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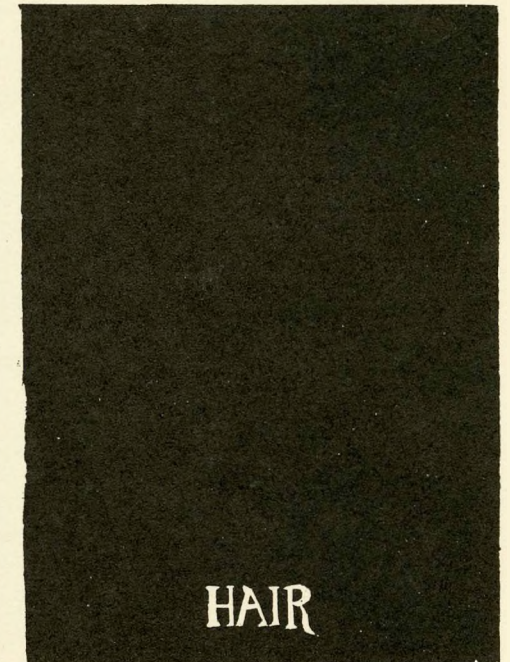
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VIET NAM GENERATION

A Journal of Recent History and Contemporary Culture



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INTRODUCTION

In This Issue

Dan Duffy usually writes the "In This Issue" Section, but Dan has been in Ha Noi for the last three months. In a return to the role I played in the earlier days of *Viet Nam Generation*, I have been immersed in the solicitation and selection of articles, editing and production of this issue. My hands-on involvement in editorial matters will continue into the foreseeable future, since Dan is involved in developing our Southeast Asia area studies publications and will be returning to Viet Nam to spend six months there in 1995. Joining me in a production and design role is our partner, Steve Gomes, who in addition to handling the sorts of tasks that Business Managers undertake, has shown a flair for graphic design and bookmaking.

We had a rich collection of material from which to assemble the contents of this volume. Volume 6, Numbers 1-2, reflect our usual eclectic tastes and wide-ranging interests, as well as the interdisciplinary principles upon which *Viet Nam Generation* is founded. The issue opens with a History section—two articles on the dangers of allowing others to remember history and to pass it off as truth; two articles on specific historical events which both foreshadowed and shaped the the 1960s in the U.S. Edward P. Morgan gives us "25 Years Later: A Sanitized Sixties," and a warning that those who do not remember the past are doomed to be misled by commercially packaged historical summaries. In "Jackson State College: The Lost Episode in Antiwar Protest," sociologist and VG Contributing Editor William King briefly reminds us that the shootings at Jackson State have been almost forgotten while the Kent State murders have become a cultural icon. King suggests that this elision is more than an accident. Historian John Andrew describes the report of the Presidential Commission on National Goals issued in 1960 in "The Impending Crises of the 1960s: National Goals and National Purpose," and argues that the report contributed to the creation of the atmosphere which fostered progressive change in the next decade. And historian Louis Kern writes at length about liberalism and censorship in the early 1960s in "Eros on the New Frontier: The Ginzburg Case and the Limits of Liberal Tolerance."

Poetry by Laurie Wagner Buyer, George Held, Timothy F. Kennedy and James Scofield follows the historical articles. The poems of these four authors remind us that historical movements are comprised of individual moments—both personal and political. The poems segue into a short section of narrative, beginning with Theodore M. Lieverman's careful description of the 1994 Hampden-Sydney College conference on the Viet Nam war. Mitchell K. Hall follows with a densely annotated presentation of the letters of Ohio antiwar activist John A. Junot, "Radical Observations." Feminist and antiwar activist Paula Friedman continues the section with a ringing answer to the question, "What Was Happening Then?" Chris Bruton's "Looking for Woodstock" articu-

lates the process by which a cultural event becomes a cultural icon as two people who were not at the concert search for a patch of ground.

More poetry—by Rod Farmer, Victor H. Bausch, and R.S. Carlson—this time focusing on the experiences of soldiers and veterans. And, sandwiched between poets, two stories which have become favorites of mine: Tom Perrotta's "Forgiveness," and Mark DeVan's "There Are Still Nice People in the World." Both tales reflect on the process of misunderstanding and on human connections in a world where alienation and isolation are the norm.

Paul Allen's long poem, "Four Passes," tells us about his simultaneous peripheral relation and intense emotional connection to the Civil Rights Movement. Elliot Richman's "Walk on, Trooper" (the title poem of his latest volume, published by Viet Nam Generation, Inc. this year) paints a picture of the confusion and contradictory impulses of an antiwar veteran at a peace demonstration. Pete Lee's work lets us know things are tough all over.

The next group of three stories is about family relationships in the wake of the Viet Nam war. Richard Welin's "Caitlin Jones" gives us a look at the veteran-as-absent-father from the point of view of a young daughter. Brian Skinner's "The Spoils of War" is an ironic and hilarious look at a husband and wife whose obsessions with material objects have caused them first to lose and then to find each other again. Toni La Ree Bennett's "Orey and Twee" is a reflection on a relationship in which two people lose each other completely—as well as a tale of a mother's reclamation of her children and her life.

Anthony DeGregorio, Robert Flanagan, and Christopher Butters write poetry about the aftermath of war and the institutions which war creates and supports. DeGregorio's "Shopping in the River" gives us the abandoned metal cart, full of junk, half submerged, as a metaphor for life in our time—a crystalline moment that seems to sum just about everything up.... Flanagan and Butters are also thoughtful poets of substance; both have generated sizeable bodies of work, and I am sure we'll be seeing more of them in the pages of *Viet Nam Generation*.

A thick section of five war stories follows the poets. Sean Connolly concludes his trilogy of REMF tales (both earlier stories were published in *Viet Nam Generation*) with "The Last Days of God on Earth." William Feitzer's "Special Training," Stephen T. Banko, III's "The Wisest Know Nothing," and Norman Lanquist's "Cannon City" all detail different aspects of life during wartime. This section leads into another group of poems, beginning with Theresa A. Williams. t. kilgore splake is once again featured—we greatly appreciate his ability to put atrocity in perspective. David Tangeman contributes a thoughtful poem about culture and war, and Mitch Grabois sums up life, the universe and everything in his amazing "My Life as a Man in America."

S. Frederic Liss interrupts the poetry with his short story about the difference between going to war and staying home in "Talking of Michelangelo." Jeanne Bryner gives us a poem about a mother who misses her son. Bryner's work is followed by a character study from Scott Goetchius, and poems by Thomas A. Gribble and *Viet Nam Generation* contributing editor David L. Erben.

The last third of the issue is devoted to criticism and reviews. Tony Williams interviews Joseph Gray, the director of the film *Ambush*. John S. Baky gives us "The Image of the Military Officer in Films Concerning the Viet Nam War," in which he describes, in painstaking detail the misrepresentations of American officers in popular culture. Cynthia Fuchs draws parallels between the "generation" of the Sixties and "Generation-X" in her usual acerbic style. And Tony Williams tells us his opinions of recent books on pop culture representations of the war. The criticism is bridged by two poets—David Sconyers and Timothy Hodor—and continues with W.D. Ehrhart's review of Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam* and David DeRose's review of Philip Jason's *The Vietnam War in Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism*. Renny Christopher gives us the rundown on women writing fiction about the Viet Nam war in "Women and Veterans and Draft Evaders," and Cecil B. Currey concludes this issue with his lengthy and careful study, "Bao Dai: The Last Emperor." (Cecil's article contains a review of Dan's first *Lac Viet* book, *The End of the Vietnamese Monarchy*, by Bruce Lockhart.)

GRAPHIC ART

As you may have noticed, the pages of *Viet Nam Generation* have begun to feature more graphics. We have a new scanner which we have been using to good effect, and we've also been making the acquaintance of artists whose work we are interested in sharing with our subscribers. The cover art for this issue is by Cedar Nordby, an alumnus of Hampshire College, now in the graduate program in Fine Art at the University of Iowa. Cedar's work is both aesthetically pleasing and politically powerful. We're delighted to feature his prints here, both on the cover and in full-page reproduction inside the issue. We've printed his six-part series on single-sided pages, hoping to encourage those of you who like his artwork as much as we do to take a razor and cut them out of the issue and hang them on your walls. We will be featuring more of Cedar's work in future issues and enlisting his aid in designing our forthcoming books.

We at VG have noted with amusement the fact that Fifties and early Sixties-style graphics of the June-and-Ward-Cleaver variety have come back into fashion. We've decided to jump on the bandwagon... sort of. Rather than adopting the usual home-and-garden



Figure 15. Inflating janta.

variety images, we've chosen those which we feel suit our own particular idiom. Thus, you will see, reproduced at random, charming illustrations from various publications issued by the Department of the Army: *Combat Skills of the Soldier* (FM 21-75), *Survival* (FM 21-76), *Boobytraps* (FM 5-31), and (our favorite) *Guide to Selected Viet Cong Equipment and Explosive Devices* (381-11, May 1966).

VWAR-L, SIXTIES-L AND THE SIXTIES PROJECT

I've continued my forays into the virtual world with noticeable enthusiasm. In 1992 I described the VWAR-L, an electronic discussion list on the Viet Nam war administrated by Dr. Lydia Fish. Since then I have moved on to found, with other Sixties scholars, a new moderated electronic discussion list called SIXTIES-L. The unmoderated nature of VWAR-L was problematic—theoretically it was an arena of "free speech" in which anyone could say anything they wished. But in reality it was an environment in which the most abusive and hate-filled voices could silence more reasonable folks simply by filling screen after screen with racist and sexist language, ad hominem attacks, and threats.

On the Internet, folks can "vote with their keyboards" and in 1993 there was a mass exodus from the VWAR-L, the active readership of the list dropped from a high of over 300 to less than 150 within a six month period. I do not know what motivated all those other folks to leave the VWAR-L list, but I can speak for myself—I felt that the list had taken on a distinct right-wing political slant endorsed by the listowner, and that any pretense of impartiality had been abandoned. Personal attacks of the most virulent sort were condoned as long as they were waged against "liberals" or other persons with progressive, feminist or antiracist politics. These attacks included veiled and not-so-veiled physical threats, making the VWAR-L seem both an unpleasant and dangerous place for those not toeing the (right-wing) party line. (The ludicrous nature of these attacks is exemplified by those waged against me, which declared that I was not only a feminist of the "man-hating" sort, but a "commie" and decidedly "anti-veteran.") Finally, the VWAR-L had become a dangerous place for students—an environment in which asking an "unapproved" question might lead to a no-holds-barred verbal assault on the questioner.

At the beginning of 1994 I gathered together with other Sixties scholars and formed a collective called the "Sixties Project." The Sixties Project is a collective of humanities scholars working together on the Internet to provide routes of collaboration and make available primary and secondary sources for researchers, students, teachers, writers and librarians interested in the 1960s. We're developing a holistic approach to the study of the 1960s, using technology available to humanities scholars, and exploiting innovative information technologies—particularly the interactive and multimedia opportunities provided by the Internet. This project has already begun to build a community of scholars who, without the benefits of this technology, would have been isolated in

geographically distant institutions. We believe that this cooperative use of technology can help us efficiently and broadly disseminate information about the 1960s. Such dissemination ensures the preservation of information which might otherwise be lost. We intend a resource concerning the 1960s that will encourage immediate end-user access to the broadest possible range of audience—scholars, librarians, teachers, researchers, and students. Moreover, this end-user access to such a complex of interests will be designed to accommodate all levels of inquiry. We see this as a natural extension of *Viet Nam Generation* into the electronic realm—we've always seen ourselves as working hard to build a community and to make our publications accessible to a wide range of people.

The heart of the Sixties Project is the electronic discussion list SIXTIES-L. If you have Internet access you can easily subscribe. Send a message to:

listproc@jefferson.village.virginia.edu

Leave the subject line of the message blank. The message should read:

subscribe SIXTIES-L Your Name



WEPTRONICS AMALGAMATED is the creation of Helmut Feifs, a once-upon-a-time captain of marines. In his current incarnation he is a comic (and manic) genius. I was introduced to Helmut on the "net," in that textual otherworld we call "espace." We've never met, but I consider him one of my favorite people. His slash-and-burn sense of humor might not be to everyone's taste, but there were many nights when I was at the computer desperately trying to meet a deadline and a Weptronics post would appear in my electronic mailbox and leave me laughing—laughing until it hurt. The best adjective I can find to describe Helmut's style is... relentless. We began publishing Helmut's work in *Nobody Gets Off the Bus: The Viet Nam Generation Big Book* (aka Volume 5:1-4 of *Viet Nam Generation*). The reception was mixed. Quite a few letters from happy subscribers specifically mentioned the Weptronics pieces as a source of amusement and delight. Other folks Just Didn't Get It. I figure that's the way satire is usually received and I've decided to carry Weptronics as a regular feature. Helmut's short pieces are scattered throughout the volume, always set off from the other text by the Weptronics logo and side-bar. These are works of fiction. Names, characters, catalog items, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and usually right on the mark....

For example, if your name was Abbie Hoffman, the message would read:

subscribe SIXTIES-L Abbie Hoffman

If you have any questions about subscribing or haven't yet learned to use your university email account, take this description to the computer center at your institution and ask them to help you get on-line. Over 350 subscribers regularly discuss aspects of the 1960s on SIXTIES-L. We hope that you will join us.

