

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

MAY 12 1992

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Stephen J. Keeley

ENTITLED.....Memories Are Made of This: The Impact of the

Vietnam War on the Persian Gulf War in Rural America

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF.....Bachelor of Arts

*Mark H. Hoff*

Instructor in Charge

APPROVED

*Charles [Signature]*

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF.....History

**Memories are Made of This:  
The Impact of the Vietnam War on the Persian Gulf War  
in Rural America**

by  
**Stephen J. Keeley**

**Advisor:**  
**Dr. Mark Leff**  
**Associate Professor of History**

-----

**Thesis**  
  
for the  
**Degree of Bachelor of Arts**  
  
in  
**History**

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**  
**University of Illinois**  
**Urbana, Illinois**

**1992**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction: Finding a Middle Ground</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter I: All Quiet on the Home Front?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter II: Don't Worry: Be Happy</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Chapter III: The Sons of the Mother-of-All-Battles</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Chapter IV: The Old Dog Learns New Tricks</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>80</b>

## Introduction: Finding the Middle Ground

Bubba Lee and Peewee Jackson, two Southerners, were at the Podunk saw mill on afternoon telling Grandpa Jones about a murder that had occurred in the neighboring county:

"Did you hear that Bobby Joe is dead, Grandpa?" asked Bubba.

"He is?" said Grandpa.

"The police think that it was a murder, or maybe suicide," explained Peewee.

"How did it happen?" Grandpa asked.

"He was stabbed, no, maybe shot, or strangled, no, um, he might have been beat to death," replied Bubba.

"Seems to me I heard about that," responded Grandpa, "but I didn't have the details until now."

Stereotypes are common aspects of American society. Stereotypes, whether positive or negative, allow humans to compartmentalize experiences. New experiences with members of different races, ethnic groups, or religions are compared and contrasted with popular images embedded in people's memories.

While some stereotypes are mere memory devices, many often determine how one responds to a member of a particular group. Stereotypes influence whether people predetermine if a person is inherently lazy, puritanical, stupid, or intelligent. Shaped by society and individual experience, stereotypes affect the interactions between people everyday.

The treatment Vietnam veterans received has also been indelibly stereotyped in the minds of the American people. The popular image of the Vietnam veteran's reception is of a nineteen-year-old returning to the United States after a twelve-month tour in Vietnam, being pitied or spat upon by antiwar protestors; and being callously ignored nonetheless by others around him. The Vietnam veteran is popularly seen as the forgotten warrior from a war America wanted to forget.

The Vietnam era began August 5, 1964 and ended May 7, 1975 as defined by the Veterans Administration. Estimates vary, but of the nine million American troops in uniform during that period, approximately four million men and women served in and around Vietnam (Egendorf 20). In fact, American troops were sent to Vietnam under President Eisenhower, and by 1973, most of the American forces had been withdrawn (Egendorf 21). It was the longest war in American history and one of the most divisive national experiences.

Some scholars contend that Vietnam veterans have not been treated differently from veterans of earlier wars. Richard Severo and Lewis Milford argue in their book, The Wages of War, that if people "believed there had never been a group of veterans so ignored, abused, and betrayed, it was not because they tried to rewrite history, but because they knew so little about it" (419). Yet Lewis and Severo readily admit the uniqueness of the Vietnam experience in that "Vietnam was a war as odd as it was brutal" (348). Lewis and Severo describe the post-Vietnam period as being "thought of as being somehow fundamentally different from other post-war periods in American history. It was rather different in the degree of national divisiveness it

caused" (420). In fact, Lewis and Severo do not reject the popular image of the reception given to the veterans by the public. Instead, their focus is on the treatment given to Vietnam veterans by the government and its comparison to past governmental treatment of veterans. Their thesis is that "Vietnam was not so different in the uncaring attitude demonstrated by the government toward veterans" (420).

Most scholars largely accept one of the stereotypes offered for the treatment Vietnam veterans received. According to the first model, Vietnam veterans were "either reviled as unwelcome relics of an unwanted war, or treated with shattering indifference" (MacPherson 29). Vietnam veterans "have been misunderstood, disliked, unfairly treated, and institutionally neglected." Scholars assert that the people who received the veterans "seemed bored, scared, repulsed, anxious, or even angry" (Brende 59). "The public, educators, and employers agree" that "the reception given to [Vietnam veterans] was not on par with that accorded to returning servicemen from earlier wars" (Myths and Realities 35).

Vast, specific evidence supports this popular image of the treatment given to Vietnam veterans. In 1971, forty-nine percent of the public said that Vietnam veterans "were made suckers, having to risk their lives in the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time." In 1979, sixty-four percent of the public agreed with that statement (Myths and Realities 87). One-third of returning combat veterans said they received direct, unfriendly treatment from their peers who did not go to Vietnam (MacPherson 37). Whereas three-fourths of the veterans from previous wars believed that people their

own age gave them a friendly reception upon their return, less than half of Vietnam veterans felt that way (Myths and Realities 35).

Scholars cite personal narratives describing ill-treatment in support of these claims. One veteran recalled that "Dad laughed and called me a drug-addict, baby-killer, and told me to get out of the house" (Mason 169). Fred Downs lost an arm in Vietnam. While attending a university, a fellow student noticed his hook and asked, "Get that in Vietnam?" When Downs replied "yes," the student sneered, "Serves you right" (Mason 78).

According to the model, Vietnam veterans were discriminated against in hiring practices as well. One former helicopter pilot had to remove his coat so his interviewer could inspect his arms for needle marks. A nurse with extensive operating room experience in Vietnam was assigned bedpan duty. Another medic with surgical experience was rejected after his interviewer learned he had gained his experience in Vietnam (Mason 54). One television producer who refused to hire Vietnam veterans explained, "I have no pity for those veterans: They were either fools or they wanted to go. Anyone could have gotten out" (MacPherson 29).

The reasons for this reception are equally well-established in the public mind. The "societal indifference was a form of punishment" to the veterans for serving in Vietnam (MacPherson 46). Vietnam was "a bad war, especially after the 1968 Tet Offensive." The veterans were seen as villains; in an immoral war, they were the immoral warriors (Brende 61-62). Not only was Vietnam an immoral war, it was a tarnish on America's win-loss war record. Thus, Vietnam veterans were scapegoats. Vietnam veterans were told that Vietnam "was the only war we lost" (Brende 49). This causal link between

losing the war and subsequent ill-treatment toward veterans is reflected often in the literature. The veteran is painted as "the only loser of our only lost war" (Brende 49). Caught in the middle, the veterans were reviled by everyone. "The left hated us for killing," commented one veteran, "and the right hated us for not killing enough" (MacPherson 29).

Another reason cited supporting this model of ill-treatment Vietnam veterans received is the image of the veteran as an aberration in society. Vietnam veterans were portrayed as "depraved, immoral, drug-crazed, and psychopathic" (Brende 49). This "image of the troubled veteran took hold long before there was solid evidence to document the war's impact. It seemed to strike a chord with the public" (Egendorf 26). Television showed American soldiers torching villages, and dumping napalm on civilians. Seeing these scenes everyday, the public concluded "that the men in Vietnam were somehow morbidly different from warriors of the past" (MacPherson 50). One veteran recalled that "people were demanding that we soldiers take a stand. Admit that Vietnam was wrong, that we were all a bunch of kill-crazy psychos" (Downs 15).

This common perception of Vietnam veterans is partially rooted in fact. In 1980, Vietnam veterans' suicide rate was thirty-three percent higher than their non-veteran peers. The divorce rate for veterans was double that of their non-going peers, as was unemployment. One in four veterans earned under seven thousand dollars per year. Drug and alcohol abuse was widespread. Nearly seventy-thousand Vietnam veterans were in jail in 1980, and another two-hundred thousand out on bail, parole, or probation. A three-year study concluded in 1980 of combat veterans showed that forty



percent were unemployed. At that time an estimated eight hundred thousand veterans suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder ("Delayed Stress Reaction").

Lines between those veterans who received negative treatment and those who did not have become blurred within the existing literature, however. The popular image is applied to all veterans. "I have yet to find one [Vietnam veteran] who did not suffer rage, anger, and frustration at the way the country received them" (MacPherson 46). Scholars write that a "theme encountered in every veteran I have ever met is searing anger at their homecoming- of being shunned ... of having to become closet veterans" (MacPherson 5). A returning Vietnam veteran would be "told by nearly everyone that he was foolish to fight" (Brende 49).

These apparent truths cannot be universally applied. Statistics cited previously in this introduction demonstrate that there is not one-hundred percent agreement with these perceptions. In fact, another model of the perceived treatment Vietnam veterans received exists which questions the first popular image.

Evidence and research by other scholars form another model in which sympathy existed for the veterans, instead of widespread revulsion. Instead of hating the veterans, "anti-war liberals saw veterans as the victims of an immoral war, and pro-war conservatives viewed veterans as patriots who were wrongfully lumped together with a war everyone wanted to forget" (Egendorf 26). A 1971 Louis Harris poll showed that the plight of the returning veterans had become "a serious burden on the conscience of the American people" (Egendorf 32). In 1971, eighty percent of respondents

agreed that "veterans who served during the time of the Vietnam war was going on deserve respect for having served their country in the armed forces." In 1979, the number was eighty-three percent (Myths and Realities 87).

These conflicting viewpoints question the first popular model in which Vietnam veterans were hated and ostracized by the public. But, neither has it been proven that Americans sympathized wholeheartedly with the returning veterans. Bob Greene, a syndicated columnist with the Chicago Tribune, questioned whether veterans were spat upon when they returned. He wondered if, in today's atmosphere of telling "the Vietnam veterans that they are loved and respected," they were treated according to the popular public memory which held that the veterans were spat upon- maybe they were pitied rather than hated. He recalled that anti-war protestors chanted "Stop the war in Vietnam, bring the boys home" (10). With these facts in mind, he asked the Vietnam veterans, "Were you spat upon when you returned?"

The response generated by his question was overwhelming. He received over one-thousand letters. Some of the veterans were indeed spat upon. Others adamantly refused to believe that anyone had been spat upon, and others wrote that they had only experienced kindness and compassion when they returned (11). In his book, Homecoming, Greene presents the responses to his question. However, Greene did not attempt to examine the causes behind the various responses.

The literature fails to examine the effects of geographical and cultural factors on the treatment the Vietnam veterans received. Veteran Chuck Hagel returned to his small-town community after the war. He stated,

"People in our town welcomed you with open arms" (MacPherson 15). Was the treatment received, therefore, fundamentally different in small-town communities?

The existing literature provides no answer. Josephine Card acknowledged "we do not know to what extent these other aspects of the homecoming made the consequences of service different for different Americans" (150). Past studies "did not tap other potentially important information relating to the homecoming- for example, did the soldier come home to a small-town or a larger city- exactly what kind of reception did he receive there upon return? (Card 150). One scholar speculated that "for guys from small towns in Middle America, coming back might not have been so jolting" (Egendorf 25).

Clearly, little is known about the reception given the Vietnam veterans in rural communities. A main objective of this monograph is to examine the reception given to Vietnam veterans in the rural Illinois communities of Fairbury, Forrest, Chatsworth, Cropsey, Strawn, and Wing. This thesis reconciles the simultaneous existence of the two popular views of the treatment the Vietnam veterans received with the diversity of treatment the veterans experienced. The veteran reviled, the veteran honored, and the veteran pitied all existed within these communities. Yet, the cultural dynamics of the community resulted in a community arena in which conflict was repressed. Because this suppression of conflict resulted in outward indifference to the plight of the Vietnam veterans, the communities' treatment of the Vietnam veteran could be reconciled with the popular image

of that treatment which was created in the public memory that evolved in subsequent years.

The communities under study are located in southeastern Livingston County in east-central Illinois. They were chosen because they share common values. In 1986, these communities consolidated their school districts to form Prairie Central School District No. Eight. Prior to 1986, these communities' newspapers shared a common publisher, the Cornbelt Press, Inc., located in Fairbury. I lived in this area for twenty-two years, and in most cases, I personally knew the people interviewed for this study. Also treated in this study is the town of Pontiac in central Livingston County, the county seat.

The effect of the memory of the Vietnam veterans' reception on the reception given to the Persian Gulf war veterans is the other major focal point of this study. In the years following the Vietnam war, the memory of how Vietnam veterans were treated was shaped by and transmitted through American culture. Evidence demonstrates that "the public's sense that Vietnam veterans received a worse reception [than veterans of earlier wars] has grown substantially" (Myths and Realities 36). A Louis Harris poll in 1971 showed that forty-eight percent of the public said the Vietnam veterans' reception was worse. In 1980, "the forty-eight percent plurality registered in 1971 had grown to a sizable majority (sixty-three percent) over the past decade" (Myths and Realities 36). Indeed, "the American people have come to accept the perception of the veterans themselves that veterans returning from Vietnam have been treated worse than were veterans returning from earlier wars" (Myths and Realities 36).

Events over the past decade and a half have only reinforced awareness of the poor treatment Vietnam veterans received. Commemorations, movies, and songs have kept the popular image of the treatment Vietnam veterans received in the forefront of the American mind.

Thus, when American troops were involved in the Persian Gulf war, the image of Vietnam was invoked repeatedly. At the same time, demonstrations were held specifically to show support for the soldiers in the Middle East. However, while the reports of the rallies held in support of the troops related the Persian Gulf war experience to the Vietnam experience, those sources failed to acknowledge a causal link between the treatment of the Vietnam veterans and that of the Persian Gulf war veterans. Sources compared the experiences in other ways. Some said that the United States "may have defeated not just the Iraqi army, but also the more virulent ghosts from the Vietnam era: self doubt, fear of power, divisiveness, a fundamental uncertainty about America's purpose in the world" (Cloud 52). Noticeably missing from the list is "the guilt Americans still feel over their treatment of the Vietnam veterans."

