash to spend on losses. A more appropriate approach might be to seek specialty markets for the rice they actually eat in each village, which is as distinct as the pizza at each joint in New Haven and overall as different as our pies are from what you get in any other American city. Selling chewy rice you eat with rotten fish, I'd like to try it. That would be to start. There are going to be third-party investors willing to buy machinery from here for factories there, and one day those factories will be making things at quality in volume. It's going to be Korea over there, not just another third world country. I might make some decent money.

So I may walk into a paddy from the tree line again, make friends and go on towards the hooches to find the man in charge. Everyone I know who was there is still walking step by step, looking for a trip wire, or standing in place in an unnatural position because they felt a mine trigger click down to arm and they don't want it coming back up to ignite. I wasn't combat, but their experience is the one we all use to think about ourselves. I didn't step on any booby traps because my informants told me where to walk. My informants are in holes in the ground. Put it all behind you, that's the healthy way, but I'm not healthy and I'm not going to be and neither is anybody else who was there. I want to cause normal life. Back to Viet Nam, that's my plan. I want to turn my social science business end on the U.S. for the people of Viet Nam, to help them sell what they've got.

*They Call Me Chilly* is fiction. Dan Duffy is editor of this newsletter.

## Age, Ethnicity, and Class in the Viet Nam War: Evidence from the Casualties File

Brady Foust, University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire  
Howard Botts, University of Wisconsin—Whitewater

We first got the idea for this paper while visiting the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington. As geographers, we were struck by the fact that each name on that haunting memorial represents a place. When those places are mapped, what pattern emerges? Does a geographic approach yield answers to some of the questions which have been raised by Viet Nam? The seemingly large number of Hispanic names also caught our attention. Perhaps they stand out simply because they are visually different from more familiar Anglo names. The discussions that grew out of that first visit to the Wall led us to consider a number of other questions. Our purpose became to discover whether or not any of these questions had a specific geographic dimension.

In this paper, we have focused on Black and Hispanic casualties of Viet Nam. Hispanics especially represent a "forgotten" group of veterans. When one examines the numerous histories and bibliographies of the war, even cursory considerations of this large minority are generally lacking. In fact, one is hard pressed to find "Chicano," "Hispanic," or "Mexican-American" listed in the index. For example, General S.L.A. Marshall, the military historian, makes a brief reference to Hispanics when commenting on the racial composition of a specific rifle company in the early days of the war (cited in Baskir & Strauss, 1978), but his remarks are completely anecdotal.

Manuel Caro in an essay entitled "A Chicano in Vietnam" (*Newsweek*, October 17, 1988) noted that the late Dr. Ralph Guzman looked at casualty reports from December 1967 through March 1969 and found 6,335 casualties from the Southwestern States and that 19% of this group had Hispanic names. This citation points out the primary reason for the lack of attention paid to Hispanic participation in the war; service records did not list Hispanics as a distinct and separate ethnic group in the way that Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans were singled out. Every major history of the war in Viet Nam has a section devoted to the role of Blacks in Viet Nam and to race relations between Blacks and whites, but everyone seems to have forgotten Hispanics.

One can make a very strong case that much of what has been written about the War in Vietnam has been based on anecdotal information, "statistics" that have been quoted for so long that they have been accepted as fact without any real evidence to back them up, and generalization derived from excellent longitudinal studies and applied to the whole universe. Furthermore, one could contend that much of what we know about the war has been garnered from the popular press rather than scholarly work which is more likely to be based on hard data.

For example, there are three popular beliefs about the war which are widely held by the general public. Ask any college class about Viet Nam and these beliefs will emerge. They are:

1. **ETHNICITY:** Blacks and Hispanics were more likely to serve in combat in Viet Nam than whites. (MacPherson, 1984). MacPherson focused almost exclusively on Blacks as an ethnic minority overrepresented in the war. She makes no direct reference to Hispanics. Kolko (1985) states that Black casualty rates were high early in the war, but were reduced after 1968 to bring their total for the entire war to a proportion more representative of their numbers in the US population. None of the authors mentioned above, however, gives even the most cursory statistical evidence of these statements.
2. **CLASS (RURAL/INCOME/EDUCATION):** A second belief is that Viet Nam was a "class war" fought by the lower class regardless of race and thus should be correlated with low family incomes and educational levels. (MacPherson, 1984). Some scholars have also contended that the lower social class of Blacks (and Hispanics?) was more important than race itself (Badillo & Curry, 1976). Leslie Fiedler in an essay entitled "Who Really Died in Vietnam?" (*Saturday Review*, December 972) states that it was "not the statistics" but the fact that he as an educated, upper-middle-class college professor "had never known a single family that had lost a son in Vietnam." The war, he says, was fought by the underclass, yet he cites no statistics.
3. **AGE:** A third widely held belief is that the average age of the soldier in Viet Nam was "just nineteen." This is an anecdotal "fact" often stated, but never documented. Manuel Caro in his *Newsweek* essay states that the average age of men who served in Viet Nam was 19.2 years. This is a very precise number, but he cites no source and we have yet to find this number in any official DOD document.

The casualty group is a *sample* of all those that served in Viet Nam, but it is not a *random* sample. It is our thesis that, when compared to the total population which served, casualties were more likely to be: 1) draftees; 2) younger; and 3) minorities. In other words, if the beliefs about the war are true, they should be even more apparent in the casualties file.

Data for this paper were derived from a variety of sources. The primary source is the *Combat Area Casualties File, Vietnam* from the National Archives, Machine Readable Division. This is also the source for the names on the Wall. The tape contains one record for each casualty and about twenty different variables in each record.

The variables include: 1) name; 2) hometown of record; 3) age at birth and date of casualty; 4) rank; 5) religious preference; 6) cause of casualty (small arms, booby trap, artillery fire, etc.); 7) age at time of casualty; 8) marital status; 9) "race" and 10) several other variables. This data set is far from clean. There are numerous obvious errors including misspellings and miscodings. No attempt was made to systematically search for and/or correct mistakes in the *Combat Area Casualties File*.

This paper is limited to counties in the coterminous United States. No data were aggregated for casualties from Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, or for the large number of foreign nations (especially Canadians) who were killed while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States. This limitation yields a data set of 57,179 casualties. The total number of names on the *Combat Area Casualties File* is 58,130.

The data were first broken down by rank (officer/enlisted), casualty type (hostile/nonhostile), and race. The "race" variable on the *Combat Area Casualties File* flags only whites, Blacks, Native Americans, Asians, and "others." Hispanics, as mentioned earlier, were not categorized in the *Casualties File*. To separate Hispanic casualties, surnames on the casualty tape were matched against the names on the *Spanish Surname List* (computer tape) produced by the Bureau of the Census. Even the Census admits that this will not produce a perfect match. Hispanics are usually undercounted. We are certain that our match was an undercount, but unsure of the amount of error.

The next step in the creation of a usable data base was to match the "hometown of record" for each casualty with the "places" contained in the *City Reference File* computer tape from the Bureau of the Census. The *CRF* tape locates each "place" in a county and supplies a FIPS code number for that county. All towns that did not match in the *CRF* file were located and the FIPS number hand coded into the data base.

At this stage, each record was flagged by race, rank, casualty type, and FIPS (county) number. All records were then aggregated by county to yield the final casualty data base. The aggregated casualties file was next matched to two other demographic data bases.

First, we used the 1972 County and City Data Book tape to derive several 1970 demographic and socioeconomic measures for counties. County population could be used to calculate relative measures such as the number of casualties per 10,000 people. Three socioeconomic measures were retained from the 1970 Census Tape against which the casualties file was compared. These three variables were: 1) median family income; 2) average school years completed; and 3) percent rural.

We then decided that the total population figures contained in the 1970 machine readable file were inappropriate. Some measure of the male population normally serving in the military was needed. The available age cohorts for 1970 were males 15-20 and 20-25. These two brackets were thought to be a reasonable estimate of the "draft age population" available in each county for the peak years of the war in Viet Nam. Unfortunately, this cohort breakdown is not available in machine readable format so the file was hand coded.

What does this data base tell us about the three beliefs we noted at the beginning of this paper?

1. Age, the cleanest and most simple question, is considered first. The average age of all casualties was not nineteen, but rather 22.97 years. This is somewhat misleading, because people on the tape were still dying of wounds into the early 1980s. The average age of casualties for years during the height of the war is shown in Figure 1. The lowest average age corresponds to the year of maximum casualties (1968), but even then is much higher than nineteen.
2. The questions about minorities can also be addressed from the data base in a collective sense. In 1970, Blacks made up 11.10 percent of the population of the United States, but throughout the entire war, they accounted for 12.56 percent of total casualties. Over time, the record is even less equitable as shown in figure 2.

Baskir and Strauss (1978) contend that Blacks accounted for 24 percent of casualties in 1965, but this is not supported by our data. They also point out that as Black leaders "publicized the plight of Blacks in Viet Nam, the Defense Department reduced the minorities' share of the fighting—to 16 percent in 1966 and 13 percent in 1968 (supported by our data). These figures also support Kolko's contention mentioned above.

Hispanics, on the other hand, made up only 4.6 percent of the total U.S. population in 1970, but accounted for 5.04 percent of all casualties. This figure, as far as we know, has never before been presented. Given the undercount produced by the Spanish surname data file, the percentage contribution of Hispanics to total casualties is certainly much higher. Furthermore, this percentage does not include the 255 dead who listed Puerto Rico as their home of record or the five who listed Mexico. The temporal sequence is shown in Figure 3.

FIGURE 1

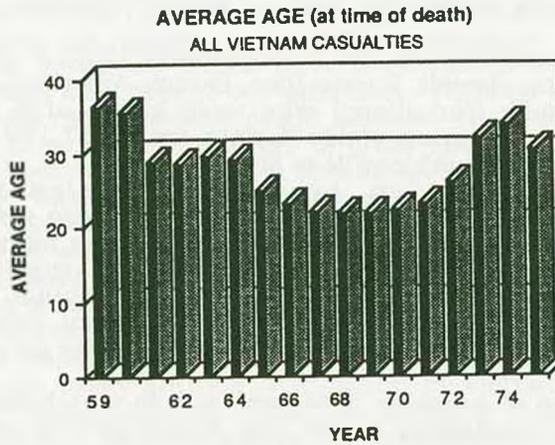


FIGURE 2

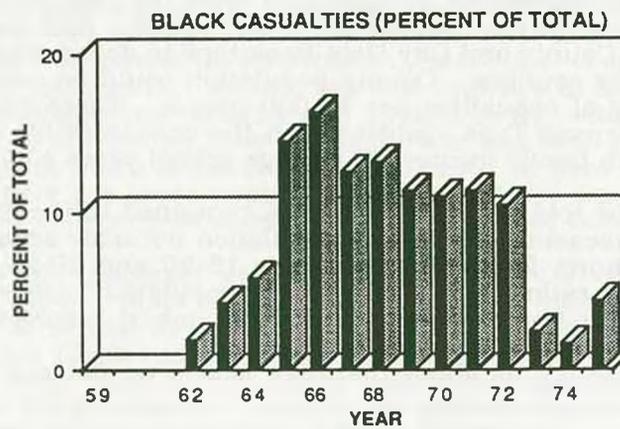


FIGURE 3

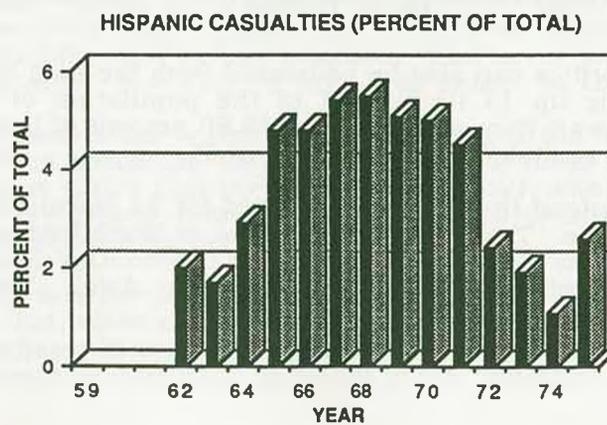
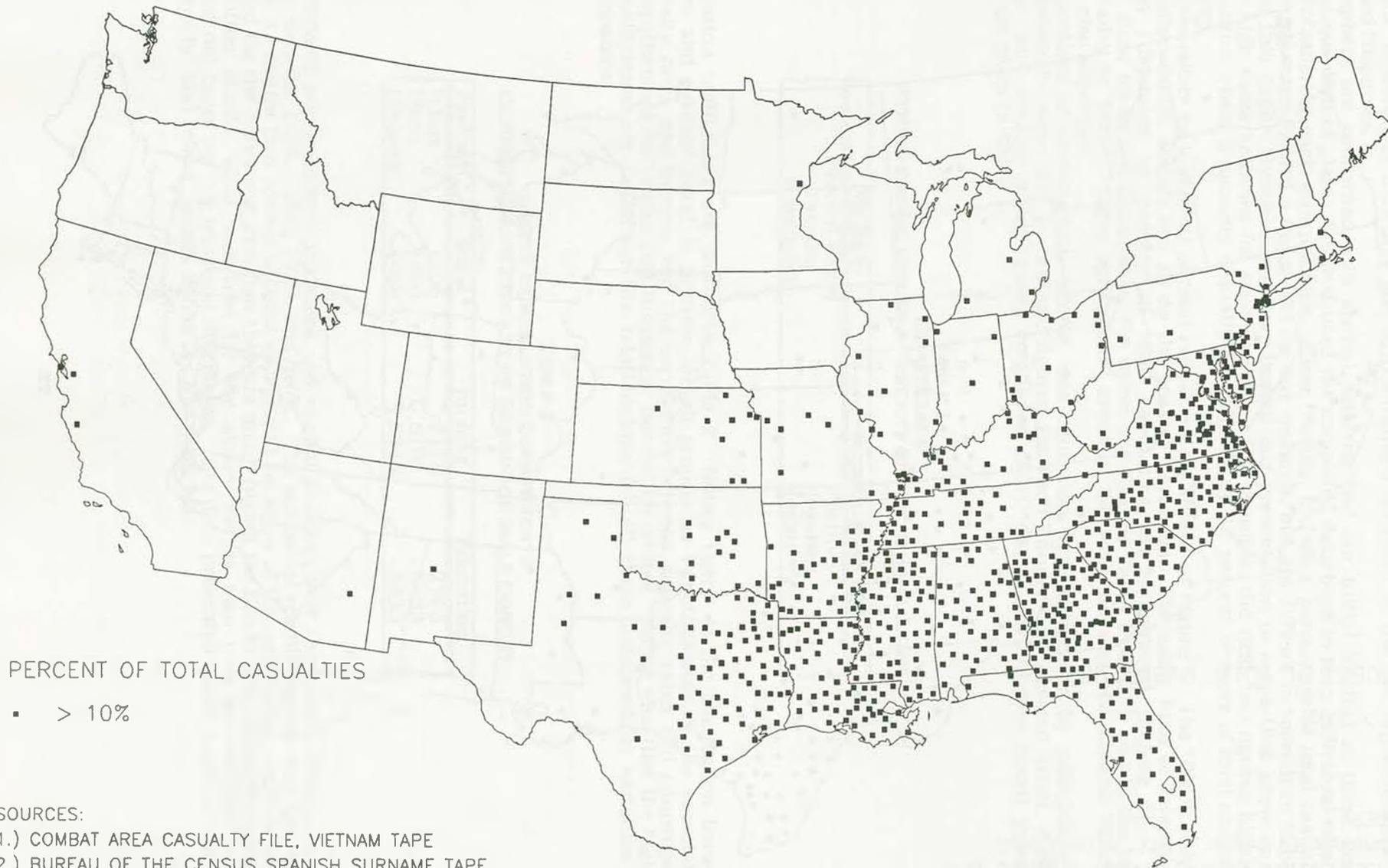