The Sixties Project is also sponsoring the digital archiving of Sixties ephemera. This is viewed as a fundamental commitment. Many of the underground press publications and other artifacts—broadsides, buttons, t-shirts, and ephemeral publications—of the 1960s which were either printed on cheap, acidic paper or made out of fragile materials, are literally falling to dust. The need to preserve these often unique intellectual resources is clearly essential for persuasive cultural purposes, if not always for precise historical ones. Already assembled is a team of librarians and humanities scholars, each bringing to the project complementary skills of organization, analysis, and exposition. With a substantial census of appropriate material already in hand, we are examining other digitizing projects to set durable digitizing standards now, as well as make maximum efficient use of the technical lessons learned by others through trial and error. We will create digital images of texts and artifacts and use the multimedia capacity of programs like Mosaic to make these images available to Internet users.

Text archiving of Sixties source material is also important. We have initiated a project that will place the full text of the Pentagon Papers on-line, and we will continue that commitment by seeking to digitally archive out-of-print and hard-to-find government documents. In addition to public domain material, we are interested in placing on-line as many "Sixties classics" as possible, limited only by copyright clearance. We would also like to create a text archive of secondary sources and critical materials on the Sixties. Viet Nam Generation, Inc. will make all of its published material available in electronic format. We're working on translating all of our articles and book publications into plain text format now.

It's our philosophy that revolutions are made by those who show up, so if you are interested in the Sixties Project, we are interested in you. We'd also like to hear from you if you have in your possession, or know about, materials which should be included either in the text or image digitizing projects.

STATE OF THE JOURNAL

Things look better for us financially this year. We're hoping that we will gross approximately \$50,000 in 1994. We've earned close to half of that amount in the first half of this year and anticipate that our second half-year earnings will be similar to the first half-year. We are particularly pleased that over 50% of our gross is generated by book sales. We signed a distribution contract with Inland Books in August, so VG publications will be

available to over 2,500 bookstores. We anticipate signing more distribution contracts soon.

Subscriptions account for another 30% of our gross (half of our subscribers are libraries and half are individuals, so the breakdown is 10% from individual subscriptions and 20% from library subscriptions). Numbers of subscribers fluctuate between 200 and 400, depending upon time of year and how many renewal reminder notices we mail out.

Approximately 20% of our income is donated. The donations range in amount from \$5 to \$300 from individuals, though a couple of people have given us substantially more (thank you!), and *many* of you have helped us out. I'd like to take a moment to tell you how much we appreciate it, since we couldn't have made it through the last year without you. Your support makes our continued existence possible. VG has also just received a \$25,000 Ford Foundation grant to assist us in developing our Southeast Asia area publications.

Our expenses are equal to our income at this point. Printing accounts for over half of our costs. Postage and shipping are the next largest expenses, hovering around 20%. Other major expenses are office supplies, software, computer maintenance and expansion, and telephone bills. We still cannot afford to pay our staff. It's our goal to reach a point where we can pay three salaries (for Dan, for Steve, and for me) of \$20,000 per year and to provide a health insurance plan. In order to reach this goal we will have to turn VG into a corporation which grosses \$150,000-\$200,000 a year. We hope to generate this income by expanding our sales base—making connections with local book stores, and increasing use of VG texts in courses. Our estimate is that we can reach our income goal within three years. We'd like to become a stable and self-sufficient, long-lasting alternative press institution and to continue to serve the community which has supported us for so long. Our next goal, after we secure subsistence salaries for our staff, is to begin paying our contributors for their work. We believe that the work we publish is of value, and that writers deserve a decent honorarium for their literary efforts.

VG issues for 1994 should be out before the end of the year, putting us back on schedule after a very late 1993 volume year. And we've already printed two volumes of poetry in 1994, David Connolly's *Lost In America* and Elliot Richman's *Walk On, Trooper*. We have at least four more books on the 1994 schedule, and you'll receive them all with your subscriptions.

To keep us going, you can adopt our publications as course texts. Another important thing you can do for us is to contact your local libraries (both university and public libraries) and request that they carry *Viet Nam Generation* and purchase VG books. And you can write to indexing companies like UMI and Wilson and request that they index our journal and/or carry a full-text version of our publication on-line.

Books: Kali's Picks

James William Gibson, *Warrior Dreams: Paramilitary Culture in Post-Vietnam America* (New York: Hill & Wang) 1994. ISBN: 0-8090-966-8. 357pp. Indexed. \$23.00 hardcover.

Bill Gibson is a really smart guy. I thought so back when I first read his massive study *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (1986), and I was delighted to publish the first article he wrote on paramilitary culture, "Paramilitary Fantasy Culture and the Cosmogonic Mythology of Primeval Chaos and Order" (*Viet Nam Generation* 1:3-4, Summer-Fall 1989, special issue: *Gender and the War: Men, Women and Vietnam*). A good sociologist is a national treasure (and a rare bird in these days of decline), and a good sociologist who can *write* is a gift beyond value. In *Warrior Dreams* Gibson examines the glorification of war and the "warrior" which lies at the heart of U.S. culture, and describes the contemporary cult of the paramilitary hero and the glorification of "the victory of good men over bad through armed combat." Gibson does what few dare—he connects the proliferation of what he calls "New Warrior" images in popular culture with the "real world" of politics and law. Male fantasies, it turns out, affect male actions in the world. And the world of the "warrior" as described by Gibson, is obsessed with images of masculinity. In a chapter titled "The Hero's Magical Weapons" Gibson explains the essential contradiction of paramilitary culture:

Combat weapons and the concentric rings of power they create are not only a means of aggressive self-expansion; they also function as "body armor." But the enemy is always imagined to be more dangerous than the body armor developed to keep him away. Thus, the gun magazines' obsession with weapons and their lethal ranges can also be read as a discussion of fear—fear of an unbeatable, unstoppable enemy. The warrior is deeply afraid that no matter how many weapons he has, the enemy will penetrate each and every ring. No matter how many enemies he kills with his sniper rifle, carbine, and pistol, he will still be left alone to face just one more with his knife. (89)

This consuming fear is, Gibson argues, at the heart of the anticommunism practiced both by *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, and by the Reagan/Bush governments—Gibson sees the differences between "fringe" paramilitary groups and mainstream government as merely a matter of degree. He brings this home most clearly in his chapters "Bad Men and Bad Guns: The Symbolic Politics of Gun Control" and "Paramilitarism as State Policy in the Reagan-Bush Era." As Gibson reminds us, relying on gun control alone to stop violence

is to pretend that the social and political crises of post-Vietnam America never occurred and that the New War did not develop as the major way of overcoming those disasters. Paramilitary culture made military-style rifles desirable, and legislation cannot ban a culture. The gun-control debate was but the worst kind of fetishism, in which focusing on a part of the dreadful

reality of the decade—combat weapons—became a substitute for confronting what America had become. (264)

Our fears are articulated both in our domestic and our foreign policy. Gibson claims that it wasn't the reality of the Persian Gulf War that Americans paid attention to, but the *image* of the war, the "firepower and gunfighter language" which was embraced by politicians and celebrities alike, and which celebrated a sheerly symbolic victory. In a mind-boggling example of form over content, Gibson quotes Leslie Gelb (familiar to scholars of the war as co-author of *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*). Gelb wrote:

U.S. servicemen and women who fought and died in the Persian Gulf earned back honor for those who served and fell in Vietnam. Don't ask me exactly how. There is no real link of honor between the two wars. Nor should there be. Yet there is. (294)

Gibson's conclusion? "First and foremost, masculinity needs to be redefined in a way that will reduce the pull of the warrior on the masculine unconscious. This in turn requires changing the structure of the family, particularly the role of fathers." (304). He has suggestions for such structural changes, including treating the concept of adventure "seriously" (making adventures and breaks in routine available to more Americans), but they aren't convincing when ranged against the pervasiveness of the problem. Men must change... this is what feminist critics (and many male critics) have been saying for decades. But how? Perhaps Gibson will tackle this question in his next book.

Ward Churchill, *Indians Are Us? Culture and Genocide in Native America* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage) 1994. ISBN: 1-56751-020-5. 382pp. Indexed. \$14.95 paperback.

I've been an avid reader of Ward Churchill for years. I use the books which he co-authored with Jim Vander Wall (*Agents of Repression: The FBI's War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* and *The COINTELPRO Papers*) whenever I teach courses on 20th Century history. One of the things I like best about Churchill's work is that he doesn't bullshit. Some people might call his style unprofessional or biased—I call it straightforward. I like a guy who tells you where he's coming from. And I have to admire him (and his press, Common Courage) for doing what I've always wanted to do—name my enemies in my acknowledgments. My editor at Cambridge told me that it might effect my reviews if I left in the story about Charles Fiedelson (then Director of the American Studies grad program at Yale) calling me into his office to remonstrate me for my "willfulness," or the tale of Dean Etta Onat, who yelled at me and threatened that I'd "never TA again" if I didn't give back fellowship money that she claimed Yale had "mistakenly" awarded me (I had the signed contract from the university in my hands at the time). So I told the stories, but I left out the names. And now I'm shamed for my cowardice by Churchill, who names

names with abandon, thanking the "whole herd of hang-around-the-forts, sellouts and 'nickel' Indians," as he tells them outright that their "braying, rumor-mongering, and backbiting serves to make [Churchill] look better and better to anyone possessed of a mind."

Indians Are Us? is a collection of Churchill's essays and informal talks. It's not a scholarly work of the weight of *Agents of Repression*, but it's full of good points and nasty (and apt) cracks. Churchill has a wonderful eye for the absurd and when he tackles subjects such as the "Men's Movement" he's transcendent:

There are few things in this world I can conceive as being more instantly ludicrous than a prosperous middle-aged lump of pudgy Euroamerican verse-monger, an apparition looking uncannily like some weird cross between the Mall-O-Milk Marshmallow Man and Pillsbury's Doughboy, suited up in a grotesque mismatch combining pleated Scottish tweeds with a striped Brooks Brothers shirt and Southwest Indian print vest, peering myopically along his nose through coke-bottle steel-rim specs while holding forth in stilted and somewhat nasal tonalities on the essential virtues of virility, of masculinity, of being or becoming a "warrior." (207-208)

The volume is full of moments like this—darts to puncture inflated egos and to put events back into perspective. But *Indians Are Us?* also has some very serious and weighty articles including "'Renegades, Terrorists, and Revolutionaries': The Government's Propaganda War Against the American Indian Movement," and (co-authored with Vander Wall) "AIM Casualties on Pine Ridge, 1973-1976." The latter is a roll call of the dead, listing 69 AIM casualties. Churchill doesn't include any revelations to surprise those who have followed the U.S. war on AIM over the years, but he does underline, in short and teachable units, the extent of the repression.

What Churchill does best in *Indians Are Us?*, though, is to detail factional and political divisions within American Indian communities. This sort of exposé is often frowned upon by progressive groups because it amounts to "airing dirty laundry" in public, and ostensibly gives "them" (whoever "they" are) ammunition to use against a progressive cause. But Churchill does us all a service when he details turf and authenticity battles such as the one fought over the 1990 "Indian Arts and Crafts Act." Churchill argues that an act which was ostensibly promoted to "protect" Indians from imposters trying to appropriate their culture for profit actually works to exclude genuine American Indians from claiming American Indian status as artists. He also claims that the most vocal supporters of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act are "a rather small clique of low-talent and no-talent individuals in the Santa Fe area calling themselves the 'Native American Artists Association,' (NAAA) gathered around an alleged Chippewa and maudlin primitivist named David Bradley." (94) Churchill says that the targets of the NAAA have always been other Indians, and that their "objective was and is to restrict as closely as possible the definition of who might be viewed as an Indian artist, and therefore the definition of Indian art itself, to themselves and their various products." (95). Furthermore, Church-

hill ties this campaign to restrict the arts to a larger political program, arguing that "it is impossible to project the American Indian Movement as Bambi, to elaborate the essence of Wounded Knee, 1973, or the 1975 Oglala Firefight, in gentle colors or soft pastels." (100) Churchill's object, in this article, is to reclaim artist Jimmie Durham as an Indian artist and to fight what he considers the NAAA's financially and politically motivated condemnation of Durham. As a non-Indian who has spent a lot of time in self-proclaimed "Indian art" centers like Aspen, Colorado and Santa Fe, New Mexico, I'm delighted to have an explanation for the obvious decline in quality of works sold as "Indian" in those places. I've been noticing a distinct Bambi-like trend over the years, and I'd wondered what the story was...

Indians Are Us? is not a great book, but it is a good book, a useful book, containing all sorts of radical notions (such as Churchill's claim that we are *all* indigenous *somewhere*), and it is well worth the read.

Gayle Green & Coppélia Kahn, eds., *Changing Subjects: The Making of Feminist Literary Criticism* (New York: Routledge) 1993. ISBN: 0-415-08686-8. 283pp. Indexed. \$15.95 paperback.

