

John Birch

B Company
3rd Shore Party
11th Marine Regiment
May '65-Feb. '66

I went into the Marine Corps one week after graduating high school, and boy, I really loved it. When we sang the Marine Corps Hymn tears would get in my eyes. There was no Vietnam for us then, no Gulf of Tonkin or anything. After training we went to Hawaii with the first Marine Brigade and got orders. They said: "Well you're going back to invade California. Thirty days leave. A mock invasion. Get to see your parents and all that stuff... go anywhere on the mainland!" Off we sailed. Three mornings later after the sun had been rising three times over the stern of our transport we figured we weren't heading for California. On we sailed, until six o'clock one morning, 7,500 of us and all our equipment landed in Chou Lai. It was a pretty wild experience. There was no air strip, no air base, no kind of giant complex... just sand dunes and little houses. Really beautiful beaches. A lot of little fishing villages along the shore. And they told us: "Well fellows, here we are! Landing on the beach!" And we were all loaded down with bullets and ammo and the whole bit and the little school girls were really beautiful looking, these exotic women came down to us and put leis around our necks, flower things. After that we never saw them again. They had been flown in from Danang—special. By helicopter.

And there we were. No runways. No PX. We lived in the sand for three months and ate C-rations and put in an expeditionary landing field. The first month and a half we were there, the only casualties we had were our patrols firing at each other's patrols.

One morning we'd gone down—kind of borrowing a truck—to take a swim call on the beach. Red Beach, where the original landing was.

And when we'd got there, the MP's had a little cage built of beach matting...the steel you throw down on sand so heavy trucks won't sink in. It was about ten foot square. No shelter from the sun. They had an old Vietnamese man in there. They took him out just as we drove up. We stopped pretty close by. One of our guys yelled over, "What's happening?" "Oh," they said, "we're interrogating. Want to watch?"

We said, "Fine! Yeah! That'll be really good." We'd never seen this before and we thought we'd see some really supersophisticated [sic] information-getting. We were pretty gungho [sic], all of us. We were over there fighting Communists and saving America.

So the MP's starting pushing him around a little bit, asking him questions and everything then they hobbled him at the knees and put a blindfold on and drug him around the sand. He started stumbling and they thought it was funny. After a while they got angry. He wasn't saying anything one of the MP's go a can of lighter fluid out of his back pocket and poured it over the man's little wispy beard, and lit up the bread. Then the laughing stopped.

After that year, and I'd come home, I didn't want to be reminded of anything I'd seen or done in Vietnam. All I wanted to do was hear, "Welcome back,," and give me a chance to just become a person again. I joined the VFW. I became Junior Commander of that VFW Post in Connecticut and was doing a lot of speaking for them. Pretty soon I got really turned off because all they did was sit around and talk war stories.

The procession of veterans moves out from West Potomac Park toward Arlington Cemetery

[photo omitted]

A small delegation of Gold Star mothers, widows and veterans barred from entering Arlington Cemetery lay two memorial wreaths before the locked gates.

[photo omitted]

I am here to join all these men.
In each one of them I see my
son. --Gold Star Mother

[photo omitted]

Jim Weber

Sgt. (E-5)
"A" Company
1/6 & 1/46, 198 L.I.B.
American Div.
Nov. '67-Nov. '68
[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

I, I didn't care about anyone else. You know. I cared about myself and I, I got drafted into the army and it made quite a big change because I was waving flags all the time that I was on my train, you know, down to South Caroline where I got my murder training. And I...okay, I went in there and my complete moral worth was completely destroyed. I mean I was a worthless human being. The worst thing that you can be in the military is to be called a civilian. And so they had to completely re-socialize us, which they were very effective at doing. I didn't agree with everything, but I went along with it. Then I was sent on to advanced genocide training down at Fort Polk, Louisiana. And this is where I got, you know, this is where I started to hate, hate anything that wasn't exactly like me. Anything that wasn't a fighting machine. Gooks.

By the time I had left Fort Polk, Louisiana, I wanted to kill my mother you know. Or anyone, that, that wasn't you know, completely in agreement with me. I wanted to just kill everything, you know. It's really bad. I went over to Vietnam with the same attitude because I, I had been trained and I knew I was an effective fighting machine. That I was going to kill everything in my path and It started out and it...it lasted for about one day. When I got there and saw the shit being beat out of a few children, you know. And from there on, it was all downhill and, man, like I was a great American, and I think I still am a great American, you know.

Skip Roberts

Cpl. -USMC (2537332)
Force Logistic Command (FLC)
1st FSR/FMF PAC
Sept. '69-Sept '70

And this Spec/4 at the Army induction center turns to me and says, "Roberts, you're going into the Marines."

No. No Yeah. Was it me? Was it really happening to me? A tidal wave. No. It's not supposed to...my God, you know this can't be real! You know it happening to the poor, smug George D. Roberts, you know, 2537332 type thing, not really happening to me. It's not supposed to...I'm from Fairfield County, Connecticut!

And I just sort of absolutely panicked: "My God!" The Marine Corps drafts people. They don't talk about it often. They're supposed to be gung-ho. In a way it's a good sign. They can't meet their quotas any more.

I learned at Paris Island that terror works. It's a very effective means of control. I mean me, a Georgetown Foreign Service School man, a former congressman's aide! The drill instructor would go on: "All right, Professor. Come out here in front of your buddies. Now since you know it all, show us how to disassemble this." And he'd throw me a pistol. I'd never seen a pistol before and I'd make a mistake. Five hundred push-ups. The DI would explain, "See, your college education don't mean a thing."

Veterans march
from Arlington
Cemetery to the
Capitol.
[photo omitted]

It's the first time in this country's history that the men who fought a war have come to Washington to demand its halt while that war is still going on.
--Vietnam Veteran

We're vets who look like hippies. Demonstrators are easy to put down. But we're vets... and they've always had such faith in their veterans.
John McDonald
Vietnam Veteran

(overleaf): We represent 1,000 years in Vietnam.
--Vietnam Veteran
[photo omitted]

Scott Shimabukuro

L/Cpl. (E-3)
“C” Battery
1st Bn.
13th Marine Reg.
3rd Marine Div.
Oct. '67-Nov. '69
[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

Before I went into the Marine Corps, I grew up in an all-white and Chicano neighborhood and I encountered a moderate amount of racism; it didn't bother me much. When I went into the Marine Corps, I thought I was going to serve my country and be brave, a Marine and a good American. As I stepped off the bus at UCMD, San Diego the first words that greeted me were when the DI came up to me and said, :”Oh, we have a gook here today in our platoon.” This kind of blew my mind because I thought I was a pretty cool guy myself. But, ever since then, all during boot camp, I was used as an example of a gook. You go to a class, and they say you'll be fighting the VC or the NVA. But then the person who is giving the class will see me and he'll say, “He looks just like that, right there.”

Joe Bangert

Sgt. (E-5)
1st Marine Air Wing
1st Marine Div.
Oct. '68-Oct. '69
[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

You can check with the Marines who have been to Vietnam—your last day in the States at staging battalion at Camp Pendleton you have a little lesson and it's called the rabbit lesson. The staff NCO comes out and he has a rabbit and he's talking to you about escape and evasion and survival in the jungle. He has this rabbit and then in a couple of seconds after just about everyone falls in love with it, he cracks it in the neck, skins it, disembowels it. He does this to the rabbit—and then they throw the guts out into the audience. You can get anything out of that you want, but that's your last lesson you catch in the United States before you leave for Vietnam, where they take that rabbit and they kill it, and they skin it, and they play with its organs as if it's trash and they throw the organs all over the place and then these guys are put on the plane the next day and sent to Vietnam.

The affront of being refused entry to Arlington Cemetery was vindicated when 200 veterans returned on the following day and knelt in silence while wreathes were laid on a grassy knoll. A memorial to the dead in Indochina

This is not a demonstration. This is a memorial service.

Al Hubbard
Vietnam Veteran

(overleaf): These guys risked their lives to go out and pick up those bodies and put them in body bags so they could be shipped home. You can't bar these men from paying honor to their friends

--John Kerry
Vietnam Veteran

[photo omitted]

Charles Leffler,

Pfc (E-3) 226. Golf company,
9th Marine Amphibious Brigade.
Sept '68-Sept '69

I went on this patrol and we went for about four hours in a northerly direction. I did not know where we went since I did not have a map. But after proceeding for about 3300 meters and crossing a river which I later found out was the Ben Hai River (which runs exactly through the middle of the DMZ) the lieutenant turned to me and said, "Well, Leffler, you have something to write home and about now." And I said, "What do you mean, sir?" He said, "We just crossed over into North Vietnam."

Steve Noetzel

Sp/4

5th Special Forces Group

Augmentation

May '63-May '64

[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

they were transporting some sixteen prisoners, South Vietnamese prisoners, who had been interrogated at several levels before being sent to Saigon. They were transporting these prisoners in two helicopters, double-rotor helicopters, H-121. There were eight prisoners brought onto each helicopter. They were tied, their hand were tied behind their backs, and they were tethered together with rope around their necks, and about a six-foot length of rope to the next prisoner. A string of eight of them like that were put on each helicopter. With them were an equal number of South Vietnamese or ARVN troops as guards. Also on the flight of five helicopters were three gunships [sic], HUIB single-rotor helicopters. I flew in the first of these helicopters. The point helicopter. We were to fly support for this mission to bring these prisoners to Saigon for a six-month rehabilitation program and then they were released after six months to go back to wherever they wanted to go, that is, South Vietnamese or NLF prisoners. We took off from Can Tho. We heard, or I heard (I had a headset on), the radio message to Saigon. We got in contact with NACV headquarters in Saigon, told them we were coming with sixteen prisoners, and they said they would have a greeting party for us at Tan Son Nhut Airport. We flew in one direct nonstop flight. All the ships stayed together the entire flight, about an hour and ten minutes or so. No helicopter left the group at any time. It could never have caught up with us if it did leave, and land anywhere. We landed in Saigon, I got out of the helicopter, and there was a greeting party there to meet us, a colonel from MACU and some other field grade officers. They had a paddy wagon to transport prisoners and so on. When

we got off the helicopter, there were exactly there prisoners left on one helicopter, and one prisoner left on the other helicopter. These prisoners were now bound with their hands behind their backs. They were blindfolded, and of course no tether or no rope around their necks attaching to any other prisoners. I instantly realized what had happened and couldn't believe it, although I knew, rationally, what had to have happened. I went over to the American door gunner of one of the transport ships, and I asked him what the hell happened, and he told me they had pushed them out over the Mekong Delta. And I said, "Who?" and he said, "The ARVN guards did." And I just shook my head and said, "I can't believe it," and he said, "Go over there and look at the doorway." There are open doorways on these helicopters; they have no closable door, there's just a door frame.