FIGURE 4  
**BLACK VIETNAM CASUALTIES (PERCENT OF TOTAL)**



PERCENT OF TOTAL CASUALTIES

▪ > 10%

SOURCES:

- 1.) COMBAT AREA CASUALTY FILE, VIETNAM TAPE
- 2.) BUREAU OF THE CENSUS SPANISH SURNAME TAPE
- 3.) BUREAU OF THE CENSUS CITY REFERENCE FILE TAPE
- 4.) 1970 CENSUS OF POPULATION

Brady Foust (University of St. Thomas)  
 Howard Botts (University of Wisconsin-Whitewater)

## FIGURE 5 HISPANIC VIETNAM CASUALTIES (PERCENT OF TOTAL)



**SOURCES:**

- 1.) COMBAT AREA CASUALTY FILE, VIETNAM TAPE
- 2.) BUREAU OF THE CENSUS SPANISH SURNAME TAPE
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Brady Foust (University of St. Thomas)  
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Both these percentages support the "ethnicity" belief about the Viet Nam war. What is more important, however, is that they give a *quantitative* measure of the overrepresentation for both Blacks and Hispanics.

Geographers are concerned with spatial patterns and our initial interest in these issues began with the question of place. We first used the completed data base to map individual casualty statistics by considering each group (Black, officer, hostile, etc) as a percentage of total casualties per county. Such maps formed a major tool for our research, but are difficult to reproduce in black and white. In this paper, therefore, we have limited our presentation to maps that show on the "standout" or high value counties for each variable. For example, the next two figures highlight only those counties where a minority casualty group made up 10 percent or more of total casualties from that county.

Black casualties as a percent of total casualties are shown in Figure 4. The "Black Belt" of the old plantation South stands out as do the coastal Carolinas. The same kind of intensity is evident when Hispanics as percent of total casualties are considered (Figure 5). The "Borderlands" show up as two clusters: a) the upper Rio Grande Valley (NM/CO); and b) the lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Some agricultural areas in the west such as the Central Valley of California are also important.

The questions of rural/urban, income, and education were considered by calculating the simple correlation between the percentage figures for each county and percent rural, median family income, and average school years completed (1970 data). Hypotheses about possible relationships are given in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**HYPOTHESES**  
**ETHNIC CASUALTIES AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL CASUALTIES**

Variable	Hypothesized Sign
Percent Rural	Positive
Income	Negative
Education	Negative

Simple correlation coefficients are shown in Table 2. Notice that: 1) the correlation between casualty rates and percent rural is positive for all groups as hypothesized; 2) the correlation between casualty rates and income and the correlation between casualty rates and education is negative as hypothesized for Blacks and Hispanics, but not for whites. Notice also that the highest correlation coefficients are found for the relationships for all three independent variables for Blacks and Hispanics

**TABLE 2**  
**SIMPLE CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS**  
**CASUALTIES AS A PERCENT OF DRAFT-AGE MALE COHORT**

Percent	Rural	Income	Education
White	.1306	.2178	.2765
Black	.4460	-.5192	-.5133
Hispanic	.3443	-.6318	-.5833

Next, we considered socioeconomic variables and spatial patterns over the course of the war, by looking at the data for 1966, 1968, 1970, and 1972. The statistical results for the four years are given in Table 3. Notice that almost without exception, the signs of the correlation coefficients are as hypothesized for the entire war and that they are much higher for Blacks and Hispanics than for whites. In other words, what was true for the entire war is also true for selected years. Aggregation did not cover up any temporal differences. The data presented above seem to support both the "ethnicity" and "class" beliefs about the Viet Nam war.

**TABLE 3**  
**SIMPLE CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS**  
**CASUALTIES AS A PERCENT OF DRAFT-AGE MALE COHORT OVER TIME**

Year	Dependent Variable	Independent Variables		
		PCT Rural	MEDFMIN	AVSCH
1966	Whites	+ .255	+ .007	+ .057
	Blacks	+ .581	- .590	- .591
	Hispanics	+ .531	- .693	- .501
1968	Whites	+ .169	+ .087	+ .135
	Blacks	+ .586	- .619	- .593
	Hispanics	+ .679	- .625	- .413
1970	Whites	+ .228	+ .028	+ .056
	Blacks	+ .688	- .679	- .675
	Hispanics	+ .689	- .683	- .524
1972	Whites	+ .313	- .141	- .079
	Blacks	+ .686	- .580	- .540
	Hispanics	1.945	- .441	- .165

There are two problems with this approach: 1) Blacks and Hispanics made up significant proportions of the total population of those areas where they also made up a large percentage of total casualties; and 2) both the "Black Belt" and the Borderlands are areas of low urbanization, income, and education in general.

This problem was addressed using location quotients which is a simple measure of deviation from a locational norm. For ethnic casualties the location quotient (LQ) was calculated by the simple formula shown in Figure 5. A location quotient of one means that casualties of a given ethnic group exactly match their proportion of draft age males in that county; a value above one indicates locational concentration; and a LQ less than one shows under-representation.

**FIGURE 5**  
**LOCATION QUOTIENT FORMULA**  
**ETHNIC CASUALTIES**

$\text{(For each county) LQ} = \frac{(\# \text{Black Casualties} / \# \text{All Casualties}) / (\# \text{Black Draft Age Males} / \# \text{Draft Age Males})}{(\% \text{Black Casualties}) / (\% \text{Black Draft Age})} =$
--

Myra MacPherson in *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation* contends that small town Southerners and Northern urban Irish served in the war in disproportionate numbers. Although not shown in this paper, the map of location quotients for whites does not support this contention. This is another example of popular journalism ignoring the scholarly literature. Patricia Shields (1981), in a paper published several years before MacPherson's work, had found that geographic region did not play a role in conscription. Shields' sample was a longitudinal one, but of substantial size. Our work confirms Shields' longitudinal conclusions.

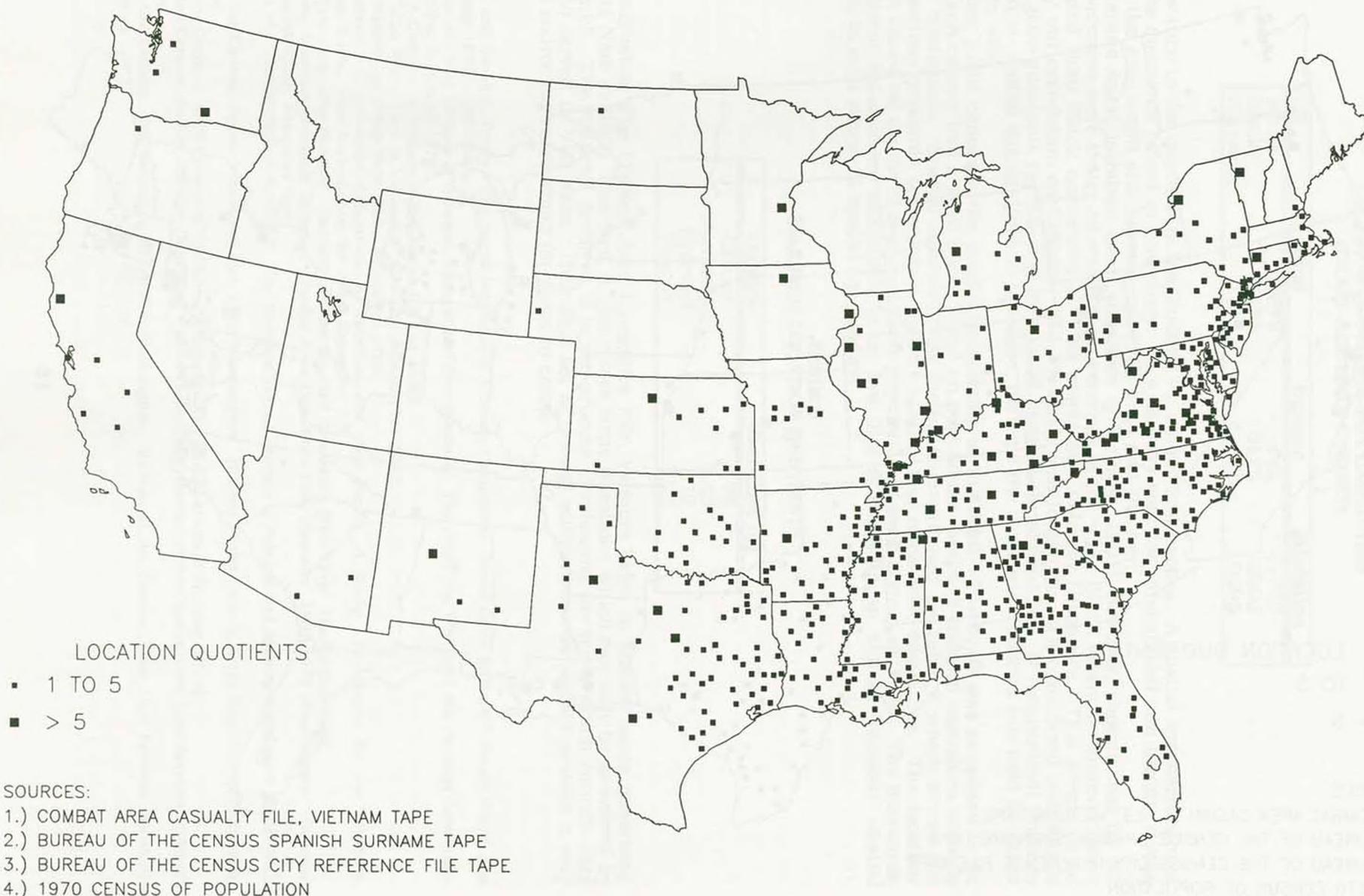
High (>1.1) location quotients for Black casualties are shown in Figure 6. High location quotients for blacks are found in the South which suggests that Southern Blacks were more likely to die in disproportionate numbers. There is also a common belief that urban ghetto blacks were overrepresented in the war and although high location quotients are found in some urban areas, this was not true of location quotients for Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston. In fact, in northern states, rural counties generally had higher LQ's for Blacks.

Location quotients (>1.1) for our Hispanic data base are shown in Figure 7. The Borderlands stand out as do selected urban areas such as Detroit and the Boston/Washington megalopolitan corridor. Within the Borderlands, the two concentrations in the upper and lower Rio Grande valley seen earlier are again evident. Both maps again suggest that Blacks and Hispanics were overrepresented in regions with substantial Black and Hispanic populations.

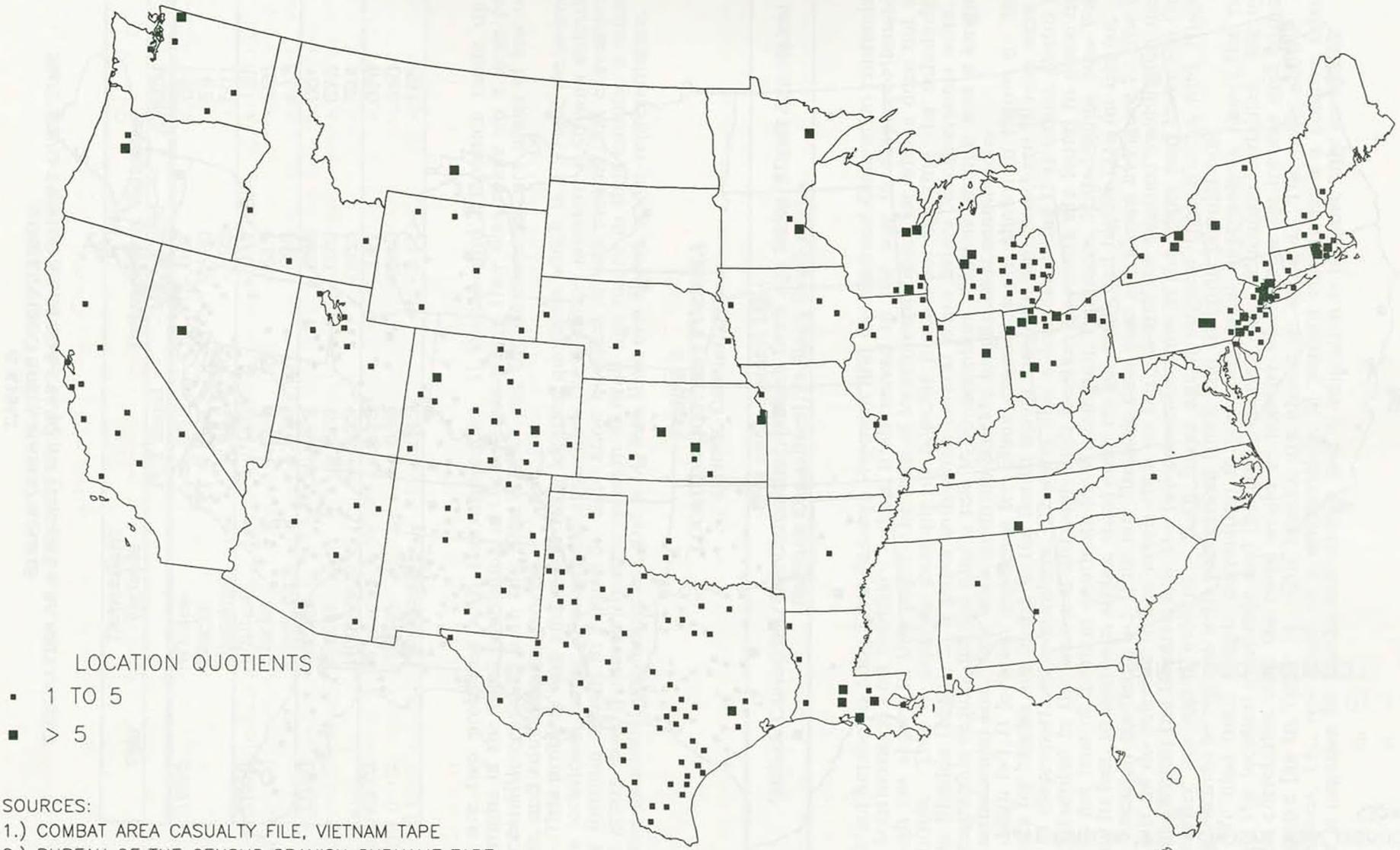
We also used simple correlation to test our visual impressions about the relationships between the location quotients and the rural, income, and education variables. We hypothesized that the correlation with the rural would be positive while those for income and education would be negative (as in Table 1). Our results are shown in Table 4. The table shows: 1) very low correlations, i.e., not much of a relationship; 2) percent rural shows a positive relationship; 3) income is negative for Blacks and whites; and 4) education is negative only for whites.