By the time I got to college, in 1978, there was already a Women's Studies program in place at U.C. Santa Cruz. When I became a feminist I drew on a tradition already established by the second-wave feminists who came before me—women who had excavated and begun to detail the history of the first wave feminists who preceded them. I thought that I was growing up into what would soon become a feminist world—a world in which sexism was a thing of the past and in which equality was the rule. I find myself now, in the 1990s, having entered what Wendy Kaminer described as "a postfeminist world, without ever knowing a feminist one." (12). The malicious posturing of Camille Paglia, the pseudo-sophistication of Naomi Wolf, and the ignorant smugness of Katie Roiphe characterize what passes for "new" (read "post") feminism in popular culture, while Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon receive attention as the "dangerous" alternative to "reasonable" postfeminists. *Changing Subjects* was a pleasure to discover, a book of essays by twenty second-wave feminists who tell their stories of building the field of feminist literary criticism. I'm not going to single out a particular essay here—what is most interesting about these writings are their similarities—but I will remark on what seems to be a consistent theme. Most of these essays underline an initial (and in many cases long-lived) separation between the work of activist feminism ("political" work) and the work of scholarship ("intellectual" work). It was years before most of these feminists reconciled their academic and activist careers, finally turning their feminist tools around and using them to examine the literature they studied, wrote their dissertations on, wrote their books about, taught in the classroom. This hard-won reconciliation is, it seems, what makes a feminist critic. *Changing Subjects* is a fine antidote to the pabulum which passes for (post)feminism in the popular press.

Randy Shilts, *Conduct Unbecoming: Gays & Lesbians in the U.S. Military* (New York: Fawcett Columbine) 1994. ISBN: 0-449-90917-4. 811pp. \$16.00 paperback.

This is a landmark text, certainly the most extensive study of gays in the military, and I'd like to speak well of it. *Conduct Unbecoming* is inarguably an important book. But for that very reason, its flaws and biases need to be carefully detailed. Shilts was a journalist, not an historian, and though unlike many journalists he did pay careful attention to annotating his sources in a long section of notes, he indulges in a journalist's love of narrative, of *the story*. In fact, its narrative style garnered the book a great deal of praise ("convincing and readable," wrote the *New York Times* reviewer), only some of which was offered in the spirit of speaking well of the dead. The second attribute of the book that reviewers cite approvingly is that *Conduct Unbecoming* is a *patriotic* book—a label which signals clearly the political stance of both author and critic. And this is the heart of Shilts' bias—he was a conservative on all issues except the issue of homosexual civil rights. The book begins with an homage to Tom Dooley, the young Navy doctor who became a hero of the anticommunist right and whose status as a "witting, active CIA operative in Indochina" (William Blum, *The CIA: A Forgotten History*, Zed Books, 1986: 302) has been frequently alleged. According to Shilts, Dooley was quietly forced into resigning from the Navy because the brass feared that exposure of Dooley's homosexuality would be an embarrassment to them. The CIA didn't seem to fear that sort of exposure and, in fact, Shilts claimed that they made a practice of hiring homosexuals for secret operations (a claim uncomfortably close to that made by example in Oliver Stone's homophobic tour de force, *JFK*). Shilts' adoption of Dooley as both the example of homosexual excellence in the armed forces and tragic victim of antihomosexual policy is consonant with his right-wing sentiments and traditional notions about war and masculinity:

There are few proving grounds so sure as combat. War challenges the human ability to perform and succeed against the most dire of circumstances. Fears are overcome in moments that define courage. Self-confidence may be established with a certainty that is elusive in civilian peacetime. War cements the bonding between a person and his or her nation. If the combat carries some overriding ideological purpose, it weds one to some higher good. Participation in war, therefore, can cause one resolutely to shed childhood insecurities and can create a place for the individual in the broader network of community, nation, and even God. (33)

Shilts believed that combat is a rite of passage, and that homosexuals (and all women) are denied the psychological and material benefits of serving their country in combat positions in wartime. Though Shilts remarked that war does not test "manhood" but "*personhood*" his construction of "personhood" is remarkable like traditional notions of masculinity. The entire book is dedi-

cated to proving that gay soldiers are not only the equals of their straight peers, but often their superiors. Woven into a massive, undeniable, and depressing litany of discrimination, harassment, prejudice and brutality against gay soldiers is Shilts' political agenda, which was to secure legitimacy for *conservative* homosexuals. Again and again the soldiers he chose to focus upon and lionize, such as Armisted Maupin and Leonard Matlovich, were conservative figures. His antiradical position became explicit towards the end of the book where he attacked groups like Queer Nation:

As with the homosexual radicals of decades past, the aim of Queer Nation was not a world in which gay people might express their humanity as they saw fit; instead, the goal seemed to be a world in which every gay person could behave like a member of Queer Nation. (726)

To give him his due, he recognized both the dual oppression of lesbians in the military and the manner in which witch-hunts of "lesbians" are used to keep women soldiers "in their place." But his representation of soldiers and veterans is remarkable one-sided. In a section on Viet Nam veterans he wrote: "To a man, all sixty soldiers on Jerry's ward had believed in what they were doing in Nam, no matter what it had cost them personally... The feeling of betrayal cut deep." (73). In another section, explaining the basis of military training, he noted:

The idea is to shear the recruit of any personal identity except for remnants that can be refashioned toward making him an interchangeable component in a massive fighting machine. This is a sensible and even necessary goal of introductory military training. (133).

Shilts seemed not to notice the contradictory nature of his position. He admitted in many places that the U.S. Armed Forces depend on the restrictive definition of gender roles to support the entire philosophical structure of the service. But he saw the "progress" made by other minority groups (blacks, latinos, women) to be an indication that homosexuals could also be accepted. What he did not question is the nature of a hierarchical structure which *demand*s an out-group, a group of failures and non-hackers and *bad* people against which "good" soldiers can define themselves. The problem runs deeper than the nominal granting of homosexual "rights" (witness the racism which still plagues the military after decades of antidiscrimination directives). His stories about "good" soldiers betrayed by a country which does not live up to its promises does his informants a great disservice. Though Shilts alluded to the radical challenge posed to the military by the mere presence of women soldiers and gay male soldiers in its midst, he did not face that challenge head on. Instead he painted dismissed homosexual soldiers as "victims" of unfair policy and even placed a great deal of blame on their shoulders (they didn't stick together, they didn't fight the charges, etc.). Though full of interesting anecdotes and a wealth of information (of varying credibility), the book was a great disappointment.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, NOTICES & REPORTS

EDITOR RETURNS

I was out of the office for a while, so this *Announcements* section is shorter than it could be. I was in Viet Nam for April, May and June, reviewing English-language manuscripts before they went to the typesetter, working for the World Publishing House (Nha Xuat Ban The Gioi) in Ha Noi, formerly the Foreign Languages Publishing House. I was the guest and responsibility of the press's director, Mai Ly Quang, introduced to him by Viet Nam Generation, Inc. author Lady Borton. The trip was paid for by the Ford Foundation, in support of my *Viet Nam Forum* and *Lac Viet* series at the Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies. I sat at a desk with the chief of the English section, Nguyen Van Minh, and two other English-language professionals, young Minh and Think, six mornings a week. I worked on the manuscripts I was given and answered any other questions anybody had about English. The most interesting questions came from Huu Ngoc, the retired director of the press, who keeps an office at the publishing house for his own writing work. He was finishing a book on American culture to which I was able to contribute an essay. Probably the best thing I did with Ngoc was to convince him that a literal translation of the lyrics to "Yankee Doodle Dandy" is not strictly necessary, since no one here knows what they mean.

It is not quite true that I worked at The Gioi six mornings each week. I spent many of those mornings at home, before I realized after one month-and-a-half that my problems could be solved with some medical attention. I had intended to spend the last two weeks of my trip touring Viet Nam, but after being ill for so long I didn't want to go anywhere. By the time those last two weeks came I had come to enjoy Ha Noi so hugely that I didn't want to leave the city at all, even when the publishing house wanted to take me to the beach for a few days as their guest. I can't tell you anything special to do in Ha Noi, or any wonderful restaurant at which to eat. All I can say is that you should go there and have noodle soup on the street and spend the morning at work and then go home for fruit and sticky rice in your room. In the afternoon, study conversation with a friend, have dinner, then spend the night riding a bike through the streets and maybe sit on a bench in a park for a while. That's what I did.

Back at the ranch, Steve and Kali were turning Viet Nam Generation, Inc. into a business that will actually support us and grow. Watching Viet Nam's publishers struggle out of their subsidized past, I became convinced that our press needs a solid financial base. But still, a lot of my work here is to raise funds. The way we raise funds is to have exciting projects. We recently received a grant from the Ford Foundation that will allow me to work half the year in Viet Nam, building our Southeast Asia publi-

cations. One editorial possibility is that of collaborating with a Vietnamese publisher, both for projects in the U.S. and in Viet Nam. While in Ha Noi I met with Western scholars and Western donors, visited other publishing houses, and made friends with a few authors and critics and literary translators. I will return in December, for another six months. Lady Borton and I will finish a book for my *Lac Viet* series at Yale, supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation, about the World Publishing House's English-language series, *Vietnamese Studies*. Lady has prepared a census of the articles in the original series, which I verified against the publishing house's library in Ha Noi. Alan Riedy of the Cornell library will turn the census into an index, to allow readers to find articles by author, title, and subject. I have a number of other books in the pipeline, but, after this last year of playing catch-up, I don't want to talk about any of them until they are ready to ship.

—Dan Duffy, Editor, Viet Nam Generation, Inc.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE ARCHIVES

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA), which are located at Brandeis University, recently announced the acquisition of new materials. These include the papers of Fredericka Martin, dealing mainly with international volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, and those of Ernest Arion, Ely J. Sack, and Paul Sigel. Last year the ALBA published *African-Americans in the Spanish Civil War*, that documents the 90-plus black members of the Brigade. When Spain was falling to the Fascists, the records of the International Brigades were sent to USSR. Recently these closed files have become available, and the 100,000 documents provide details on the military and political record of the war. The ALBA seeks funds to microfilm these records and make them electronically available. Send tax-deductible contributions to: Abraham Lincoln Brigade, c/o VALB Treasurer, Room 227, 799 Broadway, NY NY 10003. For more information about the archives, contact Victor Berch, Archivist, Special Collections, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA 02254, (617)-736-4682.

CONTEMPORARY LABOR HISTORY

Temple University Press announces *New Immigrants, Old Unions: Organizing Undocumented Workers in Los Angeles*, by Hector L. Delgado, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and the Mexican-American Studies Center at the University of Arizona. It is 186 pages long, the ISBN is 1-56639-044-3, and it sells for \$29.95. Delgado gives a case study of immigrant workers at waterbed factory in Los Angeles who organized and won a collective bargaining agreement, by choosing not to treat citizenship status as a central issue.

POW Books

I don't like to send any issue of VG to the printer without a notice of these two books. H. Bruce Franklin's *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America* (Rutgers University Press, 246 pages, paperback \$9.95) is out in a new paperback that adds major new material about illegal operations authorized by Ronald Reagan, Ross Perot's role, the 1991-1992 Senate investigation, and the controversy over the document Stephen J. Morris claims to have discovered in Moscow. In case you missed the first edition, *Mythmaking in America* lays out exactly how the sloppy weirdos in contradictory unit patches came to dominate US policy towards Viet Nam. For the longer view, West Point English professor Elliott Gruner's *Prisoners of Culture: Representing the Viet Nam P.O.W.* (Rutgers University Press, 247 pages, paper \$14.95), gives close readings of the POW narratives in a context of national mythology going back to the colonial period. Gruner, a Special Forces officer who earned his doctorate in literature under Susan Jeffords, author of *The Remasculinization of America*, explains the ways prisoners of war have been used to portray the strength of America, the might of capitalism, and the power of whiteness and masculinity. Tony Williams will review both these books in VG 6:3-4.

WISCONSIN VIET NAM VETERANS' LETTERS SOUGHT FOR BOOK

A news release from Kathy Borkowski (BORKOWS@macc.wisc.edu), posted to our Sixties list on the Internet (sixties-l@jefferson.village.virginia.edu):

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin is seeking letters and other written material for a book that will tell the history of the more than 165,000 men and women from Wisconsin who served during the Viet Nam War era (1961-1975). *Voices From Viet Nam* will include excerpts from letters written by the American women who served in the war, allowing them to describe the war in their own words.

Voices from Viet Nam will differ from some other military histories in that the stories of the state's veterans will be told through the words of the ordinary people who took part in the conflict. The book will explore how wartime experiences altered the day-to-day lives of men and women from Wisconsin and how they viewed these changes.

The project's success will require the assistance of veterans and their families and friends who still have letters written home from Southeast Asia and from Viet Nam War-era installations in the US. The Society is interested in acquiring letters, diaries, tapes, photographs, and other written materials relating to any person who served during the Viet Nam War era and was a Wisconsin resident at the time of enlistment or discharge. The materials may be donated to the Society for permanent inclusion in its archival collections or tempo-

rarily loaned for photocopying. All letters acquired will be considered for inclusion in the new book.

Individuals interested in donating or loaning materials to the Society should contact Kathy Borkowski or Ellen Goldlust at (608) 264-6465 or write to them at the State Historical Society, 816 State Street, Madison, WI 53706.