And I went over to the doorway and stopped when I got about five feet away and didn't want to go any closer because there was flesh from the hands of the prisoners when they were pushed out on the door jambs and on the door frames. And there was blood on the floor where they had been beaten and pushed out of the helicopter that I had just gotten out of and there I overheard the conversation between the American pilots and the MACV colonel who had come to meet the prisoners, and he asked them what the fuck happened to the other prisoners and one of the American pilots simply said to him, "They tried to escape over the Mekong Delta." That was the first, or only, incident of helicopter murder that I have seen in Vietnam.

Chow line at Mall
campsite

[photo omitted]

A member of the
Winterfilm, a small
film group that is
documenting and
working to advance
the objectives of
Vietnam Veterans
Against The War.

[photo omitted]

Thomas Heidtman

PFC (E-3)

3rd Bn.

5th Marine Reg.

1st Marine Div.

Oct. '66-Nov. '67

[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

My first day with 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, I was informed that the nickname of the company was the "Burning Fifth Marines." Once, just before my first operation, we had a company formation. Our company commander, a first lieutenant, said that we were going out in the morning and that we were going out on choppers. We were going out into an area west of Tam Ky. Then he said, "We're going to have a Zippo inspection right now." And I would say approximately two thirds of the entire company had Zippo lighters. We held them up, lit them, demonstrated that they were filled and would burn, then put them away. He smiled and let it go at that. When we went out I would say at least 50 per cent of the villages we passed through would be burned to the ground. There was no difference between the ones we burned and the one we didn't burn. It was just that where we had time, we burned them. I've seen a gunnery sergeant take a .45 and kill six piglets that probably came from Americans because they had a big program to give the Vietnamese people pigs and ducks and things like that. They were shot because their area, their pen, or whatever, was right next to a hootch that was burning. The entire village, for about a quarter of a mile, was on fire with illumination grenades or Zippo lighters. Everything was burned. Everything was torn down. All the animals were killed. Water buffalos were shot and allowed to just lay right where they were. They were just shot right in their pen, they couldn't move. It's had to kill a water buffalo, but when he's standing right there it's not so hard.

Sp/4

"C"Co.

2/39

9th Infantry Div.

May '69-July '69

[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

I'd say that the government, and a lot of the people who sort of run this nation, have been telling a lot of GIs that the biggest detriment to our morale has been the long-haired, protesting pinko sympathizer type, but I think the biggest lift for my morale came when I was lying in Okinawa in the hospital there and a girl wrote me about a place called Woodstock, where 500,000 people had come together and it was so beautiful. It was the first time I smiled in a long time.

Michael Hunter

Sgt. (E-5)
"B" Co.
5/7 Air Cav. Reg.
1st Air Cav. Div.
Feb '68-Feb '69
"H" Co.
75th Rangers
(Att. to 1st Air Cav. Div.)
"I" Co.
75th Rangers
(Att. to 1st Infantry Div.)
Sept. '69-Mar. '70
[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

We were in a free-fire zone just outside of Camp Evans and an old man, age sixty-eight (I must say we could not tell that he was sixty-eight at the time) was approximately 100 meters away from us cutting pineapple. It was very visible that he was cutting pineapple, and that he did not have a weapon. What he had was a machete. Machetes are carried in Vietnam by almost every civilian that works in the field and by the children. I was ordered by the senior NCO, that was backing me up at the time, right behind me, to open fire. I opened fire and killed the man. We found identification on his body stating that he was not a VC, not a Viet Cong, not an NVA. He was civilian and he did live in the nearby village, which was no more (and this was a free-fire zone, I may add) than 1200 meters away. That was his farmland that he was cutting down—the crops on the farmland. It was reported to the battalion that this was a body count. He had a weapon—the weapon being the machete. Suspected VC.

Mike McCusker

Sgt. (E-5)
Public Information Office
1st Marine Div.
'66-'67
[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

There was a tiny little form, that of a child, lying out in the field with straw over its face. It had been clubbed to death.

As later was brought out, the Marine that clubbed the child to death didn't really want to look at the child's face so he put straw over it before he clubbed it.

A World War I
veteran joins the
Vietnam Veterans
on the Mall

[photo omitted]

Kevin F. Byrne

Sgt. (E-5)
42nd Scout Dog
1st Brigade
101st Airborne Div.
Nov. '66-Nov. '69
[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

Nobody ever questioned a dog handler's judgment.

And I'd developed like a sixth sense. I knew when danger's gonna come. Usually my dog wouldn't alert me. So I'd just stop and say, "My dog's got something here. Just want to get the heavy machine gun up to ease my mind."

Other times my dog would alert me and I'd see a house or a complex up ahead and I'd say, "Recon by fire, get the grenade launcher and the heavy machine gun up here. My lieutenant—he was always behind me—would just tell the commander—who was behind him—that the dog wanted a recon by fire.

I'd always call for support...cause I didn't want to put my life on the line. Going up there active like John Wayne or anything.

Franklin Shepard

S/Sgt. (E-6)
5/60
9th Infantry Div.
Mar. '68-Aug. '69
[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

There were many ways to build up your body count. In our particular unit...we had this badge know as the Sat Cong Badge. This badge, translated into English, means "Kill Cong." This [badge] represents on Viet Cong—or civilian, whatever it may be because there is really no way of telling. It represents one life. These badges were given when someone would prove that he had killed a Viet Cong, of Vietnamese. There are many ways of doing this. One is to have somebody verify that he did, in fact, see you kill a Vietnamese. Another way—and this is a common way—is to cut off the ear of the dead Vietnamese and bring it in. You could exchange it for one of these badges.

The Badges were created on a battalion level. I have the order here that created it...It is an official Army [disposition] form dated 28 June '69. It reads as follows: "Any member of this battalion who personally kills a Viet Cong will be presented a Sat Cong Badge for his gallant accomplishment. The Sat Cong Badge will only be given to those individuals who have accomplished the above mentioned feat. There will be no honorary presentations. Furthermore, only personnel who have killed a Viet Cong may wear the Sat Cong Badge. Company Commanders will draw Sat Cong Badges from the Executive Officer, and will maintain all control."

David Bishop

L/Cpl.

“H” Co.

2nd Bn.

5th Marine Reg.

1st Marine Div.

[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

There was this operation called Meade River. ROK (Korean) Marines, ARVNs, U.S. Marines, and U.S. Army were involved. On part of the operation we had just gotten through making heavy contact and we went through a bunker system. It was a large bunker system and we found hospitals. We came across four NVA nurses that were hiding out in one of the bunkers. They were nurses, we found medical supplies on them and they had black uniforms on. The ROK Marines came up to us and one of their officers asked us if they could have the NVA nurses. They would take care of them because we were sweeping through area, and we couldn't take care of any POWs. So, instead of killing them, we handed them over to the ROK Marines.

While we were still in the area the ROK Marines started tying them down to the ground.

They tied their hands to the ground they spreadeagled them; they raped all four. There was like maybe ten or twenty ROK Marines involved. They tortured them, they sliced off their breasts, they used machetes and cut off parts of their fingers and thing like this. When that was over, they took pop-up flares (which are aluminum canisters you hit with your hand; it'll shoot maybe 100-200 feet in the air)—they stuck them up their vaginas—all four of them—and they blew the top of their heads off.

Donald Duncan

Master Sgt.

5th Special Forces

'64-'65

[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

The terrible thing we did to so many men in this country—and ultimately to the Vietnamese because of it—we sent them to fight a war without a reason to fight it. I don't know how many of you have experience standing up in front of bullets, exposing your flesh to shrapnel, hand grenades, and so on. It's a fuck of a thing to do, to send somebody out and tell them to make their body a target, and never give them a fucking reason to do it.

The politicians sent us to Vietnam...now they don't want to hear us.

--Mike Milligan
Vietnam Veteran

Terry Williams

E-4

129th Assault Helicopter Co.238th Aerial Weapons Co.

Mar. '69-Dec. '69

Little children and women, it made no difference. Like once this vehicle operator was driving a two and-a-half-ton truck back from Quang Nam, and he thought it would be fun to knock a Vietnamese's cart off the road—and in the process of doing this he killed the Vietnamese. But he didn't think of it as hurting a person. It was just a gook and they were not people, you know. His CO found about it and he wasn't even punished for it. Nothing. Nothing at all.

I was a door gunner in Vietnam and one day I was flying convoy cover between An Ke and Pleiku. We were over a free-fire zone and there were three women on bicycles, and the pilot told the crew chief and myself just to blow them away. I refused. I told them my gun was jammed and I could not fire. They ordered me again to unjam it and do'em in. And I refused. So the copilot did it with rockets. God, I thought I was going crazy! I cried. I'm not ashamed to say it. It made me sick. Then, after we got back they gave me an Article 15 [non-judicial punishment] for disobeying a direct order.

That was the incident that really made it a moral question because up until then the war was just a word. It was something that was far away and I had no way to really relate to it.

John Henry

Sp/4

2/60

1/11 Artillery

9th Infantry Div.

Mar. '68-Aug. '69

[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

You know about mad minutes. A mad minute—everybody gets on line, everybody in the company and you play Machine Gun Murphy. You're told to fire a magazine through your weapon and you just pepper the countryside. Usually you do this about six o'clock at night because you get colors off the tracers. I don't know why.

Veterans group together in home-state delegations. Almost every state was represented.

[Photo omitted]

Sam Schorr

Sp/4 (E-4)

86th Combat Engineers

Sept. '66-Sept. '67

[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

“Recon by fire’ is when you go into an area and you’re not exactly sure what is in the area. You want to find out, so you just fire into the jungle or into the surrounding vegetation in the hopes you hit the enemy or something. But they really didn’t know who was out there or what was out there. And “mad minutes” is when everybody on perimeter, around the base camp (you have bunkers all the way around it), opens up and fires away with all their fire power for about a minute, two minutes.

I saw several incidents of recon by fire. This was a convoy duty. The convoy would stop. Tanks would pull out to the edge of the convoy. These are around inhabited areas; there were villages all up and down the highway. This was Highway 13, “Thunder Road.” And they would point their muzzles down into the vegetation and fire a canister round. Now a canister round has something like 7000 oblong bearings in it. It’s got a range of about 400 meters and it spreads as it goes. It goes in at an angle. Starts out at a small angle and just goes out like this. It’s kind of a like a Claymore mine. It just rips everything to pieces that’s in the way. If there’s anybody out there—any animal, any person, and kid, any hootch—it’s going to be destroyed, flattened. Knocks trees to pieces.

one day I was assigned to bunker guard duty during the day and right outside the perimeter was Lai Khe, there was an armored personnel carrier (APC) and a Huey chopper, which was warmed up and ready to go. there were people standing around the APC. There were five Vietnamese people, I do not know if they were civilians, Viet Cong or Viet Cong suspects. Three of them were wounded, had bandages on their

bodies and their legs and their arms looked in bad shape. The other two were older men, somewhere around fifty years old. The lieutenant from the armored personnel carrier and the captain from the chopper helped place these people in the helicopter. He got a couple of hundred feet up and three bodies came out. The lieutenant who was on the ground radioed up to the ‘copter and he asked, “What happened to the prisoners?” Their reply was, “They tried to escape.”