The two welcomes were compared, but not explained. "The brass bands, speeches, and ticker tape parades are a far cry from the shame and silence that greeted Vietnam veterans," stated one source (Cloud 53). The Persian Gulf "cheery salute 'Good to go!' was a world away from Vietnam's 'It don't mean nothin'" (Klein 9).

When explanations for the enthusiastic welcome home were offered, the sources could not agree. "New York's parade was a homecoming, not a victory march," wrote one reporter. "It was about the troops, not the war."

The war was popular because the troops had made it popular, becoming "a source of pride" (Klein 9). On the other hand, others credited the popularity of the troops and the war on the fact that casualties were kept low and it was a quick victory. "Mesmerized by the bloodless unreality of the Nintendo-game air war and worried by predictions of heavy casualties when the ground war began, millions of Americans seemed caught up in the wave of relief and patriotic euphoria" at the end of a quick victory (Morganthau 51). The military's subsequent prestige was due to "Americans' long love affair with winners" (Morganthau 52).

After explaining the treatment the Vietnam veterans received, the reasons for that treatment, and how the memory of that treatment was transmitted over time, this study draws the direct causal link between these elements and the reception the Persian Gulf war veterans received upon their return to these communities. In doing so, this study demonstrates that the facts of history may not be as important as the way the public remembers those events. Furthermore, this study explains how the dynamics of these communities which shaped the general aura of indifference shown to Vietnam veterans also powered the enthusiastic show of support for the Persian Gulf war veterans, transcending the contradictions and simple explanations offered by the current literature.

## Chapter I: All Quiet on the Home Front?

The Persian Gulf war wrapped its vicious grip around approximately one thousand eight hundred Livingston County Veterans and touched the lives of thousands more residents. The veterans interviewed depicted a great diversity in the treatment they encountered. The treatment they received also demonstrated a large variation in the response from the community.

This diversity illustrates that the popular stereotype of the Vietnam veteran cannot be universally applied. The largest group of veterans interviewed indicated that they did not receive negative treatment within the community. A smaller, but significant, number reported that they consistently met with negative treatment from the community. Finally, the smallest group of veterans received very positive support from the community because of their experiences in Vietnam.

The largest group, eight veterans, characterized the treatment they received from the community in positive terms. These veterans encountered nothing they considered out of the ordinary in the form of support from the community while in Vietnam and described their treatment upon their return as being precisely what they had expected. The reception they found consisted of support and a quiet welcome by friends and family, and a level of mild indifference from the community.

These veterans were sent overseas with little fanfare. In these cases, only close friends and family gathered for a small send-off dinner. Seven of the soldiers' photographs appeared in their local newspapers together with

accompanying captions announcing their departures for Vietnam. Five of the veterans recalled that their approaching departures were mentioned in their churches the Sunday before they left, but there were no organized receptions for any (Goodwin Interview, Hakes Interview, Knauer Interview, Rieger Interview, Travis Interview).

These veterans also reported similar treatment from the community while in Vietnam. Six of the veterans subscribed to the local newspaper at regular price while overseas (Drach Interview, Hakes Interview, Knauer Interview, Rathbun Interview, Rieger Interview, Travis Interview). All eight of these veterans regularly received correspondence from their families, wives, and one or two close friends. Through this correspondence and the newspaper, the veterans were kept well-informed of the events in their communities. However, these veterans did not recall any special treatment, such as packages or presents, outside of their families (Drach Interview, Goodwin Interview, Hakes Interview, Knauer Interview, Maquet Interview, Rathbun Interview, Rieger Interview, Travis Interview).

These veterans stated that this treatment continued when they returned. They were welcomed enthusiastically by their families and a few close friends. These eight returned to work after a brief respite, and did not find any discrimination against them because they had served in Vietnam. Again, five of the veterans recalled their return being mentioned prominently by their respective ministers, but without a formal reception of any kind (Goodwin Interview, Hakes Interview, Knauer Interview, Rieger Interview, Travis Interview). The eight veterans explained that a family acquaintance, a school friend, or a local politician would occasionally approach to welcome



them back (Drach Interview, Goodwin Interview, Hakes Interview, Knaurer Interview, Maquet Interview, Rathbun Interview, Rieger Interview, Travis Interview).

A certain level of indifference greeted these veterans when they returned, however. There were never any official welcomes for the veterans from organized groups from within the community. Nor was there any official acknowledgement of the veterans' service. Only announcements in the local newspapers signaled some of their returns to the community. These eight veterans agreed that their service records were never discussed at length in public. Little interest was shown in the veterans' experiences by members of the community (Drach Interview, Goodwin Interview, Hakes Interview, Knaurer Interview, Maquet Interview, Rathbun Interview, Rieger Interview, Travis Interview).

The second group of veterans, six in number, reported that they received negative treatment in connection with their service in Vietnam. These men did not find everything all quiet on the home front: instead, they found ridicule and persecution from the community in a variety of circumstances. The maltreatment began at the time of their dismissal, and in various forms (Burton Interview, Ford Interview, Soper Interview, Hetherington Interview, Meiss Interview, Bruce Weber Interview). In each case, the veterans indicated that such treatment was unexpected, and that they believed it was unprovoked.

Unlike the other veterans interviewed, these six encountered problems almost immediately upon their release from duty. Each of them stated that prior to boarding their return flight, they were advised by their superiors not

to wear their uniform. The uniform, they were told, would invite trouble from those in the United States who were opposed to the war (Soper Interview, Burton Interview, Ford Interview, Hetherington Interview, Bruce Weber Interview, Meiss Interview). Four of these veterans ignored the advice and did wear their uniforms aboard their flights. Doug Burton, Donald Ford, and Bruce Weber recounted negative incidents along their route home. Burton and Hetherington reported incidents when protestors had gathered near their airplane as they arrived at the first American airport. The protestors shouted derogatory epithets and hurled bottles and rocks at the veterans (Burton Interview, Hetherington Interview). Burton remarked that "although I knew we wouldn't come home to a cheering crowd, I was entirely unprepared for that mob. It really shook me up" (Burton Interview). Ford and Weber did not even receive tickets to their home town from the army and had to fly home aboard commercial flights at their own expense. Both wore their uniforms (Ford Interview, Bruce Weber Interview). Ford stated that when he sat down the man next to him requested to be moved, apparently because he was a Vietnam veteran (Ford Interview). Weber declared that when he requested service from the attendant, she declined to serve him until she had helped the other passengers (Bruce Weber Interview).

Such hostility and resentment was not confined to distant airports, however. David Soper returned to Fairbury in 1972 after his tour in Vietnam to a hostile reception. Soper enlisted in detasselling crew with a local seed corn company the summer following his return. For six weeks, Soper worked with other young men and women who were about his age. When

his peers discovered that he had just returned from Vietnam, they began to harass him. They discussed the war, its most publicized tragedies, and referred to the soldiers as "trash and killers." He believed that they intentionally did so in his presence to provoke a response. Other harassment included not being notified when the rest of the crew left the fields during their breaks, and having his lunch stolen or intentionally ruined. After work, Soper was persistently bothered in restaurants and bars by his non-going peers. He stated that such treatment tended to "snowball" once others heard the initial insults. When they realized he had been in Vietnam, they "decided to chime in with insults of their own" (Soper Interview).

Such experiences were shared by one of Soper's friends, Emery Hetherington. Hetherington earned the purple heart, two bronze stars, and the silver star while in Vietnam, but his medals did not shield him from negative treatment in Fairbury. The summer following his return, he worked on a road construction crew for the city with fellow youths from Fairbury. Hetherington recalled that during work, these students referred to him as "retard," "fascist," and "baby killer." They would ask him questions such as "How many people did you kill?" or "How many babies did you waste?" One even commented that it was "too bad" Hetherington had "made it back." When Hetherington appealed to the supervisor, he was met with indifference. "Just ignore it," he was told. Outside of work, particularly at taverns, he was taunted and goaded by his peers with more insults. Hetherington stated that this treatment continued or until he left or until they provoked a fight. At weekend dances, he remembered that "they would just start in, and try to get me to fight them." He was told that the women at

the dance didn't want to dance with "some baby killer from Vietnam" (Hetherington Interview).

The negative treatment he experienced was most pronounced, but not limited to, people of his own age group. Older acquaintances avoided talking to him. He perceived a difference in the service he received at local businesses. He noticed that when shopping in the stores, others would be offered assistance before him. He believed that he after his return, he received odd or hostile glances by individuals just while walking down the street. People he once considered to be his friends did not wish to know about his overseas experiences. He "quickly learned to keep [his] mouth shut" about his encounters in Vietnam. Whenever he brought up the subject, his interlocutors would not comment or would try to change the subject. Later diagnosed as having Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Hetherington believes that only now is he recovering from the effects of his Vietnam experiences and the subsequent reception. Although he did not blame all of his problems on it, he believes that if he had received better treatment when he returned, his readjustment would have been much faster and easier (Hetherington Interview).

Bruce and Sandy Weber of Fairbury encountered various attacks because of his status as a veteran. After being drafted in 1970, but before leaving for training, Weber was befriended by other Vietnam veterans in the community. These veterans were also his fellow workers, and they tried to prepare him for his approaching trial. But this was the end of the favorable treatment he received. While overseas, his pregnant wife, Sandy could only rely upon her mother-in-law for everyday support because her family lived in

another state. While Weber was overseas, Mrs. Weber was often asked caustic questions about her husband. When someone she met found out that Weber was in Vietnam, a common question was, "Why was he dumb enough to go?" Even acquaintances that she believed to be friendly asked, "What, is he stupid? Why in the world did he go?" (Sandy Weber Interview).

When he returned from overseas, Weber was greeted with disdain and cynicism even within his own family. His brothers were wary of him- afraid to be around him when he first came back. "They seemed to think that I was on the edge and that any little thing might push me over and set me off." When he argued with his brothers and the exchange became heated, they taunted him; "What are you going to do, shoot me?" Even now, one brother is afraid to argue with Weber. Weber says, "He is still scared of me- he thinks I'm crazy" (Bruce Weber Interview).

Like Soper and Hetherington, Weber was often taunted in public places, particularly in taverns. Eventually he only associated with fellow veterans from the community. Although they formed a circle of friends, this small group of veterans avoided discussions regarding their wartime experiences. Weber attributed this silence in part to their desire to avoid the harsh conditions they had endured. However, he also indicated that the veterans avoided discussing the subject for fear of attracting unwanted attention or insults (Bruce Weber Interview).

The negative treatment Weber received was not confined to unorganized, arbitrary reactions of vocal individuals. Weber and several of his fellow veterans were rejected by the American Legion in Fairbury. When Weber returned in late 1971, he and several friends attempted to join the American

**Legion but were refused. When Weber and his associates asked why, they were told that the Legion was intended "for soldiers who had fought in real wars" (Bruce Weber Interview).**

**Weber and his friends continued to petition the Legion for membership over the next several years. Not until 1975, after the Legion had opened its doors to an older veteran's son (a Vietnam veteran), were they finally admitted (Bruce Weber Interview).**

**Weber soon discovered that joining the American Legion did not mean general acceptance by the older veterans. Weber asserted that from the time the Vietnam veterans were allowed to join until about 1986, they were treated as second-class members. Although the Vietnam veterans voted as a bloc, they were vastly outnumbered by the veterans of previous wars and thus frozen out of leadership positions. Although the Vietnam veterans were included and honored during Memorial and Veterans Day ceremonies, the Legion never planned or accepted attempts to recognize Vietnam veterans (Bruce Weber Interview).**

**The pivotal year for the veterans in the American Legion came in 1986. For the first time, the Vietnam veterans gained a majority in membership, giving them the potential to control the Legion post. Many of the Vietnam veterans were not active members, however, and the older veterans remained in control (Meiss Interview).**

**In the fall of 1987, the Vietnam veterans elected one of their own, Thomas Meiss, as president of the Fairbury American Legion. The new leadership wished to pursue the widespread suggestions from the community to upgrade the American Legion Speedway in Fairbury (Meiss Interview).**

**During the summer months, stock car races are held at the Speedway, bringing a great deal of business- possibly the most active role the Legion played in Fairbury.**

**Eventually this proposal became a contest of power within the American Legion. The Vietnam veterans were in favor of upgrading and expanding the track, whereas the older veterans opposed the plan. The friction between the two factions increased until the November meeting of the Legion when the older veterans attempted a "coup." Attendance of the Vietnam veterans was low, and the older veterans tried to impeach Meiss from the presidency and elect one of their own in order to re-establish control (Meiss Interview). Weber and several others quickly rallied other Vietnam veterans in Fairbury and rushed to the Legion hall to defeat the measure. Since this open conflict, the Vietnam veterans have remained in control of the group (Bruce Weber Interview).**

**The changes to the Speedway were completed in the spring of 1987. The Fairbury Blade, the town newspaper, covered the progress made on the track, lauding the effort as an important method of attracting more competitors and spectators to the competition, and hence, more business to the town. The local newspapers followed the progress made on the track, but described the activity as an American Legion activity, not as the work of Vietnam veterans (Jones A1). The hostile November meeting was not reported in the newspaper, either. However, when the construction was completed at the Speedway, Vietnam veterans played the most prominent roles during the grand opening. The Vietnam veterans, therefore, received a great deal of publicity in newspaper reports, and the community learned of their efforts.**

On the opposite end of the spectrum, two veterans received positive treatment from the community because of the circumstances surrounding their experiences in Vietnam. Gerald Hoffman received such positive treatment, albeit in tragic circumstances. In 1966, Hoffman enlisted with his best friend, Terence Thorton. At first, Hoffman described his treatment while in Vietnam as being similar to the larger group of eight veterans interviewed: confined only to receiving the local newspaper and correspondence from close friends and family. This situation changed approximately half-way through his tour when his friend, Thorton, was killed in action. At that point, Hoffman said, he and his family were suddenly recognized to a much greater degree by the community. He received numerous letters from his friends and friends of the Thorton family. Their church's minister began to write regularly as well. Although some of the attention declined as the end of his tour approached, many continued to write. When he finally returned home, a large group of these individuals organized a reception for him at his home (Hoffman Interview).