*It might be a nice idea for the Society to solicit memorabilia from present Wisconsin residents who used to fight in one of the Vietnamese armies, too, and call the collection **Voices from our War in Viet Nam**. There's a strong Southeast Asia Studies Center at Madison and several social agencies that could help to find donors among Wisconsin's Vietnamese people.*

A PARK IN VIET NAM

Roy M. (Mike) Boehm of 4035 Ryan Road, Glue Mounds, Wisconsin 53517, 608-767-3399, wrote on 26 March 94 to say, "Construction will begin in the Fall of 1994 on a unique structure. A Veterans Peace and Reconciliation Park will be built in Ha Noi, Viet Nam by US and Vietnamese veterans working together. This project is a major step in the road to reconciliation between our two peoples." Mr. Boehm included a short statement:

On December 31, 1993 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, a contract for the building of a Veterans Peace and Reconciliation Park was drawn up and signed. Representing the Vietnamese Veteran chapter of VPRP were Nguyen Nhu Nga, Nguyen Duc Van and Nguyen Ngoc Hung. Representing the American Veteran chapter was Roy M. Boehm. The site for this park is located near Van Noi village, Dong Anh district; about 4 km north of Ha Noi. Land was donated by the Agriculture and Forestry Departments.

The park will consist of fish ponds, fruit trees, shrubs and flowers. The focal point of the park will be a mound, based on Native American effigy mounds, in the shape of a dove.

The idea of the park originated from a visit by Nguyen Ngoc Hung in late 1990 to the Highground Memorial in central Wisconsin. He was taken there while on a visit to Madison where he talked to veterans groups and others about the need for reconciliation and friendship.

Hung's visit to the Highground had a powerful effect on both him and the American veterans. He was impressed by the emphasis on healing at the memorial, but he was profoundly moved by the Dove Mound. Hung was told of the significance of the mound, that it is a place to go to remember friends who are missing or were killed, a place to go to leave one's own pain behind, a place so powerful that some veterans have willed their ashes to be placed on the mound when they died. When Hung was told this, he went to the mound and burned incense and said a prayer for his brother who is missing in action.

Last summer, when I heard that Hung was going to be in the US again, I arranged to have him come to Madison again to speak. By this time I had begun my own journey toward healing. In February, 1992, I went back

to Viet Nam for the first time since the war. I went with eleven other veterans from across the US to Xuan Hiep village, Dong Ngai province, to build a medical clinic. That experience was powerful for all of us and showed me how much part of my life Viet Nam is.

In the process of organizing Hung's talks, I heard about his experience at the Highground and started thinking about the possibility of building a memorial park like that in Viet Nam. When Hung arrived we talked about this idea, both of us convinced of the power this park would have for healing and reconciliation. This would not be a memorial to war. It would be a green living entity with a Dove Mound as its centerpiece.

When I arrived in Ha Noi last December, I saw firsthand just how much the veterans there want this park. Not only do they not hate us, there is an empathy and bond that exists only between veterans. Every meeting was filled with enthusiasm and excitement, an intense desire for this park to happen. In spite of the fact that the Vietnamese government has donated this land, this is a grassroots effort by the Vietnamese veterans there.

Work will be started this summer by the Vietnamese, depending on initial funding by the American chapter of \$10,000. This work will prepare the site for the coming together of veterans from both countries in October to build the Dove Mound.

Although we need funding for the park, it is just as important that veterans come to Viet Nam to participate in the work on this memorial. The schedule now is to arrive in Ha Noi late in October, 1994 (exact date TBA), to work for two days building the mound. On the third day there will be ceremonies celebrating this event. Following the ceremonies, the Viet Nam veterans have offered to arrange for travel to our old AO's or anywhere in Viet Nam.

This park is a chance to work with each other, former enemies, to heal ourselves and our countries. To build instead of destroy, and to finally put the war behind us and move together as friends. The Vietnamese want us to come and see their country at peace.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has agreed to take funds into a special account for tax-exempt contributions. Make checks out to "Madison Monthly Meeting." Be sure to make a note on the check, either "Veterans Park" or "Peace Park." Mail to Religious Society of Friends, 1704 Roberts Court, Madison, Wisconsin, 53711. For more information, contact Roy Boehm at 608-767-3399.

Some editorial comment: Nguyen Ngoc Hung is a fine man and anything he is involved in is likely to be a good thing. He is one of the people who regularly explains to the Ha Noi leadership that not everyone in the U.S. is a POW/MIA lunatic in a goofy outfit. He would never put it that way, of course. Hung inspired the New Haven/Hue Sister City Project as well. He has ties to the construction industry in Viet Nam, so one can be sure that someone responsible and informed is keeping an eye on costs. It is not clear to me whether this park is inside Ha Noi or not, but I can tell you that parks in that city are used for making love.

WALL POETRY

We almost never publish a poem about going to the Wall. However, there are people who appreciate such work. Send your Wall poems to the Friends of the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial, attention: Ed Henry, 2030 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 412, Arlington, VA 22201.

BUDDHISTS IN VIET NAM

A circular from the International Secretariat of Amnesty International, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom summarizes a twelve-page document (3556 words), "Socialist Republic of Viet Nam: Buddhist Monks in Detention" (AI Index ASA 41/05/94) issued by Amnesty International in May 1994, as follows:

The circumstances of the arrest of several Buddhist monks of the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam (UBCV) in 1993 in central Viet Nam and in Vung Tau in south Viet Nam evoked the confrontations between Buddhist monks and government authorities of the former Republic of (South) Viet Nam more than 30 years ago. The government claims that UBCV members in Viet Nam and abroad have been using religion to engage in political activities. Some members of the UBCV have denounced the Vietnamese authorities for banning the UBCV and for their failure to return church properties. The UBCV has resisted attempts by the government to force UBCV members to join the state-sponsored Vietnamese Buddhist Church (VBC). Several Buddhist monks, arrested between 1978 and 1993, are still in prison or under house arrest. Amnesty International believes that some of the monks in detention are prisoners of conscience while others may have been convicted after unfair trials.

NGUYEN HO: A LAMENT FOR THE LOST REVOLUTION

by Ton That Manh Tuong, 5000 7e Avenue Ouest #3, Charlesbourg, Quebec, G1H 6Z7 Canada, phone and FAX: 418-626-228, voice phone 418-654-8933, email 3308tuon@vml.ulaval.ca

"I engaged in communist revolutionary activities 56 years ago. Our family has two people who have sacrificed their lives for the Vietnamese revolution: Nguyen Van Bao, my older brother, a colonel of the Vietnamese People's Army, who was killed on January 9, 1966, in Cu Chi by the first bombing raid of the US aggressors in the Viet Nam war; and Tran Thi Thiet, my wife, who used to be a cadre of the Communist Women's Union. She was arrested and tortured to death by the Saigon Police during the Tet Offensive in 1968. At this time, however, I have to say that our family had chosen a false ideal: communism. Why? Because, in 60 years on the road of communist revolution, the Vietnamese people, after having greatly

and unconditionally sacrificed for this ideal, have gained nothing but poverty and backwardness. The happiness, well-being as well as democracy and liberties for the people which were promised by the Party have been ultimately denied. This is an insult to us."

This lament was written by Nguyen Ho and recently published in Paris by *Tin Nha* (News From Home) magazine. His might be the strongest voice raised to challenge the hegemony of the Vietnamese communist Party (VCP). It would not be easy for Ha Noi to silence this voice or to let it pass un-noticed, because it comes from a man 78 years old who held many key positions in the communist hierarchy in South Viet Nam until 1987 and more important, because, for the first time in Viet Nam, it calls on the Secretary General, the Politburo members, the Central Committee members and the grass-roots cadres stand up to eradicate the Vietnamese Communist Party. Particularly at this time when the recruitment of new party members has become more difficult, and many older party members have abandoned their party activities and membership among young people has dropped sharply, Ho's voice is not at all meaningless. That was the reason Ha Noi just put him under a second term of house arrest in Thu Du, 10 miles from Ho Chi Minh City.

Ho was arrested the first time by his own comrades-in-arms on September 7, 1990, and was put under house arrest with a term of three years. He might be the highest ranking Communist party member in South Viet Nam to be arrested consecutively in recent years.

Born in Go Vap, a suburb of Saigon on May 1, 1916, Ho joined the Indochina Communist Party (which later divided into the three national communist parties of Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia) when he was 21 years old. He was arrested by the French in April 1940 and was deported to Poulo Condore Island. He was not released until 1945, when the August Revolution broke out and the anti-French resistance, led by Ho Chi Minh, won.

Repatriated to North Viet Nam after the Geneva Agreements were signed in July 1954, Ho was secretly sent back to South Viet Nam in 1964. From that time on, he exercised important functions in the apparatus of the VCP for the Saigon-Cho Lon area. The communist victory over the U.S. and Saigon regime on April 30, 1975, led to Ho's promotion to one of the key positions in the Communist Party Committee of Saigon, rechristened Ho Chi Minh City. In 1977, he retired and, in 1985, along with fellow veterans of the Communist Resistance, he founded a veterans' organization which soon became a voice criticizing Ha Noi's leadership. Government newspapers at the time said the organization's members were disgraced cadres who wanted to regain power. Meanwhile, opponents of the regime cheered the organization and its paper *Truyen Thong Khung Chien* (The Tradition of Resistance) as their unique mouthpiece.

In early 1990, horrified by the sudden collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, Ha Noi smashed all dissident voices, including Ho's organization. Ho and other active members were arrested, along with some outstanding figures such as Father Chan Tin and Professor Nguyen Ngoc Lan. All of them spent at least three years in prison or under house arrest, but Ho—because

of his writings later published by *Tin Nha* magazine—was the only one to be rearrested. This arrest occurred some months after his initial release. Some people in Ho Chi Minh City consider him as one of the most influential dissidents to have publicly demanded that the Communist party be disbanded.

The Ha Noi leadership is even more frightened of the younger generation inside the VCP who support Ho than of Ho himself. These younger cadres would like to see some change at the top: the appearance of a Vietnamese Andropov who could pave the way for a Vietnamese Gorbachev later on. Ho's appeal among progressive cadres, together with growing opposition to the regime among Buddhists, means that Ha Noi's monolithic power has now come under serious challenge, even if its opponents are not yet well organized.

The question now is: How is the regime going to respond to this challenge?

ATTACK! A FAX FROM Nick Baldrini

Nick Baldrini
6700 NE 182nd #A208
Seattle, WA 98155
FAX 206-487-1496

March 29, 1994

Dear Mr. Duffy,

I was very impressed when I first glimpsed the **BIG BOOK**. I rushed a copy to my parents so they could see what a fine publication my article had been chosen for. I wish now I had done a little more preliminary reading. As I read "Features" I was shocked at Kali's remark that my article was regarded as a standard for self-pity. I have read and re-read **Attack!** and fail to understand Kali's opinion. [Kali's note: *I didn't write a word about Nick's piece in the Big Book.*]

Mr. Duffy, I must inform you that your last sentence in "Concluding Remarks" upset me greatly. I assure you that the "assertions" that you refer to are certainly factual. It may interest you to know that your contributing editor David Willson had in his possession all the reference material that I saved from my tour. There were dozens of articles from the **Stars & Stripes** and **7th Air Force News**, including Xeroxed copies of magazine articles and other newspapers concerning the attack on Tan Son Nhut. It was also front page news in the **Seattle Post-Intelligencer**. All of the casualties have been documented. It may interest you to know that most of those casualties were REMFs.

Viet Nam Generation is a very important publication. It is certainly interesting reading. However, I get the impression from your comments regarding my article that you believe "service and supply" veterans were not actually involved in the war itself or that they were not allowed the luxury of terror or mortal wounds. I told Kali that **Sitting Duck** was about a side of the war that the news and entertainment media have ignored for years. It

is important to me that people become aware that not just grunts and door gunners and shot-down pilots were victims of the war. I feel deep regret that the unfortunate rear-echelon men and women that lost their lives, or were gravely wounded, are disregarded by the general public. Even more, I regret that they be disregarded by you. You should know better.

Whether you believe it or not, Dan, death and the fear of death is the same for everyone. Whether it overwhelms you in a rice paddy or in a sliding, creeping automobile on the interstate. Certainly no one that went to Viet Nam was immune from it.

It would be interesting to know how many "service and supply" names are inscribed in the cold granite of the Viet Nam Memorial. I never thought to question that when I visited there six years ago. That information may be useful should you wish to discuss this subject with any old REMF's you may meet during your trip to Viet Nam this week.

I wish to thank you for publishing "Attack!". However, please don't publish anything else of mine if you feel you have to disqualify it first.

Airman Robert Hurley, Sergeant John Paddock, civilians Bob White and Larry Strombecker never returned from Viet Nam, but you will.

Sincerely,

Nick Baldrini

NEW BOOK FROM RACE & CLASS

From the press release: **Black America: the street and the campus**, a new book from **Race & Class**, takes stock of the rebellion in Black America. With contributions from leading Black scholars and activists, it explores the legacy of the '60s and throws fresh light on the major political and cultural trends in the Black world. Price: \$9.00 (plus \$2.00 surface; \$400 airmail). ISBN: 0-85001-041-1. Available from bookstores or direct from Institute of Race Relations, 2/6 Leeke St., London WC1X 9HS, UK. Contains a rare interview with Geronimo Pratt.

Ha Noi Today

A small announcement of a big book, Virginia Gift's travelogue and photo essay on her time in Ha Noi, 1988-1990. One of the first U.S. citizens to go into the North for an extended period of work after 1975. Gift observed and documents a Viet Nam that is already gone. Here are the facts, ma'am: **Ha Noi Today: Images by an American Teacher in Viet Nam**, published by Ebory, Inc., deluxe oversize hardcover, 137 color photographs, \$39.95, ISBN 0-9633632-1-2. Contact: Leonard Forges, Marketing Director, Ebory, Inc., 9635 Sea Shadow, Columbia, Maryland, 21046, 3012-725-6633, FAX 490-1839.