FIGURE 6

## BLACK VIETNAM CASUALTIES (LOCATION QUOTIENTS)



# FIGURE 7 HISPANIC VIETNAM CASUALTIES (LOCATION QUOTIENTS)



LOCATION QUOTIENTS

- 1 TO 5
- > 5

SOURCES:

- 1.) COMBAT AREA CASUALTY FILE, VIETNAM TAPE
- 2.) BUREAU OF THE CENSUS SPANISH SURNAME TAPE
- 3.) BUREAU OF THE CENSUS CITY REFERENCE FILE TAPE
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TABLE 4  
SIMPLE CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS  
LOCATION QUOTIENTS FOR CASUALTIES  
(DRAFT-AGE MALE COHORT)

LQ	Rural	Income	Education
White	.0678	-.1442	-.1720
Black	.1175	-.0175	.0203
Hispanic	.1211	.1270	.0295

We must now turn to the question of longitudinal vs. spatial approaches. A spatial approach cannot answer all the questions raised in this study. In a country with low educational and income levels, for example, the elite might still have escaped the draft and the war.

A Veterans Administration study (*Legacies of Vietnam*, 1981), however, showed that for all groups, nonveterans were better educated than veterans of the war. Black veterans, however, were better educated than Black nonveterans. This might also hold for Hispanics. This seems to be supported by our correlation coefficients. The VA study was longitudinal; it considered individuals and not the generalizations represented by spatial units such as counties. If longitudinal findings are replicated by spatial aggregations in one case, perhaps the same assumptions can hold for other hypotheses as well.

Our last point concerns the spatial equitability of the draft. The draft was supposed to be equitable. Each county had a draft quota based on population. Maps of enlisted casualties strongly support this contention. Spatial equitability is further strengthened by Table 6 which shows the maximum location quotients for enlisted, officer, hostile, and nonhostile casualties. The location quotients are based on the total draft-age male population of each county in 1970. The maximum location quotient for enlisted casualties is so low that it suggests an almost "random" spatial pattern which in turn supports spatial equitability.

TABLE 6  
MAXIMUM LOCATION QUOTIENTS

Variable	Maximum LQ
Officer	8.75
Nonhostile	5.42
Enlisted	1.12
Hostile	1.22

In conclusion, *The Combat Area Casualties File, Vietnam* helps to answer some questions about the Viet Nam conflict. However, it also raises some questions which can only be answered by further research. The National Archives is in the process of releasing the tapes which contain data about all who served in Viet Nam. This data set of several million records should provide a very rich archival source for researchers for years to come.

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## "SECTION FORMÉE, Z'EF!"

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One morning in 1968, six months in country, I stumble out for first formation at oh-dark-thirty to find my *section* formed up by fours, after the French: ("Comptez-vous quatre!") The *montagnard* platoon leader bellows "Garde-à-vous": ("Faaaaaall-hin!") Locks his heels, does a regulation pirouette, presents me a palm-out French salute, and announces impassively: "Section foooooormée, z'ef": ("The platoon is formed, sir!")

I take the salute, but something ain't right. I look around. Then it dawns on me, literally, in the crepuscular light. They all have red boots on! They're painted red! I know better than to look surprised. I squint archly at the toes, all pointing outward at the regulation 45 degrees. They are all red. I pull the *montagnard* first sergeant, Nhiao A, aside, put my arm around his shoulder, draw my face very near to his, and ask: "Pourquoi godasses rouges": ("Why boot red?") "Ça faire bon, z'ef," comes the sober reply: "Seemed like a good idea at the time." The horror! The horror!

What he meant, of course, was that of the two quite distant poles available to him for sorting out moral priorities, that is good and bad, the reason for painting boots red fell closer to the "good" pole than the other. And that was all the explanation he could or would give me, but between those poles lay a world of exquisite complexity and refinement into which I had a privileged glimpse for a short time.

Nhiao A was *So-dang*. Served in the French Army in 1953. "Quat'ième battaillllll-ong, z'ef," as he would announce to anyone who asked him, throwing out his meager chest and giving that backhanded French salute. Captured at Dien Bien Phu in the North, he served in a labor camp, and upon release, returned to his highlands (*Haute région*) where, of course, the New War was brewing. He knew all the immediate actions and specifications for the Model '36 French carbine and the MAT '49: "PM, mod' 1949, z'ef. Pistolet mitrailleur." He had been *cabot chef*, senior corporal.

Now he was Top Sergeant of my *section* of strikers, *supplétifs* as they still called themselves. Technical rank: Exploitation Force 0-1. And every morning as I staggered out into the compound of *Hruh Huong*, the "Hornet Hive," Raider Battalion camp, he stood at rigid attention after the French fashion, snapped me a quivering salute, and reported proudly: "Section foooooooooormée, z'ef!" He enjoyed the formality of his position, and I honored meticulously his role as *juteux*, adjutant. He'd turn and roar in his own language what sounded to me like: "Binh...gia dai...Binh! The thirty-odd *So-dang* in the section would hit the first position of attention, then pop to parade rest, then back to attention as I took over. French, I guess.

One morning I take it upon myself to form the platoon alone. "Binh...gia dai...Binh!" I bleat. Yards look at me, motionless. Louder: "Binh...gia dai...Binh!" Nothing. Nhiao watches, at length marches discretely over to the

side of the formation, says something in *So-dang* to the troops, motions me to give the command again. "Binh...gia dai...Binh!" They pop from attention to parade rest and back. And from then on, each time I shout "Binh...gia dai...Binh!" at the platoon, they execute. After a while I decide to broaden our repertoire, so I ask him how to give the command: Repos! (At ease!) "Pas moyen, z'ef," he says: "No way." Of course I ask—later I learn not to—why. After a lot of downcast eyes and harumphs and so on, I extort from him that it would be too complicated for the men. Why? Because they have no idea what I am saying, so badly do I mispronounce the three lousy syllables I have set myself to entone; Nhiao has simply told them that whatever I shout, they should come to attention, snap to parade rest, then back to attention. Fact is that I could howl "54-40 or fight!" and they would execute for me.

I have, in my foolish and linear Western Way, been looking to associate cause and effect. I have assumed that when I give the command and witness the response, I have provoked the response. Error! I discover later that my orders in combat would come to the same end as well: when I shout the right thing, I get compliance. If not, then what they do is what I should have ordered. An unusual system, but one in the end I learn to live with. And through. Nhiao knows I am young and dumb, but he has an old man's patience and the patience of a people used to biding time. And he tries to explain *time* to me more than once, but between my diffidence and his French, that elusive concept remains just that between us. I do come to comprehend that, though he wears a watch and evidently understands the meaning of the hands, he arrives places more or less on time and performs tasks more or less on time purely as the happy coincidence of when us *bou mis* want things done and when he determines that the fullness of time has revolved. "Moyen faire, z'ef" ("Can do, sir.") means that we can do it *now*, though why not before or why not after is never clear to me.

"Putain dgieu de merde de bordel de dgieu de merde de bordel de dgieu de merde de merde et merdel" Faced with the perversity of things or events (though never at men) Nhiao would let loose his best string of genuine French invective, then punctuate it with a Vietnamese: "dix mille fois!" He has picked up from some *tirailleur colonial* in the 50's the savory art of strung-together expletive, wherein all the dark terror and somber joy of a soldier's life commingle brutally: God, shit, whore. "Nomdedgieu," he'd spit once again, though the god he thus invoked he knew not at all.

On operations, we'd stumble up those Laotian mountain ridges till dark, then dig in. I can still remember squatting beside old Nhiao, chopping with an entrenching-tool at the rooty, fragrant soil. I would tend to hack out a shallow burrow and flop on my back like a beetle puffing and gasping and sucking water out of my canteen. Nhiao would take up the E-tool and methodically square off my crude hole and make it into a *fighting position*. Later, at 4 or 5 in the morning, when the first 82mm rounds began to slam into our perimeter, I would be grateful for his persistence. More than once, crouching in that hole in the

darkness as explosions rocked the ground and shrapnel whistled and skittered through the brush, I felt him put his arms around me. Not for the sake of *his* fear, but for *mine*. And I recall thinking—when I recall thinking!—that I could do worse than die in the company of a man like this. As surely I shall one of these days.

Death came for Nhiao in January, 1969 during the routine sweep of a base camp in a region called merely Hotel-Nine, where he took a round in the chest. We hack frantically at a landing zone for a chopper. We huddle around the old man in the mud and rot. Can't get a vein for the IV. Respiration shallow. Pulse limping. He looks up as we try to jam the needle in his arm:

"Moi, C'est foutu, z'ef," he says to me. "I'm done for."

"Non, non!" I tell him, "Tu t'en tireras": "You're gonna make it!" He doesn't seem to acknowledge. Now I'm choking: "Si tu peux tenir... L'hélico va arriver... Tu vas t'en tirer." I know he knows those words. He stares incredulously. I try again: "Si tu pouvais tenir, tu t'en tirerais." But the "hélico" ("chopper") I have evoked by my futures, my conditionals does not exist for him. Only the air he can't catch, only the numbness spreading across his chest. The conditional, the future are for Nhiao non-states, dislocated from tangible reality. The meaningless watch, remember? What is real is what you can touch, big dumb American. "Moi, C'est foutu," he corrects. And he is right. As he has been about many other things I have come slowly to understand.

I have a photo of him. He stares sternly at the objective lens. Meager chest thrust out, black eyes burning. Still—after so many years. He wears, for his own reasons, a pair of Western eyeglasses but with no lenses in them. It was his habit to carry them and to put them on with great solemnity. I never thought to ask him why.

## THE RESCUE

Dan A. Barker

I'd lay in my bunker at night, staring up through the torn poncho roof into air dense with the sulphur scent of illumination rounds, and listen to the men settling into their night defensive positions, having one last cigarette hiding in the bowl of a helmet, getting quieter, turning the squelch knob down on the Prick-10, putting a round in the chamber. And out beyond the wire the lamps in the villages would grow dim until there was only shadow black in black, the stucco ruin ghostly grey in starlight residue. The insects and centipedes would start moving around then, the mosquitoes and fire ants, and I'd hear their crisp metallic chirps among the slithers of habu and kraits, cobras and bamboo snakes. Night was when the mongeese and the V.C. hunted.

Despite my magic, the war was getting worse, whether I was able to realize it or not. The radio crackles and the urgent grasping voices from on top of the hill would sound well into the night. More and more frequently the sudden jolting snaps of rifle fire would unleash the fears, were they coming this way? how far? ours? ARVN's?

how many? another trooper trips over his dick? can they handle it, will we have to go? to the tighten-up boys, he's out there for sure, you bet your life. Just because the hill had never been assaulted in force didn't mean that the N.V.A. didn't have such plans for it. We'd been seeing them more and more, too, reports that some other outfit had killed two or three in full uniform; pith helmets, gold star buckles, AK-47s. And we'd even seen some of our own troopers carrying the spoils of fire fights, scowls of envy, not even the officers could dare to claim weapons won in battle from men so dangerously serious.

And as many patrols as Lt. Wurtz had personally gone out on, and as many times as he had sent his platoon out on ambush, not once had he killed a Viet Cong, or been shot or blown up. The enemy were all around us, but he was charmed, fated it seemed, to never enter into the supreme conflict, to test himself against the death that the enemy was ready to bestow upon him. He would volunteer for every mission the C.O. would assign. His was the hardest working platoon in the company, he was out to get his reputation, to get some blood on his soul, and his men were his tools toward that end.

Wurtz was determined, well schooled and well-trained, blond, fit, with blue eyes that were constantly searching for the advantages of terrain. He was always ready, like his blood ran pure adrenalin. Even in the hottest parts of the days of patrol, he'd never even take off his pack, his stamina a constant intimidation to his men. I was up on the hill visiting my friend Jim, the company radio man, when I heard Lt. Wurtz talking to the Skipper.

"We gotta get over across the river if we're gonna get some kills, Captain," Wurtz said, like he was convincing a priest to do a bank job. "And I don't mean any daylight patrols when they can see us coming and sky out. I mean, a night assault. Catch those dink mutherfuckers with their pants down."

The Captain was cautious. The men didn't like moving around at night. They sandbagged the ambushes, he knew, but they were out there to serve as warnings if the enemy ever decided to mass an attack. Indian Country was a different story, though. Across the river was indisputably theirs, they told us so every time we went over there, and this last fiasco with the wounded women was a further reminder that Charlie had the high ground. The red dots on his maps said, so, Christ, the red dots on the maps said they were everywhere!

"Of course, you're right, lieutenant, but I don't think so. Be patient, they'll come to us, you watch," the captain said, showing receding gums with a reassuring smile. But Lt. Wurtz wasn't satisfied. The point of being a Marine officer was to charge the hill, to go where angels fear, to tread on the wily little yellow fuckers, to go out looking for it as long as there was one atom of strength left in one fiber of muscle. In the crackle and hiss of the radios, in the light of the dial monitors and the radium watches, he persisted.

"We ain't been getting shit, Skipper. These chickenshit assholes sandbag the night ops. We haven't even seen a V.C. on this side of the river for weeks. Regiment wants bodies, Skipper. I mean to get them some."

Sensing his lieutenant's irresistible drive, his commitment to duty, to the good of the Corps, his willingness to relinquish any credit for kills to the reputation of the company, the C.O. humored him.

"And just how are you going to do what we've been unable to do?" he asked.

Wurtz was ready for his challenge. "A night op. We'll get some rubber boats, sneak across the river, set up an ambush right outside the village, and cream their asses."

"We don't have any rubber boats, Wurtz. Rubber fucking boats."

Ridicule was OK, it wasn't no. Valiant action, dreams, Sneaky Pete in the dangerous dark, kill the evil fuckers and steal their women, the Captain was a man, after all. "Another diversionary maneuver, then. Choppers over, we'll lay chilly for a day, and work up on them at night."