The Hoffman and the Thorton families received much support during this tragedy as well. James H. Roberts, publisher and editor of the Cornbelt Press Inc., estimated that 1500 people attended Thorton's funeral services (Roberts Interview). The Hoffman family was approached by members of the community who said they were praying for the safe return of their son. They also expressed their concern about the stress that the death of such a close friend had upon Hoffman and his family (Hoffman Interview). This was the only death of a Fairbury native during the war, and was reported prominently in the local newspapers (Roberts Interview). The Thorton family also



received gifts from concerned members of the community who wished to help the family in some way during this crisis (Hoffman Interview).

Another Fairbury veteran and his wife received positive treatment while he was overseas. Duane Schieler was drafted in 1967 and served as a medical officer in Vietnam. The clinic where he was stationed served soldiers as well as a neighboring orphanage for Vietnamese children. In letters to his wife, Diane, Schieler described the children's conditions and needs. Mrs. Schieler became interested and decided to help. She collected items such as toys and clothing from family members for the Vietnamese children. Mrs. Schieler, a beautician, then began to tell her clientele about the children, and many contributed to the effort. Within a few weeks, Mrs. Schieler was in charge of a full-scale drive for the children. News of the drive spread solely through word of mouth, and the community response was enormous (Diane Schieler Interview).

Individuals contributed clothing, toys, and money. Eventually, the amount of money collected allowed for Mrs. Schieler to shop for new items for the children. She went to Pontiac and shopped at a discount store, loading shopping carts full of toys, shoes, clothes, and toiletries. After loading several carts, the manager began to notice what seemed to be an extraordinary case of compulsive shopping. When informed that the articles were for Vietnamese orphans, the manager donated shoes and coats for the children. At the end of the drive, Mrs. Schieler had sixty-seven large boxes to be shipped to Vietnam (Diane Schieler Interview).

The postage for such a shipment was over six hundred dollars, however. She therefore began another drive to collect the necessary sum. Mrs. Schieler

commented that she collected the money from a variety of sources from within the community. Members from her family's church, her place of work, and community leaders contributed the necessary amount. She also stated that a significant portion of the final sum was paid with contributions from people outside of the community (Diane Schieler Interview).

When the children received the shipment, Schieler shared the results with the community. He sent photographs of the children back to the community along with thank-you notes from the children. Mrs. Schieler submitted a story accompanying several of the photographs to the newspaper. The newspaper printed the story, pictures of the children, and a picture of Duane and Diane Schieler. The Schielers were congratulated by acquaintances and other members of the community who also expressed pride in their impressive representation of the community while abroad (Schieler Interview).

A similar effort by another member of the community demonstrated a similar level of concern for the soldiers in Vietnam. Although she did not have family or close friends serving in Vietnam, Judy Knauer began a "pen pal" relationship with a soldier in Vietnam in 1968. The soldier was not from the community, but Knauer corresponded to him regularly. During the course of this correspondence, the soldier described for Knauer his living conditions- particularly about the lack of both necessities and luxuries (Knauer Interview).

Like the Schieler case, Knauer began to collect articles that he would find useful. Knauer solicited friends and neighbors to donate articles of clothing and toiletries. She stated that although not everyone she had asked donated

to the effort, none of those who declined openly expressed a feeling of disgust with the war or the soldiers (Knaurer Interview).

Indeed, the veterans experienced a wide range of treatment related to their duties in Vietnam. However, there were many common experiences, or lack thereof, shared by almost all of the veterans. In contrast to cited in support of the popular models, none of the veterans reported that they were discriminated against when applying for jobs. Although Soper and Hetherington were harassed at work when they initially returned, their Vietnam experiences were not a factor in gaining employment at a later time (Hetherington Interview, Soper Interview). In fact, several of the veterans believed that their status as veterans aided them in getting their subsequent jobs.

For example, Jerry Maquet, a manager at Caterpillar, Inc., stated that he was asked about his Vietnam experiences by the company during his interview. He was concerned at first that this would adversely affect his chance to be hired. However, he was offered the job. When he went to work for the company, he discovered that nearly one-fourth of the people under his supervision were Vietnam veterans (Maquet Interview).

All of the veterans indicated that they met a certain degree of indifference when they returned. When they returned, no one wanted to discuss their experiences. Although people welcomed them home, these people did not express an interest in learning about the soldier's conditions during the past year. Friends, acquaintances, and even family members did not wish to talk about it. When the veterans attempted to talk about their experiences, the person they were talking to would try to change the subject. Eventually, they

remained silent about the issue. Nearly all of the veterans reported that even when spending leisure time with other Vietnam veterans, they did not discuss their wartime activities, other than funny jokes or anecdotes.

The large degree of indifference suggested in other studies was not present in these communities. There was no "lingering, subtle, insidious indifference directed at the men who bore the brunt of this lost war" (MacPherson 6). The majority of veterans interviewed interpreted the treatment they received as perfectly normal, without doubts. They did not "want those at home to acknowledge [their] involvement, admit it was a mistake, and move on" (MacPherson 46-7). Neither did the majority of veterans interviewed feel an urgent need "to be recognized as having made great, personal sacrifices in good faith" (MacPherson 62).

None of the veterans encountered organized war protestors in the community. There is no evidence that any groups formally organized to protest the war. None of the veterans interviewed was ever contacted by protest groups such as Vietnam Veterans Against the War, nor did any of the veterans attempt to contact any such group.

All of the veterans reported satisfaction with the benefits they received from the state and federal governments. Most of the veterans stated they did not attempt to utilize any of the benefits offered to them, but they also stated that they were not always aware of what those benefits were. Nevertheless, they did not feel "betrayed by the government" (MacPherson 53). Nor did any of them encounter difficulty in obtaining the benefits they needed. In all cases, the veterans said that they had to contact someone involved with a veterans' assistance organization if they wanted to know what benefits they

had or how to obtain them. Two of the veterans, however, stated that they bought their homes with guaranteed veterans' loans programs, which offered them special interest rates and generous terms for repayment (Goodwin Interview, Hetherington Interview).

Although none of the veterans was dissatisfied with his benefits, a controversy flared in February, 1987, surrounding the Illinois' Department of Veterans' Affairs office in Pontiac. The office was administered by the county board with funds provided by the state. When faced with budget cuts, the board looked for ways to slash costs. The Livingston County board recommended that the office be closed as a casualty of the severe budget cuts. Outraged, a large group of approximately three hundred veterans converged on the board's next meeting in March, demanding that the veterans' office be reopened (Burton Interview).

Led by Doug Burton, the veterans provided petitions with two thousand sixty-seven veterans' signatures to support their demands. Burton estimated that nearly half of the signatures were from concerned Vietnam veterans. Burton led the effort because he believed that without an office in the county, many of the veterans suffering from alcohol and drug addiction would not have anywhere else to turn. He also stated that without the veterans' office, other veterans would have a more difficult time securing their benefits if they had to work through a larger bureaucratic machine in Chicago or Springfield. At the local level, Burton declared, the veterans would receive the close attention that some needed (Burton Interview).

The county board did not immediately re-open the office. However, it did bow to the pressure by the veterans and allowed them to open a smaller office

in the basement of the Livingston County courthouse in Pontiac. There, Burton organized "The Veterans Assistance Commission of Livingston County," modeled on other county groups created to help veterans. Burton and his secretary, Ruth Larson, provided help to veterans in need. The commission primarily helped veterans pay for food; house, car, and rent payments; and medical bills (Burton Interview).

The veterans did not stop in their attempts to re-open the state office. After petitioning the state's Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Office in Pontiac was re-opened in March, 1989. Both offices continue to operate. Burton stated that the county office tends mostly to the needs of those veterans who have mental and severe financial problems, and tried to provide them with assistance from members of the community. The state office, on the other hand, focused on assisting veterans in securing federal and state benefits, including the G. I. Bill and low-interest loans.

Another key agency in the treatment of the veterans in Livingston County is the veterans' counseling services at the Institute of Human Resources located in Pontiac. This branch of I.H.R. in Livingston County began as a result of Frank Brunachi's interest in veterans' mental health. He began investigating the possibility of such a program in 1973. Brunachi, a Chatsworth native and Vietnam veteran, sought such a program when he became concerned about the number of his Vietnam veterans in his own community who suffered from drug or alcohol addiction or had marital problems (Brunachi Interview).

Brunachi returned to school to receive his masters degree in psychology. Upon completion of his degree, he advertised his services in the local

newspaper and through word of mouth. He counseled veterans in his spare time until 1974 when he was approached by a member of the Institute of Human Resources about beginning such a program there. He declined, citing the conflict that would be created with his own business, which he desired to continue. Instead, he continued to counsel veterans on his own (Brunachi Interview).

The Institute of Human Resources therefore created a program of its own. In 1974, the Institute hired psychologist Joseph Arnoldson to counsel veterans. Arnoldson stated that only four veterans came to the Institute for assistance at first. Arnoldson admits that the institute did not have a reliable treatment program for the veterans, and as a result, he doubted that he was "doing much good" in counseling the veterans. He stated that their treatment suffered because the disorders the Vietnam veterans were experiencing were new, and an agreed upon approach to such problems did not exist (Arnoldson Interview).

Arnoldson reported that he continued to learn by trial and error. Eventually, he believed that he developed a program that benefitted the veterans. The services at the Institute are not actively advertised, Arnoldson said, but veterans who have been treated there usually inform their fellow troubled veterans of the counseling program. Arnoldson indicated that he normally treats approximately fifteen veterans at any given time, and estimated that he personally knows almost one hundred more veterans in the county who should seek counseling (Arnoldson Interview).

The diversity of experiences within these communities largely shatters the myth of the popular image of the Vietnam veteran. The majority of

veterans met a quiet, yet supportive welcome when they returned. But these same veterans did not anticipate a large welcome, nor did they feel bitter because of the absence of a ceremonious welcome. Other veterans encountered open hostility from isolated groups within the community when they returned. Even a small minority experienced active support while in Vietnam. Courageous individuals within the community acted against a larger sense of indifference the community displayed as a whole, to help those who served in Southeast Asia. The reason why this diversity of experiences seemed to fold into a general air of indifference, and how the Vietnam veterans of Fairbury differed from the popular image of the Vietnam veteran, will be the topic of the next chapter.



## Chapter II: Don't Worry: Be Happy

Obviously, blanket statements regarding the treatment of Vietnam veterans do not withstand scrutiny of the communities' records. Many aspects of the treatment in Livingston County diverged entirely from the popular image. Some factors had effects in Livingston County that were not addressed by existing literature. Other aspects fully resembled the existing models. Most interestingly, however, certain aspects of the treatment in these communities resembled current models, but for entirely different reasons—reasons emerging from the community culture.

The models of the veteran reviled and the veteran as an object of sympathy were both present in Livingston County. Both suggest that the result of such feelings led to the veterans being treated with hostility or indifference. Vietnam veterans were reviled as "dope-crazed killers" (MacPherson 41) and "treated with shattering indifference" (MacPherson 29). The other model depicted veterans as a "serious burden on the conscience of the American public," but were "wrongfully lumped together with a war everyone wanted to forget" (Egendorf 26).

Other reasons for this indifference existed in Livingston County that these models do not fully recognize or explain. The rotation system employed by the armed forces played a significant role in the treatment of veterans in Livingston County. Designed to eliminate psychological stresses of earlier wars in which the soldiers saw too much combat, the rotation

system assigned soldiers to a twelve month tour of duty in Vietnam- a marines' tour of duty lasted thirteen months (Mason 210).

Men were constantly leaving and returning to their communities as individuals. Veterans trickled back into society throughout the course of the long war. When all of the troops had returned home, some had been back and working as civilians for nearly eight years. At that point, it would have been viewed as a futile exercise to conduct a welcome home celebration.

The timing of a veteran's period of service also proved to be a factor in the type of reception they received. Vietnam became "a bad war, especially after the 1968 Tet Offensive" (Brende 61). Veterans interviewed who returned prior to 1968 found little or no unfavorable treatment. The two veterans who received very favorable treatment from the community, Schieler and Hoffman, returned before 1968. Most of veterans who recalled very unfavorable treatment from the community- Hetherington, Soper, Weber, Meiss, and Burton- returned following that pivotal year. Ronald Rieger, who served in 1965 explained, "I was over there when our mission had support from most everybody. That was a long time before all the protesting began" (Rieger Interview).

One area not fully addressed in the literature is the effects the veterans' attitudes had upon their perceived treatment. To a degree, the indifference which greeted the veterans was a reflection of their own values. Those veterans who viewed their treatment in value-neutral terms neither anticipated, nor desired a major welcome celebration. Jerry Maquet stated that when he returned, "nobody was home, and I just went out to the pool in back, hopped on a rubber raft with a cold beer and relaxed. I didn't want to be

bothered by anybody" (Maquet Interview). Larry Hakes declared that he did not want his return to be "blown out of proportion" because "it was over and it was time to get on with my life. I didn't want to spend my time thinking about the past" (Hakes Interview). George Goodwin added, "I went, did my duty, and that was that. I didn't expect nothing big for that" (Goodwin Interview).

Many of the veterans simply returned home to their wives and did not place themselves in situations where other interviewed veterans had experienced negative responses. Robert Travis said, "I came back, and got a job. Everyday I'd come back home and stay with my wife or we'd go out. I didn't hang around with anybody my age, really" (Robert Travis Interview). Neither he nor Duane Schieler attempted to join any of the veterans' organizations. Schieler stated that "after a while, they sought me out. I joined and I pay my dues, but I don't do anything else" (Duane Schieler Interview). Travis was even less enthused about the prospect of becoming a member of a veterans' group. When asked, he didn't join, "because I'm just not a 'joiner'" (Robert Travis Interview). By not pushing to get involved, these veterans may have avoided the problems that other, more active veterans faced when they returned to society.