A Reply to Susan Jeffords

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The article to which Mallory is responding appeared in *Nobody Gets Off the Bus: The Viet Nam Generation Big Book*, (1994, Viet Nam Generation 5:1-4). It was written by Susan Jeffords (English Department, University of Washington, Seattle) and titled, "Rape and the Winter Soldier."

While reading the most recent *Vietnam Generation*, I came across the article, "Rape and the Winter Soldier," by Susan Jeffords from the English Department at the University of Washington. As one of Vietnam Veterans Against the War's Winter Soldiers, it caught my eye. It especially caught my eye when I realized that I was quoted on the first page:

"Mallory: On one occasion a North Vietnamese Army nurse was killed by 11th Armored Cavalry troops: subsequently a grease gun of the type used in automobiles was placed in her vagina and she was packed full of grease" [emphasis added by Jeffords].

Jeffords also quotes other Winter Soldier participants with similar accounts of rape and other violence against Vietnamese women. Fair enough—testimony from veterans who had knowledge of such instances, albeit knowledge held not as participants but as observers or in some other, second-hand fashion, at least according to the testimony. One witness even claims knowledge of at least ten or fifteen such incidents. I will ignore issues of credibility here, just as Jeffords, perhaps naively, chooses to accept at face value all the testimony cited

Jeffords then goes on to note that the witnesses quoted are describing events in which they did not participate, and use language that distances them from personal responsibility for the events. She suggests that this is understandable, "in terms of these soldiers' reluctance to indict themselves morally and legally in these actions." Well, here we have something that certainly could be true, but is clearly nothing more than supposition on Jeffords' part. She remarks that although the Winter Soldier Investigation intended to reveal the systemic nature of American war crimes in Vietnam, "... these men seemed to be anxiously evading their participation in that system by denying their individual participation in these rapes" [emphasis added]. Here Jeffords, without any evidence nor even an acknowledgment of the possibility of error, herself convicts the witnesses of rape. The veterans have, in the twinkling of a paragraph, gone from witnesses to convicted rapists—even though in several of the witness's accounts, no rape is even described. This is no longer an abstract argument about the presentation of violence against women in Vietnam, but an accusation of rape aimed at particular, named individuals, myself among them.

Ironically, she chooses to aim these accusations at some of the anti-war veterans who chose to speak out against just this kind of violence against women in order

to bring an end to it. My response to the article was at first rather petty: personal anger at the false allegations against me, in a journal read by thousands, some of whom are friends and acquaintances of mine. On rereading the article, my anger has now returned to the old, 70's bitterness at those who characterize Vietnam veterans in general as "murderers" and "baby killers" and "rapists" simply because, for an infinite variety of reasons, we were there. For that, essentially, is what Jeffords' accusation represents. Jeffords is old enough to remember those characterizations; indeed, she studies them. It is most unfortunate that she chooses to perpetuate them.

Let me speak first of the accusation leveled by Jeffords at me, as I can scarcely have any credibility while speaking as a condemned rapist. Truth is hard to come by, but here is a true statement: I had no individual or shared responsibility for any rape or other physical abuse of women. I was never involved in or aware of any instance of such behavior during its occurrence. Nor was I even present at the occasion described in my testimony; I was made aware of it in the form of a photograph being passed around my unit. A horrible photograph, which demonstrated some of the worst behavior of a small number of American soldiers in a war in which civilian lives were not much honored—a point I was trying to make in my testimony. While I did things in Vietnam I am not proud of, both individually and more generally as part of the overall war effort, I was not a rapist.

I am a social scientist, and do not know the norms of acceptable discourse in Jeffords' field. In my discipline, however, it would be quite unacceptable to label a named individual as a participant in an act like rape, based solely on the presumption of the writer and without corroborating evidence. For it is only presumption that supports her conclusion. Her logic seems to go as follows: these individuals fought in Vietnam, and have knowledge of horrific things, although they speak of these things as if they had not participated in them. How do we know that they, in fact, are guilty of these atrocities? Because they fought in Vietnam, and because they deny their guilt. QED. I can only be thankful that Jeffords' interests were primarily in crimes against women: in my Winter Soldier testimony I also recall second hand knowledge of a variety of other violent attacks on Vietnamese civilians, but fortunately Jeffords does not see fit to refer to my "individual participation" in vehicular homicide, arson, murder, assault, destruction of property, etc. Were this a paper written by a student, I would surely ask for better evidence and a more coherent logical structure.

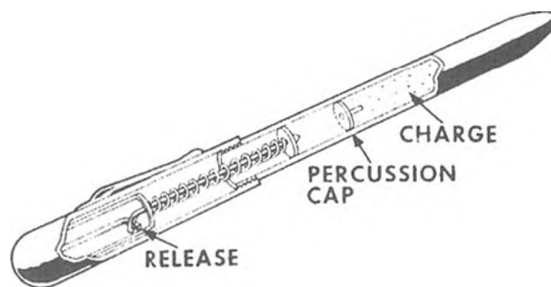
It was a war: bad shit happened all around us, but not all of us—and in fact, to my knowledge very, very few of us—were guilty of the kinds of acts Jeffords is talking about. Don't get me wrong here; atrocities occurred in Vietnam, some of them directed against women. Those guilty of such acts deserve moral condemnation and legal punishment. But their acts are their acts, not mine, or those of the overwhelming number of other Vietnam veterans. The decency with which most Americans acted in Vietnam most of the time, in a truly indecent setting, would amaze people if they had even a hint of the madness that is war. Let us bear our guilt for what we did

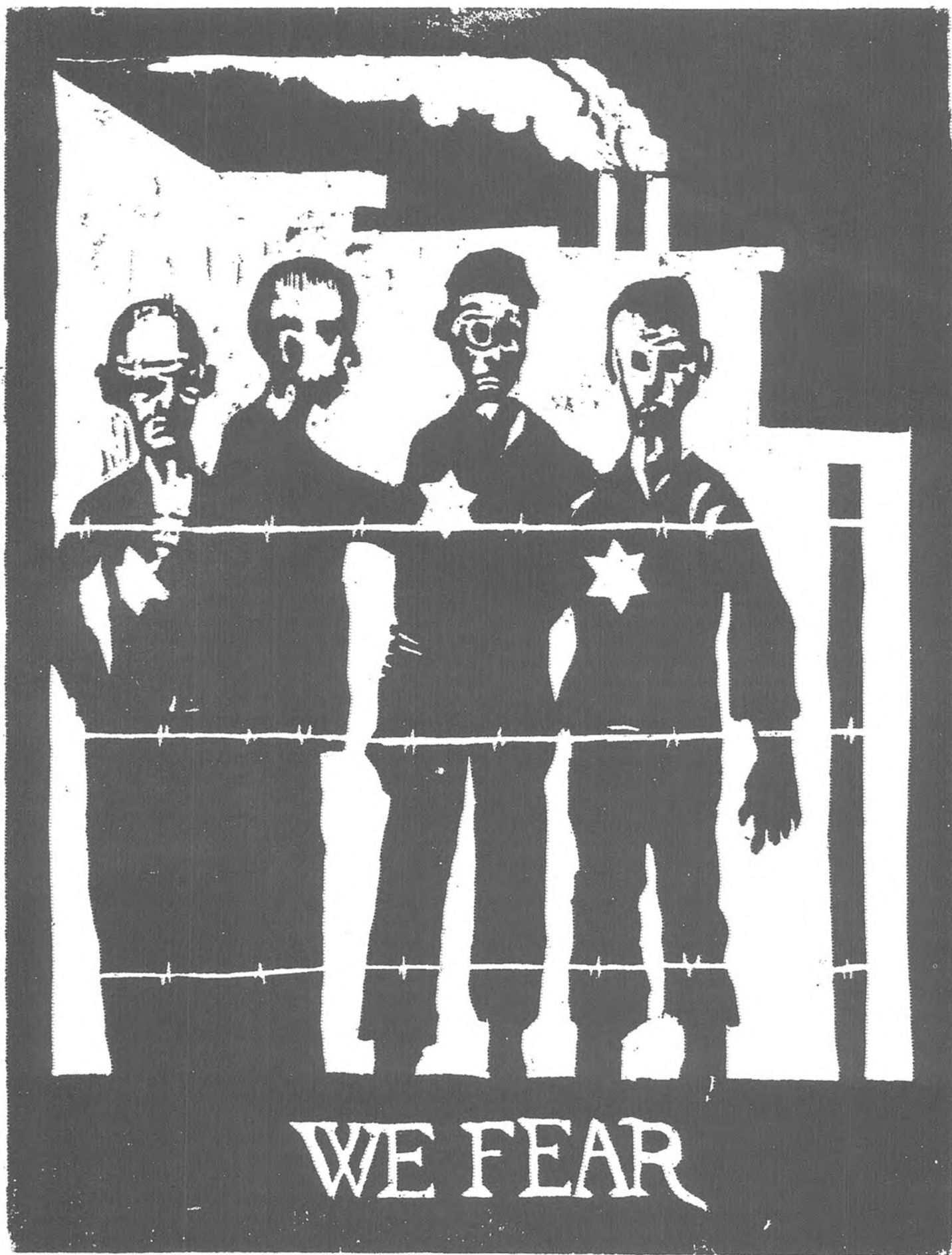
do, for our participation in an unjust, immoral war, without saddling us with additional condemnation for that which we did not do.

Why am I so pissed about this above and beyond protecting my own honor? I think it is because Jeffords is using Vietnam veterans, much as the antiwar movement sometimes used antiwar vets. We are convenient to have around as bad examples. We are not really people, but politically useful caricatures, stereotypes—folks whom you can quote, putting our words to your purposes. We're not seen as human beings who deserve the kind of decency and respect you would give someone you knew, but rather as two-dimensional creatures who exist only on the page, only in words printed long ago in the Congressional Record. It seems not to have occurred to Jeffords that her characterization of those who fought in Vietnam was going to be read by Vietnam veterans; I'm sure it didn't occur to her that it might be read by someone she was quoting, and accusing of crimes against women. Would it have made a difference to the phrasing of her article? I don't know the answer to this. I do know that I sent a much shorter version of this in letter form to Susan Jeffords within a day or so after reading her article. At the time of this writing, I have had no response: neither apology, rephrasing of her argument, defense of her position, nor even an acknowledgment of receipt. I appear to persist as an unknown, faceless witness to history, useful for her literary purposes but unworthy of real recognition.

For two decades and longer, Vietnam veterans have been marginalized by American culture. At best we were ignored, perhaps because our existence reminded Americans of a time and a war they wished to forget. At worst, we were labeled war criminals, murderers, rapists; perhaps to deflect the burden of guilt for the war from the people who let the war go on for ten years—the American people. Jeffords manages to both ignore us as real human beings, and condemn us as war criminals at the same time. As a result of such treatment, many Vietnam veterans have chosen to remain silent and hopefully unnoticed. I refuse to do that; I will not allow myself or other veterans to be condemned without the slightest evidence. I challenge Jeffords to either abandon her charges, or produce better evidence than her twisting of the words we spoke to help bring an end to the violence.

Jack Mallory





Woodcut by Cedar Nordby, ©1994. Printed in *Viet Nam Generation* 6:1-2, 1994.

25 YEARS LATER: A SANITIZED SIXTIES

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Roughly twenty-five years ago, public order in the United States, Great Britain, and much of Western Europe seemed poised on the brink of disintegration. The turbulence known collectively as "the Movement" was viewed by prevailing elites as a serious threat to the established order. Far more dangerous than any physical threat of disorder, 1960s movements threatened to subvert the *ideological order*—the myths, beliefs, and perceptions that help insure public acquiescence in "the way things are."¹

As a result, not only did those heavily invested in established institutions physically repress 60s movements, but they have since sought to erase the living history of struggle that connects it to today's world. In this, they have been enormously aided by the mass media in their market-driven rendering of that era. The effect has been to consign the Movement to the trash bin of history, fit only for pacified personal nostalgia or obscure scholarly study. It's hardly surprising that, we are told, young people of "Generation X" are likely to dismiss 60s veterans as self-absorbed sentimentalists.

The process of historical revision has occurred in two domains. One is an explicitly ideological assault on the Sixties that began during the late 60s, was institutionalized during the 1970s, and became a dominant force during the 1980s. Because of the Rightist rhetoric of the latter period, this assault is usually viewed as "Right Wing." In fact, it represents a broader establishment response aimed at discrediting 1960s movements. Commentators from the Old Left to the New Right have employed typical propaganda devices—distortion through the selective use of facts and falsehoods, guilt by association, and the manipulation of language and symbols—to convey an image of sinister forces that allegedly endanger the American polity.

However, the "rewriting," or perhaps "re-imagining," of 60s history has also occurred indirectly across a vast range of market-driven media—entertainment films, documentaries, news accounts, public relations campaigns, advertisements, and the ebb and flow of styles and fashions. Like the ideological redefinition of 60s struggles, the prevailing images of the 1960s were born during that decade, as mass media were drawn to what Stuart Cohen has called the "lunatic fringe" of Sixties phenomena.² Todd Gitlin's study, *The Whole World is Watching*, demonstrated that mass media distortion of 60s activism not only provided tempting targets for 60s detractors, but attracted young people inclined to militant posturing like moths to the light of media attention—thereby perpetuating the prevailing media image.³ Since

the mid-1980s, the political struggles of the 1960s have virtually disappeared behind a veil of decontextualized media images, a kind of postmodern "hypertext" which depoliticizes the past. Readers who recall the media's lionization of Richard Nixon at his death will recognize the phenomenon.