“Random fire” on civilians happened quite often, especially on bunker guard. You sit on bunker guard for a week, twenty-four hours a day, and you get pretty bored. So we’d play games. The Vietnamese flags stuck in the paddies so you would know they were there. And we would try to knock the flags down. I had a machine gun, my friend had a grenade launcher, we would shoot all over the area and the Vietnamese would just take off for the hills. They thought we were friendly and they put the flag up to let us know they were there and we fired at it anyway. This was out of sheer boredom and also because we just didn’t give a damn.

One bus of school children drove by the camp singing “God Bless America.”

[Photo omitted]

James Duffy

Sp/5 (E-5)

228 Avn. Bn.

1st Air Cav. Div.

Feb '67-Apr. '68

[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

Rotor wash from the helicopters was a very effective and sadistic weapon. The Chinook Helicopter is basically a cargo ship; that's what it's designed for. I forget the weight you can pick up with one, but when you've got a full load, you can put out a rotor wash at certain times that approaches 100 miles an hour. Sometimes, we'd be on early morning missions when the people from hamlets and village were going out to a designated field to defecate. We'd spot them, make a swoop in, and we could get up to a 120 knots, about 130 miles an hour. And as we'd swoop in with the ship, just as we'd approach, the pilot would flair the ship on its tail, and the rotor wash would spin around and hit the people, blowing them over through the sand and their defecation. This was one of the things that we did for kicks.

So once we were hovering over the sling load of, I think it was Howitzer rounds, and I was hanging out of the window observing what appeared to be a twelve-year-old Vietnamese boy standing there watching us. And as we lifted up with the load, the rotor increased because of the weight and it blew him into the path of a two-and-a-half-ton truck with trailer which killed him instantly. When that happened, my first reaction was, I guess, you would call normal. It was horror, pain, and when I realized that I caught myself immediately and said, "No, you can't do that," because you develop a shell while you are in the military. They brainwash you. They take all of the humanness out of you and you develop this crutch which enables you to survive in Vietnam. And if you let that protective shell down, even for a second, it's the difference between you flipping out of managing to make it through. And I caught myself letting the shell down

and I tightened up right away, and started laughing about it and joking about it with the flight engineer. He sort of move on the same logic because I guess he thought it sort of knocked his shell down too.

Mike Misiaszek

Sp/4

101st Airborne Div.

1st Brigade, Support Element

Dec. '68-Jan. '70

[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

Every once in a while at Camp Eagle, every two months or so, the order would just come down, "Okay guys, get to it." You got a mad minute. And everyone picks up a weapon with both hands, both feet and they shoot. And they don't care what they shoot at, just as long as it's away from the base area....

I never saw any, but I've heard of some people who were shooting at cows.

(overleaf): A contingent of veterans tried to turn themselves in as war criminals. Brigadier General Daniel James agreed to see three of the veterans. He told them: "I'm sorry but we don't accept American prisoners of war here—why don't you try the Justice Department?"

[photo omitted]

John Upton

Hospital Corpsman
USN, Attached to 1st Recon Bn.
1st Marine Div.
June '69-June '70

tom was really, really mild-mannered, you know...almost an overly nice dude. An all-state wrestler from Wisconsin. And since I was a bit older he used to come over and talk to me when he got a bad letter from his girl and say, "Oh, Doc, look at this. What can I do, man?" And I'd give him advice. And then when we were out on patrols, it was the same kind of thing, kind of getting our shit together. And whenever we came under fire, Tom, no matter where he was in the column, would come up to where I was and start shooting form close by—so that it was like a protection type thing. He wanted to keep me safe.

Then along come another one of those patrols and we'd been out all morning and were resting and one of the guys said: "I've got to take a crap." And all of a sudden he came running back to us with his pants down, screaming "Gooks!" And we got hit by about 90 NVA. There were only six on my team. But we had guns and gunships and all kinds of crap supporting us.

Tom was by a tree behind me and I was next to him and I was shooting the other way and you know, with all the gun power going around us, you couldn't tell if there's a gun firing even if it's right next to you. When my clip expended I started reaching in my little doggie pouch thing for more ammo. And I looked over and saw Tom slumping up against the tree and I said: "Shit, Tom, what's the problem? Why is he slumping?" And he just fell over and I said: "Oh, God."

And I did all kinds of crazy things. He was already dead. He was shot through the head and the neck...one and one. And I knew he was dead. There was nothing to do. But something hit me, like this corpsman

thing. I had to do something. I drew a tracheotomy on him and gave him external massage, I opened his chest and massaged his heart. And it seemed I tried for hours, but it was only a few minutes in the middle of a firefight.

The birds finally came in and I pulled his body on board and sat looking down at him the whole trip back. His head was really done in pretty well and his neck was about gone and there wasn't much left. It was a really strange trip. I keep seeing his face the way it was before and it was like I was on, you know, some kind of a drug or something. I didn't understand what had happened until after some guys put me in the shower. I was crying with no big emotion, just tears coming that I couldn't stop. About a week later I started having dreams.

After Tome died I got stoned and went on every patrol I could. I wanted to kill the dirty gooks because they'd killed my friend. Once I got into the bush again, I'd realize that this was a stupid idea—it wasn't just the gooks that had killed him. So I'd come back, settle down in my rack, and listen to the stereo. And I'd fall asleep and have one of these dreams. I'd always see tom up against the tree. Some time later, I got wounded again and ended up on a hospital ship. I started dreaming on the ship. And I was so touchy about things, like one time I was asleep and a nurse came up to give me a shot and I belted her one. I didn't know who she was or what was going on. I was asleep. And they wanted to court-martial me for hitting her. And what could I do? I said: "My God! You wake me up without any warning. What am I supposed to do? You could have been a gook or something." I was so badly injured I don't think they could have court-martialed me.

All the way back on the plane, in Guam, in Oakland Naval Hospital, the dreams persisted. Finally I got my discharge and I got on a plane to get home to Kansas City and I had one of these dreams on the plane. I freaked

A number of Senators and Congressmen visit the Mall campsite.

[Sen. T. Kennedy, D-Mass. Photo Omitted]

(overleaf):
Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm addresses the veterans as they await eviction on Wednesday afternoon.

all the passengers out. And like when it happened, I was sitting next to an Army dude who was a lifer and had been kind of admiring my ribbon collection. After I had the dream, he moved away to another seat, leaving everyone looking at me as if I was this strange dumb-ass. Coming home from Vietnam. God damn! What a weird dude I was! After it happened I tried to look inconspicuous. You know how you do. But everyone kept turning around and looking me. And when I went to the restroom, as I walked down the aisle, everyone stared. And I felt like just shouting out something, you know, like “You stupid-assed fuckers!”

I don't think I would have yelled, though. I would have talked first, tried to talk real calm and tell them that this is what happens to guys that go to Vietnam. That something like this happens; it's something you can't lose; it's a memory that you can't wash out of your head. It leaves scars on your brain you can't get rid of.

I got home and I kept dreaming at my mom's house. Like a lot of other people I still have the dreams.

Larry Rottmann

1st Lt.

Public Information Office

25th Infantry Div.

June '67-Mar. '68

[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

While I was in Vietnam, I sent what I called a holiday message from First Lieutenant Larry Rottmann. On it there's a small picture of a black medic, a white medic, and a Vietnamese treating a wounded Vietnamese. And there's a little quote from honorably discharged General William Tecumseh Sherman saying, “I am sick and tired of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have never fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood. more vengeance, more desolation, and destruction. War is cruel and you cannot refine it. War is hell.” That quote was taken from the *Army Digest*, a Department of Defense publication.

For sending that card, I was court-martialed. I'll read you the charges, “This is to inform you action is being taken by this headquarters to determine your fitness for retention as a reserve officer in the United States Army. Your record indicates that in December '67 you printed and distributed at government expense” (the ‘at government expense’ was—I wrote ‘free’ on my envelope, which we are allowed to do, so I didn't put a stamp on it. That's the government expense: they paid the postage for the card and they're upset) “a Christmas card depicting a seriously wounded soldier receiving plasma, etc., etc.”

This court martial was finally held last fall at Boston Army Base. I was represented by the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) resulting in the dropping of all charges and specifications. This is just to point out to you that they will do that. They pursued me for sending that Christmas card taken from the *Army Digest*; they pursued me, and spent, I guess, a million dollars, for three years across the country until they finally actually held the court martial and it was thrown out. That's just to show that they do mean business.

(over leaf): At the appointed hour of eviction, an alarm clock rings over the microphones on the speaker's platform at 4:30 P.M. No police in sight.

[Photo Omitted]

Mike Damron

Pvt. (E 1)
"B" Co.
3rd Tank Bn.
3rd Marine Reg.
3rd Marine Div.
Sept. '66-Oct. '67
[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

Well, in January of 1967, we were on Operation Newcastle about thirty miles out of Da Nang. We had our tank and some infantry people on top of a hill white some more tanks and infantry were sweeping through the valley below. Our job was to more or less plaster the area before the infantry go there and if there was any stragglers left, enemy stragglers, after our people went through, we were to plaster them again. We were told we couldn't fire unless we saw people with packs and rifles. That was more or less the policy as written, but what we made it a practice to do, is our unit was to boost the body count. We'd paint a little hat, a triangled shaped hat, on the side of our tanks for each confirmed kill we had, so any chance we got to add more hats to the side of the tank, we fired.

As far as prisoners of war go, on the back of a tank there's a thing called a travel lock, so when the gun tube's to the rear it can be locked down where it won't be bounced around. They don't use these in Vietnam. but they use them in the States. But what we used them for in Vietnam was we could put a VC's head or a VC suspect's head in that travel lock and lock it down. But it could be dangerous because if we did hit a bump it could break the person's neck.

Steve Rose

E-5 (USN Corpsman)
Hq. Bn.
4th Marine Reg.
3rd Marine Div.
Dec. '66-Dec. '67
[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

Yeah it's a thing maybe it's only with 3rd Marine Division, to cut off the left ear of NVA troops that are killed. I had some friends—I was back down to Phu Bai and some friends came out of the field and as a corpsman they asked, "Can we bet a bottle and something to put in if in so we can ship it back to the States?" and I proceeded to do that—pack 'em for shipment.

I call the time I spent in Vietnam "dead time." I call it a time when you just function and do things that, hopefully, you won't do when you come back home. As dead time, I think it's a sort of emotionless, you know, you do it your buddy did it, so you can do it. So you just send it back. You don't make a big deal of it.