"Can't do that. We're spread thin, lieutenant. We're down to almost half strength, as you oughta know. Besides, we send you over there in a helicopter it'll be like you wearing a neon sign that says 'shoot me.' I'm glad you're gungy, but there's no reason to be stupid."

It still wasn't no. Yes was closer, and good men got what they wanted. "You know, and I know, they are over there. Only way we are going to get them to engage is to go over there and force them."

The Captain wasn't listening anymore. His mind had slipped into commando fantasy, and he was stroking across the Song De in a rubber boat, knife in his teeth, eyes that could cut down trees.

"So, what is your plan?" he said, exasperated, like he was granting his brash lieutenant a huge huss and he would be expecting repayment.

It still wasn't yes, but Wurtz could feel the approval of his daring warming in the Captain, knowing the keen weight placed on aggression. Nothing was more highly prized than the willing courage to engage and kill the enemy. Even if it went bad and got people killed. The Captain couldn't say no. All he needed was a workable plan.

"Well, we sure as hell can't wade the fucker. We go down to where Charlie crosses, he'll be waiting for us, for sure. We'll take some tracks over. We'll jump out just as they come up on the bank and slow down, lights off, then the tracks will go on further downstream, and we'll already be in place. Slick." His voice was a zealous whisper, the moments of setting up the ambush and readying the men, and squeezing off the death forming in his mind as certain and solid as a stone, the thrill like a crystal seizing his blood. The muscles at the sinuses tighten, the kidneys switch from urine to adrenalin, you couldn't bleed if your own daughter needed a quart. And, just at the moment of decision, Battalion called for a situation report, distracting the Captain. Taking the handset from Jim, he looked sternly at the brave young lieutenant and said, "Just a squad, Wurtz. No point in squandering men."

And that was all the permission Lt. Wurtz needed. He had difficulty not running down the hill to his platoon's portion of the perimeter, instead, striding purposefully and smiling.

Seeing him coming one of his men said to another, "Better watch it, Wurtz has a hair up his ass."

"I wonder what we volunteered for this time? Anderson's platoon has the ambush tonight."

"That fucker looks dangerous. I'll bet we're going someplace special."

"I don't want to go no place special. We're short, man. That lifer mutherfucker can't do no shit to us."

"I wanna go home. I wanna go home. Oh Lord I wanna go home," another man sang.

Most of the platoon had been sitting on top of their bunkers, silently looking out into the gathering dark, but gravitated toward Wurtz by habit and attraction to his zeal. When he had their attention, he looked at each of them, saying, "We're going across the river."

"Tonight?" a man asked, stricken by the idea of wandering around in Indian Country at night.

"Right now." Wurtz said, tolerating no further questions. "This is a strictly volunteer mission. First squad, you just volunteered."

"Oh, thank you, Lieutenant," a lance corporal mocked.

"Knock off the shit," Wurtz replied. This was not a discussion. Lives depended on the men getting his word.

"We will get into one of the tracks, cross the river, and get out just as we come up on the bank. The track will proceed further down the bank on the other side, then come back. The gooks will be watching it, not us. We'll move on in toward the village, set up an ambush, and nail whoever goes out to take on the track. Now get your gear together, no noise, no smoking, be ready to saddle up in five minutes. We are going to kick some ass tonight. No doubt about it. Doc Wilson, you stick with the sergeant. I'll take the lead." End of message.

Wurtz didn't wait for assent, but moved further down the road to make the arrangements with the track driver. First squad was complaining, "That dipshit is gonna get us greased, man, I can feel it."

"He's got his commando bullshit going again. Swear to God he shoulda gone re-con."

"What are you people bitching about. Isn't this why you came? We're just gonna go for a little moonlight walk and grease some gooks, no big thing, no sweat. Be home for a midnight snack," the sergeant chides. But for his bravado everyone knew he was just a talker; he'd never killed a bunch of gooks on an ambush. None of them had.

"I got a bad feeling about this one," the machine-gunner admitted. He was a big, powerful Cherokee who seldom spoke. His admitting to a premonition was an omen, a good reason not to go. But he had his machine-gun and his orders and there was no possibility of refusal.

The nine men met the lieutenant in front of the Amphtrack. There was the gunner, Bear, and his 'A' gunner, the M-79 man, the young black corpsman, Wilson, and five riflemen, counting S/Sgt. Monk.

"They are going to step in it tonight, you watch," someone watching them assemble prophesied. Someone else said, "This is the dumbest dumbshit thing I ever heard of. Don't that fool know who is over there?"

"He's mad because they won't come out and play."

"Anderson did that shit to us, I'd leave him there all alone," someone else said, but all the grumbling in creation couldn't change Wurtz's mind. He did know what was over there. He was possessed of the invincibility of immortal youth. He was Marine Corps officer, as good as any ten gooks. He was a leader of men, a scion of a rich family and it was his genetic destiny to perform the national duty of conducting his part of the war with inviolate pride.

The patient men waiting in the dark for him and his squad suffered no such illusions.

The dozen Marines loaded into the track, and the huge green vehicle rumbled down the hill and through the wire. We heard the track's engine noise fade into the night, and we waited, smoking in the dark.

An hour passed before we heard the track returning.

"I guess they made it over, all right," a man said, his friend answering, "Don't mean shit. If I was mister dink, I'd pick 'em off on their way to town. I mean, it ain't like there is anywhere else for them to go over there. There's the hills, the paddies, the path and the ville. Now just where would you expect a bunch of Marines to go?"

The track roared up the road, spun on one tread and parked. We went over to ask the driver how it had gone, and he said it was no sweat. A few rifle shots sounded down by Iron Bridge, none of our concern. Another hour passed. I went inside my bunker so I could smoke and register the sense of Wurtz's patrol. I didn't know the men very well, but they were friends who would die for me, and I for them. Wurtz's stupidity didn't disrupt the fact that the squad was part of us, and some intuitive connective tissue was tracking them. Something horrible was going to happen. It was preordained by the structure of our lives, our being in that place at that time. We went looking for it. It was going to find us, and Wurtz was looking hardest of all.

We were safe inside the wire, and I was safer inside my bunker, and they were out there, across the river, in the breathing dark bristling with menace, walking through country that was pure trap.

First there was a short burst of AK-47 fire, the reports sounding to us through the dense air from across the river—maybe a click up from the village. For a second in the pause just after the firing I think, no, not ours, but the burst is too short to have done much damage, their guys get nervous too, hope nothing bad has happened. It can't be bad, the tracks haven't even been back ten minutes.

But the pause only lasts a couple of seconds. Four more rifles start firing simultaneously, the AK has signaled them to start the ambush and there are four, five, maybe six rifles firing, some on automatic, some single shot, the firing lasts for at least an excruciating minute, it is one-sided, different weapons, theirs. It's too far away to hear human voices screaming but I feel them in my heart. There is another longer pause, then several M-14s open up on automatic, but it's only three or four men firing, the sound feels desperate, unaimed, terrified.

But it is enough to keep the V.C. quiet for several minutes. I am waiting to hear more firing, more firing would mean that some of them were still alive, that they hadn't all been killed our wounded to stillness, though silence could mean that the V.C. broke off the ambush and left Wurtz's squad to bleed and die.

Part of me is insisting that nothing bad has happened, that it was all just a big mistake, that even men as angry and dedicated as the Viet Cong would not be so murderously bold as to kill Marines in an ambush, especially an ambush of men I knew, I'm taking it personally, ego and self tied by love and paranoia to every man around me, including the V.C., to ambush Marines invited massive retaliation, napalm, mini-guns, helicopter gunships swooping out of the night sky, freezing your eyes in a halogen spotlight while the 20mm cannon blew your body apart, how the little yellow fuckers with their small arms could hope to withstand such onslaught bewildered me, such guts to get in close and kill us straight on from fifty feet away, the willingness to take on overwhelming odds, two to one, three to one, ten to one, to almost certainly die behind their courage, was so stunning in itself that to go against them was both enormously courageous and like killing your own noble reflection. The difference between ground pounders and flyboys is how intimately you know your enemy.

But it was night, there were no gunships in the air, the firing was close in, there would be no rescue from the air. In the pause between firings the men on the hilltop were screaming orders. The mortar pit launched several illumination rounds, and as they lit over the ambush site, more firing came from both sides. The fire is sporadic, aimed, they've got each other in their sights, there is more firing from the M-14s, desperate, urgent, each trigger squeeze feeling like a little boy calling help me. The AKs and the SKSs felt like enraged punches to the mouth that drove your brain into the ground, splintered teeth and skull, the last knowing moments, sky and vengeance.

As soon as I heard the fire I was out of the bunker, bolting into the dark like the rest of the men in my platoon perimeter, hearing the gunshots, lighting up pensively, automatically putting on web gear and flack jackets, getting ready, the motions more dictated by unity with our brethren than expecting orders. A runner came down the hill, moving fast, followed by the X.O., Gunny Mead and the company corpsman, HM-3 Broad. By the time the X.O. and the Gunny reached us, Lt. Anderson had already passed the word for the platoon to saddle-up.

Seeing the three of them I was expecting the senior corpsman to go along with us. It was clear that we were going to load onto the tracks and cross the river and get the men who'd stepped into the ambush, it was our duty, our singular and unit obligation. If we would leave no dead for the enemy to mutilate, we would more certainly risk and spend our lives to save the wounded and the living. But Broad came up to me as I was heading over to the waiting gape of the tracks, stopping me, saying, "This is a volunteer job, Doc, you don't have to go."

And for a second I felt enormously relieved, I didn't have to go, I knew that we were about to enter into

extreme danger, the firing had not stopped, and I didn't have to go if I could find the flimsiest excuse not to. I could leave it to the other corporals, saying it's too late, I should stick around in case we were about to be overrun, it was another platoon, there was no loyalty bond, my back hurt, I had a sprained ankle. "I'm staying here to coordinate the medevac," Broad said, effectively cutting off any decision that gunfire might have inspired in me.

"I'm on my way, man, who else is coming?" I said. Scared down to your bones, so what, you are those men suffering out in the dark, you will go, there was never any real question about it.

"I knew you'd say that. That's what I already told the C.O. You, Corry, and Bob Planter. They'll stay in the tracks. You go out and do triage. Good luck, man," and he gave my flack jacket a pat like I was going out to win one for the Gipper, but I didn't feel like I was going out to play some silly game. I'd won the honor of being just like the Marines, about to go out and throw myself in front of machine-gun fire. One her, hardly; dozens and dozens.

Approaching the waiting tracks, I asked some sergeant, "What's happening?" Verbal tic, getting a reply that summed up the Marine Corps approach to disseminating pertinent information. With as much cool as he could muster the sergeant said, "Squad stepped in the shit, we're gonna go get 'em." Like we were about to go get some groceries. Obedience means action without understanding, like you don't have the right to expect to come out of it alive.

Everyone wanted to ride on top of the tracks, a way to hold the high ground, to shoot from a moving platform. But the sergeants insisted that we all ride in the belly of the beasts, mouths shut, weapons on safety, no smoking, no information. It was an urgent matter at hand, even if few of us understood completely what awaited us, so there was little of the usual grousing.

Clamor of gear and boots on steel floors, the ramps winding shut, engines thrumming, we're loaded in the tracks and the tracks are rattling down the road, sharp left turn, further down the road, then out across the dry paddies, heaving humps over the dikes, then into the green silt-laden ooze of the river. Inside, we are defenseless, incapable of action, disconnected from our sacred earth, sitting ducks to a rocket or a big mine. Muscles and imaginations are tightening. Everyone has a different version of the story, no one in charge has deemed to tell us what has happened. Maybe Wurtz's squad was ambushed, maybe they sprung an ambush and had one backfire on them, maybe there were wounded, maybe there were wounded and dead, maybe they were all dead and the Viet Cong were just sitting over there in huge numbers waiting to slaughter us as we ran out the doors, just like the Japs. Everyone has different expectations of what will happen once we get there, and what is expected of them. It will be up to each man to figure out what they are supposed to do once the tracks stop and the ramps open and we go rushing out, into what, no one is saying.

We're in the wash of the river, water churning under the spinning tracks, the walls of the compartment cooling and condensing our rapid breathing, no longer

faces of boys looking frightened, but the faces of reconciled men, just as frightened but absolutely resolute. When the ramp came down we would be out the door, no sergeant would have to kick our asses. The only way to defeat the enemy was to kill him first.

Another sudden lurch up the river bank and we're in Indian Country, mud and silt churning out from under the tracks, clumps and clods of riverbank kicking back into the river. We turn, heading east toward the sea, hoping that it would be all over when we finally got there, that we'd find our friends, some of them wounded, but basically OK, and we'd just have gone through the fears, better that than having to go through gun fire. The tracks are moving fast, the one I'm in taking the lead, the driver pushing the huge machine to its limits, engine straining its hulk over the rolling mounds of earth beside the river. The trip is taking so long, if it takes much longer the Viet Cong will have killed any survivors, I'm thinking, gone down and shot them all in the head to make sure, and to humiliate us. The trip is taking so long, long enough for the Viet Cong to gather their strength, regroup if Wurtz's squad was able to defend itself and kill a few of them, long enough that they could be waiting for us. Everyone in the tracks is too scared to talk, to venture a fear would be to invite disaster.

Bullets are hitting the side of the track. They are a harmless noise, strange and metallic, so distant in danger than no one even flinches, a curiosity. I remember thinking, oh good, they're only using twenty-twos, which wasn't true. Two Viet Cong were firing their AK-47s at our track as if mere bullets could halt the lumbering beast and pierce the armor plate and kill all of us men trapped inside. We heard the sudden crump of a grenade exploding behind us. I was only trying to make the threat smaller, manageable, mental magic to help get me out the door.

Soon now, soon. Soon we'd be out the door, there were Viet Cong waiting for us, in their loathing of the great metal beasts they had announced their presence, we knew they were there now, now we would be ready for them, it didn't matter how many they were, we were Marines. If there were more than one platoon they would have brought bigger weapons. They knew we came after our own, they planned, they were patient, they could afford to wait. "Fuck man, if they rocket us, we're fried, man, fucking fried!" a trooper yelled, making us all suddenly aware that the machine's gas tank was in the floor and we were sitting on it. A sergeant told him to keep his mouth shut, but the trooper's warning was just more reason to hit the door running when the track finally stopped.

The driver turned out the overhead light, ducking down under his hatch, steering the machine with his periscope. The driver's gunner started opening up with the twin .30s. There it was, all the information you needed, there were Viet Cong waiting for us out there, we were close, there was only one chance beside staying locked up on the track and running, leaving our men out there to fight for themselves until the Viet Cong killed them, and that was to get out there amongst them, fight, shoot, kill, make the horrible moments stop. Brass is clattering on the steel floor.