Thus it is possible to argue that the same kind of "propaganda system" that pacified the American public during the Persian Gulf war has been impressively effective in obscuring, if not erasing, a potentially threatening progressive history. The traditional terms of propaganda study are readily applicable to those who seek to redefine 60s movements in order to discredit them, while reinforcing the organizational purposes of elite or Rightist interests. These Sixties-bashers parallel the Bush administration's efforts to mold public support for its Persian Gulf mobilization. Yet the allegedly "neutral" or "objective" role of mass media, like the media role in the Gulf onslaught, has been equally responsible for rendering the 60s safe for contemporary consumption—and thus passé. Together, the revisionist ideological attack and the media's decontextualized images reinforce the hegemony of precisely those elites and institutions threatened by 1960s movements.

THE SIXTIES THREAT

The catalyst for much of the 1960s turbulence was the successful struggle to dismantle the southern system of racial apartheid, an effort built on the non-violent collective action of the oppressed themselves. Following inspiring examples of civil rights activism, young people in unprecedented numbers began "speaking their minds" on and off college campuses. The largest antiwar movement in American history constrained the hands of government policy makers wishing for a war subject only to their own self-imposed "limits." Social codes, sexual mores, and traditional forms of artistic expression were swept aside in a surge of experimentation. Freshly self-conscious groups emerged from convenient passivity to assert themselves in the political arena, demanding their due. Similar phenomena emerged simultaneously in much of the developed world. Together, these disparate manifestations were loosely known as "the Movement." Stripped of any moral motivation, ideological commitment, idealism, or sense of purpose, what are the "Sixties" reduced to? A "period of unfettered self-indulgence on the part of the privileged children of the American middle class" is Yardley's characterization, "adolescent rebellion masquerading as a political movement." "Recreation mistaking itself for commitment" is columnist Charles Krauthammer's phrase.¹⁹ Sixties converts to the Rightist agenda are less easily dismissive of the Sixties (i.e., their younger selves), confessing that they were wrong or didn't understand the consequences of their actions.

The final part of the Rightist formula, and one that reveals its political agenda, is that these decontextualized "Sixties" are to blame for many of

today's ills. Here the Right uses the classic propaganda technique of diverting attention from the real causes of (and in some cases their own responsibility for) social problems by blaming them on a shadowy threat—a technique once mastered by the Nazis. For Bloom, amoral 60s students are responsible for the vacuous relativism of today's students and the decline of the university. For converts like Collier and Horowitz, the demon is a Left cadre (fittingly projected as Stalinist in their depiction of it) that seeks to undermine America and embraces America's enemies, including the genocidal Pol Pot and allegedly genocidal North Vietnamese. In the twisted logic of Yardley, the 60s (especially the antiwar movement) produced a "revulsion against national service" that leads, inevitably it seems, to the Yuppies of the Eighties.

Blame-the-60s claims truly know no bounds: today's drug crisis (itself a nicely functional "crisis" embellished by the mass media) was "caused" by the widespread drug use of the 60s, even though no causal link has ever been demonstrated; today's AIDS tragedy is the result of sexual permissiveness of the 60s—again, another media-hyped image of the 60s, with no evidence to suggest a cross-generational leap; "60s generation" faculty and university administrators driven to political correctness damage the minds of today's youth, and one outgrowth of the 60s, rampant multiculturalism, threatens the integrity of Western culture—both cases of highly selective demonization.

Two facets of this assault are telling. First, many of these societal ills—student relativism, sexual promiscuity, drug use, Yuppie greed, etc.—can be traced with considerable documentation to forces within advanced technological capitalism and/or the market-generated spread of a television culture, both of which are the antithesis of the democratic vision informing 60s movements. Reality, in short, has been stood on its head; we get a "negative" image not only of 60s movements (e.g., fascists, not opponents of fascism) but of the roots of many of today's ills.

Second, Sixties bashing, coupled with the political and economic dynamics of mass media, feeds off of and helps to set the agenda for the continued decontextualizing of the 60s in the various channels of mass culture. It seems likely that without the various image-producing and decontextualizing effects of mass media, the Rightist assault would have been far less effective in marginalizing 60s movements and their political themes. By the same token, revisionist accounts, like government propaganda during the Gulf war, provide a framework of assumptions that guide a reflexive mass media interpretation of the 1960s.

THE CENTER HOLDS:

One off-shoot of the Rightist assault in the 80s was the liberal center's capitulation in this revisionism. An example that reveals much of what has happened to public memory of the 60s is Theodore H. White's 1982

New York Times Magazine article "Summing Up" two decades of "social experimentation" that preceded Ronald Reagan's 1980 election.²⁰ White's link between Reagan and the Sixties repeats familiar themes. The initial civil rights quest for equality was an idea legitimately expressed in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision but which "exploded ... in riot and bloodshed" in the streets and "spread farther than anyone could understand" to the "enlargement of Federal controls (quotas, busing, etc.) on a scale never envisioned by those who dreamed the dreams of the early 60s." The war in Vietnam was characterized with the politically neutral dismissal as "the most mismanaged war in American history," though in the eyes of "educated youth" it was "illegal" (no mention of it being immoral). The image of antiwar activists in the streets of Chicago, embellished with White's mention of "cellophane sacks of toilet waste" thrown at police, is targeted as one of the major reasons the U. S. lost the war by "encouraging resistance in that Asian civil war that was to end with the victory of tyranny" (the alternative being conveniently invisible in White's account).

The 60s have thus been reduced in classic fashion. The struggle for racial and gender justice is either one of two things: a legalistic, liberal effort initiated by the NAACP and the Kennedy Administration's Commission on the Status of Women, or riots in the streets. The latter don't need to be embellished, or even discussed; they are a snapshot image of counter-productive rage familiar to most. The grass-roots, democratic and communitarian movement among African Americans and women is completely absent from White's account. Thus he can criticize excessive, bureaucratic liberal reformism from the right, conveniently obscuring the fact that grass-roots, communitarian efforts attacked this bureaucratization from the left. Rare instances in which democratic—i.e., bottom-up, community-based—policies were attempted in the 1960s, as in the initial Community Action Program, are not even mentioned. [Thus it is not surprising ten years later, after the vast insurrection in Los Angeles following the Rodney King verdict, the same Community Action Program that was cut back and bureaucratized by the Johnson administration (thus helping to spark the "revolution of rising expectations") was completely invisible in the mainstream press.²¹ Instead, the Bush administration traded barbs with old defenders of the Great Society over who was to blame for the urban unrest.] The community-based, democratic impulses of the 1960s are simply erased.

Naturally, White's article contains the obligatory photographic 60s images. Two large 60s photos are juxtaposed against smaller, more recent images. Young black men with "Vote" inscribed on their whitewashed faces are captured during the 1965 march in Selma, Alabama. It would be hard to find a more appropriate photograph for White's endorsement of the acceptable, symbolically white-faced side of the civil rights movement. This large black-and-white photograph contains two color insets: one depicting "blacks voting for the first time in Alabama, 1966," the other showing "black children bused into South Boston, 1975." If one traces these

photographs chronologically, one gets the message that a good thing was carried to excess; "they" should have been happy with the vote. Similarly a full-page black and white photograph of women striding arm-in-arm down New York's Fifth Avenue in 1970 is juxtaposed against a color photograph of a black man, white man, and Latina woman cheering madly for McGovern at the 1972 convention—another good thing presumably carried to excess. The point is driven home by a subsequent photograph of minority women shopping with food stamps "made available through the largesse of President Johnson's Great Society."

Although Vietnam is not the centerpiece of White's article, his brief treatment also reveals the degree to which the Rightist agenda and media imaging have blanketed the political and journalistic mainstream. Thus the antiwar movement is reduced to offensive images, and the possibility that many movement activists (and, since the latter 1970s, about 70% of all Americans) found the war morally reprehensible is apparently beyond White's comprehension. The war was simply "mismanaged"—presumably meaning either that politicians "didn't let the military win," as the Right claims, or that too many errors were committed in an otherwise benign policy, as liberals assert. No serious consideration of the possibility that, as many in and outside the United States see it, the U.S. engaged in a massive assault against a tiny Third World nation on behalf of a puppet government that the United States knew had no popular support.

White's recapitulation of two decades conveys a clear message for American readers: liberal reformism in the 60s may have accomplished a few good things, but it unleashed a torrent of abuses and excesses that have caused the United States to veer dangerously off course.

MASS MEDIA AND THE SANITIZED SIXTIES

While ideological revisionists have hammered away at their favorite Sixties targets, the mass media's treatment of 60s events has effectively erased, or at least marginalized, the counterhegemonic reality contained in the struggles of that time. Analysis of a wide range of media reveals several telling patterns. Reflecting their source in a market-driven institutional base, media treatments consistently emphasize dramatic, personal stories and evocative images, while affecting a tone of safe neutrality. The preoccupation with "neutrality" and market maximization produces media accounts of the 60s that reflect prevailing political currents and draw heavily on past media treatments. The end result is a kind of unreal postmodernist montage in which authentic history all but disappears, and interpretation (where it explicitly occurs) conforms increasingly to revisionist perspectives.

It is possible, in fact, to speak of two distinct patterns in the mass media: one tends to occur in the primary media of consumerist popular culture (especially advertisements and entertainment films), the other in the news media. Regardless of whether popular culture media

appear sympathetic or unsympathetic, they reduce the 1960s to a consumable commodity, or one that is at least compatible with the hegemonic ideology of acquiescent consumption. News media accounts are dispersed across a market-linked spectrum; at the "popular" pole most susceptible to the mass-marketing imperatives of popular culture, media accounts are virtually indistinguishable from advertisements and entertainment films. At the other end of mainstream news accounts one may find a host of authentic 60s fragments—usually revolving around a notable reunion of a very concrete and significant 60s event. These accounts appeal to tiny audiences still interested in those events and resistant to the media's hyperreality; as disconnected fragments, they are unable to offer a counterhegemonic explanation of the 1960s and thus they drown in the sea of more pervasive Sixties images and interpretations.

THE SIXTIES AS COMMODITY: ADVERTISING AND ENTERTAINING:

Like the revisionist interpretations, the commodification of 60s images by the market began *during* the Sixties. The principal focus for product marketing was the rich tapestry of images produced by the middle-class counterculture, especially those revolving around clothing and rock music. In fact, media imaging of the counterculture and its subsequent commodification went hand in hand. Dramatic images of strangely dressed hippies in Haight-Ashbury helped to plug the media-hyped "Summer of Love," thereby attracting a horde of alienated youth who had little political consciousness; the increasingly depoliticized counterculture thus became meaningless except as a form of rebellion (so much so that the serious hippie community of Haight Ashbury held a "death of hippie ceremony" and many fled to rural communes). A drop-out could thus feel "politically correct" simply by "smoking dope" or "dropping acid" and dressing in Edwardian clothing or ragged jeans. The image *became* the reality.

Simultaneously, the corporate market began to discover that it could sell products that conveyed the image of rebelliousness to young middle-class drop-outs.²² The resulting styles and fads echoed images of the counterculture and shaped the behavior of young people who wished to feel a part of this now-commodified "generation." [At about this same time, *Time* magazine proclaimed the "under-25 generation" its "Man (sic) of the year."] The music industry also recognized a good thing when it saw one, scouring the country for new "rock" talent of the type that had emerged in the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival—thereby creating the Big Star system that separated the musicians from the community that had spawned them and generated products the young could buy as evidence of their membership in the larger "community."²³ Before long, young people were being lured by advertisements that suggested that they could "join the

revolution" by playing Columbia records or buying expensive stereos.

Thus it is hardly surprising that since the 1960s, the styles and images of that era have been effectively exploited by the producers of consumer commodities. In his analysis of *All Consuming Images*, Stuart Ewen examines several advertisements that translated 60s images into messages appropriate to the 1980s. One typifies the empty evocation of 60s nostalgia with a collage of dramatic 60s images and a text that read:

It was a decade unlike any other in the history of this country.

Ten years that have affectionately become known as the 60s.

A decade of enormous social change, political upheavals, and where the activities of the day ranged from the ridiculous (how many people could squeeze into a Volkswagen) to the sublime (meditating along with your favorite Maharishi).

It was a decade that saw man first walk on the moon. And the New York Mets win their first World Series, a feat many saw as even more improbable.

A decade in which four guys from England came west to the U.S. and changed music forever. And 400,000 people from all across America traveled north, to upstate New York, and a piece of history known simply as Woodstock.

Finally, it was a decade in which hemlines got shorter, ties got wider, and the official uniform was faded jeans, T-shirts and a pair of Frye boots.

It was a uniform that symbolized a belief on the part of those who wore it (did anybody not?) in things that were simple, honest and enduring.

So to the often asked question these days, "Where can you find those values that were so important to us all back in the 60's?" we have our own answer.