The department of Justice has made a decision...as you will see., it does not mean that you must leave. It means only that you cannot engage in the following specified acts. You cannot sleep, lie in or under bedrolls, make fires, erect any shelter other than a medical tent, break any earth or carry on any cooking activities. As the attorney who has pursued this, I would like to urge you to comply. I think you have been very effective for the cause of peace and I hope you will carry on. God bless you.

--Former Attorney
General
Ramsey Clark

The best thing about this year's demonstration is you fellows. you're the one new not and hope of making an impression in the country. I remember very vividly as a young newspaper man in 1932 when Herbert Hoover called out General MacArthur and the troops and drove the bonus marchers out of Washington and burned down their tents. It was the biggest mistake Herbert Hoover ever made. And if they drive you out tonight, it'll be the biggest mistake Richard Nixon ever made."

I.F. Stone addressing
Mall campsite.

Jack Mallory

Capt.

11th Armored Cavalry Reg.

1st Air Cav. Div.

May '69-May '70

You know, one of the things I remember about Vietnam, besides all the war stories, are the “Doughnut Dollies” [USO girls]. They’d come out to the field to play Bingo or something, and when they came out all of these guys were coming in cruddy and stinky and smelly and muddy and bloody. And this fresh, clean young thing would come up, “Hi, I’m Nancy. Your Doughnut Dolly. Would you like to play Bingo?” And people just looking at each other, you know. You’d see people start to bunch up, away from her, and maybe crack a few dirty jokes or something, but they wouldn’t ever come near her. They wouldn’t know what to say to her. She was just scaring the shit out of people. Of course, I didn’t want to play Bingo anyway. The guys would be saying, “Boy, I’d like to fuck the shit out of her.” But had the opportunity arisen then and there, I think that every one of them would have been terrified to even say hello to her.

Christopher Soares

L/Cpl. (E-3)

“G” Co.

2nd Bn.

9th Marine Reg.

3rd Marine Div.

Feb. '69-Apr. '69

[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

This sergeant used to be the biggest pig in the world and he just used to take everything—first man to be on the chow line; first man to grab the best C-rations and leave us with the ham and lima beans, which we used to call ham and shit and so far this reason and for driving us to the point of not knowing where your mind is—not knowing where the hell to go or what to do—we just hated that guy and we wanted to see him go. As far as the bounty is concerned, the first man with a witness in a fire fight, who blew his ass away with a round across his eyeballs would get a \$1000. and we had a pool going within the platoon. This was around Quang Tri Area and I personally offered approximately \$25 for his head.

A veteran listens to the proposal: To sleep on the Mall or not sleep on the Mall.

Alex Prim

E-4

Army Information Specialist
HQ 1st Logistic Command
Sept. '68-June '69

In Vietnam I was an information officer. One day we had a request from an executive of a manufacturing firm in Los Angeles. This firm made a steam cleaner and they wanted some pictures of their apparatus on the job. I was assigned to take care of this. The other men in the office thought this idea from Los Angeles was pretty funny...sine the stem cleaner was used mainly on damaged army personal carriers and tanks. These vehicles often had bodies and the remains of bodies crushed into the armor and things like that. My associates were joking about this. I go upset. Violently upset. It made me sick of the whole thing. I just saw what this guy was trying to do, this manufacturer. He was making money off the war and he wanted publicity so he could get more government contracts. But I did my assignment as I was ordered. The next day I wrote a letter, a personal letter to the manufacturer, saying I thought his pictures were immoral. Three weeks later I had a visit from the Army's Criminal Investigation Division. They didn't take official action against me. I never received an answer from the guy in Los Angeles. I guess he just turned my letter over to the government.

Russel Kogut

WO-1

155 Assault Helicopter Co.
May '68-Mar. '69
[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

I saw an elephant and made mention of the fact. The captain who was in charge of the overall mission told me to go back and look and see what was going on.

I went back. There were four adults and a calf. I circled them several times. There was no village in the vicinity, so they were not friendly elephants and there were no (this was by the captain's definition), there were no marks on the elephants or packs or any signs of any people around, so I assumed they were wild. The captain assumed they were enemy and told me to have 'em destroyed. So I had my gunners shoot 'em. And this is the price an animal pays for being wild in Vietnam

A delegation discusses the proposals.

[Photo Omitted]

Evan Haney

E-4

NSA Danang

June '68-July '69

[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

I'm a Seminole Indian. If you took the Vietnamese War as it is, and compared it to the Indian Wars a hundred years ago, it would be the same thing. All the massacres were the same. Nowadays they us chemical warfare; back then they put smallpox in blankets and gave them to the Indians. You could just go right on down the line and name all the similarities. One thing I would like to bring up about racism is that I have grown up with it all my life. When I was small I was exposed to it. When I watched TV or something and watched the Indians and the cavalry, I would cheer for the cavalry. That's how bad it was.

right now a lot of Indian people are thinking bout the old ways. Way back, they had something good. And then people started getting into a money bag, and that's when it all happened. When we made treaties long ago, it was for as long as the grass shall grow and as long as the rivers shall flow. the way things are going now, one of these days the grass isn't going to grow... and the rivers aren't going to flow...

Wade R. Sanders

Lt.

Coastal Division 13

"Black Cat Division"

NAVFORV

May '68-May '69

In July 1968 I was in a swift boat operation patrolling the mouth of the Bo-De River—a known VC area. At the time we were operating under the standard naval rules of engagement. There was a specific rule stating we were not to fire unless fired upon.

As we came out of the river, my gunners mate observed two individuals jumping a small stream near the river's mouth, about 200 yards away. They were unarmed. He didn't fire.

There was not reason to take action. No action was taken.

I sent a message in to my operational commander—a routine report:

Personnel observed moving. For your information, this unit while patrolling passed out of river, and observed to personnel running. Attempted to notify sector, but unable to establish communication. Personnel visible for only 10-15 seconds. No action was taken by this unit.

My immediate superior received the following reply.

Reference A indicate possibility that Black Cat Division acting like pussy cat division. Get this guy squared away. Are noted by reference A is definite Indian Country. Regardless of communication problem of sector, good judgment indicates that personnel should have bee taken under fire. Headquarters.

The debate continues into the night.

[Photo Omitted]

John Beitzel

Sgt. (E-5)

4/21

11th Brigade

Americal Division

Jan. '69-Jan. '70

[Congressional Record]

We were ordered to go out on a patrol, a regular patrol that we go out on all the time—during a cease fire. We were very perturbed at this because we wanted to take the time off to write letters home. In one incident, we were working with another company and our battalion was nearby. Both companies were on the same radio frequency. Over the radio, the other company told us to pass on to the higher command that they had a body count of thirteen. So we passed it on up...Then later, one of our platoons went into the village and they said, "We can confirm the body count of that company." They said, "There's nine women, three children and one baby."

Steve Pitkin

Sp/4

"C" Co.

2/239

9th Infantry Div.

May '69-July '69

[Congressional Record]

I thing [sic] it's an atrocity on the part of the United States Army, to allow eight weeks of basic training, nine weeks of advanced infantry training, and then se you against an enemy that been fighting in his own backyard for twenty-five years. The training that they gave us, in the infantry, really amounted to nothing but familiarization with the small-arms weapons and the explosives you would use once you got over there. Once, we attacked a mock Vietnamese village in the snow at Fort Dix. Then you go over to Nam with that limited amount of training and knowledge of the culture you're up against, and you're scared. You're so scared, that you'll shoo anything. You'll look at your enemy, and these people that you're sort of a visitor to—you'll look at them as animals while you are turning yourself into an animal.

I'd say that's got my head spinning a little right now...the fact that I was once a sort of an animal and now I have to come back and be civil again and have a definite purpose: you know, going to school, going to work. But there's more and more veterans now that are just finding there is no purpose.

The only purpose I had in Vietnam was surviving and getting the hell out. And then on of the saddest experiences of my life occurred when I returned from Southeast Asia...and was waiting to catch a plane form Fris co Airport to Baltimore. It's like two o'clock in the morning or something and four long-haired people came in. And, you know, they laughed at me and I really had to fight back tears. I didn't say anything I tried not to let is phase me that much but we're not tine soldiers, we're people.

Arthur Egendorf

SSG /E6)

525 Military Intelligence Group

Apr. '68-Apr. '69

Saigon

[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

I went to Harvard, majored in economics, worked on a project studying multinational corporations, did research in Europe on them before being bothered by the draft board, and I enlisted in intelligence. I was told that I would be in area studies because people with my background should be in area studies and not with the infantry. And I found out in the first day of intelligence school that area studies is spying. I was later sent to Vietnam, and because I speak French, I was set up in Saigon in a position I really wanted. I didn't want to be out in the field. I didn't want to be out in the field. I didn't want to have to be under fire. I ran French spies back and forth into Cambodia. And one of the first things that I had to do there was to arrange to get press cover for my spies.

This, some of the people in the press corps might have heard about, and they might also have heard last year the Army's denial of this fact—that press cover was needed for espionage operatives,. But it's been a standing policy, covert of course, since the beginning of the war. Later I found out about an oil company being use to provide cover for people in Cambodia; that was a proposed operation. Later when I was sent back to Washington, I found out about X-hundred different companies working through the CIA with Army intelligence and providing cover and accommodation addresses. About how Internal Revenue Service documents were falsified in order to hide income paid to spies, as well as Treasury Department and Immigration [sic] Department documents falsified to aid operatives overseas. And, in fact, a large number of the institutions that I had studied in college, believing that these were things that were going

to help corporation was going to weld the world tighter—were in fact working for Uncle Sam; no totally, not everybody committed to Uncle Sam, but the institutions provide a cover for things that are not published in the society. Not because it would be a threat to our national security, but because the people of this country, if they found out about it would probably feel what I feel now, which is quite a bit of desperation.

By a vote of 480 to 400, the veterans choose to sleep on the Mall. A motion is made to declare the vote unanimous and the tension eases.

[Photo omitted]

Scott Camil

Sgt.
1st Bn.
4th Marine Reg.
1st Marine Div.
Mar. '66-Nov. '67

I spoke to all fourteen of the representatives from the state of Florida. And when I said things like, "Senator Gurney, the Vietnamese government doesn't represent the Vietnamese people," he said, "So what? The American government doesn't represent the American people."

I explained to Congressman Hailey that we were killing five hundred Asians a week and were losing fifty men a week, not counting the injured bodies and minds on both sides. He said: "Son, you just have to face reality." Congressman Young said he just came back from a five-day tour of Vietnam and I was full of shit and I was a liar. He flew around in a helicopter for five days and he knows Vietnamization is working, when I walked around for twenty months and I know it isn't.

Well, I saw State Senator Garden from Dade County. Supposedly the most liberal State Senator in Florida, and asked him to back the resolution stating "the Florida legislature recommends the immediate withdrawal of all troops from Vietnam." And he told me he didn't think the Vietnamese war had anything to do with the Vietnamese people. And then thanked me for trying to awaken his unconsciousness.