Lt. Anderson has the door seat, but he seems incapable of leading, so Gunny Mead stands in front of us, bracing himself against the roof of the track, waiting for us to stop. We hear the other track pull up beside us, more bullets hit the side of the machine. In the dark, the .30s are still firing, he can see in the flare light, but all we can do is hear. Gunny Mead's bulky form is outlined in the orange light. "When the ramp goes down," Mead's strong voice says, "hit the door running." And that is all the information we get. Just an order of what to do in the next five seconds, and we're all standing up in the tracks, except Doc Corry who is hanging back in the back of the track, doing what he has been told to do. The ramp goes down, taking far too long, it's opening and we are vulnerable to fire during the time it takes to get low enough to let us escape.

Finally, we are out the door, worse than getting off helicopters, it is definitely a hot zone, but it is night and there is too much to find and focus on for instantaneous survival. At the split second the ramp hits the dirt the whole squad is yelling, releasing the voices, pouring out the door as fast as their legs can carry them, hunched low, the rifle fire is coming in at us now, the twin .30s are still firing but none of us has presence of mind to fire back, all we are looking for is a place to hide and find some cover so we can fire back, there are a half dozen rifles firing at us, traces are flying past and above us, leaving retinal after-images I can still see. In the sliver of dying flare light I could see our young faces hardened into fierce resolution. We are yelling the oldest yell in the world, reaching back millions of years, flushing the blood with the willingness to kill and die, making all life but the life here in this moment the only life.

In a strobe of rifle fire flashes I saw a ragged line of prone men strung out over thirty yards in front of me. The other men see them too, and rush toward them. Several of the men laying down are firing at the Viet Cong who are firing both at them and at us. A flare bursts overhead, I can see two Viet Cong hiding behind a mound thirty feet away, two more are teamed fifty feet away from them, another Viet Cong is hiding behind a mound about midway down the line of prone Marines, two more are further down, and those are the only ones I can see. But what I was seeing and hearing, what was happening, was not registering in the brain place that assigns names and meaning. There wasn't time to invent a story. What needed to be done was wired deep in the nerves, issued from the medulla, dictated by human character and immediate event. That I could die out there ceased even to be a comforting whisper. The officers and the trainers can claim influence, but it is the bones of being that do the work.

Another flare popped above us. To my right I could see a man laying prone, his hands were covering his ears, as if he could shut out the dangerous noise and the horrible world by not being able to hear it. The next think I saw was Sgt. Monk up on one knee, calling for a corpsman. Beside the sergeant lay a man curled into a fetal position, clutching his abdomen, his pain and anguish rippling through the night. The sergeant patted him on the shoulder, then picked up his carbine, aiming and firing it in the general direction of one of the Viet Cong

who was firing at the still onrushing burst of men coming out of the tracks. Twenty-five feet away from them was another man firing his rifle in short bursts, conserving his ammunition. His feet looked strangely detached from his legs. He seemed remarkably calm, like the world had slowed down by half, and if that slowing was to be fatal there was no impeding it.

Somehow I reached Sgt. Monk, and the man clutching his own abdomen. "Good to see you, Doc." Sgt. Monk says, his voice slow and measured, and I'm wondering how he can still be alive as tall as he is and as erect as he is holding himself while the fire is coming at us from fifty feet away. "Keep down, there are only five of us holding this line," he says, and two Marines flop down beside us, taking the aim of his rifle as the direction in which to fire. While they fire their rifles into the dark, keeping the ambusher's heads down, I tend to the wounded man at the sergeant's knees. He's got a battle dressing over his stomach, and looking under it in the flare light I see the grey protrusion of intestine indicating a through and through gut wound, maybe the kidney has been taken out, maybe he got lucky and the bullet just entered the gut just below the apron of his slack jacket, bouncing off the pelvis, tearing up the intestine, but that can be fairly easily fixed by a competent surgeon, biggest immediate worry is peritonitis, getting him out of danger and into one of the tracks where he can stop worrying about getting shot while he's defenseless, so I tell one of the just arrived riflemen to scuttle back to the track and get a stretcher and get the man into the track, superseding Sgt. Monk's order to fire on the enemy, and the man scuttles off quickly, and before the sergeant can say anything, I've got a styrette into the man's arm, my hand is soothing his brow and I'm telling him that he is going to be all right the others will be here soon with a stretcher, no I can't give you any water, you're gut shot, here let me put some water on this battle dressing to cool the fire and so the tissues don't dry out, I'll catch up with you later, there are other men here to get you, take it easy, we'll be out of this shit before you know it. But I didn't know. I didn't know how many Viet Cong were over there, or how many were waiting after we killed the ones that had ambushed Wurtz's squad, there was only one thing to do and that was keep going and I'm moving off down the line toward the man with the strange feet. Looking up for a split second I can see Gunny Mead standing over by the lead track, directing men to take positions along the ragged line of wounded Marines, and I can still see or feel the Viet Cong also in a rough line across the field from us, the chaos and the yelling and screaming, the rifles firing confusing beyond description, but the force lines of the fight bringing Marines into the right places, the Viet Cong holding their own with incredible perseverance. I'm not the first man out on the line anymore, there are Marines passing behind me, heading to reinforce the men in the ambushed squad who are still capable of self defense. I don't know what I am supposed to do, I barely know what I'm doing, just moving through the fire zone trying to stay alive and keep the people who've been shot alive and mostly just moving toward the man with the strangely twisted feet.

When I get to him I find him being looked over by Bear, the machine-gunner, the man with the strangely twisted feet is his assistant gunner, and Bear is propped up on his elbows fitting the pieces of his machine-gun back together. He seems undisturbed, like there is nothing more important in the existence of creation than getting his gun back together, and there is no force in existence that can break his concentration. Blood scent and fear scent, cordite and gasoline, shit and urine, red soil and river mud, tawny Vietnamese flesh, scents in flare light. Ten men on the line are firing now, shooting indiscriminately into the dark at the Viet Cong, keeping their heads down, maybe they'll get lucky, and there doesn't seem to be any urgency about killing the Viet Cong, only in getting the ambushed squad out of there, if enough Marines are shooting at the Viet Cong there would be little chance that any of us rescuers would be hit, or so goes the unstated tactic.

The assistant gunner is Morton, a friend of Dale's, and he recognizes me, saying, "Glad you could make it, Doc."

"Where are you hit?" I ask, still watching Bear put his M-60 together, still feeling the Viet Cong looking for a position from which to fire not fifty feet away from us. I can feel him crawling, towing his weapon behind him.

"I'm shot through both ankles."

"Bleeding much?"

"I'm all right," he says, calm and clear, almost glad, "bullets went right through. Can't walk, but I ain't bleeding."

I see two men reach Sgt. Monk with a stretcher, and yell at one of them to get over to us as soon as they can, letting them know our position, stupidly letting the Viet Cong know exactly where we were too, as if they didn't already know. Bear has the gun together by then, and he's putting the belt into the feeding mechanism, pulling back the slide, sighing like it's about fucking time, and I'm saying to Morton, "Let me get a dressing on those ankles."

"No point Doc," Morton says, kind of dreamy.

"Doc Wilson already get to you?" I ask.

"Naw, Gunner Bear got his kit, gave me a jolt already. I'm OK. You better get to LeFever, he's all fucked up." And I'm about to move off, and I lift my head for a second and not thirty feet away I see the tight muscular curl of a Vietnamese man untuck for a moment, lift his AK-47 to take aim at the three of us and I let out a scream as the tracers and bullets stream just over our heads. Bear ducks slightly, like he was impenetrable, like he could tell the trajectory of the bullets and knew even before the Viet Cong soldier fired that we would not be hit, and he pulls the M-60's slide back, the belt is started and without aiming triggers the gun, loosing a burst of bullets that hit the Viet Cong in the chest, blowing his upper body apart, killing him instantly, sending him flying back like he'd been hit by three huge fists, the force of the rounds entering his body rending him asunder. He doesn't even have time to scream.

Bear is still calm, and I don't have time to even see what has just happened, I must get on to LeFever, there are several Marines running up behind me, one of them catches up to me and asks me what to do next and

I send him back for a stretcher to pick up Morton, and tell him to tell the other two to reinforce the machine-gun, I'm not even thinking, more just moving. Further down the line, near the tracks, a grenade explodes. Bursting crump. No screaming. A dozen men are running behind us now, and there are rounds being fired into their midst by the Viet Cong, but they are poorly aimed, as if they have come to sense that if they start shooting at us with deadly accuracy they will so infuriate us that we will neglect our wounded and hunt them down and kill them no matter how many of us it took, we'd blast their village, women and children, into nothingness, they were outnumbered and outgunned, the two tracks had four machine-guns between them, lights and mobility. If they dared back off the very air itself could suddenly fill with violent fire and steel. Sensible men would have given up the fight when they first saw the Amphtracks coming across the river, but not these Viet Cong. No. It was their women and children we'd dropped the mortars on, and we would pay. They were sticking, fighting to the death, but staying cautious and low, prescribing what death and maiming they intended us to absorb.

I can see LeFever's long lanky body laying still and pain wracked a few yards away, and feel the bullets going over my head and at the Marines running behind me, I scuttle over to him. The Marines behind me hit the deck, catch the flashes with their eyes and start firing, barely missing me. "Hold your fire!" I yell, my voice automatic, unthinking, the blood doing all the talking. But it works, and I hear a voice slightly hoarse and shamed say, "Sorry Doc."

LeFever was unconscious. The gunner said he'd taken a round in the leg, so he couldn't be dead, I thought, but checked for a pulse at the jugular just to be sure. Slow and thready, he was in shock, he stirred when I checked his body for wounds, flinching when my hand located the battle dressing the gunner had applied to his leg. The bullet had torn through the large muscle of his left thigh, but there was little blood, no arteries had been severed. No tourniquet needed. He was out, I only had one and one-half styrettes left, the corpsmen on the tracks could dose him if he came around, there was nothing more I could do for him but get the Marines behind us to come to his aid, to protect him, the Viet Cong were readying themselves to fire on us again, I could feel them moving behind their grassy mounds in front of us, taking position. There were still two more clumps of men I had to get to.

Another flare washed the field in stark white light. In my peripheral vision I can still see Gunny Mead directing the operation from his position beside the Amphtrack, the twin .30s are putting out sporadic fire to keep the Viet Cong's heads down, Marines are still running to take up protective positions beside the wounded men, and I can see men heading with stretchers toward LeFever and Morton is being carried back to the tracks. Sgt. Monk is still kneeling beside the man with his intestines hanging out, Monk is firing into the grassy mounds. Several Marines on the line are firing, single shots, unsure, firing to make the horrible thing stop.

I could also see several Viet Cong crawling into positions behind the mounds, towing their rifles by the slings, sliding over the grass like serpents, like vicious

black mouths about to eat us. But I was so intent on getting to the next men who might need me that the thought of getting out my pistol to shoot them simply did not occur. Some prescient personnel officer had me pegged, oldest son of a broken home looking for God, and while I was aware that men around me were being killed and wounded, that I was in profound danger, that we all were in profound danger of losing our lives or being maimed, my killer instinct was not awake, the others would make the Viet Cong stop, they had to, we had to get these men to medical help, they had rifles and grenades, it was their job. I had my own work to do. I could trust them. I moved on to the next two men, both were lying prone, scoping the mounds, waiting for movement before they fired.

"Either of you hit?" I asked, seeing the tension in their bodies as a sign that they were still intact, still whole and worried, defending themselves, tied into each of us, knowing the Viet Cong only as the enemy to be stopped and killed, as the enemy who had done this outrageously horrible thing of ambushing them in the heaving dark, shooting them without warning, killing them without the courtesy of honor, vile and loathsome, deserving death. But that cut both ways. Only one thing to do in a firefight and that is to stay alive.

"We're OK. You better check Washington. He took a hit, he's over there somewhere," was all the information they had for me, enough to get me moving toward the moaning sounds coming from thirty feet away, the supine form of his body trying to lay as still as he could so the pain would cease. It was my friend Washington who thought I was crazy but followed me with his rifle after the Viet Cong kid who later sniped us, ready to defend me. But it didn't really matter if I knew him. He was a man down, the complete and utter purpose of my being. I felt a few rounds fly overhead, heard the pops of an SKS, heard the two men I just left open up with their M-14s. I ran my hands over his body, he was still conscious, checking for broken bones, bullet holes, cold where the blood no longer flowed, hot and sticky where it did. His respiration was labored, his pulse strong and regular, his eyes in the flare light beseeching, those of a child both terrified and angry, something horrible had inflicted this terrible pain in him that stopped him from moving, from even defending himself, making him lie still on top of the hole in his hip that he didn't want to explore with his fingers, he didn't want to know how much damage was done, that if he moved the pain would explode through his nerves like yellow lightning.

I could see where the blood had crusted in a jagged blotch on his hip, showing blackening green in the flarelight. I touched his hip, and he winced, moaning low and saying, "Not there, man, don't touch me."

"Gotta get in there, man, gotta see it, gotta know," I said, deciding to use my next to last Morphine, his breathing was OK, the pain rippling through him in waves. I jabbed the needle through the sleeve of his fatigue jacket squeezing the tube empty, talking to him, telling him it was going to be OK, that the men with the stretchers would be here any second to take him away, don't worry, nothing more bad will happen to you, making promises I couldn't keep, the grunts didn't call us

witchdoctors for nothing. I don't know if he was even aware that we had come to rescue him in the tracks. When the Morphine took hold, I rolled him over on his back.

Then I found the hole where the bullet had entered, and with two fingers, tore open the fabric of his trousers. In the stark shadows I could see a neat hole filled with torn tissue and bruise blue blood. Simply touching around the wound sent the man into a spasm of excruciating pain. Under my fingers I could feel the fragments of bone move. The bullet had smashed into his iliac arch and was lodged there, hard and stubby.

"You're gonna be all right, man. That ain't sh. Hurts like a mutherfucker, but it ain't gonna kill you. Home, baby, home to the World for you."

I stuck a battle dressing over the hole, telling Washington to hold it in place, there was nowhere to tie it to, and yelled to the men next to us to get the word to the men in the tracks that we had a wounded man here, need a stretcher, get moving. I get to my knees to start moving off, remembering that someone along the line of the wounded had told me that the lieutenant was somewhere in back of us, badly wounded, maybe dead, and I had to get to him next.