At any of the stores you see listed below. In men's sizes 7-13 and women's 5-10.²⁴

While placing its product conveniently at the center of the Sixties, the Frye ad makes no mention of political content except for its generalization about "political upheavals;" no Vietnam, no civil rights or black power movement, no student upheaval, no women's movement—any of which might tarnish the image of the 60s with divisive imagery, thus reducing the market appeal of Frye boots. The best selling image of the 60s is thus a series of dated and trivial fragments designed to evoke sentimental longing for youth.

With a more hegemonic message reflecting the Right Turn of its day, Vitalis Men's Haircare urges 80s men to adopt the "80s neat look," photographically juxtaposed to the 60s "wild look" and the 70s "let it be" look (presumably for John Lennon fans), with the message "Don't let your hair let the rest of you down" (for all those career advancement opportunities, one assumes). Or a television advertisement for the upscale *Changing Times* magazine opens with a 60s hippie declaring "Capitalism stinks, man," only to reveal that he is now the president of a high-tech company and is worth \$30 million. The rebellious, oppositional politics of the 1960s—again, captured in styles or slogans—has come around to embrace the system it once denounced—precisely the path of Rightist "ex-radicals" like Collier and Horowitz.

Perhaps the most symbolically loaded example of commodifying the 60s was a Nike ad that sold sneakers to the tune of the Beatles' "Revolution." As John Lennon sings "You say you want a revolution," Nike offers its glamorized \$75 sneakers—thereby not only obscuring the political controversy over Lennon's song (which denounced violent factions of the New Left) but turning the 60s "revolution" into an act of purchasing expensive sneakers endorsed by multi-million dollar athletes.²⁵ Thus, either way, the 60s come to "mean" failure—either because the changes resulting from 60s movements failed to match the "revolutionary" hype, or because a "revolution" that can be purchased like sneakers is obviously a gross trivialization of whatever political forces were unleashed in the 1960s (echoing the trivialization by writers like Alan Bloom and Jonathan Yardley). The cumulative effect of this commodification is underscored by the fact that 60s music and images have been appropriated to sell innumerable products from raisins to airlines.

The commodification of 60s images, indeed of the decade as a whole, erases their political content and replaces, in Ewen's words, any "coherent meaning" with a "pulsating parade of provocative images, a collage of familiar fragments, an *attitude* of rebellion and liberation" that "ultimately tells us nothing."²⁶ In the process of merchandising products, history becomes the cluttered memory of images, and thus the 60s are politically sanitized. Much the same thing happened with the commoditization of Gulf war memorabilia. In the case of the Sixties, hegemony is reinforced by the very historic forces that threatened it. Not surprisingly, this is precisely the theme of the quintessential 1980s film on the Sixties.

The Big Chill Revisited:

In the cultural context of mass mediated consumer images, and in the political environment of Ronald Reagan's America, it was hardly surprising that a movie like *The Big Chill* was produced, nor that it enjoyed considerable popularity. *The Big Chill* is the consummate expression of a sanitized 1960s converted to fit the "conservative" images of the 1980s. In fact, like the commodification of the 60s, *Chill* attempts nothing less than the absorption of an oppositional "60s generation" into the consumerist culture of capitalism.

The primary vehicle for *Chill's* access to baby boom viewers was its play on that generation's nostalgia for lost youth and rebellious excitement. Sentiment and nostalgia permeate the film in its prominent score of popular Sixties music, the reunion among 60s comrades and their fond recollections of youth ("I was at my best" declares one; there's "no good music anymore," states another), the group's recapture of their playful cohesion when they dance to 60s songs while cleaning up after a communal meal, and of course the purpose of their gathering: the funeral for their friend Alex. Indeed, the funeral setting is fitting, for *Chill* reflects back on its audience their own sense of bereavement for a time gone

by. In effect, the dead Alex, the only member of the group who "turned his back on society" never to return, embodies the 60s. He "drew us together." "Something about Alex was too good for this world." "Where did Alex's hope go?" One of "his favorite songs," (fittingly, "You Can't Always Get What You Want") is prominently featured.

Nostalgia for the 60s is thus colored with regret, loss, and death. Members of the group ask "Where'd our hope go," and the loss of this hope is what they are grieving along with their friend. Yet, although lost political hope might be a common feeling among 60s activists—both during the late 60s and during the Reagan 1980s—*Big Chill* sanitizes the rather obvious political implications of this transformation. The 60s are a shadow that invisibly haunts the movie, yet the audience never sees the Sixties, and the vast majority of verbal references recall typical countercultural fare: drug use, sexual relationships, communal solidarity. A handful of political references crop up, but these are typically hyperbolic. In fact, references to being "revolutionaries" in the 60s, when "property was a crime" are exact echoes of the commodified images recalled in the *Changing Times* and Nike advertisements (as is the mention of 60s media icons like "Huey and Bobby.")

In the absence of any political explanation for their regret and cynicism, why have these once-rebellious baby boomers lost hope? Not because they expected more from the political process. Not because echoes of Vietnam were looming in Central America. Not because the political mainstream had turned to the Right. The reasons catapult out of the personal lives of these successful, middle-aged Yuppies: the inevitable aging process, demanding children and empty relationships, and the pressures of their ambitious careers. Instead of substantive politics that might in some way challenge or question the "Establishment" of 60s notoriety, these 60s relics have embraced that Establishment *in toto*. Symbols of yuppie affluence pervade the film, beginning with the opening scene: Porsches, Mercedes, and other desirable cars arrive for the funeral; pin-stripe suits are donned and attaché cases packed as would be expected from this group of successful business owners, advertisers, lawyers, television actors, and *People* writers; investment opportunities figure prominently in private discussions. The rebel-turned-Yuppie theme lies at the heart of *The Big Chill*.

The film's images are made more potent by virtue of its emotional connection with the subjective world of its baby-boomer audience, namely their feelings of regret. In many cases, this regret may be amorphous and personal, especially in the absence of explicit political reminders of a hopeful time. For some, it may even reflect nagging doubts about their enjoyment of a comfortable or even affluent life (a theme much played up in media, even traceable to the media's commodification of the 60s). Through flippant comments ("who'd have thought we'd ever make so much bread, two revolutionaries like us. It's a good thing it's not important to us.") and its characters' introspection about the struggles of mid-life, *Chill* penetrates the psychic distance of its viewers; then, in the

sanitized world it offers, assures them that "selling out" is all right.²⁷

To unmoved outsiders (i.e., "non-hip" baby boomers and those from other generations), there's not a great deal to recommend these 60s retreats when they gather to relive the good old days. They are reduced to discussing investments and the non-white "scum" who are their clients, or to sexual flirtation and dope-smoking (while bemoaning "I no longer know how to handle myself stoned"), all with a healthy dose of narcissistic self-absorption (watching, as they do, videotapes of themselves). Even the hopelessly unhip realism of the outsider (the only present spouse who was not a member of the group) is made to seem wiser than these once-romantic baby boomers: "No one ever said [life] was going to be fun." The Right's deprecation of the New Left is no more total than this. In the end, the political and oppositional 1960s are as invisible in *The Big Chill* as they are in advertisements for Frye boots or Nike sneakers.

In their study, *Camera Politica*, Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner place *The Big Chill* in the dominant cinematic paradigm of the 1980s, a time which saw a return to prominence of renewed militarism (especially with respect to Vietnam), masculine heroism and entrepreneurship, and the male romanticization of women, in addition to a surge in fantasy movies. In this, *The Big Chill* contrasts with the politically more authentic John Sayles' film *The Return of the Secaucus Seven*, which remained at the margins of popular cinema.²⁸ In the end, the prevailing culture of entertainment media merged with the explicit corporatist agenda of retrenchment.

"NEWS" MEDIA: THE SIXTIES DISMEMBERED

As happened during the Gulf war, the news media have provided a vast tide of retrospective accounts of the 1960s carefully designed not to offend either prevailing dogma or mass consumers. At the far margins, one encounters authentic 60s fragments that cannot be reconciled with the conventional wisdom. Yet as disconnected fragments, these accounts cannot provide a counterweight to the prevailing tide. In fact, the more authentic the historical account, the more it is targeted to a narrow and highly selective audience. Only outside the mainstream—in left, alternative, or academic presses, can one find coherent counterhegemonic treatments of the 1960s.

INFOTAINMENT:

At the entertainment end of the news media spectrum, one finds all the commodified images, celebrity fixations, and banal "rebel-turned-Yuppie" preoccupation of the popular culture media. In a 1987 retrospective on the Sixties, *People Magazine* asks, "For the Baby Boom generation 60s rebels remain a kind of psychic barometer. We wonder how they are faring. Are they still carrying the torch? Or have they—and it—burned out?"

The political struggles of the 60s are thus periodized and personalized, embodied in the lives of celebrity rebels from that era. Still-rebellious "Boomers" are presumably reassured to read that "Wavy Gravy" is dressed in a clown suit soliciting funds to help fight blindness in India and Nepal (though his son has changed his name from the hippie moniker "Howdy Dogood Romney" to Jordan Romney). So, too, for other 60s celebs tracked down by *People*: Bobby Seale, Angela Davis, H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, Ken Kesey. We are assured "most of your favorite radicals, hippies and Yippies are still carrying the countercultural [sic] torch 20 years after."

Thus the community of 60s activists, embellished and reshaped by the mass media, is still alive. One is reassured the way one might be to find that years later "Snap, Crackle and Pop" still adorn Kellogg's Rice Krispies boxes. It is good to know that some things don't change in this impermanent world—even if the only possible "community" one can discern among these fragments is that all its members were rebels in some far off time.

The depoliticization is completed when *People* observes that "America's curiosity about the 60s and its aftermath has spawned a mini-industry that includes books (*Woodstock Census*), plays (*Moonchildren*) and movies (*The Big Chill*)"—all of which coincidentally emphasize the depoliticized counterculture or the familiar rebel-turned-Yuppie theme (which the content of *People*'s article curiously refutes). The mass media feed on mass media images as the *People* article so amply demonstrates.

1968 AS RECALLED BY *TIME* MAGAZINE:

The more "serious" weekly news magazines—*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U. S. News and World Report*—are an important source of information and interpretation for millions of Americans. One would therefore expect the 1960s to receive a more substantive hearing. Superficially, at least, this is the case. A January 1988 issue of *Time* devoted ten pages to a cover feature on 1968. Yet *Time*'s effort to explain that turbulent year echoed many of the classic depoliticizing characteristics of mass media in the popular culture. *Time*'s interpretive assessment read as if its invisible writers wore sanitary gloves when handling this potentially lethal year.²⁹

Tellingly, *Time* frames its story by suggesting the year, 1811, as an appropriate metaphor for 1968—a year in which inexplicable natural events occurred: squirrels by the thousands drowned when they plunged into the Ohio River; earthquakes reversed the flow of the Mississippi River, and a double-tailed comet burned through the night sky. Two things are noteworthy about this metaphor; first, things just happened for no explicable reason, and second, they soon faded into bits of historical trivia as things returned to normal.

The balance of the *Time* article confirms the appropriateness of this metaphor; it gives special emphasis to what are probably the most profound images or "stories" of 1968: Vietnam and the Tet Offensive, the assassina-

tions of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, the student uprisings at Columbia and the Sorbonne, the violence of the Chicago Democratic convention, and the Apollo 8 flight around the moon. For the most part, however, the article does little to explain the context of these events; when it does, it provides a thoroughly conventional framework (wherein movement experience is invisible). Its treatment of the Apollo flight (played up so often in mainstream media accounts of the 1960s) symbolically reassures the reader that everything has returned to normal.

The article includes many of the dramatic photo images from 1968: a group of angry youth in Chicago, prominently featuring one male with contorted face and middle-finger extended towards his police adversaries (predictably perhaps, this photograph is chosen to represent Chicago rather than one of the violent city police who were found, by an independent commission, to have "rioted"). Three Vietnam war photographs: the Eddie Adams' frame of South Vietnamese police chief Lo An shooting an NLF suspect in the head, a darkened frame showing the silhouette of an American helicopter, and the beleaguered President Johnson at his desk. The "youth revolt" is represented by a Columbia student belligerently sprawled at the desk of university president Grayson Kirk, a rally of flag-waving French students, and the seduction scene from "The Graduate." The article is rounded out with two memorable images of the slain Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., the black power salute of U.S. Olympians John Carlos and Tommie Smith, Soviet tanks facing down Czech students, the triumphantly arm-waving Richard Nixon at the Miami Convention, the stare of a starving child in Biafra, and finally the Apollo 8 view of the distant earth-rise over the moon.

The article frames these photographs with a series of extended "snap shots" that reflect the forces at work in the mass media—a tone of affected neutrality and hyperbole ("more than in ordinary times, people thought about death, about spiritual transformation, and about transfiguration"), numerous references to popular culture (the first *Laugh-In* is prominently featured, as is the eminently forgettable Tiny Tim), obligatory references to rock music (embellished by compelling non-1968 images like the Woodstock festival), and the virtual absence of any interactive history that might have explained the alleged 1968 turning point. A "kind of Aristotelian logic" is the only explanation given for a year in which "hope begot death, revolution begot counterrevolution."

Where *Time* attempts serious analysis, it remains safely within what Bruce Cumings has called the "goal posts of bipartisan Washington politics," ranging from Right wing to a corporatist liberal centrism. The account of the Tet Offensive, for example, provides an uncritical rehashing of the now-prevalent, revisionist view of Tet:

Militarily, Tet was a defeat for the Communists. But once again in Viet Nam and in the American mind, illusion triumphed over reality. America, and much of the rest of the world, regarded Tet as shocking proof that the war was a disaster for the U.S., unwinnable.... The Communists had hoped to use their Tet offensive

to provoke a general uprising in the countryside. In that, they failed. They also suffered disastrous casualties. Yet Tet was for them an enormous victory. It turned American opinion decisively against the war.