Alex Prim

Army Information Specialist
HQ 1st Logistical Command
Sept. '68-June '69

There was a vet named Johnny Upton in our delegation. He had seen a lot of killing and done a lot of killing. When we went over to the Senate I made specially sure he was there to talk to Senator Symington. The senator was certainly shocked by what John had to say. John had a story involving a policy in his unit. They were awarded a T-shirt which was stenciled "Charlie's Hunting Club" in on the back and on the front was skull and crossbones for each confirmed kill they got. They'd bring in a finger or an ear. John was wearing one of these T-shirts in the senator's office.

John Upton

Hospital Corpsman, USN
Attached to the 1st Recon Bn.
1st Marine Div
June '69-June '70

Senator Symington said he was shocked. Said he couldn't believe it. I was holding up a T-shirt, showing him. No. I had it on as a matter of fact, and I was modeling it for him. He couldn't believe it. and I said, "Well it's a true fact." And he said, "Well, if you give me the names of people that were connected with your battalion, your battalion leaders and people who had these T-shirts," he would do something about it.

So I wrote a letter to Symington as soon as I got back to Kansas City. I've received no answer on it or anything. That was two months ago.

Veterans lobby
Congress

Senator Hubert
Humphrey (D-
Minn.)

[Photo omitted]

Congressman
Albert Quie (R-
Minn)

[Photo omitted]

Ron Newton

PFC (E-3)
HHQ Co.
704 Maintenance Br.
3rd Brigade
4th Infantry Div.
July '66-June '67
[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

I saw an officer complaining about a watered drink. He picked up the Vietnamese girl that he thought watered the drink, grabbed her by the neck, and lifted her up. He was about six foot or more. Lifted her up, raised back, and slapped her hard. And you know what? They carried her out of that room. I don't know what happened to her. But everybody sat back down and started drinking. You know, nothing was thought about it. This happened all the time, abuse of the people. It was like we were uncaged animals. We were bored...bored and we wanted to do something, you know. It's like the guy coming to the big city and he wants to do something. We were able to create inflation in Pleiku. As an analogy, it would be like you trying to purchase a regular \$100 apartment for \$300. Now that's beyond my means I think it's beyond a lot of people's means. These people could not purchase apartments. They couldn't buy food anymore because we were paying whatever the people wanted. The prices just kept going, going, going. Finally the general put Pleiku off limits because of the inflation, because we were driving the women to prostitution so they could feed their kids. We were driving all the people to corrupt activities just to keep alive. We were driving the people. And this is racism. We were the supreme race. These people were nothing.

Christopher Soares

L/Cpl. (E-3)
"G" Co.
2nd Bn.
3rd Marine Div.
9th Marine Reg.
Feb. '69-Apr. '69
[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

I remember an incident in which I was in Laos. These two squads got ambushed one right after another and wound up with three men killed and fourteen men wounded and not one enemy soldier killed. And that's the war we fought in Laos. I mean, like everybody was getting killed, left and right, and they called the operation a success. I don't know if you call a success catching some small arms ammo...

Christopher Soares points out—to a Congressman's aide—several areas in Laos where his company fought during Operation Dewey Canyon I (see text on left)

[Photo omitted]

Larry Rottmann

1st Lt.

Public Information Office

25th Infantry Div.

June '67-Mar. '68

[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

At the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company, 25th Infantry Division, Cu Chi, there was a chaplain who prayed for the souls of the enemy on Sunday morning and earned flight pay as a door gunner on a helicopter during the rest of the week.

Al Hubbard

Sgt.

22 Troop Carrier Squadron

Aug. '65-June '66

Emotions

Walking down the flight line a Saigon
past stacks of aluminum cases
containing American Bodies
and
past stacks of aluminum luggage
containing American currency.

Seeing the tight, sad face of an Airman
loading the bodies aboard a dirty
Air Force Transport
and
the wide smiling face of a stewardess
greeting the passengers aboard a
clean Pan American Clipper Jet.

Hearing a Vietnamese beg you to
leave *his* country
and
an American colonel tells you to
bomb his country.

Hearing a Vietnamese invite you to
live in *his* home, after the war
and
an American explain why you can't
live in his block, after the war.

Flying over barren, brown, *safe*
American held terrain
and
over lush, green *unsafe*
Enemy terrain.

Feeling happy to be leaving a country
in which *you* do not belong
and
sad to be returning to a country
in which *you* are not allowed to belong.

Sacrificing a portion of your
consciousness so *you* won't have
to deal with
Being there
and
building mental blocks
so *you* won't have to deal with
having been there.

Office of Senator
James Buckley (R.
N.Y.)

[Photo omitted]

These protestors are
a minority of on
tenth of one per
cent of our
veterans. I'm
probably doing
more to get us out
of the war than
these marchers.
--Senator Hugh
Scott.

Robert Muller

1st Lt.

2nd Bn.

3rd Marine Reg.

3rd Marine Div.

Sept. '68-Apr. '69

My name is Robert Olivier Muller. I am a first lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps, Retired. I was retired because of a permanent disability rating, 100 per cent [sic], as a result of combat injuries sustained in Vietnam. My service number was 0105118. In Vietnam I served with 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. I served eight months in Vietnam, from early September '68 until I was shot on the 29th of April in 1969.

One day in the spring of my senior year at Hofstra University, I walked past a Marine officer standing behind a recruiting table. I knew enough to know that when I graduated the service was imminent. I was able-bodied and there was no reason for me to have a deferment. And knowing that the United States was actually engaged in war, I felt that it was my duty as a citizen of this country, the country that I considered the greatest country in the world, to join the service and fight for my country. So I signed up for platoon leader's class at Quantico, Virginia. This was something instinctive in me. I had total faith and had always pledged total allegiance to my government. I never questioned the war; I never studied the history of Vietnam. I was sufficient for me to know that my government wanted me in Vietnam and that we were fighting to repulse a massive northern Communist invasion which was threatening the freedom-loving people of South Vietnam. It was our nation's responsibility to liberate these people from their oppressors and insure the self-determination of their future.

Right from the beginning I wanted to be a good soldier. And I thought about it a lot. As nearly as I could see,

there was a correlation between good athletes and good soldiers. Good soldiers get wounded and the majority of my friends that were casualties in Vietnam were good athletes in high school. I don't know what first made me think of soldiering this way, but it's true that one of my best friends was killed and he was the top cross-country runner I knew. And I sort of look at myself in retrospect—I was a three-letter man in college, soccer, wrestling, and track—and I see that traits which are necessary to be a good athlete are the ones that are also necessary to be a good soldier. The characteristics of a good athlete are dedication, loyalty, self-discipline. These are the same characteristics necessary to be a good soldier. I had those characteristics. I also had a very strong competitive drive. And when I decided to join the military, I said to myself, the only way I'd go off to war would be in a way I could contribute the most to my country's effort. And for me, I felt that I could contribute the most by being on the front line with the toughest fighting unit there was. This is why I selected the Marine Corps Infantry, and when it came time for filling out chits for desired duty I wrote in: "front line Infantry; Duty station—Vietnam." And I made it quite clear to the commanding officer that I would accept no substitute—Vietnam combat was what I wanted.

By the time that I was sent overseas, thirty-three weeks' training in the Marines had brought out in me a fanatical dedication to our military effort. I had come to view the enemy in Vietnam as a real monster, as a threat to my personal security...something which had to be stopped and squashed. Phrases like "gook" and "link the chink," "Luke the gook," stuff we used in training got solidly into my head.

I had gooks on my mind when we flew into Danang Airport. As I was getting off the plane I suddenly found myself surrounded by gooks. It was horrifying. Someone told me, "Don't

A veteran during a guerilla theater performance—his face painted white for dramatic effect. American casualty figures in Vietnam are inscribed on his forehead.

[Photo omitted]

I realize the remnants of uniform, toy guns and spilled red ink are colorful and considered newsworthy—but I question the value of this type of publicity to the American people over an extended period of time."
--Herbert Rainwater
National Commander of VFW

worry, they're just Vietnamese civilians who work at the Air Base." But, you know, what was I supposed to think? I had been told repeated that I could not trust any Vietnamese. To see so many of them running around came as a shock, especially when they were in black pajamas which is what the thought the enemy wore.

My unit got into a combat situation the first day out in the field. We immediately lost three men and it was the first time that I'd seen deployment of military ordinance in a combat situation. Mad minutes in training are nothing like mad hours in combat...with dozens of jets coming over again and again dropping bombs, and napalm, while heavy artillery barrages come in from the rear. When all this happens, you feel very confident that anybody out there is dead. And when you think the enemy's dead, something like a medivac chopper comes in to take out the wounded and it's met by a stream of green tracers from the "dead" enemy. So you say to yourself, "Those bastards got some nerve, after what we threw at them, coming out and shooting at a helicopter." So the helicopter takes off and after going out maybe four clicks it crashes, and the wounded and everybody on board dies.

Out in the field it was fairly easy to maintain the rationale with which I went to Vietnam—that I was repelling a Communist invasion—because out in the jungle the only people we come into contact with were the NVA and hardcore Viet Cong. They come on like aggressors. So for the initial time I stayed in the field my outlook stayed about the same. And then we pulled back and we started working around civilian areas, populated areas. This was an awakening—to actually deal with the Vietnamese people. I was shocked to find open expressions of animosity and hatred, for myself and my fellow Marines. This animosity was demonstrated in the looks the people gave us and in the way they

would react when we walked through a village. If we were on an operation and we had to search through a village, these people would huddle themselves together and look at us. Some were afraid and others just openly hateful. These were the Vietnamese people that "wanted" us there! Hell, they wanted us there to get our MPC, our "Will you be here tomorrow?" I said, us Cokes, to sell us bread, to sell us anything we wanted let me tell you something that happened in a little village just below the DMZ. While we were there I asked a little Vietnamese kid for a harmonica. He didn't know what I was talking about. So I mimicked the sounds of a harmonica and with my hands, I demonstrated what I was talking about. And he said, "Tomorrow. Will you be here tomorrow?" I said, "Yes," and the next day he came back with a Hammond harmonica. I was amazed.

I came into contact with Cam Lo Refugee Village several times. Every time I passed Com Lo, I had trouble. When we passed it at night, on a truck convoy the convoy would get hit with RPGs (rocket propelled grenades). I had on night twelve or fifteen guys wounded topside on my truck. Other times we took sniper fire. Other times it was land mines. Other times when we were on a cordon, it was grenades coming out at us. And I said, "What is going on? This is not Viet Cong that we're fighting; it's not North Vietnamese. These are refugees. These are people of South Vietnam that we are here to help that are shooting at us, that are setting up the booby traps, placing the land mines, who know damn well where these things are located and yet won't help us and tell us where they are. And they allow us to get hurt and they allow me to lose my men, and I don't understand why." And then as this sort of experience continued I think I started to understand.