Something sharp whipped past my ear, then two more. I know they are bullets but there is nothing I can do about them. I'm moving toward the lieutenant, there is nothing that can stop me and therefore I can ignore the bullets. I hear the rifle fire coming at me, and turning toward the rifle flashes, eyes drawn to danger, drawn to light, I see a Vietnamese man less than twenty feet away. His face is contorted into a mask of profound anguish. The muscles of his arms stand out bunched and taut, and his aiming eye is focused on me, I can feel it see me. He was ignoring Washington, I was moving, Washington was already down and gone. I can see the Viet Cong's finger tightening on the trigger of the old M-1, the muscles of his arms and shoulders contracting to pull the trigger and I know he is going to kill me but there isn't anything I can do about it, there isn't even enough time to duck or dive away. I am going to be dead in the next split second. I can already feel the great black emptiness getting ready to swallow me. I can feel the hint of unutterable peace. It doesn't matter if I am a good man or a bad man, a good Doc or a vile enemy. I will simply end. I see the Viet Cong's face explode. Two more bullets smash into him while I'm seeing him come apart in pieces. Then I see the bright yellow-white rifle flashes register in the air just past my left field of vision, and feel the Marine who is rushing toward my left side. He is going down on one knee and firing again. I am not dead.

It was Wilks.

"You better learn to keep your head down, Doc," he said. He was smiling. "These people ain't fucking around." And he is happy, looking at the product of his work in the fading flare light, seeing the black blood smashed clump of man flesh totally inert. "Fuck man," I said, not fully understanding what I'd just seen, the readiness to die still coursing through my brain. Wilks' posture is solid, carved out of absolute flesh, he is inviolate, pure, the supreme ruler of his piece of ground. "You better check the lieutenant, Doc, he's back behind

us," Wilks commands. Other voices were still shouting orders, some directing the fire, but none were calling for help. I was almost done.

"That's where I was headed."

"Get going, your ass is covered," Wilks said, and I move off again, more bullets snapping past my head, several Marines returning fire. But I feel protected, like nothing horrible can happen to me. A grenade detonated behind me in a burst of white light. A piece of shrapnel seared into my left arm. I kept moving, ignoring the pain, maybe not even knowing that I was hit, not caring, just keep moving, if you are moving and working you are alive, forgetting that I'm hit until the metal works out eleven years later burnished smooth as a streamstone by my blood. Moving toward the dark shape that is laying still as death behind the ragged line of men I'd just left, moving toward the an so motionless, so devoid of divine presence, a kind of blackness seeming to hover over him.

Even as still as he was the thought that he might be dead refused to enter my mind. He was apart from the fight, his face relaxed, his eyes rolled up into their sockets and showing the whites. His web belt was on backwards, the gunner had already been to him and dressed one of his wounds with his battle dressing. I felt under the flack jacket for the thick wet of blood on the body cavity, but found none. He was so still though, his body temperature was dropping, he was closing in on death, the wounds had to be in the legs like the wounds of the others, the flak jackets were worth their weight in diamonds.

A Marine flopped down beside me while I was palpating the lieutenant's legs, feeling the give in his left femur where a bullet had cracked it.

"Sorry to bother you, Doc," the Marine said. He was so polite. A bone fragment jagged out of Wurtz's right calf. The gunner had used his own battle dressing to cover the wound, remarkable sacrifice, the lieutenant must have been the first man he'd reached, but the dressing was slipping off. Another battle dressing had been applied to Wurtz's upper right hip, that bandage taken from Doc Wilson's kit.

"They're out of Morphine back at the tracks. Sent me to get some from you," the Marine said, his voice is soft and consoling, like being gentle would alter the mood of the violent air. I felt for the lieutenant's pulse, slow, thready, I had to dig deep under his jaw to feel it.

"Lieutenant here sure don't need it," I said, reaching in my kit and handing him my last styrette, saying send some people back with a stretcher. And the Marine took it back to the tracks, even though there were bullets aimed at him, he was running as fast as he could to help ease the pain of the other men; guts, love, a brave act by a loving man.

The firing was slowing, though, not hearing the rifles shooting, not hearing any more grenades, I felt like I had a few moments to work on the lieutenant, he was hurt bad. But I didn't have the slightest clue as to what to do next, except try to make him comfortable even though he was near death and unconscious. Talk about refusing to accept present reality, about not having the mental capacity to understand what I was seeing. I was reverting to hospital care procedures. I tried to cut his

web hear away with my bandage scissors, make his breathing easier, but they were too dull.

Two more Marines showed up dragging a stretcher. They'd crawled over to us on their knees. "Glad you're here," I said. "Lieutenant here's got five wounds in his legs, he's got compound fractures. I'm amazed he's still alive. We gotta get him to the tracks and get him back to Regiment, or he's gonna die," I said, and we settle the stretcher beside his prone limp body. There is a large spreading scab of blood seeping below his right leg. I take off his belt and put it around his leg up near the hip and cinch it tight, even though the seep is slowed, his heart not pumping much.

"Easy now," I say to the Marines, but we all know what to do, and how to do it, it's in our brain and flesh. And we carefully lift the lieutenant onto the stretcher in the dark, me cradling his legs against further trauma, trying to keep the compound fractures, the bone sharp, from cutting further into his skin and muscle and blood vessels. Then the two men take off, hauling the lieutenant toward the tracks with me holding his fractured legs between the splints of my arms until they get to the tracks and they take him inside.

Gunny Mead is shouting, "Let's go, people, let's go, get in the tracks, get it moving!" But the men holding the line have already broken off the fight and have started peeling back toward the tracks, the Viet Cong have stopped firing, the men are crouched low and facing into the mounds, a few of them shooting at the mounds just in case.

Inside the tracks I can hear the moaning soft sobbing of men wounded and laying on stretchers, and the murmuring of men bending over them in the dark, soothing them until the rest of the men can be loaded aboard and the hatches closed and the lights turned on so they can see to help them further. To get them back into the comfort of the light.

And the Marines are coming in now, crouching low, backing into the tracks, some of them still firing into the dark, but the floors of both vehicles are full of men on stretchers so they have to climb up on top, and finally the engines start.

But the count is wrong. Two men are missing. Morton and S/Sgt. Monk are still out there, and two troopers are immediately dispatched to go out and get them but there are no more stretchers and someone asks me what to do. No time to devise something, there was no telling how soon the Viet Cong were going to regroup or even if they were, or if any of them were still left. I know I saw two of them killed, I don't know how many others were killed by the other men in the ambushed squad or by the rescue platoon, maybe three, maybe ten, maybe a whole platoon, we'd never know. And I remember the cot that the Amphtrack driver slept on tucked behind his seat, and I say take that. So they do, and I can see their dark forms take the cot out to Morton and Sgt. Monk, and Monk never relaxes his vigil over his man even to help load him on the stretcher, he is absolutely dedicated to protecting his trooper, he is in love with life and his man, and they all four come back, taking Morton into the track.

The ramps close, the lights coming on before they are completely closed, but there is no more firing. And the rest of us climb up on the top of the lumbering machines, and it is done. All but the leaving.

*"The Rescue" is a chapter excerpted from Dan Barker's Viet Nam war novel.*

## Buffalo Bull

Robert Lawrence Schichler

Gazing through the bus window through his sweat-stained spectacles through his shingles-scarred cornea, BS observed sets of identical twins strolling down two-layered sidewalks alongside stores with double-lettered neon signs. He was on his way home from work. He had a porter's job at a place called Projection Optics. He had spent the day sweeping, mopping, and emptying vats of a tar-like substance behind the building, back by the railroad tracks. Always the same routine: In the morning he swept lens-grinding powder and chips of glass from the floor, taking a coffee break at 10:15, and then resuming his sweeping until noon. After lunch, he mopped where he had previously swept. At 2:45, he took another break. After that, it was time to empty the vats. So, with the assistance of one of the lens-men, BS toted the sticky black vats out the rear door, across the parking lot, and over to the railroad tracks. He emptied each vat with a splash. Spattering specks of the sticky liquid struck BS's clothing and face, while the rest streamed down the tiny embankment and trickled over the railroad ties. When all the vats were emptied, BS washed up and prepared to go home. At 4:00, he punched out. At 4:07, he boarded a bus. At 4:15 he observed identical twins strolling down two-layered sidewalks alongside stores with double-lettered neon signs.

The bus halted, and BS exited from the rear door. He lit a cigarette. A Marlboro. He didn't need a Salem to experience the taste of Spring. He merely funnelled the springtime air through his Marlboro, his Spring Candle wick. The bus had let him off at the corner to his street. It was a pleasant street, named after a pleasant World War I general. General Pershing. Trudging down the street in his tacky clothes, BS contemplated the prospect of the Old General coming out of retirement and returning to his long-neglected occupation. BS anticipated seeing cylindrical bombs rolling off the roofs of the street's pleasant houses and blasting the pleasant street into pleasant street smithereens.

A strong spring wind caressed BS's face, giving him a terrific rush. He put his Spring Candle wick to his lips and inhaled a deep breath of springtime freshness. But storm clouds lingered in the west. Quite soon the azure sky would die. Birds were beating through the air for higher skies, a sure sign that the torrents were almost certain not to just pass by.

BS ascended his porch steps. He checked his mail box. Just one envelope. From the Selective Service.

He went inside, turned on a lamp in the parlor and sat down on the sofa. He opened the envelope. There was a folded sheet of Selective Service stationery in side. He unfolded the paper and read the typed message. He was "hereby ordered" to report for an armed forces physical examination on the seventeenth of May. BS shuddered. He got up and paced nervously about the room. Then he went upstairs to take a hot shower. He ripped off his muddy boots and stinking socks, tore off his sticky shirt and pants, pulled off his damp underwear, and threw his filthy body into the shower compartment. The impact of the tingling spray on BS's skin served to steady his nerves somewhat. BS sang ten verses of "Home on the Range." He wished for a home where the Buffalo roamed. Where the sky was not cloudy all day. A mist of steam filled the room. Outside, the azure sky died.

The rains came. April showers brought May flowers. The red robin came bob-bobbing along, pulling brown worms from the moist lawn. The azure sky came back to life. May sixteenth gave birth to the seventeenth.

BS stood in line in his underpants. He wore dark glasses. Prescription ones. He was waiting for his urine test. The line moved rapidly. A doctor gave BS a cup to pee in. BS had a full bladder. He filled his cup to the brim. BS was bringing his cup of urine over to get tested, when he felt a tug on his shoulder. A guy with an empty cup stood behind him. BS asked him what he wanted.

"I can't get anything out," the other answered. "I see you've got a full cup. Can you spare some?"

BS poured half his urine into the other guy's cup. "Thanks a lot, man," the guy said. "I'll do the same for you some time."

After completing the urine test, BS moved along to the other testing stations. He got his chest x-rayed and blood pressure checked with no complications. Then he went to have his hearing tested.

"Press the button when you hear the sound; release it when you can no longer hear the sound," the doctor instructed BS and four others. There were five guys being tested at once. They sat in a big booth, each with his own button and set of earphones.

Upon completion of the test, however, the doctor came into the booth to tell them that they had to do it again.

"Someone screwed up the test by not pushing his button when he should have," the doctor explained. "Now, are you all clear on what we're going to be doing this time? Press the button when you hear it. Release it when you don't. Got it?"

They did the test again. The doctor came in again. He told them that someone had screwed up again.

"Everyone's going to pass this test," he said. "If someone screws up again, we'll just have to take it again. We'll keep right on retesting until everyone gets it right. Understand? Okay, now push when you hear it; release when you don't. We'll try it again."

They tried five more times before they all got it right. Even the deaf guy. Then BS got his vision checked.

The vision testing was done in a dark room. BS entered the dark room wearing his dark glasses.

"Remove your glasses and read what you can through here," the doctor in the dark room said to BS.

BS removed his glasses, looked through the scope and told the doctor what he could read.

"I can't see anything," BS said.

"Put on your glasses and tell me what you can read."

BS put on his glasses and tried to read one of the lines: "L, P, A... I can't make out the next one... A, O... and I can't read the last one either," BS said.

"What's the number of that line?" the doctor growled.

"Number? What do you mean?"

"The number! Every line has a number. What's the number of that line?"

"I can't see any numbers. But I'll read the line again for you. It's the seventh line down on the right, L, P, A—"

"You can't read the numbers, but you can read the letters, is that right?"

"Yes, the numbers are too small for me to read. But I can tell you where the line is on the chart; on the right side, seven lines down. I'll read the letters again, if that will help."

"Never mind." He scribbled something down on one of BS's many examination forms. "Next man," he said. BS shuffled out of the room.

The next station was for the blood test. BS went up to the doctor's desk. The doctor spoke:

"With your right hand, get a tight grip right here on your left arm." He showed BS where he wanted BS to grip himself. "That's right," he said. "Now don't let go."

BS's armpits were drooling onto the doctor's desk. The doctor injected the needle. BS looked away, pretending it was a big mosquito. Then the doctor removed the needle and held tightly a wad of cotton against the leak in BS's arm.

"Okay, now hold your forearm up tightly against your upper arm, the doctor said. BS complied. The doctor released his pressure on the cotton wad as BS made a tight "V" of his arm. "Keep the cotton wad wedged in there tightly for a few more minutes," the doctor said. "You can sit over there and wait until you are ready to leave this station." He motioned to a row of chairs where others were holding their left arms in tight V's. "Next man," the doctor said.

BS sat down with his arm in a V and waited for about a minute. Then he straightened out the arm and removed the wad of cotton. He got up and moved on to the next station. The last one. He was to have his long-awaited interview. He waited in another one of the many lines. Then he felt something crawling down his left forearm. He thought it was a fly. He slapped it. Blood spattered into the air. He looked to see how big this fly was that had possessed all this blood. His needle puncture was leaking. Blood was dripping down his arm. BS had removed the cotton wad too soon. He had nothing to wipe the blood up with. He was naked except for his underpants. So he bent down and wiped his arm on his underpants. The doctor called, "Next man."

BS sat down at the doctor's desk in his red-and-white-striped shorts. The doctor looked over BS's sweat-soaked papers.

"Have you anything to add to this report regarding your medical status?" he asked.

"Yes," BS replied. "About eight months ago, I had an attack of shingles in the upper left portion of my face, on and around my left eye. Now I see double images of things—lights particularly—through that eye. I also get a terrible glare in that eye. These tinted glasses I'm wearing cut down on the glare, but they don't eliminate the double vision."

"I see. You'll have to see one of our ophthalmologists." He pulled out a form from his desk drawer, wrote something on it, and handed it to BS. "Keep this with your other papers. They'll tell you what to do."

It was lunch time. BS went to Room 201 to eat. He was supplied with a box lunch containing a ham sandwich, a turkey sandwich, a package of Hostess cupcakes, an orange, an apple, a small carton of milk, and several napkins. BS ate everything except the napkins, cellophane, cardboard, orange peels, and apple core. When he was finished eating, he smoked a Marlboro. As he smoked, he found himself suddenly transformed into a cowboy standing at the edge of a canyon in Marlboro Country. In his newfound elation, he jumped impulsively into the canyon, where he fell for miles, lost his cowboy clothes, and landed finally at a desk back in room 201. A soldier was speaking to the group:

"We're going to take the written test now. It's multiple choice. Choose the answers that best complete the questions. Good luck, men."