Livingston County veterans were treated with revulsion by two groups: their civilian peers and older veterans from previous wars. In both cases, the treatment agreed with the reception described in the two popular stereotyped models. Also in both cases, the explanations for this ill-treatment appeared to be similar.

Twenty percent of Vietnam veterans described their reception from people their own age in negative terms (Myths and Realities 38). It is therefore no coincidence that those veterans interviewed who received negative treatment, received it from their peers. Soper, Hetherington, Weber, and Doug Burton reported that the people who treated them the worst were people their own age who did not go to Vietnam (Soper Interview, Hetherington Interview, Bruce Weber Interview, Burton Interview).

Furthermore, these groups that harassed the veterans were described as "college kids- the kids of the so-called big-wigs in town" (Hetherington Interview). The incidents of negative treatment occurred mostly during the summer when university students had returned home. The jobs where Soper and Hetherington were harassed predominantly employed people their age for part-time summer work. The dances and the bars where veterans were baited served as the normal hang-outs for veterans and their peers. Since universities were characteristically centers of protest during the Vietnam war, many of these college students were probably influenced by others against the war, some of whom presumably more vocal in their protest than others. Small town, "hick veterans" might have seemed, as one veteran speculated, "easy targets" at whom they misdirected their hatred of the war (Hetherington Interview).

The American Legion's response to the Vietnam veterans was also part of a pattern that is explained in the models. Such treatment has "become part of the folklore" about Vietnam veterans in which veterans tell a story like this: "I went to the American Legion Hall and some dad ... a vet from World War II says, 'We won our war. How come you didn't win yours?'" (Egendorf 25).

Such a statement could easily have come from an older veteran from Fairbury. Veteran Tim O'Brien spoke for many when he said, "the very words, 'American Legion' make many of us shudder" (MacPherson 55). One World War II veteran, in phrase strikingly similar to reports by Fairbury veterans, dismissed a book about Vietnam veterans with, "I don't want to read a book about a bunch of whiny vets" (MacPherson 4).

Like the veterans quoted by scholars, Livingston County veterans were harshly received because they were perceived as losers. While the older veterans had sufficient numbers, they kept the Vietnam veterans out of the Legion. Vietnam had been a "bad" war, and the older veterans didn't want anything to do with them (Meiss Interview).

The admission of the Vietnam veterans was not due to a sudden change of heart, either. The first breakthrough arrived when the son of a World War II veteran wanted to join. Unable to make a special exception, the Legion opened its doors to all of the Vietnam veterans who wished to join. However, the older veterans continued to assert control over the group as long as they possibly could. Weber stated the reason why the Vietnam veterans were finally able to seize control quite bluntly: "All of the old farts started dying off and they needed us new guys to fill their roster and pay dues. Without us, the Legion would died out" (Bruce Weber Interview).

The majority of veterans did not receive negative treatment from the community. The treatment they received was mildly supportive in most cases, but the majority of veterans recognized the existence of mild indifference. Unlike the reasons put forward in the two models of treatment, this indifference was a result of conflict that existed within the community,

and the way in which the forces within the community suppressed that conflict.

One common reason offered by members of the community as a reason for the indifference is that they just didn't know. Interviewees claimed not to know when members of the community left for duty or when they returned. None of the teachers interviewed followed the careers of their former students once they left the high school, nor were they contacted by any of their former students. Lawrence Lancaster, English teacher at the Fairbury high school for thirty years, explained "I never knew when any of the kids came back. I didn't really know anybody from Fairbury who had to go over there" (Lancaster Interview).

While it is doubtful that any of the interviewees intentionally lied, the claims of a lack of knowledge about the lives of the soldiers do not withstand the evidence. The Fairbury Blade, The Forrest News, The Chatsworth Plaindealer, and Pontiac's Daily Leader routinely reported the activities of the area servicemen. Of the servicemen interviewed, all but two had announcements concerning their military careers reported in the paper. Completion of basic training, promotions, station assignments, and periods of "leave" for veterans to visit family were announced weekly. The members of the communities could have known who was sent to Vietnam and when they returned if they had only read the newspaper.

The resources for following the lives of the young community members existed, but apparently were not utilized. The format of the town newspapers allotted space for local news of social gatherings and family events. This attentiveness to community detail provided opportunity for those in the area

to be kept informed even about major family events. If the community did not know who was in Vietnam, it was not because they did not know, it was because they did not want to know.

A partial explanation lies in that some just did not care, or were too absorbed in their own world to notice. Gordon Kinate, a Fairbury attorney for forty years who served on the city council, the hospital board, and the school board declared, "To tell you the truth, I didn't think that much about it. I was busy, and I figured I couldn't do much about it anyway. There was no use in worrying about it 'cause the government was going to take them anyway." Lancaster added that he didn't pay attention to the affairs of local servicemen because "we had problems of our own. I had a whole new batch of kids to deal with every year. I didn't have time to keep up with the other ones [former students]" (Lancaster Interview).

A more plausible explanation may lie in the sentiments expressed by many interviewees: the war was so long that many simply lost interest or wanted to forget about it. Ed Kapper, a teacher at Chatsworth High School beginning in 1961, echoed this feeling when he stated, "People just couldn't keep up with the flood of information we had coming at us. People got sick and tired of hearing the same old crap from the government and the t.v. We just wanted it to be over." Gene Weber added, "the Vietnam war wasn't a topic of everyday conversation like the Persian Gulf war. We only saw a little bit on the nightly news, if they saw any of it at all. Most spent their time worrying about other things" (Gene Weber Interview).

Indeed, there was little to keep the community focused on the war or the veterans. There were not any organized protest activities in the community.

It was not a pressing issue for many. As Dennis Evelsizer, another teacher at Fairbury's high school, explained, "we didn't have to sacrifice anything during this war like people had to in previous episodes. Nobody had to give something up everyday; consequently, people were much less aware of what was going on" (Evelsizer Interview).

The local newspaper was not interested in following the events of the war, either. From 1964-1973, no articles appeared in any of the local newspapers addressing major issues in the war. No articles ventured into the debate questioning America's role in Vietnam. No stories even discussed such important events as the Tet Offensive in 1968, nor the "incursion" into Cambodia in 1970.

The newspaper did cover some events and issues related to the war, but these were scarce and brief. One editorial appeared on August 15, 1971 which criticized the "peaceniks" as traitors and "obviously" communist sympathizers, if not outright connected to the communist party (Roberts, "Opinion and Comment" A2). Other columnists, such as Russ Metz, would discuss aspects of the war if they involved a member of the writer's family (Metz A2). The most common news followed by the community newspapers, however, announced changes in veterans' benefits or additions made to the benefits as enacted by the state government.

Following a national pattern, the Cornbelt Press, Inc., printed few articles concerning Vietnam veterans. In 1970, magazines nationwide printed fewer than fifty articles about the veterans (MacPherson 57). Aside from the articles submitted by Mrs. Schieler concerning their efforts to aid the orphanage near her husband's base, there was only one major article concerning Vietnam



veterans entitled, "Local Veteran Concerned with Apathy Shown toward Returning Vets." Despite the misleading title, the article merely detailed the war experiences of a wounded Forrest veteran. Only the final paragraph, only six lines long, dealt with the issue raised in the title of the article; the treatment of veterans since their return. The paragraph concluded with a quote from Koehl; "It bothers me that people are ignoring the returning veterans. We went through a lot over there and now it worries me that the apathy about them now will lead to problems for many down the road" (qtd. by Dave Roberts B3).

In fact, the owner, editor-in-chief, and publisher of The Cornbelt Press expressed disbelief about the popular stereotype of the treatment Vietnam veterans received. James H. Roberts declared that "the Liberal Establishment" over-emphasized the message of the anti-war protestors. "Everyone wasn't against the war as the Liberal press would have us believe," Roberts added. "The vets from around here certainly weren't spat upon by any hippies," he declared (Roberts Interview). In fact, Roberts seemed intent upon conveying the notion that none of the veterans from the local communities experienced troubles from the community itself when they returned.

The people who did not recollect instances of conflict may simply not have remembered. Those who did not consider the war and its implications important issues were undoubtedly less likely to remember events related to it. Veterans and others who did not expect conflict or hostility when they returned may simply not have recognized it if and when it occurred. Being less sensitized to those issues may have dulled their awareness of such instances.

However, certain people who did not report such hostility almost assuredly knew that conflict existed. During the course of this study, there seemed to be an effort on the part of many people to deny that conflict within the community existed, and this had an affect on the treatment of the returning veterans. Roberts was considered to be a local "giant" within the community. His company published the newspapers in nine area communities. He served as a member of the Fairbury Hospital Board of Trustees, was a member of the Rotary Club, and served as a member of the Fairbury Chamber of Commerce, and was active as a Republican in the Livingston County party organization. Through his column, "Just Whittlin' with The Blade," he prided himself on keeping his finger on the pulse of a community that consisted of only three thousand six hundred people. Roberts probably knew about the ill-treatment many veterans experienced among their peers upon their return and had to know about the conflicts that raged between the American Legion and the Vietnam veterans. Yet, when asked if such conflicts occurred in Fairbury, Roberts replied with certainty that they did not.

One other notable instance of such suppression of conflict occurred in interviews with the veterans themselves. George Goodwin, a Vietnam veteran, was asked if he experienced any ill-treatment from anyone in the community, and he replied, "no." When asked specifically about his treatment by older veterans, particularly by the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Goodwin suggested that he "always got along with" the veterans within these groups and that he "never saw any problems with anybody, really." However, Bruce Weber disagreed. Weber stated that

Goodwin was among the veterans who were denied membership into the American Legion during the early 1970's. Weber described Goodwin as an active member within the American Legion when Thomas Meiss was nearly impeached by the older veterans, and when the older veterans attempted to obstruct the refurbishment of the American Legion Speedway in Fairbury.

At a cursory glance, this apparent suppression of conflict may just appear to be the result of faulty memories or of a general lack of knowledge. Many veterans who took part in this study admitted that they couldn't remember certain events very clearly, and were often "reminded" of other experiences by this interviewer's gentle prodding. Many of the veterans indicated that they did not even know who the veterans were. In many cases, the veterans said, they had known a person for several years before they became aware that someone had been in Vietnam.

This failure among veterans to identify other comrades does not eliminate the fact that members of the community knew that conflict existed. Knowledge that conflict existed within the community would be far from a revelation to anyone in the area, according to one leader of the community. David Kilgus, a city alderman of Fairbury for ten years and a teacher at the community high school for twenty-five years stated:

"People in the coffee shops and at work discussed the war but didn't necessarily agree. There were all kinds of perspectives floating around the community, and if you engaged people even in casual conversation about the war, you found out about it. We knew about the stuff the Legion was pulling and what other kids were saying about the soldiers. But because it was such an emotional issue for most of us, it was avoided- you just didn't discuss it in too

much detail. Nobody was willing to risk ruining the closeness around here by arguing about something that was out of our hands" (Kilgus Interview).

Other types of tension were dealt with in silent ways as well. This is illustrated by the fact that there were very few draft evaders who fled to Canada during the war. During the course of the interviewing process, only two names were mentioned when asked if anyone dodged the draft. Now, perhaps as a result of having broken with the conformist nature of this avoidance of conflict these two people no longer reside in the area.

Nevertheless, one teacher noticed a quiet increase in the number of his students who attended college. Gene Weber, an agriculture teacher at Chatsworth for thirty years, taught students who, generally, didn't attend college then- the sons of area farmers. As a teacher, he constantly preached to these future farmers about the advantages of attending a university. He said, "suddenly, a lot more of my students started attending college, and it just so happened that our commitment in Vietnam was growing at the same time. Back then, I just thought I was doing a really good job of teaching and convincing the kids to go to college. But now, I realize the kids just figured that it was better to go off to school than to go off to war" (Gene Weber Interview).

The teachers interviewed stated that, generally, conflict was avoided among the students as well. None of the teachers interviewed remembered Vietnam being discussed openly and at length among the students. Only one teacher recalled a student who displayed an anti-war stance. Ed Kapper remembered one student who "wore his hair like a hippie and had a bunch of those anti-war patches on his jacket and dufflebag" (Kapper Interview).

Thus, whether intentionally or subconsciously, the community suppressed the conflict that was known to exist. Average members of the community did not engage in open debate about the war, its goals, or the moral nature of the conflict. The subject of Vietnam was avoided as a necessary means to avoid a conflict within the community. Because of the intimacy of the small community, the abilities to avoid conflict and to enjoy the intimacy of the community that living in a rural environment afforded them were prized values. Kilgus explained that "members of this community had to live beside each other every day. The person in a restaurant who strongly opposed the war might be sitting next to his neighbor whose son was over in Vietnam. People were friends and neighbors and didn't want to sacrifice their relationships over Vietnam" (Kilgus Interview).

This suppression of conflict affected the way the veterans were received by the community. It explains why those veterans who viewed their treatment in neutral terms recalled no special hostility nor support. It also illuminates a motivation for the level of indifference recognized by most of the veterans. The conflict that simmered under the surface regarding the war was tacitly ignored in order to preserve harmony within the community. In the effort to suppress the conflict- to project a mood of "don't worry; be happy" -the subject of the war was avoided, and when its warriors returned from duty, they and their experiences were avoided as well. When the Persian Gulf war began, however, the same forces which suppressed conflict and created indifference generated enormous enthusiasm and support for the soldiers.

### Chapter III: The Sons of the Mother-of-All-Battles

There were twelve men from the Fairbury-Forrest-Chatsworth area who participated in Operation Desert Storm, "the mother of all battles." These veterans, unlike the Vietnam veterans from the same area, received total, massive support from their local communities. Every sector of these communities played a role in supporting the men and the families of the soldiers. Members of the community worked diligently to ensure that a supportive, open link existed between these men and their hometown. The link that was created served to fulfill practical as well as emotional needs for the soldiers, their families, and the community itself.