During a week I spent in a Fire Support Base, I killed about twelve rats and I threw them out in the garbage. The rats decomposed just as rapidly as any

dead body would decompose in 120 [degree] heat. At the end of a week's time, I went to dump the garbage out with a friend of mine, and I had the entire population of this refugee village pour around my vehicle. I'd say there were around one hundred and fifty people. My friend and I dumped maybe two GI cans full of garbage that had the twelve rats there. The people saw the rats; they just kicked the rats aside and jumped in to salvage the remainder. And that was one of the most sickening sights of the war. I could tolerate dead bodies. I do not know shy. Dead bodies did not bother me, but when I saw a human being that was still alive pushing through this garbage to perhaps get a cigarette or a rancid piece of meat, that bothered me more than seeing dead people. Then I understood why we weren't winning in Vietnam—because these people hated what we were doing, what I had to do as an officer, as a Marine, in relocating people, in pulling ordinary search operations, in going through their villages, sometimes destroying their property and their goods. The basic rule that they taught us down at Quantico, the number one rule in guerilla warfare, the you cannot win a guerilla war unless you have the popular support of the people; this most important rule was the very one that we were overlooking. By pushing these people to the starving point so that they'd push away dead rats to get a rancid piece of meat make it ludicrous to conclude that we are simultaneously winning the hearts and minds of people, as the pacification program says.

After this, I went with the ARVN and had another enlightening experience. I could see apathy on the part of the civilian population—they didn't help us militarily, they didn't tell us where the booby traps were or the land mines or where the trails and the supply caches were. I could see so many civilians harboring the VC, giving them information. But I expected from the fighting forces, from the

soldiers in South Vietnam, the Vietnamese soldiers that there would be some willingness to fight. I served four months with the ARVNs working with three battalions. And I was dumbfounded the first time we had contact with the enemy to see the ARVN soldier literally run the other way. I mean, run the other way. There were times when we heard mortar tubes popping in the distance and before one round would land, the entire battalion had taken off running the other way. They were nicknamed "The Roadrunners." I remember every night I slept with the battalion commander, he had this personal bodyguard walk around us all night long because he knew we had VC in the battalion. But to see such widespread—I don't know what you call it—lack of motivation, lack of identity, lack of ability to fight was startling. The fact that the South Vietnamese soldiers did not want to fight was the final straw for me. I said, "If they don't want to fight, what the hell and I doing here? What am I fighting for? If the people I'm supposed to be helping, the people who want to be liberated, are not willing themselves to fight, then I have to question what I'm doing here." I remember being out in Ashau Valley where we'd wake up in the morning to find out that some of the South Vietnamese soldiers had simply put down their M-16's, taken as much rice as they could carry, and went off into the field. And when you desert in Ashau Valley, you're not going back to harvest the rice crop, or to see your family, you're going out to join the enemy. This was amazing! The day that I got shot, I had a battalion reinforced, approximately six hundred South Vietnamese soldiers. I had a company of ten Marine tanks, and I had to take an objective that had perhaps fifteen North Vietnamese soldiers dug in as a suicide squad. Before we assaulted that hill, I had four jets come in, four sorties, and they dropped their payload right on target. I had an hour and a half to prep fire with heavy artillery, 155 and eight-inch guns. I had each of the tanks expend

We didn't dodge the draft. Our guerilla theater is effective because we were the guerillas. Nobody is going to doubt the sincerity of a guy who go both his legs blown off in the Nam. We're finally bringing the war home.

Mike Milligan
Vietnam Veteran

This is not a Disney Land operation. We are enacting things we are sorry that we did in Vietnam.

William Cradell
Vietnam Veteran

half of their allowance in ammunition. And after all this, the ARVN repeatedly failed to take that hill. They would start up the hill, take sporadic fire, and fall back. Some of the tankers told me they could see the VC through their telescope sights when they popped up to shoot at us. They were bleeding from their noses and ears, from the concussion of the air strikes. But these guys, the North Vietnamese, were fanatics. There is not other word. They were so dedicated to what they were doing that they would hold out against us to the death. I mean it was sickening to contrast these VC with the South Vietnamese that I had under my advisory capacity—these six hundred guys who could not take the hill. In a John Wayne type move, I got pissed off by the fact that fifteen North Vietnamese soldiers could deter me and my advances—I was determined to get them—not for political ideology but simply because they were there, and they were the enemy, and they were responsible for the loss of my friends. So I got three tanks and told the South Vietnamese that we were going to walk them up the hill. So we went up the hill and everything went fine until we started to take fire. Once again the South Vietnamese fell back, this time leaving me and the other tankers out dry. That's when I got shot.

I got shot through the chest. The bullet went through both lungs and severed the spinal cord. And I was immediately rendered a paraplegic, from the fifth thoracic vertebra down, I was conscious for maybe ten seconds after I was hit, and my first thought was, "I'm hit. I don't fucking believe it. I'm hit!" That was the first thing that went through my head. The second thing was, "My girl. And my family." Almost simultaneously, "My girl and my family. What are they going to say?" And then all of a sudden I said to myself, "It doesn't matter, I'm dying. I'm going to die in Vietnam. On this shitty piece of ground I'm going to die. I don't

fucking believe it." And I close my eyes and I thought I was dead. And I woke up and I was on a hospital ship, the U.S.S. *Repose*. I had seven tubes in me and all I know is that I woke up and I was alive. It was unbelievable. The doctors told me I was paralyzed and what have you. I couldn't have cared less. The only thing that mattered was that I was alive. We always talked among ourselves before we went over about what would happen if we lost a leg or if we were disabled. And almost unanimously the guys said, "I'd rather die than come back disabled." Let me tell you something. When I woke up on that hospital ship, the fact that I was disabled, permanently, the rest of my life, the sorrow of being told that I'd be a paraplegic—a word that I'd never really heard or understood before (I didn't know what a paraplegic was until they told me)—the sorrow in being told that I was in that condition was so lost in the overwhelming joy of seeing that doctor come down and tell me, "You're going to make it." And that's why, to this day, I cannot allow myself to feel sorry for what happened to me. Because I'm here. A lot of my friends aren't, and I know that. And that's why I can't complain. I am bitter. I am bitter, not because I was shot in Vietnam. I am bitter because I put my faith, my allegiance in my government. I did so with the best, most honest intentions in the world, believing that I was doing right because my government told me we had to fight in Vietnam. And to believe that my government would lie to me or lead me astray was inconceivable. But having been there, and recognizing what we've done over there, and not being able to justify the death of any of my friends, that's why I'm bitter. I'm bitter because I gave to my country myself, 100 per cent [sic], and they used me. They used me as a pawn in a game and for that reason I am bitter. And insofar as the tragedy—many people say, "Oh, what a tragedy. You're a paraplegic" the tragedy in my life is not that I'm a paraplegic, because I'm a lot better man today than I ever was before. The tragedy in my

life is that I was, as so many Americans still are, so totally naïve and so trusting, and I had this instinct of putting faith in my government, totally forgetting that good government doesn't just happen. A good government takes work, and it takes work from the people, from me. As a college graduate I was supposed to be an educated person. I was an idiot because I never asked the question Why? And that is my greatest tragedy—one which, I might add again, was shared by all too many Americans.

What do I want to do now? Well, one of the reasons that I make an effort to go out and speak about the war in Vietnam and why I take so many speaking engagements, is because I've heard people say too many times, "After the price the United States has paid, after having lost so many dead and so many wounded in Vietnam, we cannot just write these men off, write the dead off and write the disabled off and say it was for nothing. We must continue," they say, "to lend

credence or some justification to the price we've paid." But I can tell you this, I spent over a year as an in-patient in a VA hospital, and I was with some of the most severely disabled casualties of this war, multiple amputees, quadriplegics, men who could only move their head (the only part of their body that they would ever feel or be able to move again for the rest of their life was their head). And these guys, despite their need to justify their loss, despite their need to say it was for something, to consider themselves heroes—the overwhelming majority of these guys recognize that their loss is for nothing. And the only thing that they want' and what I want, is not to lose any more friends in Vietnam. Not to have any more of my friends come back, either in boxes or in wheelchairs. These people who promote the war are playing on emotions of guys like me. They're using me again to carry on this war, so I want to go out and I want to tell people from my wheelchair, "Don't use me as a rallying cry to continue this war for a just peace. To throw more guys and more of my friends and brothers into the hopper of this war machine, to justify my loss. If I can recognize my loss is a waste, why can't you? Maybe it's harder for you because of the guilt that you feel."

My Vietnam experience has really changed me. I was the one who went to college and studied business administration. I was the management major. I was the one who had full expectations after three years in the Marine Corps as an officer with outstanding credentials to go on into a major corporation under a management training program and be route right into the type of young executive working fourteen hours a day to get his home out in the suburbs or whatever that Great American Dream is. This has changed. When I was shot I became a member of a minority group. I began fighting the system from a VA hospital. In my case the system was the Veterans Administration. I tried to fight

Veterans Administration to get what was my due right under law. I was entitled to care second to none. There was no reason why I should be denied access to a proper and thorough rehabilitation program. But the Veterans Administration was lacking funds and they couldn't help me. All of a sudden I found that I was politically impotent; that I could not effect a change. This really hit me. And this is why, this is what prompted me to choose law as my profession. Because I was a member of a group, disabled veterans, that literally lie hidden and forgotten behind hospital walls—because they're an unpleasant reminder of what's going on in life today. To be a member of a beleaguered minority! Me! A white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. This was really a revelation. And now I know what it is to be and underdog in a literally hopeless situation. I want to be in a position where I can effect changes. The only way I might be able to do this is by becoming a lawyer. That's why I'm going to law school.

I tell you, I'm a better man now than I was before I went to Vietnam. I'm certainly more aware of the sanctity of life. They say that the veteran is a callous and dehumanized person. I disagree. Because I was forced to kill other human beings I have found what life means.

I think Vietnam may have served a purpose and this is where my personal hope for the future lies: that Vietnam was the catalyst that precipitated a social revolution, and I hope it's a revolution because it has to happen fast. It has to happen very fast.

Son, I don't think what you're doing is good for the troops.

--Daughter of the American Revolution

Lady, we are the troops.

--Vietnam Veteran

Jack Mallory

Capt.

11th Air Cav. Reg.

1st Air Cav. Div.

May '69-May '70

They get discharges from Vietnam and the Army and suddenly they're standing out there in the street, outside the gate, calling a cab. Because that's all there fucking is to do. Call a cab. Get on an airplane. Fly to your home. Take a cab from the airport home. And you're home again. And when you're home, some people say, "Well, how was it?" and other people say, "How many people did you kill?" And then there are those who say "Where have you been? We haven't seen you around for a while." And I think that a lot of vets feel that there is something really lacking—things aren't happening the way they're supposed to happen.