The soldier passed out examination forms and pencils and then added, "No one fails this test."

BS did his test. It wasn't too hard. He knew most of the answers. He knew that it was a cow who jumped over the moon, not a zebra. He knew that two and two were four. He knew that a hammer was used for driving nails into boards. He was a veritable fountain of knowledge.

After the test, everyone remained in the room until the test scores were processed. When the results arrived, the soldier called all of the class hopefuls individually to the front of the room to tell them whether they had passed or failed the physical. He called BS's name last.

"you'll have to come back to see an ophthalmologist," the soldier told him.

"When?" BS asked.

"We'll let you know."

"How?"

"Through the mail."

BS left the room. He left the building. The buss wasn't there to pick his group up yet, so he went across the street to a Buffalo bar. He sat down on a bar stool and asked for a beer.

"Give me an Iroquois," he told the bartender.

"We hava no Iroquois beer, mister, but we do hava Genesee," replied the bartender.

"All right, give me a Genesee then."

The bartender brought BS a glass of Genesee.

"Give me a submarine sandwich to go with the beer," BS then said.

"We all out of sub-a-marine sandwich, mister, but we do hava tuna fish sandwich."

"Okay, give me a tuna fish."

Then, in a much-distressed tone of voice, the bartender spoke:

"First you wanna Iroquois beer, then you wanna Genesee, then you wanna sub-a-marine, then you wanna tuna fish. *Pleeza*, mister, make uppa your mind!"

"And for dessert, I'll have orangutan pie," BS further ordered. He drank his Genesee, ate his tuna fish, and waited patiently for his orangutan.

"To Tell the Truth" was on television. Three well-informed French guys were claiming to be the champagne taster for the Gold Seal Wine Company, and all the talk about champagne was having an effect on the watching BS. He just had to have some of that delicious sparkling drink. He used to be quite a juice freak. So BS went to the corner liquor store for a bottle of Great Western. Five dollars and seven cents with tax. Made with good New York State grapes. Extra dry. So was BS (extra dry). Upon returning from the store, PS asked his parents (who happened to be there watching the program with him) who turned out finally to be the real French wine taster, but neither of them could remember. After all, ten minutes had passed, and two more liars and one more truth-teller were subjecting themselves to an intensive grilling by Tom Poston, Orson Bean, Bill Cullen, and Kitty Carlisle. Everyone drank—BS, his mother, and his father. BS got those shingles tingles. (Sensations in the nerve where BS had had shingles still occurred: burning, crawling, and itching sensations. The champagne gave BS a tingling sensation.)

BS opened up a pack of Marlboros. His mother told him not to give any cigarettes to his father, who did not want one.

"Don't give your father any cigarettes," she said.

"I don't want a cigarette," BS's father said.

"Don't giver your father any cigarettes," she said again.

"I said I didn't want any cigarettes, damn it!" BS's father reiterated.

"Don't give your father any cigarettes. He'll get cancer and die."

"God damn it!" BS's father angrily shouted. "Now you've got me so perturbed that I need a cigarette." So he went to the store for a pack of Larks. He didn't smoke Marlboros.

"See what I have to do to put up with that man?" BS's mother said to BS. "He just won't listen."

BS sat back in his armchair, coughing his lungs out. He wasn't paying much attention to his mother. He was watching Lassie on TV. Lassie was busy saving a skunk who was trapped in a cage. She needed help. So she went into the forest and barked at an owl, a deer, and a fox; they all followed Lassie over to where the trapped skunk was. When they saw who it was in the trap, they all vanished back into the woods. All except Lassie. So,

Lassie was faced with the problem of freeing the skunk unaided. Not without a certain degree of difficulty, she managed to knock the cage onto its side, after which she was able to slide the door open with her teeth. The skunk crawled out and scampered into the forest. Then, out of nowhere, a wolf came into the open and pounced on Lassie. Lassie was down. The wolf was fixing to sink his fangs into Lassie's neck. Then the skunk came to the rescue. He went over to the wolf, lifted his tail, and gave the wolf a nasal treat. The wolf went yelping off into the woods. The the own, the deer, and the fox came onto the scene. They congratulated the skunk on his victory. Lassie got up and licked the skunk's fur. The skunk crawled onto Lassie's back, and they all marched off into the forest in a parade of glory.

Spring blossomed into summer. June bugs replaced dying May bugs. The red robin went bobbing along, pulling no worms from the dry lawn. Bees buzzed through the lazy summer breeze.

The bus ride had been pacifying. Its steady hum, the early morning light glinting through the tinted windows, several Marlboro cigarettes—all had served to produce a tranquil mood for BS. Sweat no longer dripped down his arms.

Now the bus was coming to a halt. BS waited in his seat until all the others had exited. Then he got up, stumbled down the steps to the sidewalk, and followed the crowd into the induction center.

"Print your name where it says 'name,' last name first; then fill in your Social Security number in the appropriate boxes..." barked the soldier in charge of BS's group. BS completed the forms as directed. After everything had been filled out, the soldier asked, "Is there anyone here who has taken the pre-induction physical examination within the last nine months?" BS raised his hand. The man in uniform came over to inspect BS's papers. "You won't be needing these then," he said, tearing up BS's freshly penned forms. "Go down to room 207. They'll take care of you."

So BS took what remaining papers he had and walked down the winding passageway to room 207. There he was instructed to strip down to his shorts and shoes, and to wait in a chilly room on an icy metal chair until the doctor called "next man." BS was bleeding sweat, now, as if he had just received gunshot wounds in both armpits.

"What's your problem?" the irate doctor demanded.

"They sent me down here because I had the armed forces physical examination within the last nine months," BS replied.

"Let me see those papers of yours." He snatched them from BS's sweaty hands. "It says here: claims double vision... possible cataract?"

"Well, you see, I had shingles on the cornea of my left eye about a year ago, and I wound up seeing double images of lights and light objects and things, through that eye."

"Shingles? What's this cataract business?"

"I don't know. Maybe they thought—"

"Never mind the explanation," the doctor interrupted. "You need an ophthalmological examination. You shouldn't be here. Go to room 211."

Officials in room 211 referred BS to the receptionist's desk, where he patiently waited for the receptionist to get back from her coffee break. When she got back, BS told her about his need for an ophthalmological examination. She took his papers and studied them. Then she typed out a form on which the name and address of an ophthalmologist appeared, and drew a little map in the upper right corner, indicating how to get to the eye doctor's office from the induction center.

It was bright outside. BS put on his prescription sunglasses and strutted through the streets of downtown Buffalo, following the route indicated on the map. The doctor lived in a highly residential area. Oak trees shaded the lane. Birds sang. BS contemplated the prospect of cylindrical bombs rolling off the roofs of the street's pleasant houses, blasting the pleasant street into pleasant street smithereens.

The waiting room was crowded with elderly people. It smelled like a library. It was 11:00. BS waited in the waiting room. Soon it was 1:00, and BS, still waiting patiently, was beginning to look like a new addition to the furniture of the room. Finally, it was his turn to see the doctor. BS went into the examining room, where the doctor scrutinized him. High-intensity flashlights were aimed into BS's eyes. He was perspiring again. Then the doctor spoke:

"You've got quite a shingles-scarred eye, young fellow. It must have really smarted when you had the attack, didn't it?"

"Yeah, it stung terribly. The shooting pains would make my whole body wince."

"I'll bet they did. Come on, let's sit down over there at my desk and I'll take a look at those papers of yours."

They walked over to the desk and took seats.

"What do you do for a living, young man," the doctor asked.

"I work at a place in Rochester called Projection Optics."

"Projection Optics! I do a lot of business with that company. See that projector there? Projection Optics made that for me. I've been doing business with them for years. What exactly do you do there?"

"You might say I'm in charge of the appearance of the floor."

"A public relations man, eh? You keep the place in good shape so as to impress visitors to the factory, right?"

"You might say that."

"But you should keep up your own personal appearance as well. You don't want to look like those long-haired hoopies, woopies—whatever you call them. You're not like them. So, to avoid being associated with those freaks, why don't you get yourself a haircut? It would greatly enrich the already fine reputation of Projection Optics if people could see just what fine, clean-cut

personnel they have working there. Personal appearance plays a big part in public relations. If that's your field, you should consider it your duty to keep yourself well groomed. Get a haircut like mine."

BS glanced at the doctor's butchered scalp.

"No. I don't think so," BS said.

"Get a haircut like mine," the doctor repeated.

They debated about haircuts for a while longer.

Then the doctor changed the subject.

"Are you here trying to get into the service or trying to keep out of it?"

"I'm trying to keep out of it," BS answered honestly.

"I see. The reason that I ask you this is that they send both kinds over here from the recruiting station. I do this work for the armed services because I was asked to do it. You see, I am a Commander in the Naval Reserve, so I couldn't very well refuse their request. I'm a veteran of both World Wars and do my duty yet, making decisions as I deem best—best for the country and best for each and every individual that they refer to me. I'm a military man, yes, but that doesn't mean that I believe everyone to be suited for the military life. This country needs good civilian workers as much as it needs soldiers. I think it is wrong to herd all men into one group without regard for their individual potentials to serve their country in different ways. If all men were soldiers, where would this country be? I doubt that they would have asked me to do this job for them if they had known down at the recruiting station that I had this attitude. In most cases, I *discourage*, rather than recommend, acceptance of young men with eye problems into the service. Earlier today, I had a young man here who was trying to enlist in the Navy. I had to discourage acceptance of him, although my decision was very disappointing to him. He had an eye condition that, in my opinion, made him an unfit prospect for the military life. Certain people are cut out for the military life, and some people are not. He was not. You are not. If you were to lose your glasses in the midst of battle, how well off would you be? What would you be able to see? Where would you go? You'd be lost. What great advantage would the army have gained by having you on their team? None. This is my reasoning. You'd do a much better job for our country on the domestic front. Be somebody useful."

Then the doctor wrote his report. The last line of the report read: "In my opinion, this man is not fit for military service." He sealed it in an envelope and gave it to a grateful BS.

"If they give you any trouble down there," the doctor told BS, "let me know. I probably outrank anyone there. Let me know how everything turns out. I'd like to know just how much they value my judgment in these affairs."

He gave BS a piece of paper with his name and address scrawled upon it. BS said thanks, goodbye, and left the office.

"Get a haircut like mine," the doctor hollered after him.

The grapes had reached their ripening. The leaves, their time to fall. Tall grass was wilting, turning

brown. No buffalo were to be found. And the gray and sullen clouds were overcast throughout the sky, that not a hint of the sun's existence could be presumed.

A flock of geese flew overhead, letting out chaotic squawks to scare others out of their way. Those in the rear moved up in line, and others floundered to the straggling shorter side of the "V" that hardly wavered in the process.

A dried-up, leaf—brown, crinkled, and brittle—scraped barely the surface of the pavement, blown to voice a sound in harmony with the howling wind.

From a town tower came the mellow chiming of the hour.

BS stumbled down a lonely street, the ground not as near as it might appear, in a body no longer like his own. A sluggish wind forewarned of rain; and, with the hooting owls and screeching birds, it sounded like a jungle. But these sounds were hardly heard. BS's perception had been blurred, and now the words came out slurred of some voices paying visit to his brain. BS turned to see who was speaking to him. It was a friend of his. Bert the bartender. BS was in front of Bert's bar, and Bert was inviting BS in for a drink. Upon realizing this, BS entered the bar with his friend. He staggered over to a bar stool and sat down. He looked at the bar. The liquor bottles melted in his eyes. He looked at the TV behind the bar. Two Mets teams were winning the World Series. He ordered an orangutan pie and a shot of Ron Rico 151 rum. The bartender brought him his rum.

"The Mets are winning the series," he told BS, who nodded. "And, BS, did you hear the latest development with the draft?"

BS shook his head no.

"They're only drafting up to 125. What's your number, BS?"

"A bigger-number-than-that," BS slurred.

"Well, let's drink to that, then," Bert said, smiling.

"Let's do," replied BS.

"BS, you make the toast."

"Aw-right." He thought a minute. Then he spoke:

"God is good, God is great. He gives me a tummy ache."

They drank.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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***Rising Like the Tucson*, Jeff Danziger (New York: Doubleday) 1991; \$20.00 hardcover.**

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The undercurrent of black humor that charges Jeff Danziger's recently published *Rising Like the Tucson* differs sharply from the stark cynicism of *The Short Timers* or the psychedelic madness of *Meditations in Green*. Danziger's novel derives from the tradition of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, and, like Heller's 1961 novel, this satire of the war spills over into a satire of the American culture that spawned the greed and naivete so influential in determining the outcome of that war.

The central character of Danziger's satire is Lieutenant James Christopher (known as Lieutenant Kit), an incompetent, vacant-brained intelligence officer stationed sixty kilometers north of Saigon in the ragged town of Phuoc Vinh.

Kit was an officer only because he supposedly understood Vietnamese. In the late 1960s the United States was desperate to Vietnamize the war—something it had neglected to do until it was too late. Nixon had promised to do this, and he told the army that they better get cracking on this project. The army's first problem was to tell the Vietnamese.

It is during this tricky time of 'Vietnamization' that Phuoc Vinh becomes the local headquarters for "the great real estate consortium." Kit's father, a wealthy real estate developer who profited handsomely in the Philippines after World War II, plots a similar success in Viet Nam, driving Kit to the brink of nervous hysteria. *Catch 22's* Milo appears as Lieutenant Stevenson, a man whose greed overwhelms any chance he has of being a decent human being. The real estate plan drives him to visions of a stock portfolio as fat as that of his draft-dodging high school friends.

... Kit told Stevenson everything. All about the real estate consortium. All about the partners back in Connecticut who were putting up money to buy Saigon

real estate out from under the war refugees to build shopping centers and golf courses for Japanese businessmen after the war... Stevenson listened, staring at the money, studying the intricate engraving, "THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA," it said across the top of the bill. Powerful words. Wonderful money. Of course, buying Saigon made sense.

Greed is not presented as an exclusively American trait. Sergeant Xuan of the National Police is certainly self-interested and manipulative. He has no sense of loyalty to the South Vietnamese, but he warrants little condemnation in light of Stevenson or in light of the maniacal American Lieutenant Toomey, who killed eight of his own men.

Among the other characters, only Major Bedford, the well-fed and bloated representative of the Old Army, is somewhat endearing. He is continually startled by his homosexual attraction for Kit, longs for a Purple Heart, and is delighted by the realization that he actually gets to plan a real combat mission over real hostile territory.

*Rising Like the Tucson* is not just an entertaining *Catch-22* clone, however. Its vision is much bleaker, more desolate. Kit does not possess the puckish qualities of Heller's Yossarian. He is somewhat well-meaning and he is trying to survive the war, but Kit is not, like Yossarian, ultimately likable. Kit's "fear of contradiction, the desire to avoid confrontation and a lack of conviction one way or the other" explain his (our?) inability to accomplish anything positive in this endeavor.