The area soldiers who participated in the Persian Gulf war were a heterogeneous group of men. Eight had enlisted for active duty in the armed forces years in advance of the conflict, while four were members of the army reserves who were called up during the course of Operation Desert Shield. Some were among the first units sent to Saudi Arabia, but others were not assigned to the operation until mid-January, 1991, when the war was about to begin.

One of the first reactions within the communities occurred among the families of the soldier. Joanne Huxtable, the mother of a Gulf War soldier, founded a support group for the families of those soldiers in the Persian Gulf. She announced the formation of the group on the Livingston county radio stations and in several of the county newspapers. The meetings began

December 4, 1990, and met on every Tuesday night thereafter in a classroom provided by the Pontiac Township High School (Huxtable Interview).

Huxtable formed the group after discussing her situation with other families who had children in the Persian Gulf. She wanted to "establish a network of support for those of us who worried all the time about our loved ones." She believed that such a group would "make it easier on all of us if we could lean on each other for support." This support group was intended to be a forum for expressing the grief and emotional difficulty experienced by the families during the crisis (Huxtable Interview). As Joan Johnson, a reporter for The Blade who attended the meetings, stated, the meetings were designed to be a method for sharing "news and information" about the "activities of their loved ones" and the movement of the armed forces in general (Johnson "Needs for Saudi Shared" B3).

The first meeting in Pontiac attracted approximately twenty-four participants, mainly family members of soldiers in the Gulf. Other notables at the first meeting included a small group of Vietnam veterans. Among this group of Vietnam veterans was Doug Burton of Pontiac. Burton said that he chose to attend the meeting to "shed some light about some of the feelings their sons might be going through over there." As a fellow veteran, he hoped to "let them know some of the ways they could best let their kids know they were behind them all the way" (Burton Interview).

Most of the Vietnam veterans stopped attending the meetings after a few weeks as more families of soldiers from around the county began to attend. By the fourth meeting, Huxtable stated, there were about forty people who attended the weekly meetings. The people who took part in the group

included wives, mothers, and fathers of those in the Persian Gulf, although most of the participants were parents of soldiers because most of the soldiers were single (Diane Travis Interview).

The group was involved in all of the major activities in the area designed to be supportive of the troops. The group made yellow ribbons for themselves and for members of the community. They also distributed posters adorned with American flags and declared, "We Support Our Troops in the Persian Gulf." Members of the group participated in rallies and prayer vigils throughout the county and shared information about their children with the local media (Diane Travis Interview, Huxtable Interview).

The local media, however, played the key role in raising awareness and support within the communities. The dedicated work of the publisher and a handful of reporters ensured that the community was engaged in active support of the soldiers and the families. From the beginning to the end, the local media extensively covered the war and its impact at home. The Blade, the newspaper published by the Cornbelt Press, Inc., served the communities of Fairbury, Forrest, Chatsworth, Strawn, Wing, Saunemin, and Cropsey during the Persian Persian Gulf war. (When James Roberts sold the Cornbelt Press, Inc., to Ronald Zink in 1989, the former Fairbury Blade consolidated with the other newspapers printed by the company, and the new version was simply called, The Blade.)

The driving force behind the coverage of the war was Judy Knaurer. A free-lance novelist, and a reporter and columnist at The Blade, Knaurer had a deep, sustained interest in the treatment of the soldiers and their families. Knaurer attended the support group meetings as a way of showing her own



personal support, although she did not report the substance of the meetings themselves. She remained in contact with the family members and communicated regularly with the veterans in the Gulf via the mail (Knaurer Interview).

First, the newspaper compiled a list of the servicemen's addresses in the Middle East. Each week, the names of the local soldiers were published on the front page of the newspaper. As more soldiers from the area were assigned to Operation Desert Storm, their names and addresses were published alongside the others. Nearly every week, the community was reminded by the newspaper to write the soldiers in a show of community support.

The newspaper then profiled the soldiers and their families. One or two of the families would be interviewed about their son and his overseas activities. These interviews appeared prominently on the front page of the paper, accompanied by photographs of the family and their son. Knaurer and Jan Ringler- another reporter with The Blade- conducted most of the interviews. "I wanted to create a kind of personal intimacy between the readers and the families of the soldiers," Knaurer explained. "I hoped a bond would form between them so they would know the community was behind them one hundred percent" (Knaurer Interview).

The newspaper also published letters from the soldiers. Many of the letters were written directly to the newspaper, but others came from other sources. Many of the families shared their correspondence with the newspaper, and letters received from the community schools were also

published in the paper. Photographs sent home by the soldiers showing themselves and their surroundings were published along with the letters.

When one of the families received some news, it was placed prominently on the front page. Gary Bashford, a member of the army reserve, called his wife, Norma Lynn Bashford, once a week, and each week Mrs. Bashford was contacted by Knaurer for an update (Norma Lynn Bashford Interview). Brian Travis likewise telephoned his parents once each week to re-assure them he was safe, and each week the community was informed about their conversations (Diane Travis Interview).

The letters received from the soldiers covered topics ranging from matter-of-fact descriptions to the discussion of the political feelings of the soldiers. Jon Bachtold of Fairbury described his living conditions, the climate, his job, recreation opportunities for the soldiers, and his hope that 'he soldiers' job would soon be over (Knaurer, "Letter from the desert: Soldier reports" A1). Airman Rick Yoder of Forrest talked about flying missions in his "studly F-16 fighter jet" ("Our young men in Saudi" A1). bashford was more serious, however, wondering, "I do not mind fighting for our country, but how will this benefit our society?" Bashford told his wife, "I do not feel very good about coming over here ... I just do not feel this is the United States' battle." He wrote, "If the politicians want to play games, then they can come over here and sit and wait it out with us" (Knaurer, "E-5 Sgt. Gary Bashford reports" A1). Despite the variety in content, the soldiers generally expressed gratitude in to the newspaper, their families, the schools, and the community for the support they were given. One marine from Forrest, Roy McBride, wrote to The Blade; "Tell the community to hold their heads up high- they're

doing one hell of a job" of showing their support (Knaurer, "Two letters arrive from Sgt. Roy McBride" A1). Another area veteran, David Wojtaszek, wrote that the mail the soldiers received "really kept us going ... it was a great morale booster" ("Wojtaszek Welcomed" B1).

In addition to the correspondence from the soldiers, the newspaper also served as a forum for community opinion on the war. In letters to the editor, community members expressed their support for the soldiers. Shauna Wenger of Fairbury urged her fellow citizens to keep the soldiers in "our thoughts and our prayers until they can come home" (Wenger A2). Leslie Philpott wrote "Our soldiers have written that they have a job to do and are going to get it done. I feel I have a job to do, too. And that's to stand up in strong support of our troops" (Philpott A2).

Other members of the community were interviewed in the weekly "heard on the street" section of the newspaper. Local businessmen, city council members, school officials, high-schoolers, and grade school children were all asked for their opinions concerning the war. Jeremy Houston, 16, hoped that the United States would "blow Saddam's head off," (qtd. by Doran and Knaurer, "Prairie Central High students" A1) while Bob Nussbaum, Sr., wished that "we didn't have to go to war to get that guy out of there, but he's lied to us before, so I guess we better finish the job now" (qtd. by Knaurer and Ringler, "America at war gets local support" A1). Blaise DeMuth was concerned that "we use this opportunity to stabilize the region and finally broker a peace between the Arabs and the Israelis" (qtd. in "Area residents react to peace talks" A3).

During the crisis, the whole newspaper was mobilized to concentrate entirely on Operation Desert Storm. Articles were devoted to topics that ranged from the practical to the sublime. One article explained the postal regulations for shipping packages to the soldiers in the Gulf (Knaurer, "Post Office" A3). Yet another editorial expressed the view that the United States should send criminals to fight in the conflict so that "men and women with families and lives of their own back here can return home and resume their normal lives" (Knaurer, "Prison boot camps" B4). The Blade reported on the concern that existed in the local schools about the effect the intensive television coverage would have on the children (Dohman, Doran, and Knaurer; "P.C. first and second graders" A1). Knaurer composed a story about the family of marine Roy McBride, and asked people to donate toys and/or food to help them through the difficult times (Ringler, "Uneasy time " B2). The newspaper, in an editorial, appealed to local residents to increase their participation in the bloodmobile drive in add to the blood supply in case a great need arose for blood in the Gulf ("Military seeks blood supply increase" B1). Joan Johnson, who had also been a member of the support group, wrote articles listing the supplies the soldiers needed; food supplies, ziplock bags, pharmaceutical supplies, music, envelopes, etc. Johnson also reported which stores sold sweatshirts that read "My son/daughter is in Saudi Arabia" and "I support our troops" (Johnson "Needs for Saudi shared" B5).

The Blade publisher, Ronald Zirk fully endorsed his newspaper's devotion to the Persian Gulf war. On January 23, 1991, he ordered that all soldiers from the communities which his newspaper covered receive free subscriptions to The Blade newspaper. He stated that he felt it "vitaly

important to keep the community informed about what's going on over there with their hometown sons. And those soldiers over there need to know that we're thinking about them every day and that we support them" ("TP Drive to Saudi" A1).

The Blade vigorously endorsed the ongoing yellow ribbon campaign within the communities. Shauna Wenger wrote "I would like to ask the citizens of this community to place a yellow ribbon on their doors, trees, wherever, in remembrance of our world situation and especially all the men and women who are in the Middle East" (Wenger A2). Soon, there was a massive proliferation of yellow ribbons on nearly every tree and house in the community. The Blade published pictures of the yellow ribbons and the numerous American flags that appeared around the community. Signs appeared in windows of homes that read, "We Support Our Troops In the Persian Gulf." Eventually, members of the community began wearing yellow ribbons on their clothes as a sign of support for the troops.

The biggest effort fostered by The Blade, however, was the "TP for Saudi" drive. In the January 9, 1991 edition of The Blade, Brian Travis' telephone call to his parents was reported (Knaurer "Mail slow, morale okay" A1). During the call, he asked his parents to send him toilet paper and handy wipes. He reported that they often ran out of the former, and the soldiers were only allowed to shower every four days at the most, hence, the handy wipes. His mother, Diane Travis quickly contacted Knaurer and Mary McBride, the mother of marine Roy McBride, and the three planned to collect donations in order to transport toiletries to the troops. Travis and McBride solicited donations from neighbors (Diane Travis Interview) while Knaurer

requested in her weekly column that people donate whatever they could spare to the effort (Knaurer "Thoughts that Breathe" 9 Jan. A2). The community responded generously, collecting seven hundred forty-six rolls of toilet paper, twelve cases of handy wipes, and several other various practical supplies to be sent to the troops in the rear ("TP to Saudi drive" A1).

The Blade was one of a number of vehicles through which the community received information from and communicated their support for the troops and their families. Various organizations within the community participated in the show of support. Businesses added their resources to the effort, as did the schools, the churches, and the city councils.

Businesses participated in various ways. Businesses in Fairbury, including the National Bank of Fairbury, Walton's Department Store, and Dave's Supermarket, served as collection points for donated items from members of the community. Dave's Supermarket donated food and toiletries to groups who wished to send the troops "care packages" (Knaurer Interview). Like the private homes within the community, the businesses in the area sported yellow ribbons, American flags, and "We Support Our Troops..." signs on their premises. Some businesses began running "We Support Our Troops" advertisements in The Blade during the crisis as well (Knaurer Interview).

Area businesses worked with the county radio stations to support the troops. Kevin Anfield, sales manager at Pontiac's WPOK-WJEZ radio station, reported that local businesses sponsored announcements and "Welcome Home" spots for the various veterans at the end of the conflict. Each announcement described a particular veteran from Livingston County, his

duties in the conflict, and his family. When the veterans were honored at a "Welcome Home" celebration June 29, 1991 in Pontiac, the radio station provided the sound system and covered the event (Anfield Interview).

Area churches organized committees to support the troops as well. The Forrest Lutheran Church, the Fairbury United Methodist Church, and The Church of God in Forrest, announced in the newspaper the formation of committees to collect donations for the troops in the Gulf. The Church of God also held public prayer services on Sundays for the troops. The churches solicited soap, magazines, and personal hygiene products to send to the troops. Although the churches made clear that they did not support war, they certainly indicated their desire to support the troops involved (Ringler "Forrest churches support U.S. troops" B5).

The city councils of Fairbury, Forrest, and Chatsworth each ordered symbols to be placed in the streets indicating the towns' support for their troops. Forrest and Chatsworth voted to purchase additional American flags to be flown on their main streets "until the troops come home" (Ringler "Forrest to purchase flags" A8). Chatsworth and Fairbury hung supportive signs adorned with American flags and yellow ribbons from light poles on its main street during the crisis (Johnson "Approves flags for downtown" A6).

Civic organizations participated in the show of support. The Forrest Library displayed a table which contained profiles of local soldiers, descriptions of their geographical location, and expressions of support for the troops overseas ("Forrest Library " A8). Women's groups in the communities organized prayer services for the soldiers and their families. In Fairbury, the Junior Women's Club held a candlelight prayer vigil for the community at

7:00 P.M. January 28, 1991. The high school band played the national anthem in Fairbury's Central Park. Over fifty residents braved the sub-zero temperatures to join together in a show of support. Ministers from four Fairbury churches addressed the crowd and led them in prayer for the quick and safe return of the troops ("Ecumenical candlelight prayer service" A1 ). The Chatsworth Junior Women's Club held a similar service (Johnson "'Support our troops' draws big crowd" B3). This "Support Our Troops Rally" attracted two hundred fifty area residents who prayed for the safe return of the troops. The women distributed American flags to everyone who attended, and the American Legion along with the junior high school chorus participated as well. The participants were then given red, white, and blue ribbons to tie to the trees in the park in honor of the troops in the gulf. At the conclusion of the ceremony, one hundred balloons were released and the crowd watched as the wind carried them to the "far east."