Back in the mid-sixties I was never really convinced that the government was as evil as all those filthy radicals were saying it was. But then I took the whole Vietnam trip. And then I had to think about it. Why did all those people die?

I guess if there is a revolution and someone asked me who I'd blame for causing the revolution, I'd have to say Walt Disney. He is the one who taught all of us to believe in the things that the country and the soldier is supposed to stand for, the whole Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, George Washington image.

Bill Perry

PFC (E-3)

101st Airborne Div.

Nov. '68-Aug. '68

[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

The whole American policy is nothing but what you might call cultural imperialism. It's like a very clever form of racism. They've always been in to trying to honkify white people as much as possible. Trying to make you whiter than white. Just taking their whole decadent culture, their whole cold-weather culture, their whole fear culture, their whole money culture, and push their fear, push this hate, push this mistrust, among all of us. It's this kind of thing some of us have felt all of our lives.

Veterans pose in
USO headquarters
beneath a picture of
well known
Vietnam visitor.

[Photo omitted]

America's Vietnam generation isn't up against the wall; it's bricked in. Going to Vietnam is a war crime, refusing to go is a domestic crime, and just sitting still somewhere or somehow in exile or limbo is a moral crime. It is a terrible time today to be American and young. In fact, it apparently is a crime.

Jan Crumb

Vietnam Veteran

(overleaf): A large group of veterans arrive at the steps of the Supreme Court to demand that the court rule on the legality of the Vietnam War.

[Photo omitted]

Mrs. Virginia Warner
Mother of James Warner
American POW in N. Vietnam
[Congressional Record 4/6/71]

First of all, I want to say, I am an American. I'm sure I'm going to be labeled Communist; I'm sure I'm going to be labeled revolutionary, but I am not. I am an American. I love my country. It's being torn apart by this war. I want to appeal to the middle-aged, middle-class American. We have to wake up and realize what's happening to us. My son's been a prisoner, and, of course, I'm interested in him coming back. I'd love to have him back, but this isn't the only consideration. We have to consider the people in Vietnam. What would we do, what would you and I do, if a Vietnamese plane flew over and bombed our town? How would we react to somebody that we've captured?

I think my son isn't being humanely treated. I don't think he's been brutally treated, but he doesn't get steak; I'm sure he doesn't get chicken like George Smith got. But I think he has food enough to sustain him until he comes back, fine. We're allowed to send him a package every other month. We send, oh, aspirins, vitamin capsules, and such thing as that. We hadn't heard from him for two and a half years. We knew he was a prisoner. We knew he had been captured by North Vietnamese. We began to write letters to foreign newspapers and letters to foreign governments to try to get the Vietnamese to tell us about the prisoners, where they were and who they were. Now we've gotten two lists. I don't understand why we claim the lists aren't complete; I don't understand that. Of course, maybe it's because my son's name has appeared on it and you know, in the back of my mind, maybe I'm satisfied. But I've talked to other families and the circumstances of their son's disappearance or their husband's disappearance is quite different and

it's perhaps that the North Vietnamese don't know where they are. These are the things we have to rationalize with. We have to stop and think what's happening to our country and to that country. Is it worth going on, is it worth tearing everybody apart? I think, I don't know what else to say. I'd just like to say that since Hanoi has said that if we set a date, they'll talk about the release of the prisoners, is that asking so much, just to set a date? Let's put them on the spot. Let's put them on the spot. Let's set a date and see if they really will live up to their word. They've told the whole world that this is what they'll do, and if they're interested at all in world opinion, like we've been told they are, I think they will. I think they'll listen. And will America listen? Will middle-aged, middle-class America listen? Don't let our country be torn apart by this.

Police arrive to arrest protesters. One hundred and ten are arrested on charges of disturbing the peace. The charges are later dropped for insufficient evidence.

[Photo omitted]

Christopher Soares

L/Cpl. (E-3)

“G” Co.

2nd Bn.

9th Marine Reg.

3rd Marine Div.

Feb. '69-Apr. '69

In Vietnam, I was not defending my country, I was defending my own life. I wasn't fighting for the John Doe next to me, I wasn't fighting for my captain or the battalion commander, or the general, or Westmoreland either. But for my own ass. I wanted to come back to the United States alive.

There's not so much charm in war stories, you know. But at times you have to tell war stories because what happened to you in Vietnam is always on your conscience. You don't tell war stories in John Wayne style. You tell it quietly. But you have to tell it. There is so much you have to get rid of in your mind. Sometimes I just stay up half the night and cannot get to sleep because my mind bleeds from hell when it goes back to Vietnam.

Mike McCusker

Sgt. (E-5)

Public Information Office

1st Marine Div.

'66-'67

[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

The Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians are dying right now, at this exact moment, and they will continue to die tomorrow, maybe even next year. So remember that and maybe you're going to find one of these days an F-100 flying a napalm strike on a ghetto; you're going to find an F-100 flying a napalm strike on where the long-hairs live. It's not too far off.

They've used tear gas from helicopters already; they've used shotguns; they've blown away Black Panthers—it's not too far off.

The veterans are being very cooperative. They even asked for more trash cans.

--Park Policeman

Veterans conduct a candlelight march around the White House.

[Photo omitted]

It was Thursday night, after the candlelight march, when the guys came back and were on the stage with the flag. There was this spontaneous feeling of pride. I sort of drew a parallel with Iwo Jima. I guess you had to, because it was with the same type of pride that they put up the flag in Iwo Jima. And when that was done—instead of burning the flag, they took it and they folded it up because as Phil Lavoie, one of the vets with the flag said, “We love America, we’re not here to destroy it.:

Michael Roach
Vietnam Veteran

The President hope
individuals will
continue to have the
opportunity to
express themselves
in a peaceful
manner.

--Ronald Ziegler
Press Secretary

I think the office of
the President is a
great office, and the
man in it should be
big enough not to
close his eyes to
what we are trying
to show him. There
is no pride in this
war.

--Norwel Bestick
Vietnam Veteran

Larry Rottmann

1st Lt.

Public Information Office

25th Infantry Div.

June '67-Mar. '68

[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

Many people ask us, right why we haven't spoken up before and I think we have given you the reason. We are ordered not to speak up and if you do speak up, action will be taken against you—sometimes very serious and very harsh action. There is another question in many peoples' minds here. They say, "Well, why do you talk now? Why do you come here and tell us these things that happened two, three, maybe four, five years ago? What is your motivation behind it? You want to get on the boob tube? You're on some kind of ego trip? You know, why are you here?"

I'm here, speaking personally, because I can't be here. I'm here because, like, I have nightmares about things that happened to me and my friends. I'm here because my conscience will not let me forget what I want to forget. I didn't want to talk about it at all. I didn't watch Cronkite.

I went fishing a lot and changed socks two or three times a day and slept on beds and ate cheeseburgers. But after a while, it gets to the point where you have to talk to somebody and when I tried to talk to somebody, even my parents, they didn't want to hear it. They didn't want to know. And that made me realize that no matter how painful it was for me I had to tell them. I mean, they had to know, told me they had to know.

Bill Perry

PFC (E-3)

101st Airborne Div.

Nov. '66-Aug '68

[Congressional Record 4/7/71]

People say we must stop the war. I feel it's so much more than this. The whole rich man's game has always been fear. They've always been very much into impressing us. Now here's the Empire State Building. Be impressed. Now here is the C-5A or some fantastic bomber. Be impressed. You know, be afraid of it. Here is a club. I'll bust your head if you don't stay in line. Be impressed. Be afraid. Competition is another thing that brings about fear. Like ever since we're little children. Com on, stupid, you're thirteen months. Why can't you walk yet? Then there's this fear that's always put into us by the movie people for instance. That all Africans are cannibals and all Indians are savages. Who are the real savages? Who is really creating this climate of fear—this climate of mistrust—this climate which makes us scared to death of the person sitting next to us? Who prevents us from loving each other? The whole fear thing is what's creating atrocities in Selma, atrocities in Phuc Vinh, atrocities in Angola, atrocities in Mozambique, atrocities in Montevideo. It's happening everywhere. We're afraid of ourselves. We're not allowed to love each other. The whole life style of the Vietnamese people, their whole cultural and social way of life, is nothing but love. It's a kind of love we really lack in this country and a kind of love that we have to build. A kind of opening of ourselves, an honesty to ourselves and a love for each other where you know there will be no reason to hurt anyone except perhaps to protect our love. You know, the kind of love which is called primitive or savage.

The troops roll out on the final day.

[Photo omitted]

Anne Pine carries the flag which draped her son's coffin—making her way toward the steps of the Capitol where veterans will cast down their medals.

[Photo omitted]

In the Spanish Civil
War, if a son was
killed his father
would stop down
and kiss his son a
pick up his son's
rifle, and fight.
They had a cause.

Alberto had a
cause. I don't feel
it was a bad cause.
But there is enough.
We have lost
enough blood and it
is time to stop. If
we must fight
communism, let's
fight it here.
--Evelyn
Carrasquillo
Son, Alberto, killed
in Vietnam

He didn't want to
go there but he was
drafted and he said
it was his duty to
go. He said he
hated to burn their
homes and see the
homeless going
from camp to camp
and being told the
old men and
women and
children were the
enemy. But he
fought the war.
--Anne Pine-mother
of Fred Pine Killed
in Vietnam

Landon Thorne

1st Lt.
Golf Battery 3/12
3rd Marine Div.
Nov. '69-Dec. '70

Brothers

Send us,
Send us far away,
Make us believe what our fathers
would
like to have been
Sons we tried to be
but we became brothers
When we learned how far we had been
sent and how far we had to come
To be home.

We were told to be heroes
because if we were
Our fathers would have us back,
but we became brothers
In a blood house,
And we were called heroes
because of what
Our fathers thought we were
But we had learned to
save a brother
Not a father's fear-dream.

Who has the right
To tell us what we are
Or what a brother is not?
Who can tell us
What to destroy
Or what to protect
To be heroes?

Is a hero a father's sandwich
stuffed with politician's
baloney and bombast cheese
Delivered cold to a mother's doorstep
wrapped in a bunting
tied with glory ribbon
To ease the eating—
Our brother?

Is a hero one who showed himself
urging other to be brave
Or is he one who lay still
Searching
for
his
soul,
not finding strength in danger

His passion, his life
To bring home —
Our brother?
Here we are father,
We are home!

We may have lost your face—
a presumptive countenance
squinting shyly
into a mirror of another day—

But other things are still in reach
at fair exchange for limbs and life
If they have a heart
It may be we cannot change you
but we hope to make you see
How we have changed,
While you have chosen to be father
We have fought—
and are fighting—
To be brothers to our sons.