Kit also never seems to learn from the corrupt systems around him. He neither triumphs over those systems nor escapes beyond them. In this way, Kit's stupidity and worthlessness deny him the archetypal role of the satire's 'innocent.' Unlike Candide, Gulliver, or Yossarian, Kit significantly has not persistent optimism or vaguely noble characteristics to admire in the face of war's brutality or society's corruption. He seems, rather to be that society's end product: an occasional good intention, a monster-load of anxiety, and a superlative quantity of clumsiness.

The key to Kit's purpose in this novel is offered by Lieutenant Starret in the first chapter. When he thinks to himself that making Lieutenant Kit an intelligence officer was just one of the "endless mistakes" the army had made in its pursuit of victory, Starret also muses that "the mistakes in the late 1960s had built upon the mistakes in the early 1960s, all on top of one another, so that the war teetered like a rotten tree waiting to fall." Danziger's story of Phuoc Vinh is the story of one limb of that tree.

An 'innocent' might display many different reactions to the rot of this war. If Kit's experiences led him to a "don't mean nothing" attitude, such cynicism would give him stature in an existential world view. If he maintained a "best of all possible worlds" perspective, his faith would be admirable. If he made an absurd but optimistic gesture—as Yossarian does, paddling off to Sweden—his naivete would inspire a sense of hope. Kit, however, does nothing. His lack of response, given the satirical context of this novel, proves Starret's judgement

that, "Innocence was gone. No one was innocent." Danziger gives us a close look at the inside of that rotted tree limb. Kit has no passion, no idealism, no reactionary cynicism, not even a self-righteous morality or operating code of ethics. He lacks the innocence from which, Danziger, suggests, a response or attitude might have taken root to save that tree from rotting completely.

In support of this pessimistic perspective, the novel contains many truly dark moments to offset the colorful ones. One of the most disturbing occurs when Xuan and Kit interrogate a young girl, no more than twelve, slapping her repeatedly, raising rows of welts on her swollen cheeks. Kit "outranked Xuan, he thought, and if he disapproved he ought to say something. But he waited. Maybe that had been the last slap." Kit's passivity and Xuan's cruelty in this small scene provide a focus on the war's brutality more effectively than all the artillery explosions and satchel charges of the novel's climax.

The main drawback to the novel, particularly to those familiar with Viet Nam war fiction, is the predictability of the plot. It is inevitable that the base at Phuoc Vinh will be overrun. Inevitable not only because it is foreshadowed in the declining base security and the tenuous success of Vietnamization, but also because anyone who has read any Viet Nam war novels by American would know that the plots of these novels nearly always build to a final cataclysmic firefight. The sense of culmination in this type of climax seems inappropriate to characterizing this war. Fortunately, Danziger does not allow for heroic sacrifice, epiphany, or tragic loss during the final moments of graphic carnage. The next day, Kit is the same. The limb is still rotted and the tree teeters a bit further.

Danziger, political cartoonist for the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Los Angeles Times Syndicate*, was an intelligence officer with the First Air Cavalry in 1970 and 1971. His novel presents a distinctly American view of the war. It gives some insight into the Vietnamese's suffering but no perspective on the broader political or strategic issues of the war. What it does show, with both humor and eloquence, is the American sense of money-will-buy-all, an unethical alienation of individuals from their sense of reason and morality.

*Rising Like the Tucson* rakes the ashes of the Viet Nam war. Finding no phoenix, this novel exposes the deep ethnocentric coercion with which the United States—militarily and economically—exploited the Vietnamese and misjudged the war it was fighting.

**Balaban, John. *Remembering Heaven's Face: A Moral Witness in Vietnam*. New York: Poseidon Press, 1991.**

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In 1967 John Balaban went to Viet Nam as a conscientious objector. First as a member of the International Volunteer Services (IVS) and later as a representative of the Committee of Responsibility to Save War-Burned and War-Injured Children (COR), he served as a witness to the

Viet Nam War. This memoir offers a first-hand look at the turmoil the war wrought, both on Balaban and those around him, Americans and Vietnamese alike.

Balaban's first service in Viet Nam, teaching English at a university in Can Tho, was brought to an abrupt halt by the Tet Offensive. At a hospital so crowded with injured that the worst cases are sent home to die, Balaban confronts his moral stance to war. "I had never felt more morally bewildered," he tells us. (p. 101) He finds himself wearing a Red Cross arm band, carrying an M-3 .45-caliber machine gun (that he can't recall picking up), with a leather shaving kit containing two grenades dangling from his belt. This he does so the Air Force surgeons at the hospital will stay to operate, rather than retreat from the danger of a Viet Cong attack. To save the lives of some of the civilians dying around him, Balaban stands guard, though he doesn't believe in killing. The book is rich in such moments of contradiction and self-confrontation.

One scene at the hospital I will never forget—nor will Balaban, I'm sure. Once the Special Forces arrive and relieve Balaban of his armed sentry duty, he assists the doctors with the "Civil War surgery." (p. 102) Among the napalm cases, he sees, on the floor, a mother and her daughter, "beautiful, chubby, naked...with gold earrings who was perfectly whole except for one arm burned black." (p. 103) Beneath that arm, he observes a copy of *Stars and Stripes*, with an ad proclaiming, "Expand your ego. Visit the exotic East." (p. 103)

Once back in the States, recovering from a shrapnel wound in his shoulder, and with more time to serve to complete his C.O., Balaban decides to return to Viet Nam, this time as a member of COR, helping to send war-injured children to the United States for surgery they could not receive in their own country. Even this response to the war brings doubts. Was he merely involved in a show of false concern, as some critics charged, allowing politicians and the military to demonstrate how much they "cared" for the Vietnamese? And would the Vietnamese children be able to fit back into their own families and culture after long stays in the U.S.?

Despite his own concerns with these questions, Balaban decides that he can do more good than harm by assisting these children. After reading about some of the children's injuries, Balaban's position is a convincing one. To give only one example among many, there's Dao Thi Thai, a fifteen-year-old girl, who was scalped by the propellor of a boat. To send children with injuries such as this to the U.S., Balaban must do battle with the Vietnamese bureaucracy, indifferent officials, and hostile American doctors, some of whom see Balaban as a "communist." (p. 162)

After completing his C.O. duty, and exhausted from his work with COR, Balaban returns to the U.S. and makes a discovery that's both obvious and profound. Those who were involved in the war as civilians can experience and suffer from the same type of stress that soldiers face after the war. Living in a cabin in Pennsylvania, he feels estranged from the war in Asia and those he knew there, the cabin, his fellow Americans, and even himself. And so he returns to Viet Nam once again, this time to collect ca dao, Vietnamese folk poetry, with

the hope of preserving something of Vietnamese culture from the destruction of the still on-going war.

It's at this point that Balaban presents us with further examples of his inner conflict between pacifism and violence. The first occurs in Hawaii when Balaban comes to the rescue of a young woman being attacked by her boyfriend. Not content to free the woman and subdue the man with repeated punches, Balaban, his arm unable to throw another punch, proceeds to pull at the man's mouth until it begins to tear. His wife and the man's girlfriend have to pull Balaban off the fallen man. On the plane after this incident, Balaban tells us that "I wasn't the least bit sorry." (p. 224) Was it the war causing another John Balaban to emerge?

Another such incident occurs in Viet Nam. Knocked down from behind by a young Saigon tough in the market, Balaban successfully wards off the teenager and a second assailant. But Balaban is not content with that. Perhaps feeling protective of his young pregnant wife, sitting nearby on their Honda scooter, Balaban chases the two youths with a chair. When the two youths collide into a soup vendor, where three of their friends lurk, the situation only worsens. Bringing the chair down on the youths, Balaban begins to realize the seriousness of his mistake. By chasing the two assailants Balaban now has five youths wishing to do him harm.

Balaban's wife rescues him by dragging a reluctant policeman into the fray. The incident ends in sorrow. A week and a half after the fight, she has a miscarriage. Balaban recalls how his wife complained of a pain in her stomach during the street fight, and he wonders if the fight didn't cause the miscarriage. Though he doesn't come out and say it, it's clear he feels that unleashing his anger at the teenagers hurt his wife and her child.

*Remembering Heaven's Face* has much to offer, not only documenting Balaban's own struggles as a "moral witness" to a violence that seems to have infected him as well, but as a reminder of the true toll of war. Coming after the Gulf War with its smart bombs and "surgical bombing," though only 7% of all the bombs dropped during that war were "smart," Balaban shows us the human devastation of war, what civilians, in particular, must bear. His last trip back to Viet Nam lets us see some of those children, now adults, whom he helped send to the U.S. for surgery. The poet offers a picture of a healing landscape and people, but of deep wounds and reminders that, for those who lived the war, won't go away. At a remote village in the Mekong Delta, he finds himself washing his hands in a U.S. helmet, the household basin.

His book also offers a picture of U.S. deceit. Balaban tells of David Gitelson, a saintly IVS civilian worker, known as "the Poor American." Gitelson won the trust of Vietnamese farmers by living, dressing, eating and travelling in their manner. Gitelson, assisting the farmers with ways to improve their crop production, is mysteriously killed in Viet Nam after meeting with Senator Edward Kennedy to tell him of U.S. atrocities. While Balaban finds no "smoking gun," circumstances and the style of execution implicate a U.S. group known to be operating the area. Balaban's book carries a dedication to "the Poor American" and the entire memoir amounts to a eulogy.

Those familiar with John Balaban's poetry (anthologized in *Carrying the Darkness* and *Unaccustomed Mercy*, both edited by W. D. Ehrhart) will have the pleasure of placing into context faces and events from his poems by reading *Remembering Heaven's Face*. But this moving memoir offers for all interested in the Viet Nam War a fresh perspective, that of a civilian witness, a man filled with compassion and contradiction, risking his own life to preserve what he can of a threatened culture and its people.

**The James Jones Reader**, James R. Giles and J. Michael Lennon, eds. (New York: Birch Lane Press) 1991.

W.D. Ehrhart, *Going Back: An Ex-Marine Returns to Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.) 1987.

W.D. Ehrhart, *In the Shadow of Vietnam: Essays, 1977-1991* (McFarland & Co.) 1991.

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Cinema

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Stephen Crane's war fiction and journalism inspired comment from both civilian readers and soldiers. Awaiting transfer to Guadalcanal during October 1942, James Jones wrote an extended critique of *The Red Badge of Courage* for his University of Hawaii English class. Three decades later Viet Nam veteran poet W.D. Ehrhart criticized Crane's Spanish-American war journalism in a scathing review of Michael Herr's *Dispatches*. While noting Crane's perceptive and blinkered comments in praising the common soldier and then championing United States "largesse," Ehrhart sees the same "combination of poignant sympathy and wrongheaded blindness" endemic in Herr's work (*ISV*: 5-6). Reviewing *The Red Badge of Courage*, Jones compared Crane's experience under fire with his own during December 7, 1941, and found it wanting. From this perceptive early essay, "A Book Report of *The Red Badge of Courage*, Jones would further experience the hell of warfare and go on to become a great war novelist. What links both writers is an uncompromising desire to tell the truth as they see it to expose the untruthful flaws behind any literary creation of warfare, and uphold the currently unfashionable banner of that most complex of terms—realism.

Separated by different generations, literary styles, and diverse wars, Jones and Ehrhart make some parallel observations concerning the nature of warfare of crucial relevance to those exploring the concept of the Viet Nam war as 'representation.' The recent appearance of *The James Jones Reader* and Ehrhart's collection of essays are essential, stimulating, and serious reading. Although belonging to a different era, James Jones did travel to Viet Nam in 1973 writing a collection of essays later published under the title of *Viet Journal* (1974), a generous selection appearing in this recent publication. Travelling at a time when the American military was in a process of withdrawal, Jones naturally did not witness the post-Tet

offensive demoralization. The soldiers he met were the military professionals he admired in his novels and real life. While knowing about My Lai, he regarded it as an aberration. He regarded US military intervention as a mistake. But at the same time, he never abstracted any situation he observed from his own personal experience into convenient categories of binary oppositions. Jones avoided certain pat generalizations that marred otherwise fine observations by contemporaries such as Mary McCarthy, Susan Sontag, and Frances Fitzgerald. Although criticized heavily at the time of publication, *Viet Journal* now appears surprisingly contemporary. It has not been dated. War is hell for both sides and all soldiers suffer the danger of bestial reduction. For Jones, the Viet Cong were certainly no "innocent noble savages" as combatants on both sides will readily admit. His *Viet Journal* is fascinating reading, a work mixing personal factual experience with fictional constructions akin to recent perceptive theoretical observations on the subjective nature of documentary film. It is a work avoiding much of the solipsistic nature of understanding Viet Nam as the "American Tragedy," as he said, it was "an appeal to Americans to stop hating ourselves so much" (*JJR*: 333).

As several other Viet Nam scholars have emphasized, it is a mistake to isolate Viet Nam from other conflicts and representations. *The James Jones Reader* provides key selections from his war-time fiction. In addition to the famous trilogy—*From Here to Eternity*, *The Thin Red Line*, and *Whistle*—it contains extracts from his symbolic novella, *The Pistol*, as well as *WWII*, and war stories from *The Ice-Cream Headache and Other Stories*, and *Some Came Running*. It is thus a very good introduction to Jones' work and should stimulate the reader to then begin reading his entire opus. Although the editors emphasize Jones as a war novelist, in deference to his popular image, he really transcends this label. He really wrote about the entire human condition, the illusions, evasiveness, and deceptive nature of everyday life. If the masks fell in the war situation, they returned in the homefront. Civilian life was not less dangerous and treacherous than the average battlefield. Jones' non-war fiction recognizes this. Thus, one should ideally proceed on to his other neglected work. His *magnum opus* and greatest achievement, *Some Came Running*, is decades ahead of its time. It exposes the self-deceptive nature of small town American life. Similarly, part to *Go To the Widow Makers*, *The Merry Month of May*, and *A Touch of Danger* (not anthologized in this collection) present civilian life as a sexual and explosive battlefield threatening the fragile facade of human personality. It is not only *Whistle*, with its literary representations of PTSD, that presents the concept of life as a minefield. One recalls the cameo appearance of Big Red One WWII veteran Samuel Fuller in Godard's *Pierrot Le Fou* (1965), who describes film as a battleground—"Love, Hate, Action, Violence, Death. In one word... Emotion." Substitute "life" for film, apply it to the entire spectrum of Jones' novels (not just the war fiction) and one sees the parallel. He is not just a war novelist but a chronicler of the human condition. The war situation exacerbates the foibles and false ideological illusions contaminating human life.

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