The area school district, Prairie Central, also played a prominent role in the community's demonstration of support. Within the grade schools, the teachers dedicated much of their classroom time attempting to help the children understand the situation (Dohman, et al, "P.C. first, second graders react" A1). Most of the grade school teachers had their students write to the soldiers. The children had a choice of who they wanted to write to, but the teachers generally checked that at least some of the students wrote to soldiers from the local community (Dohman A1). Shirley Mitchell, a fourth grade teacher in the district, instructed her students to write two batches of letters to soldiers. One batch was to be written exclusively to local soldiers, and the



other batch was to be sent to the troops in the Gulf, not addressed to a specific soldier (Mason A5).

At the Prairie Central Junior High School, the student council organized the effort to support the troops. The students in the council made yellow ribbons with the names of local soldiers written on them, and then the school sent one set to the soldiers' families and displayed the other set in the school. The council formed the "Adopt-a-Serviceman" committee, responsible for encouraging the other students to choose a soldier in the Persian Gulf for a "pen-pal" (Ringler "PCJH students busy" B3). The chorus performed at the Chatsworth rally for the troops in February, 1990 (Johnson "Support our troops" B3).

The Prairie Central High School also actively supported the troops. The student senate worked with the National Society in making yellow ribbons with the names of area soldiers. The students posted signs with the slogan supporting the troops (Sands Interview). The Future Farmers of America committed itself to raising money to purchase food and toiletries to send to the troops (Gene Weber Interview). The band participated in the candlelight ceremony held in Fairbury in January, and marched in the "Welcome Home" parade held in Pontiac on June 29, 1991 (Bradford A1). When Mike Pica, a reservist called up to serve in Saudi Arabia during Desert Storm, returned from duty, the high school principal asked him to present a discussion about his activities and experiences while overseas to the Prairie Central Teachers' Association (Mike Pica Interview).

When the veterans returned, they were greeted with a plethora of welcome home celebrations. On April 3, 1991, David Wojtaszek was escorted

to the American Legion Hall by the city fire department, where he was greeted by a crowd of one hundred well-wishers. American Legion members passed out balloons, flags, and yellow ribbons ("Wojtaszek Welcomed" B1). Brian Travis and Roy McBride of Forrest were also given a "welcome home" party at the American Legion. Nearly two hundred twenty-five members of the community came to welcome them home (Brian Travis Interview).

Finally, when most of the soldiers had returned from Saudi Arabia, the Pontiac American Legion, the chamber of commerce, and the county support group planned a county-wide "welcome home" celebration. Held on June 29, 1991, the celebration included a picnic and a parade. Although specifically aimed at honoring the Persian Gulf war veterans, veterans from past wars were also invited to march in the parade. After the parade the district's state legislator, the mayor of Pontiac, and the commanders of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars officially welcomed the veterans home. The Pontiac Chamber of Commerce sponsored a barbecue dinner for all who attended, estimated at approximately one thousand five hundred people (Bradford A1).

After the welcome home celebration, members of the former support group planned a Persian Gulf War Veterans' Memorial in Pontiac. The memorial consisted of a simple rock engraved with a yellow ribbon and the names of the Livingston County Persian Gulf war veterans. The memorial will be placed on the grounds of the Livingston County courthouse during a dedication ceremony May 17, 1992 (Knaurer "Desert Storm Monument" A1).

For their part, the veterans were grateful for the support shown to them and their families during the crisis. Wojtaszek stated that "we constantly

heard about the protests and the anti-war demonstrations going on over here. We thought that everyone was against us and what we were trying to do until the mail began to pour in in November, full of support. It really boosted morale" (Exum A2). When they returned, many veterans visited the grade school children who had written to them during the conflict where they answered questions and thanked them for their support ("Soldiers Visit Pen Pals" A1).

Many of the veterans were still on active duty during this case study and were unavailable for interviews. However, Judy Knauer interviewed nearly all of the area veterans when they returned. She stated that many of the veterans expressed a sense of relief that the public supported them as they did (Knauer Interview).

Travis' enlistment period expired in October, 1990, but was extended until the end of the conflict (Brian Travis Interview). Bashford had planned to marry in October but was forced to marry earlier on short notice when called to active duty in September (Bashford Interview). Pica had planned to attend a university in the Fall but ended up missing his Junior year (Pica Interview). Such disappointments and stresses were easier to deal with, they said, because of the solid support they received from the community.

The support the veterans received from the community was absolute during the Persian Gulf war. Many of the driving forces within the community urging the support forward owed their strength and success to the hard work of a few dedicated individuals. However, a more complex and subtle force had been conditioning the community's reflexes since the end of the Persian Gulf war. The nature of that force and the impact it had on the

treatment given to the Persian Gulf war veterans will be addressed in the final chapter.

## Chapter IV: The Old Dog Learns New Tricks

The Persian Gulf war veterans returned to universal support from the Livingston County communities. Most of the veterans then journeyed on to their next base assignment, while four of the veterans re-entered civilian life. The enthusiastic welcome these veterans received, however, was shaped by three factors. First, elements about the Persian Gulf war situation that contrasted with the Vietnam war facilitated a sustained attentiveness and enthusiasm among the members of the community. Second, the intensive, immediate media coverage devoted to the war placed it constantly before the public eye. Finally, and most importantly, the communities' public memory of the Vietnam war and the treatment those veterans received profoundly shaped the response of the community to the Persian Gulf war veterans.

The contrasts between the Persian Gulf war and the Vietnam war are extreme. First, the Vietnam era officially lasted for over eleven years, while the length of the Persian Gulf war was only one month- the ground war phase of the conflict lasting for only one hundred hours. The limited duration of the war allowed Americans to retain a high level of interest in the conflict instead of becoming distracted by domestic concerns.

The war was so short that conditions that would have been intolerable over an extended period never even became a problem. Protest factions which formed early to oppose the war (Cockburn "Speaking Out" 15) failed to create a severe division in public opinion ("The Home Front" 25). American reservists called to active duty during the conflict may have faced increased

difficulty in re-assimilating into their jobs and communities if their service had been prolonged (Leerhsen 61). The American casualties incurred during the Persian Gulf war were limited and deemed acceptable by the American people. Had the casualty rate risen dramatically in a long war, division may have occurred among the American people regarding the justification of the war (Sayle 13). The American military did not employ a rotation system such as in Vietnam; soldiers returned together in their original units, not as individuals. Nor was the draft employed for the Persian Gulf war. Controversy stirred by discussions during the build-up of forces of re-instituting the draft indicate that such a policy decision would have divided the American people (Cockburn "Speaking Out" 15). These conditions during the Persian Gulf war promoted an atmosphere of general support for a limited conflict, much in contrast to the Vietnam war.

There is some evidence that these factors could have affected the communities of Livingston County. David Kilgus speculated that had the American casualty rate risen, and had the public been exposed to tragic scenes of death through the media, "people would have begun to think twice about all the hub-bub and cheering" (Kilgus Interview). Persian Gulf war veterans Mike Pica and Gary Bashford returned to their pre-war activities with ease (Pica Interview, Bashford Interview), and Brian Travis found work within one month of returning to Forrest (B. Travis Interview). However, the low number of reservists from the area who were called to duty may indicate that even if they had not readily found work, few people in the area would have seen such difficulty as a serious concern. In addition, instead of coming back to the communities one by one, servicemen from the area returned within

the span of three months, and eleven of the twelve were present at the "Welcome Home Celebration" held June 29, 1991. Hence, it was easy for the community to celebrate their return at one time.

The intensive national media coverage of the Persian Gulf war also affected the way the soldiers were treated by the American people. President George Bush's visit with the troops during Thanksgiving, and the many interviews of troops by reporters, added to a sense of empathy among the American people for the soldiers stationed in Saudi Arabia. When the Allied air-strikes against Iraq began on January 16, 1991, the American people were immediately informed by the Cable News Network (CNN) and its correspondents in Bagdad. From that point onward, until the end of the conflict, CNN and the three major networks conducted live updates and reports of activity from the Middle East. CNN and other networks bombarded the American people with information about Middle Eastern customs, geography, and military data; and the media continually emphasized personal interest stories about soldiers and their families as well (Cockburn "The TV War" 14).

The intensity of the national media coverage affected the communities in Livingston county as well. Dennis Evelsizer stated that because of CNN, "we always knew what was going on, when it was going on" (Evelsizer Interview). George Goodwin stated that "I was glued to the t.v. that entire first night. I kept wishing they could have told us more" (Goodwin Interview). Indeed, the "CNN junkie" soon emerged in the area. Donald Ford lamented, "I watched CNN constantly. Whenever I was home or near a TV, I was watching it. I couldn't get enough" (Ford Interview).

Coverage of the war penetrated all levels of the Prairie Central school district as well. Aside from the coverage received at home, children at all levels received additional information as well. Grade school children received the "Weekly Reader," which examined aspects of the war at the children's level. Grade School teachers held discussions about the war to help answer the children's questions. At the junior and senior high school levels, a new cable program at the school presented coverage of the war as well. "Channel One," a program designed for the classroom, was begun in the district junior and senior high schools in September, 1990 (Schmitt Interview), presented segments reported by their peers about aspects of the war. Ed Kapper stated that "first thing *every morning* for ten minutes, we were fed more information about the war" (Kapper Interview).

The topic of the Persian Gulf war permeated society at every level. In lounges of businesses, the Persian Gulf war was discussed over coffee and during breaks in factory work schedules (Keeley Interview). The newspaper coverage in The Blade ensured that all the members of the community knew which people from the area had been stationed in the Persian Gulf. Beginning Wednesday, November 1, 1990, through July 13, 1991, The Blade contained articles every week about the war and the local troops involved in the build-up of forces. Edwin Kapper stated that "it wasn't like Vietnam-people didn't talk about that everyday like they did with Desert Storm. It was the topic of conversation the whole time it was going on" (Kapper Interview).

The meticulous attention given to providing the community with specific information about the local soldiers overseas and their families at home created an intimacy between the communities, the soldiers, and their



families that the national media could not have provided. This intimacy provided a rapport between the community and those directly involved in the conflict, allowing the community to feel as if it had a stake in the outcome of the war and how its soldiers were treated. The community therefore reached out to the families of the soldiers it grew to know so well during the conflict, and welcomed back their favorite sons with enthusiasm when they returned.

The reaction of the community is due to more than these valid factors, however. A memory of how the Vietnam veterans were treated was instilled upon the community by forces outside and within the area. Since 1979, forces had been acting upon the community from the outside which formed a collective memory about how Vietnam veterans, in general, were treated when they returned. Once these forces had been in action for a period of time, forces within the area forced the community to confront the issue directly. The memory generated by these forces instilled a desire within the community itself to avoid a repetition of the treatment received by the Vietnam veterans.

The warm reception given to the American hostages in 1981 repulsed many Vietnam veterans nationwide who had not received such a welcome upon their return. In fact, the return of the hostages has been termed by Robert Muller, former director of Vietnam Veterans of America, as "the single most important event to benefit Vietnam veterans" (qtd. in MacPherson 56). This reaction motivated a dedicated group of veterans to begin an effort to create a memorial to the soldiers who had died in the conflict. Jan Scruggs, Tom Carhart, and other Vietnam veterans began the

effort to build the memorial. Scruggs and Carhart sought to recognize Vietnam veterans, many of whom felt betrayed and neglected by the country for which they fought (Bodnar 3). The design of the memorial depicted a sense of grief and sorrow for those who served in Vietnam. Letter writers to the committee planning the memorial "claimed to be motivated...by empathy for the soldiers who suffered and died" in Vietnam (Bodnar 4).

When the monument was dedicated on November 13, 1982, thousands of veterans converged on the capital, telling the nation about their plight. The thousands of veterans who marched in the parade prior to the dedication had been gathering for weeks. During the entire time, "expressions of personal pain, grief, and loss were manifest" and transmitted to the public through intense media coverage (Bodnar 7). The monument represented both "a simple memory invention of survivors moved by feelings they had after the war" and "a continuance of a conflict that had originated in Vietnam" (Bodnar 8). The images drawn by the memorial, the activities surrounding its dedication, and the accounts of veterans about the treatment they received when they returned, formed the foundation for the "beliefs and ideas about the past," in this case Vietnam and the treatment the veterans received from society. The public used these beliefs and ideas about Vietnam to "understand its past, present, and by implication, its future" (Bodnar 15). These same beliefs and ideas served as the public memory of how the veterans of Vietnam were treated when they returned.

The years since the end of the Vietnam war are filled with reminders of the war and the treatment the veterans received. Many of these movies have "taken a decidedly critical and psycho/socio-analytic approach to that conflict"

(Myths and Realities 169). In 1980, eighty-three percent of Vietnam veterans and sixty-two percent of the public had seen at least one of the following movies: The Green Berets, Coming Home, Friendly Fire, The Deerhunter, Taxi Driver, The Boys in Company C, Who'll Stop the Rain, and Apocalypse Now (Myths and Realities 170).

These movies created and helped shape the image of the Vietnam veteran. Twenty-seven percent of the public believed Coming Home presented an unfavorable image of veterans. For Friendly Fire, the percentage was twenty percent. Thirty-one percent of the public believed The Boys in Company C presented an unfavorable image of the Vietnam veterans, and thirty-four percent thought the same of The Deerhunter. For forty-four percent of the public, the mega-hit Apocalypse Now painted an unfavorable picture of Vietnam veterans, and a full fifty-six percent of the public said the same of Taxi Driver (Myths and Realities 172).