Neil Olsen of
Russell, Pa,
wearing his dead
son's army fatigue
jacket, blows taps
before the medals
are turned back

[Photo omitted]

“I wish I could
make ‘em eat it.”
“I’m still on active
duty and I say get
the hell out!”

“I gave up 90 per
cent of my vision in
Vietnam. These
medals are
worthless.”

“Here’s my merit
badges for murder...
from the country I
betrayed by
enlisting in the U.S.
Army.”

Igor Brovosky of
New York City
threw most of his
decorations away.
“I’m keeping two
Purple Hearts in
memory of
friends,” he said.

“I’d like to say just
one thing fro the
people of Vietnam.
I’m sorry. I hope
that someday I can
return to Vietnam
and help rebuild
that country we tore
apart.”

“I earned a Good
Conduct Medal in
Vietnam. In the
worlds of another
son of
Massachusetts,
Henry Thoreau, my
only regret is my
good conduct.”

Vietnam Veterans

[Photos omitted]

The American
Legion deeply
regrets any veteran
feeling it is
necessary to return
medals to the
government after
they were justly
earned.

--Alfred Chamie
Commader—
American Legion

Rusty Sachs

Capt.

Medium Helicopter Squadron 362

Marine Air Group 36

1st Marine Div.

Aug. '66-Sept. '67

And then things started going right. And the government started making these stupid decisions, like: "You can stay there on the Mall all night as long as you stand up." Things like that. So we just decided, "Well, fuck 'em. We're not going to pay attention to their silly rules. We're going to do what we came here to do." And we did.

By Friday morning when we returned our medals, it was becoming an emotional thing. We discussed for a long time who we were going to return our medals...whether we'd drop them into shitcans filled with blood...or carry them up to Congress in body bags. Finally we decided the best way to show our contempt was by throwing them over the fence they'd put up in front of the Capitol steps.

This was really an emotional thing. After I threw in my medals I moved beyond the mike and was standing next to the fence helping herd the newsmen away from the fence so that the vets could get through. The I saw some newsmen beginning to pick up medals. I grabbed the mike and said: "Listen: you newsmen, we're not giving you the medals. We're turning them in to the country...don't touch them!"

And then another newsman picked up a Purple Heart and put it in his pocket. And I snapped. It was just like...the most sacrilegious thing I'd ever seen. And I reached through the fence and grabbed the nearest reporter and started saying to him and the others: "You tell every motherfucker back there that if somebody touches a medal, I'm going to be over there breaking the fingers off his fucking hands." And then a vet grabbed me and said, "Hey, calm down a little,

brother." And I realized that if I'd gone around the other side of the fence I would of done that and I'd better calm down.

And I just turned to go when Ron Ferrizzi from Philadelphia go up and said, "My wife is divorcing me for returning these medals. She wants me to keep them so my little sons can be proud of me." And went on to say how three of his best friends had died so he could get that medal. And that finally snapped everything, and a whole bunch us, you know, just started crying. That was the emotional peak. We couldn't take it any more. And we walked away and were crying really hard for two hours. We felt that we'd really, right at that instant, we thought, we wouldn't have been surprised if somebody said, "Hey, Nixon just announced that all the troops will be out of Nam and back home by suppertime." We would have believed it at that instant. We really would have. We thought we'd finally done it and we'd reached everyone.

You fell you're bad off and then you meet someone who's worse—somebody who's lost two legs and an arm, or somebody whose stumps are shorter than yours.
--1st Lt. James Dehlin
Vietnam Veteran

It was the absolute top of the mountain. This was the final act of contempt for the way the executive branch is forcing us to wage war. It was like two hours before I could stop crying. It was very, very, very heavy.

--Rusty Sachs
Vietnam Veteran

My parents told me that if I really did come down here and turned in my medals, that they never wanted anything more to do with me. That's not an easy thing to take. I still love my parents.

My wife doesn't understand what happened to me when I came home from Nam. She said she would divorce me if I came down here because she wanted my medal for our son to see when he grew up.

I'm not proud of these medals. I'm not proud of what I did to receive them. I was in Vietnam for a year and our company policy was to take no prisoners. A whole year we never took one prisoner alive. Just wasted them with the door gun, dropped down to check their bodies for maps or valuables, and split. If it was dead and Vietnamese, it was a VC.

--Ron Ferrizzi
Vietnam Veteran

Last vestiges of
Vietnam—
Ploughshares and
pruning hooks.

[Photos omitted]

Howard Baker

Yeoman & Courier (E-3)

Naval Intelligence, USS Forrestal

Talking to the policemen first...gave me hope. And then seeing that there was this beautiful community amongst us. Tribe's a good word because it had its structure but it didn't have an old hierarchy or anything like that. Everyone had a vote; everyone had a say. And like many of our meetings there, we didn't really cut each other down or beat each other up or pick on each other's insecurities. Instead we gave to each other, we listened to ideas. I think it was on Thursday all of a sudden it hit me that there's no reason to be violent anymore, that we've done something without bombing the city or something like that. It was at the point that I began to see that all of our ideas were right and that we had our hearts and our minds in the right place.

Dr. David Galicia

Maj.

Psychiatrist, 3rd Field Hospital

July '69-June '70

[Congressional Record 4//71]

And when I returned home (I consider myself to be quite a stable individual. I've never really had a suicidal thought in my life), I was staying in Detroit by myself. I was staying in a hotel on the ninth floor. And because I was alone, a lot of this stuff kept coming back to me. I was standing by the open window one day with this stuff running through my head and I had to leave that window because I felt that, at any moment, I would jump. I've had the same felling a number of occasions crossing freeway bridges when I am thinking about the subject again. And this has remained an upsetting thing to me until just the other day. I read an account in the Detroit Free Press which probably many of you have. It was very long, long article last Sunday about veterans returning. Somewhere buried in the middle of that was a paragraph that said, roughly, about 7000 people are coming into VA Hospitals, and this doesn't include only psychiatric patients, this includes the whole spectrum, everybody. Out of these 7000 people, 54 per cent of these people have at least suicidal feelings. And that 27 per cent of these people have actively tried suicide, one or more times. I suspect that perhaps it is a low estimate because up until today I don't think I would have been prone to express what's happened

Scott Camil

Sgt.
1st Bn
1st Marines
Mar. '66-Nov. '67

My stepfather is a policeman. I'm what people call a patriotic son. I volunteered for Vietnam and spent twenty months there. I did a lot of things that I wouldn't be allowed to do in the United States and I justified them. I justified killing unarmed women and children because we were told in training that we can't have a guerilla warfare without the support of the people, the people supporting the enemy are the enemy also. And you kill them. You kill the women so they can't have children to grow up to be Communists. And you kill the children so they don't grow up to be Communists. I rationalized it, thinking, "Well, we killed unarmed women and children in Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the best interests of the nation and this too is supposed to be for the best interests of the nation," and I didn't see any difference.

Who can say what's the right way to kill another human being? If someone was trying to kill me, I would kill him. And that's one thing I learned in Vietnam—how easy killing was—it was just me pulling a little lever on a piece of metal I was holding in my arms. I couldn't feel, when I shot someone, the piece of metal whipping through his body, causing him pain, taking away his life. It was just me going "click, click." And every one of the enemy that fell was like a feather in my cap. And it just made me happy to do it, and I did it for what I believed in.

And I believe in what I'm doing now and, like, if I was at Kent State when it happened, and if I would have gotten my hands on a rifle, I would have shot back. I would have tried to kill and I'm sure I would have killed. Even though I realize that the National Guard people at Kent State were being used just like I was being used in

Vietnam. Yet, even though I recognize that, I still know I would have tried to kill them. And this is something that I hassle with myself that upsets me, that I can't resolve.

John Spencer

PFC
L Company
3rd Bn.
7th Marine Reg.
1st Marine Div.
Feb. '66-May '67

I got wounded and that's when my drug addiction started. I was getting morphine for the pain and the morphine began doing something else—relieving my tension about going back into combat when the hospital trip was over. Then I got to using heroin and that was it.

When I got back to my unit, there was no problem continuing with drugs, I just bought it from whatever village we were near. The medics in our unit gave us hypodermics and everything we needed to shoot up intravenously.

I got back to California and kicked the habit for four months because I didn't know the neighborhoods. Then I came back to New York where drugs were easy to get and I got hooked again. After a while I went to the VA looking for help. There was none. So I went to robbery and stealing to support my habit. Then I got busted.

Amongst other well know people drawn to the veterans camp was Arthur Miller. He talks to a veteran as the camp is breaking up. (top right)

[Photo omitted]

Alex Prim

E-4

Army Information Specialist
HQ 1st Logistic Command
Sept. '68-June '69

A lot of people who are in VVAW don't like to be in it. They would rather forget about Vietnam. Forget the war and spend more time with girls—rather than other veterans. But they feel they have to do this VVAW thing. They have to be involved.

You see, when they get home, they have this problem getting to be real people again. A lot of my friends wanted to get married and settle down when they got back. A lot of the marriages haven't worked out. Some were too fast, others had their engagements broken off. The main thing all of us wish is to be able to come back and pretend the whole thing never happened, that we never really went to Vietnam. And that we're just average guys, going back to college, finding jobs. But we can't forget being there in Vietnam. And that's the problem. There's a war going on where our friends died. We understand what that means. The rest of America doesn't.

Bestor Cramm

Lt.

7th Eng. Bn.

USMC

Mar. '68-Apr. '69

The new American soldier, as I see it, is a person who has come to a point in his life where he's rejected violence—he's seen too much of it. He's been so much a part of it. He's learned about how and to what extent human beings can really torture on another. So now, he's thinking about the future, about his own kids, about the other people who haven't been born yet, and how that last thing in the world he could wish for would be for them to go through what he's been through. He's got eyes that are set really deep, because I think he's cried a lot. I think he's cried a lot in shame, for the year, maybe two years of his life in which he killed, in which he raped the countryside, and I think that's a shame he's going to live with for his whole life. And that's a really incredibly hard road, I think, for the new American soldier because he has to accept that fact that he spent a portion of his life doing these things.

On Friday afternoon I was sitting at the campsite on the Mall and I saw a Parks Department truck pull up with a tree in the back. I didn't know what it was all about. Then I heard that some vet had ordered the tree to commemorate Dewey Canyon III. And we went and planted that tree. It was the thing that topped off the week. It was the spirit of everything. I mean how much more beautiful can you get? You come down there and you do this thing, you know, as vets going through all this hassle, and going through all these changes, and getting a selective thing together, and then just to freak up the straight people, planting a tree. Everybody was stoned by this. They jump up and start clapping: "They're planting a tree. They're planting a tree." Just like a baby being born. And that was it I freaked out on that. Because I had no idea what it was all about until somebody told me the vets said they were going to make the park a better place than it was when we arrived. And we did! We lived up to our word, we're not like the President, he says all those words and doesn't live up to any of them.
--Rand Martin
Vietnam Veteran