The public perception of veterans portrayed in the movies since 1980 has not been systematically studied. However, the issue of the Vietnam war and its veterans has been kept alive on the big screen. In the First Blood trilogy, Sylvester Stallone borrowed the name of a Vietnam soldier listed on the Vietnam Memorial. His character, John Rambo, was a veteran with mental problems confronting society. First Blood, Part II, caused a minor stir when the plot sent Rambo back to Vietnam to free remaining American prisoners of war. In the movie, Rambo asked his superior, "Are you going to let us win this time?" At the conclusion, photographs of real POWs were shown when released in 1973. The commercial successes of Good Morning Vietnam, Platoon, Casualties of War, and Full Metal Jacket attest to the public's interest

in the subject. Most important for the purposes of this study, however, were the movies which dealt with the return of the veterans when they returned. A movie based on the book, Born on the Fourth of July told the story of veteran Ron Kovic's attempts to reconcile his war experience with civilian life.

Among the people interviewed in this study, Apocalypse Now, Platoon, and Born on the Fourth of July made the greatest impact. When asked to name movies about the Vietnam war and/or its veterans during the interviews, these movies were mentioned most often. When asked what impact these movies had on their image of the Vietnam veteran, several interviewees replied that it had none. However, one person stated that "they [Platoon and Born on the Fourth of July] reinforced my sense that they [the veterans] just got jipped" (Gene Weber Interview).

The attempts of veterans to direct adequate government attention to their needs following their return repeatedly drew media attention. Veterans who were suffering illness because of their contact with the toxic herbicide Agent Orange fought for years to receive government assistance and government admission of its culpability in the controversy (Lewis and Severo 363). Veterans fought to have the Veterans' Administration adequate funding for the medical services it offered to veterans. The veterans' efforts to achieve recognition from the government was partially rewarded under President George Bush when he raised the Veterans' Administration to a cabinet level position.

The POW controversy continually resurfaced throughout the 1980's and 1990's. Pictures of alleged POWs found their way into the press or the

families of the POWs, who would demand the government respond. Squads of mercenaries formed with the intention of going to Vietnam to free the POWs. The controversy was renewed in 1991 when the pictures of two alleged Americans were given to their families. The government investigated the photographs when veteran and Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts demanded that action be taken.

Analogies to Vietnam were often drawn whenever the United States used military force. When U.S. Marines were sent to Beirut in 1983, some Americans raised questions about whether they would be there long or given the proper support. When President Ronald Reagan sent economic and military aid to El Salvador and rebel forces in Nicaragua, critics in the media and in the Congress wondered aloud if the aid was only the first slide down a slippery slope into another Vietnam.

Thus, the specter of Vietnam has haunted the American memory since its termination. Issues, whether they related to the treatment of the Vietnam veterans or not, continually reminded Americans of that divisive war. The constant invocation of Vietnam in the national arena reminded Americans, at large and in the communities encompassed by this monograph, that there were issues left unresolved by that conflict- including the treatment of the veterans.

When Operation Desert Storm commenced, President Bush invoked powerful imagery from Vietnam. He vowed in his January 16, 1991 address to the nation that the war would not become "another Vietnam" He assured the public that "our troops ... will not be asked to fight with one hand tied behind their back." Even Saddam Hussein declared, "if Allah wills, we will

make our province of Kuwait another Vietnam" (qtd. in Sayle 13). When American forces drove the Iraqis from Kuwait City, an American helicopter was prominently depicted in the media as it landed on the American embassy there and several soldiers debarked. The scene was eerily, if not purposefully reminiscent of another American helicopter photographed as it evacuated the last of the personnel from the American embassy in Saigon in 1975 as the South was collapsing. When the troops had won their victory, Bush declared "by God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all" (qtd. in Cloud 52).

National reminders of the war in Vietnam and its aftermath created a public memory of the treatment of the Vietnam veteran. Particularly, the Vietnam Memorial, Born on the Fourth of July, and belated "Welcome Home" parades for the Vietnam veterans held periodically across the nation produced both the images of the Vietnam veteran as either the neglected victim of an ungrateful nation, or a despised, spat upon executioner from America's unjust war. However, this imagery might have remained mere abstractions in the public memory of the Livingston County communities except for events beginning in the late 1980's that provided the area with concrete examples of this national and local tragedy.

In January 1986, a group of Vietnam veterans gathered from American Legion posts across the county to plan a Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Pontiac. Donald Ford and Doug Burton were members of the committee which planned and supervised the construction of the memorial (Burton Interview, Ford Interview). The veterans created a memorial depicting one soldier in combat gear and an American flag on top of a tall granite wall with

the names of all of the Livingston County men and women who served in Vietnam. Prior to the dedication of the memorial on November 15, 1986, a parade was held in downtown Pontiac in honor of the veterans. An estimated two thousand people attended the dedication ceremony at the Livingston County Courthouse in addition to approximately three hundred Vietnam war veterans ("Vietnam Memorial Dedicated" A1).

In 1987, another event captured media attention in Livingston County which reminded area citizens about the plight of the Vietnam veterans. A group of veterans gathered in Springfield, Illinois, determined to draw attention to what they believed were government mistreatments of veterans. This group of twenty veterans marched on foot along Interstate 55 from Springfield to Chicago, their destination being the State of Illinois building in downtown Chicago. When the veterans arrived in Pontiac, Fire Chief and veteran Donald Ford wanted to house the veterans overnight in the fire station. Because the veterans "had long hair, beards, and wore old, cruddy uniforms" Ford encountered initial opposition within the Pontiac City Council. However, the majority of the council agreed that Ford could house them overnight. Ford and his wife, who had been a nurse in Vietnam, collected pillows and blankets from some other veterans, and provided rolls and coffee for the marching veterans the next morning before they continued (Ford Interview).

Of greater significance was the visit of "The Wall" to Pontiac in the summer of 1989. The Wall is a replica of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. that is one-half the size of the original. John Devitt, a veteran from San Jose, California began building The Wall in 1984 as "a type

of cure" for other Vietnam veterans. Although initially planned to be a permanent monument in San Jose, Devitt decided to make it a portable memorial after suggestions by other veterans. When The Wall was completed, it began to tour the country ("The Wall").

Doug Burton visited The Wall in Macomb, Illinois in 1987. Inspired by the visit and the reactions of the people he saw there, he immediately made plans to bring it to Pontiac. He called San Jose the very next day and soon thereafter received the necessary forms. Eventually, Pontiac was placed on a two-year long waiting list. Burton would need that time to enlist support from the community for the project (Burton Interview).

At that time, Burton was in charge of the Veterans' Assistance Commission of Livingston County. There, he was able to lobby fellow veterans for their support for bringing The Wall to Pontiac. Eventually, Burton gathered a motivated group of fellow Vietnam veterans who worked with him to gather further support (Burton Interview).

Burton and his supporters then turned to the Veterans of Foreign Wars district organization for assistance. In order to bring The Wall to Pontiac, the veterans needed to raise thirty thousand dollars. Burton stated that when approached with the idea, it was widely derided within the V.F.W. as too costly. Nevertheless, with more than a year to raise the money, Burton convinced the group that reaching the goal was possible (Burton Interview).

Burton did face prejudices that still existed among older veterans within the county. Burton reported that when the idea of bringing The Wall to Pontiac was first suggested, representatives of individual community V.F.W. posts resisted. Burton explained that some of the community representatives



rejected the notion of helping "a bunch of whiny vets re-live their [experiences] over and over." Older veterans did not want "to reward a bunch of cry-babies who didn't even win their war." When the V.F.W. and the American Legion posts from around the county were asked to donate money to the effort, two refused altogether while others donated only token amounts (Burton Interview).

The veterans collected the ten thousand dollars necessary for the required initial payment one year before The Wall was due to arrive in Pontiac. At that point, Burton and his fellow veterans began to hold raffles and to advertise around the county to raise the remaining twenty thousand dollars. The veterans were successful in raising an additional ten thousand dollars prior to The Wall's arrival, but had still fallen far short of the needed amount. The lack of funds, however, did not stop The Wall from coming to Pontiac, however, because the financial arrangements were flexible enough to allow for payments to be made at a later time. Burton said that he did not worry about the deficit, because he believed contributions would eventually pay the bill. "Everybody I talked to who was connected with this thing kept telling me not to worry about the money because this thing pays for itself. And sure enough, it did" (Burton Interview). Burton's solution to the problem was to set up a table at the site of The Wall where T-shirts and American flags were sold as souvenirs of the event. Many individuals, however, chose to donate money to the event outright. When the event was over, Burton had raised an additional fifteen thousand dollars, which his committee donated to local charities ("The Wall").

The Wall came to Pontiac on July 2, 1989 and remained until July 8. Burton did his utmost to bring prestige to the event. When the memorial was "dedicated" in Pontiac, the same band that had played at the original dedication to the memorial in Washington, D.C. in 1982 performed in Pontiac. Jan Scruggs was present at the ceremony, as were officials from the Veterans' Administration. Ceremonies that day included a twenty-one gun salute to the Vietnam veterans and their fallen comrades and a candlelight prayer service that evening held in their honor ("The Wall").

A large number of people came to Pontiac to see The Wall. Burton had each participating American Legion and V.F.W. post place flyers around their communities announcing the event. The veterans advertised The Wall's arrival through radio and newspaper ads. Burton and his volunteers kept a registration book, recording the names of the individuals who attended the event. Nearly thirty-five thousand people from Livingston and the surrounding counties came to Pontiac to see The Wall. The site was always open, with people coming to see The Wall at all hours of the day and night. Burton estimated that over the course of the week, five hundred volunteers helped him run the registration and souvenir tables and assisted in providing security for the event ("The Wall").

Burton was motivated by a desire that members of the community finally recognize the Vietnam veterans that lived among them. "No one in Livingston realized how much the Vietnam war had affected other people, and this was the only way to show others how much it had affected us," Burton explained. He added that "some vets are seen as the town drunks and

scum; but they had service records. I wanted people to see that" (Burton Interview).

Burton's involvement in forming the Veterans' Assistance Commission of Livingston County, in dedicating a Vietnam war Memorial in Pontiac, and in bringing The Wall to Livingston County demonstrate a great dedication to achieving recognition for the Vietnam veterans in the area. Burton is among those "cultural leaders" that John Bodnar described, who "never tired of using commemoration to restate what they thought the social order and citizen behavior should be" (Bodnar 245). The actions of Burton, Don Ford, and Bruce Weber were not the products of any specific agenda. Rather, they were spontaneous reactions to the events around them.

Burton's efforts illustrate Bodnar's conclusions that "cultural expression and public memory were not always grounded in the interests of large institutions, but in the interests of small structures and associations that they [the cultural leaders] had known, felt, or experienced directly" (Bodnar 245). Burton's continued efforts to recognize the Vietnam veterans, and the sustained, positive responses that resulted from his efforts exemplify that "public memory was never clearly or permanently defined, but rather, it was continually constructed in a realm where the small and large-scale structures of society intersected" (Bodnar 245). The involvement of smaller groups, such as Bruce Weber and his fellow Vietnam veterans in Fairbury and Donald Ford and Doug Burton in Pontiac, was the critical element in shaping the response of the larger institutions: veterans' organizations, city government, and county government in Livingston. The interaction

between these groups determined the evolution of the public memory of the treatment of the Vietnam veterans in the communities' mind.

Thus, when the Persian Gulf war threatened another generation of American soldiers, a public memory about the treatment Vietnam veterans had received had been instilled in the community mind. Based upon the actual treatment the local veterans had received, this memory was subsequently fashioned by national recognition of this treatment, which in turn inspired local phenomena and commemorations. The large participation of local citizens in these belated recognitions of Vietnam veterans indicates a significant level of sympathy and empathy for the veterans, and even levels of guilt or uncertainty about how the community believed the veterans had been treated based upon this memory.

The relationship between the historical memory and the actual treatment demonstrates the powerful effects the forces that were shaping the memory had on the public mind. Veterans from the community were received in a variety of ways. Some were quietly supported by and welcomed back into the community. Veterans were treated with resentment or faced with open hostility. Other veterans received enthusiastic support and were warmly welcomed by the community because of their Vietnam experiences. But despite the fact that only some members of the community maltreated the veterans, and despite the fact that most of the veterans did not see their treatment in a negative light, many members of the community felt a need to reach out to the veterans. In attempts to recognize the Vietnam veterans and to make restitution for perceived maltreatment of the veterans, the communities demonstrated that they had adopted the popular view of the

treatment veterans received, and through the local public memory that had evolved, applied that popular image to themselves.

Interviewees stated that America had indeed "learned something" from Vietnam. Diane Travis stated that "I think America is more compassionate now than we were back then. We didn't want the Persian Gulf war vets to suffer the type of treatment the Vietnam vets went through" (Diane Travis Interview). Lawrence Lancaster agreed, "Americans didn't want to repeat something that they considered to be a mistake" (Lancaster Interview). Daniel Schmitt added that at the Prairie Central high school "both the teachers and the students got involved because they didn't want to see the Persian Gulf war veterans return to the same silence that the Vietnam veterans received" (Schmitt Interview).

Judy Knauerer echoed the memory of Vietnam in her columns while working at The Blade. When the air phase of the war began, she declared that America was at war again, and that being at war was "a hard pill to swallow, especially for those of us who still carry a raw spot from Vietnam" (Knauerer "Thoughts That Breathe" January 30, A2). She recalled President Bush's promise that the Persian Gulf war would not be another Vietnam, adding that such a promise meant that "we don't leave any of our guys/gals over there as prisoners of war or missing in action." The promise, she said, was also a call to the country "to stand up and support them men and women over there fighting, even if you don't agree with the government they're fighting for." She explicitly invoked the memory of Vietnam when she stated that "nobody should be more aware than the Vietnam veterans of how fighting Americans without support from home feel" while they are fighting

in battle and when they finally return home (Knaurer "Thoughts That Breathe" January 30, A2).

The Persian Gulf war soldiers themselves recalled Vietnam when talking about the treatment they received. Michael Pica stated that many of the letters he received mentioned Vietnam and the hope that soldiers like him not feel abandoned as the Vietnam veterans did (Pica Interview). Jon Bachtold, responding in a letter to correspondence he had received from the Prairie Central junior high school, declared, "Thanks for the letter and the support. My men and I have one big concern in regards to the Gulf crisis, and that is when we return, we will not be rejected as the Vietnam veterans were" (qtd. by Knaurer "Letter from the desert" A1)

Vietnam veterans were divided in their treatment of the Persian Gulf war veterans. Emery Hetherington and David Soper shared similar sentiments. Soper agreed with Hetherington when he stated, "Why should they get such a big welcome? They didn't do anything. It was over and done in just a couple of days" (Hetherington Interview, Soper Interview).

Other veterans were happy to see the Persian Gulf war veterans be warmly received, although many believed that the treatment was overdone. "I'm glad that they weren't ignored, but it went overboard. People were trying too hard, like they were trying to make up for Vietnam," said Larry Hakes in a statement with which Duane Schieler, Gerald Hoffman and Robert Travis agreed (Hakes Interview, Schieler Interview, Hoffman Interview, Travis Interview).

A smaller group of veterans was excited about this opportunity to participate. Joe Arnoldson, counselor of veterans at the Livingston County

Institute of Human Resources found many veterans who "wanted to go to the recruiters office and sign right up. It was like they wanted to finally be a part of a winning battle to make up for losing in Vietnam" (Arnoldson Interview). Donald Ford was one of those veterans who wanted to participate in Operation Desert Storm. Ford reported that "both me and my wife looked into possibilities of going over and doing something in the war, but nobody wanted us." Instead, Ford concentrated on assisting the "Welcome Home" committee of the American Legion that was organizing the festivities. In addition, when the "Welcome Home" parade was held in Chicago, Ford joined the Vietnam veterans who were allowed to join the parade (Ford Interview). Vietnam veterans being allowed to join in such national parades and in the local parades for Vietnam veterans was another expression of the community feeling that a debt remained to be paid to the Vietnam veterans. Doug Burton and Ford both attended the first few meetings of the support group for the families of the Vietnam veterans, attempting to use their own experiences to help the families through the crisis (Burton Interview, Ford Interview).

The same consensus that sought to preserve community values during the Vietnam war by suppressing conflict, acted during the Persian Gulf war to promote an active demonstration of the community's values. The memory of the Vietnam war spawned a community reaction determined not to repeat the silence which greeted veterans twenty years before. The proliferation of yellow ribbons, "Support Our Troops" signs, and American flags marked the universal community support and determination to show that support to the veterans and their families.

This community pressure toward consensus spurred positive reactions from members of the area who did not even agree with the large display of support. Lawrence Lancaster and Edwin Kapper both derided the display of yellow ribbons. "Weren't those things inspired by some country song about some guy writing to his girlfriend from prison, telling her to tie up a yellow ribbon on some tree if she still wanted him?" asked Lancaster (Lancaster Interview). Kapper stated, "That's not exactly the kind of signal I'd want if I were one of those soldiers." But when asked if he had tied up a yellow ribbon on his house, Kapper meekly responded, "yes, I guess I did." Lancaster attempted to divert the blame from himself by declaring, "Well, my wife takes care of things like that" (Kapper Interview). Even veterans Hetherington and Soper displayed yellow ribbons on their houses for the duration of the conflict (Soper Interview, Hetherington Interview).

The communities in this study demonstrate that rural areas did not escape conflict over the Vietnam war. How they dealt with that conflict and treated the veterans Vietnam veterans stands outside the present models of treatment. Some members of the community reviled the veterans. Others sympathized with them. The conflict between the two groups was suppressed, resulting in the indifference many veterans felt when they returned. These conservative communities did not want to air their dirty laundry in public, so they pushed as much of the issue aside as possible. A pattern emerged in which most conflict was ignored in the attempt to preserve community harmony. Unfortunately, this consensus which rushed to overlook conflict resulted in the neglect of the veterans themselves, a



pattern of neglect which resembled the pervasive neglect and indifference shown to Vietnam veterans across the nation.

This resemblance in treatment provided a great enough link to the stereotyped models of treatment that the communities accepted the stereotyped models as true when they developed in the public memory. Differences between the memory of the treatment and the actual historical treatment were small. Thus, national events were allowed to shape that memory locally, and were made real to the people of Livingston County through local commemorative events. The accepted, national models of treatment were therefore adopted and applied to the communities' own past as the communities gave recognition to the forgotten warriors.

The great time span during which these commemorative activities took place kept the memory fresh in the community mind. Thus, when the Persian Gulf crisis threatened a new generation of warriors, Americans everywhere were determined not to allow a recurrence of the perceived welcome Vietnam veterans had received. The references to Vietnam, nationally and locally, demonstrate that the imagery of Vietnam, including the treatment the veterans received, had been seared into the American consciousness. Those people for and against the Persian Gulf war persistently declared their support for the troops. When they returned, a euphoric welcome for the soldiers swept the nation.

In fact, the lesson learned in Livingston County was driven home by the same forces which had shaped the Vietnam veterans' welcome. Community consensus was generated in the schools, the local media, the churches, businesses, and civic groups. As nearly everyone had tried to overlook

**Vietnam, and consequently the veterans, so too did nearly everyone participate in support and recognition of the Persian Gulf troops and their families. Preservation of community harmony and spirit demanded that everyone join the effort this time. The reception may even have been overstated, but for the nation and the communities in this study, it didn't matter. The American people had learned a lesson.**

## Bibliography

### Primary Works Cited:

- Anfield, Kevin. Personal Interview. 6 January 1992.
- Arnoldson, Joe. Personal Interview. 3 January 1992.
- Bashford, Gary. Personal Interview. 4 January 1992.
- Bashford, Norma Lynn. Personal Interview. 4 January 1992.
- Brunachi, Frank. Personal Interview. 11 January 1992.
- Burton, Doug. Personal Interview. 6 January 1992.
- Dohman, Connie; Brenda Doran, and Jan Ringler. "P.C. first, second graders react to war in Persian Gulf." The Blade 30 Jan. 1991, sec A; 1.
- Doran, Brenda. "Area residents react to peace talks with Iraq." The Blade 6 March 1991, sec A; 1.
- Doran, Brenda. "Operation Desert Storm ... From the view point of mothers." The Blade 27 Feb. 1991, sec A; 1.
- Doran, Brenda and Judy Knauer. "Prairie Central High students consider implications of Mid-East war on future." The Blade 6 Feb. 1991, sec A; 1.
- Drach, Steve. Personal Interview. 25 October 1991.
- "Ecumenical Candlelight Prayer Service." The Blade 30 Jan. 1991, sec A; 1.
- Evelsizer, Dennis. Personal Interview. 8 November 1991.
- Exum, Jess. "Wojtaszeks welcome son home from Middle East." The Blade 27 March 1991, sec A; 2.
- "Fairbury marine sends gratitude for support." The Blade 10 April 1991, sec A; 1.

Ford, Donald. Personal Interview. "18 January 1992.  
"Forrest Library display." The Blade 20 Feb. 1991, sec A; 8.

Goodwin, George. Personal Interview. 9 November 1991.

Hakes, Larry. Personal Interview. 24 October 1991.

Hetherington, Emery. Personal Interview. 3 November 1991.

Hoffman, Gerald. Personal Interview. 1 November 1991.

Huxtable, Joanne. Personal Interview. 11 January 1992.

Johnson, Joan. "Approves flags for downtown area to show support for  
Desert Storm." The Blade 27 Feb. 1991, sec A, 6.

---. "Needs for Saudi shared." The Blade 23 Jan. 1991, sec B; 5.

---. "'Support our Troops' draws big Sunday afternoon crowd." The Blade 20  
Feb. 1991, sec B; 3.

Jones, Rick. "Speedway to be ready for opening night." The Fairbury Blade  
13 May 1987, sec A; 1.

Kapper, Ed. Personal Interview. 2 January 1992.

Keeley, Rita. Personal Interview. 26 December 1992.

Kilgus, Dave. Personal Interview. 9 November 1991.

Knaurer, Dennis. Personal Interview. 10 January 1992.

Knaurer, Judy. "Desert Storm Monument carved by Fairbury man." The  
Blade. 15 April 1992: 3.

---. "E-5 Sgt. Gary Bashford reports from Operation Desert Storm." The Blade  
30 Jan. 1991, sec A; 1.

---. Personal Interview. 10 January 1992.

---. "Letter from the Desert; Soldier reports from Saudi Arabia." The Blade 16  
Jan. 1991, sec A; 1.

- . "Post Office advises on economical ways to ship to Desert Storm." The Blade 23 Jan. 1991, sec A; 3.
  - . "Prison boot camps should stomp path to Operation Desert Storm." The Blade 2 Jan. 1991, sec B; 4.
  - . "Sgt. Gary Bashford writes letter to The Blade from tent in Saudi Desert." The Blade 13 Jan. 1991, sec A; 3.
  - . "Thoughts that breathe ... and gasp and wheeze." The Blade 9 Jan. 1991, sec A; 2.
  - . "Thoughts that breathe ... and gasp and wheeze." The Blade 23 Jan. 1991, sec A; 2.
  - . "Thoughts that breathe ... and gasp and wheeze." The Blade 30 Jan. 1991, sec A; 2.
  - . "Two letters arrive from Sgt. Roy McBride: Bravo Company shares TP from Blade-sponsored project." The Blade 6 March 1991, sec A; 1.
- Knaurer, Judy and Jan Ringler. "America at war gets local support." The Blade 23 Jan. 1991, sec A; 1.
- . "Phone calls reassure families of servicemen seeing action in Operation Desert Storm." The Blade 13 Feb. 1991, sec A; 1.
  - . "Report from Saudi: Mail slow, morale okay; send toilet paper." The Blade 9 Jan. 1991, sec A; 1.
- Lancaster, Larry. Personal Interview. 8 November 1991.
- Maquet, Jerry. Personal Interview. 27 October 1991.
- Mason, Joy. "Westview student receives letter from serviceman in Saudi Arabia." The Blade 3 April 1991, sec A; 5.
- Meiss, Tom. Personal Interview. 26 October 1991.

"Military seeks blood supply increase for use in Desert Storm." The Blade 23 Jan. 1991, sec B; 1.

"Our young men in Saudi." The Blade 16 Jan. 1991, sec A; 1.

Philpott, Leslie. Letter. The Blade 27 Feb. 1991, sec A; 2.

Pica, Michael. Personal Interview. 2 January 1992.

Rathbun, Tom. Personal Interview. 7 November 1991.

Rieger, Ronald. Personal Interview. 11 January 1992.

Ringler, Jan. "Forrest churches support U.S. troops in Desert Storm." The Blade 30 Jan. 1991, sec B; 5.

---. "Forrest to purchase flags for mainstreet to honor servicemen in Saudi." The Blade 13 Feb. 1991, sec A; 8.

---. "PCJH students act to support troops." The Blade 23 Jan. 1991, sec B; 3.

---. "Uneasy time soothed for wife of Sgt. Roy McBride." The Blade 20 Feb. 1991, sec B; 2.

Roberts, Dave. "Local veteran concerned with apathy shown toward returning vets." The Fairbury Blade 3 Feb. 1971, sec B; 2.

Roberts, James. "Opinion and Comment." The Fairbury Blade 4 March 1970, sec A; 2.

----. Personal Interview. Personal Interview. 23 November 1991.

Schmitt, Dan. Personal Interview. 22 November 1991.

Schieler, Diane. Personal Interview. 18 January 1992.

Schieler, Duane. Personal Interview. 18 January 1992.

Soper, Dave. Personal Interview. 2 November 1991.

Toohill, Steve. "FFA sets week to help soldiers in Saudi." The Blade 13 Feb. 1991, sec A; 5.

"The 'TP to Saudi' drive." The Blade 23 Jan. 1991, sec A; 1.  
Travis, Brian. Personal Interview. 7 January 1992.  
Travis, Diane. Personal Interview. 7 January 1992.  
Travis, Robert. Personal Interview. 7 January 1992.  
"The Wall." Take Ten; Illinois State University television. 7 July 1989.  
Weber, Bruce. Personal Interview. 8 January 1992.  
Weber, Gene. Personal Interview. 22 November 1992.  
Weber, Sandy. Personal Interview. 8 January 1992.  
Wenger, Shauna. Letter. The Blade 16 Jan. 1991, sec A; 2.  
"Wojtaszek welcomed." The Blade 3 April 1991, sec B; 1.

#### Secondary Works Cited:

Bodnar, John. Remaking America. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.  
Brende, Joel and Erwin Parson. Vietnam Veterans. New York: Plenum Press, 1985.  
Card, Josephine. The Personal Impact of Military Service. Lexington, Massachusetts: 1983.  
Cloud, Stanley. "Exorcising an Old Demon." Time 11 March 1991: 52-3.  
Cockburn, Alexander. "Speaking Out." New Statesman and Society 25 Jan. 1991: 15-16.  
---. "The T.V. War." New Statesman and Society 7 March 1991: 14-15.  
"Delayed Stress Syndrome." Pamphlet prepared by Institute of Human Resources: Pontiac, Illinois, 1983.

- Downs, Frederick. Aftermath. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1984.
- Egendorf, Arthur. Healing from the War. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985.
- Greene, Bob. Homecoming. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1989.
- "The Home Front." The Economist 19 Jan. 1991: 25-6.
- Klein, Joe. "The Mother-in-Law of all Parades." New York 24 June 1991: 9-10.
- Leerhsen, Charles. "The second battleground." Newsweek 6 May 1991: 50-2.
- MacPherson, Myra. Long Time Passing. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984.
- Mason, Patience. Recovering from the War. New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1990.
- Milford, Lewis and Richard Severo. The Wages of War. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.
- Morganthau, Tom. "The Military's New Image." Newsweek 10 March 1991: 50-1.
- Myths and Realities. Washington D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980.
- Sayle, Murray. "The Gulf, Son of Saigon." Far Eastern Economic Review 28 March 1991: 13-14.