Time's account thereby wrenches Tet out of context by ignoring the prior growth of antiwar sentiment throughout the population (in late 1967, 47% of polled Americans felt the U.S. war was a "mistake,"³⁰ a number that continued to rise in the months after Tet) and the growing elite disenchantment with an "unwinnable" war that preceded Tet.³¹ Another of the Right's charges, that "inaccurate" media coverage of Tet was "responsible" for this "turning point" is sanitized into the impersonal "illusion triumphed over reality." *Time* embellishes the revisionist view of Communist intent, thereby buttressing the Right's contention that the war might have been won if American forces had persevered.³²

Time's other conclusion about Vietnam is also telling, reflecting as it does corporatist assumptions (aided by a healthy dose of hindsight):

Viet Nam taught America something about its fallibility. The U.S. may have *overlearned the lesson*, but it is an instruction that at least tends in the right direction. Fighting Viet Nam, the U.S. squandered resources it should have devoted to its *real* international struggles, against Japan, Germany, and other economic competitors, against poverty and other problems at home. [emphasis added]

Democrats from Bill Clinton to Lee Iacocca could hardly disagree with this verdict.

What, then, of the moral agonies of the antiwar young? *Time's* treatment is instructive, echoing the revisionist theme of selfish youth. The war "alienated the young from their elders" (thus the antiwar movement's critical attack on the government and larger economic forces are absorbed into the more palatable counter-cultural "generation gap"). This occurred, because the war was a "dark hallucination, the black magic that would come and take the young and bear them off to the other side of the world and destroy them"—no mention of the destruction of Indochina, now safely consigned to the black hole of public memory. As the metaphor for the war, according to *Time*, Tet taught two lessons. For the New Left it demonstrated that "Amerika" was "not merely mistaken or even bad, but evil" (note how antiwar has become anti-American); for the rest, "the nation had made a bad mistake. Americans, who love a winner, detest thinking of themselves as losers, and they saw themselves distinctly as losers after Tet." In other words a simplistic dichotomy between those against the war who hated America and the rest who hated losing—an accurate echo of Ronald Reagan's jingoist rhetoric.

Time recalls antiwar activism in the same way that the media reported on it in the 60s: "In the fall of 1967, 35,000 [not 100,000] had marched on the Pentagon [behind a banner, one might recall, that read "Support our GIs, Bring Them Home Now!"] and in the hip-mystic style had attempted with chants to levitate the palace of the war machine." There is certainly nothing in this account to contradict the image of Vietnam-era protests

that the Bush Administration found useful to promulgate during the Gulf War; movement numbers are undercounted and trivialized by the actions of a "mystic" few, and no evidence is offered suggesting that any antiwar protesters felt anything that might be construed as sympathy for American soldiers. Thus history is rewritten.

The balance of *Time's* retrospective repeats the themes of decontextualization and normalization. Martin Luther King's assassination is mentioned in conjunction with the Black Panthers taking up guns and "shooting it out with police in Oakland" (though no such link has ever been reported). Like good media events, student uprisings in Paris and at Columbia erupt out of nowhere and just as quickly disappear. Although appearing "in cities as widely spaced as Paris and Tokyo and Mexico City and Berkeley," the origins and connections of student eruptions remain mystical: "psychologically coordinated [whatever that means], as if a mysterious common impulse had swept through the nervous system of a global generation." Only mainstream celebrities *make* History; thus if Robert Kennedy's life had been spared, we are treated to an imagined American history without the presidencies of Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan.

The end result of *Time's* retrospective is a kind of pastiche that reflects all the usual characteristics of news media: dramatization, fragmentation, polarization, personalization, and normalization.³³ In discussing Chicago, the authors quote Todd Gitlin, "What exploded in Chicago that week was the product of pressures that had been building up for almost a decade." Unfortunately young readers depending on mass media sources like the *Time* article would not be enlightened about what those pressures were. The same might be said about the 60s generally, and thus the struggles of that decade are effectively periodized and isolated from the concerns of today's young.

NEWSWEEK'S AGE OF AQUARIUS:

While relatively ambitious, *Time's* account of 1968 typifies most mass media retrospectives triggered by the anniversary of some symbolically significant event. Twenty years after the 1967 "Summer of Love"—itself a media event—*Newsweek* featured an article on "The Graying of Aquarius, with the subheading, "some people cling to the values—and they're still called hippies." Most of the article features vignettes from individual lives of everyday people (few celebrities here³⁴) quietly living in ways that reflect their 60s values and experiences. Yet *Newsweek* chose to frame its story in tones that suggest a travelogue from some quaintly anachronistic tribe, still misrepresented in its politics. It begins:

The smell of incense still wafts down from Earth People's Park, outside Norton, Vt. From the mountains near Eugene, Ore., on a quiet night you can still hear the White Album being played. They cluster in remote communes from which they descend occasionally to sell some sandals or straighten out a problem with

their welfare checks [an important derogatory image]. Or they live in plant-laden Victorian houses in Cambridge or Boulder with \$500 bikes in the halls and \$200 cars in the driveway. They are hippies, survivors of that once vast band of romantics who imagined that the mighty river of American civilization [sic] could somehow be turned from its course by sex, drugs, and rock and roll. They await the call that may never come, to dance again on that verdant field of memory, joining hands no longer young, real grannies behind those glasses.

Interestingly, the evidence uncovered by *Newsweek* tends to contradict the magazine's depoliticized frame; many "rally" for issues like apartheid, abortion rights, and nuclear power, while others have incorporated their values into the creation of non-exploitative jobs.

However, after recounting the kinds of changes and pressures that one would expect of people who remain committed in the Reagan era, *Newsweek* returns to its romanticized gloss, concluding, "Someday no one will believe there was a time when young men and women tried to stop a war with music and bring down a president with flowers; or that they could have sex with dozens of strangers and run the risk of nothing more serious than body lice. It is time to move on, but not yet time to forget." Presumably, in the absence of a comparable article five years later, it is time to forget.

Newsweek thus recreates images of the 60s much hyped by mass media in the 60s, drawn from the totally anti-political edges of the counterculture. Indeed, the magazine's travelogue format is a direct echo of mass media accounts of the "Summer of Love" twenty years earlier. One almost expects a revival of "hippie tourism" of the kind that frequented Haight-Ashbury in 1967 (complete with Gray Line "Hippie-Hop" bus tours) and helped to kill the authentic hippie community of San Francisco. In the end, *Newsweek's* representation provides the perfect foil, and corroboration, of the revisionists' ideological attack.

SIXTIES REUNIONS IN THE NEWS: AT THE MARGINS, GLIMPSES OF AUTHENTIC HISTORY:

Typically, the efforts of mainstream newspapers to "make sense" of the 60s have focused on 60s retrospectives or reunions of 60s activists. Within this sphere, market imperatives produce a range of news accounts. At one end of the spectrum, mass-circulation pressures produce stories that dismember, romanticize, and neutralize 60s events. At the other, articles designed for a narrow base of interested, "serious" readers produce authentic, albeit fragmented, glimpses of the past.

One 60s retrospective tailored to mass media imperatives was a 1987 Berkeley seminar on "The Sixties" that invited innumerable 60s celebrities to participate, and then widely publicized their involvement in an effort to attract international media attention. Not surprisingly, the various imperatives of media-packaging created tensions between event organizers and its many 60s

participants. Initially, attendees were not allowed to tape or photograph any panel discussants because a \$59 "official" tape was being sold. Similarly, several participants balked at having to pay a \$75 seminar enrollment fee.

Predictably, a *Los Angeles Times* account featured these "Sixties-style" conflicts as its lead:

The conference was billed as "The Sixties" and that's exactly what happened. Like the decade itself, the weekend seminar sponsored by the University of California at Berkeley Extension was marked by crisis and controversy, of a sort. A grass-roots protest ignited over the \$75 price of admission. One of the 10 speakers refused to give his speech and walked out. Two audience members were ejected from the lecture hall by a university policeman for being disruptive. A couple more were asked to leave. In fact, all the elements of the 60s were there—except the sex and drugs.³⁵

Reflecting the now well-established sanitized Sixties hypertext, the article's headline asked "Where have all the 60s Radicals Gone?" In response, the article indulged readers with loving attention to "many of the Love Generation's most outspoken gurus"—a group that included Abbie Hoffman, authors Ken Kesey and Tom Robbins, Dr. Benjamin Spock, Timothy Leary, feminists Betty Friedan and Deirdre English, sociologist Harry Edwards, and musicians Mimi Farina and Country Joe McDonald. Instead of politics, however, much of this treatment focused on "European luxury cars" in the parking lot and participants' expensive perfumes and clothing, thus echoing the *Big Chill* theme. Brief comments by Abbie Hoffman were the only references to currently relevant political struggles.

A seemingly more sympathetic *Boston Globe* account of the same event³⁶ devoted considerable space to participants' views of contemporary struggles and the chances for real change. Still, the *Globe's* treatment of the Sixties recalls the vacuous Frye boot advertisement, asking: "What happened to all that energy and color and commitment?" "Can some of that old spirit be, and should it be, stirred up again?" And the *Globe* quoted the media-conscious seminar organizer's characterization of the 60s: "a time of 'famous headlines—assassinations, war, street protests; and famous images and sounds—the Beatles and Bob Dylan, pot and acid, psychedelics and sex, hair, ponytails and beards.'" Like the Frye ad, these 60s images lend themselves to a decontextualized formula for describing political ferment. Thus the *Globe* described the baby boom generation (another hyped 60s image) in terms that echoed *Newsweek*, as: "a kind of standing army for change. They were comfortable in crowds, which usually contained mainly their own kind. They loved mass political demonstrations." Not surprisingly, the article concluded its account of 60s legacies by quoting Timothy Leary's latest sales pitch: "Data is [sic] the ocean we swim in.... Computers can really make your neurons sizzle."

Not surprisingly, the mass media's tendency to romanticize and dismember the 60s is least apparent when the media focus explicitly on political activists

gathering to reflect on a specific 1960s event. 60s reunions are often meaningful times of reflection and reconnection among people who have not detached from their past. In addition, these gatherings lend themselves more readily to accurate media explanation: a restricted focus on a single event rather than an era, the tendency of a concrete (already "newsworthy") event to fit the dramatic imperatives of media, and the presence of most of the main actors for whom the event is a crucial part of their lived history. Numerous examples have appeared over the past fifteen years, ranging from reunions of Berkeley's Free Speech Movement, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)'s Port Huron conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)'s Mississippi Freedom Summer to student takeovers at Columbia and Harvard and the killings at Kent State and Jackson State.

Yet even here the imperatives of mass media are at work. Thus, a 30-minute National Public Radio retrospective on the Free Speech movement is at one extreme in presenting taped documentation of the original event and interviews with participants who retain their critical faculties. Like the documentary films *Eyes on the Prize* or *Berkeley: The Sixties*, this kind of in-depth analysis can only hope to appear on the small-audience public radio or television networks. At the other extreme, a commercial television news spot on the anniversary of Kent State provided dramatic footage from 1970 and a 1990 commemorative service; yet squeezed into about one minute, it could provide no context for the 60s images, thus resulting in a grieving gathering not unlike what viewers might see for victims of a hit and run driver. The meaning of the story is reduced to personal grief connected to something inexplicable that happened a long time ago.

A similar dichotomy appears in newspaper accounts. In covering the reunion of students involved in the 1968 Columbia student takeover and the Harvard seizure of 1969, the *New York Times* and *Boston Globe* respectively provided dual treatment: a news article for general readers and a more detailed, more critical feature presumably targeted on those with an active memory of the two events. The difference between the two types of treatment is revealing, especially in the *Times*.

The *Times* news article reads as a struggle of interpretation between the sanitizing media (represented by the *Times*) and authentic voices of former Columbia radicals. Several activists go to great lengths to disassociate themselves from mainstream images (radical historian Eric Foner was driven to declare, "This is not the *Big Chill*"). Yet, the *Times* gives prominent placement to former-student-rebel-now-*People*-magazine-editor James Kunen (thus precisely echoing *The Big Chill*). The balance of the article reflects prominent themes of the reunion, most notably the anger of women at the sexism of the New Left and participants' discomfort (then and now) with the "turn to violence" and "fractured philosophical turns" that occurred in the late 60s. Yet it concludes with a fairly typical example of mainstream normalization; the *Times* observes that participants feel "no bitterness" towards "a movement that self-de-

structed" (not thinking to ask whether they might have felt any "bitterness" towards the university that called the violent police onto campus). The paper of record gets about as deep as *The Big Chill* when it sums up with one participant's characterization of the movement, "it was about changing our lives."

Similarly in a brief news article titled "Harvard, ex-radicals remember" the *Boston Globe* recounted the unrepentantly critical perspective of "ex-radicals" and the impact the Harvard experience had on their political consciousness. [Interestingly, five years later in an article on the Harvard Class of 1969's 25th reunion, the allegedly liberal *Globe* gives page one prominence to celebrities like Vice President Al Gore and a lengthy dismissal of 60s activism by well-known Reaganite, Elliot Abrams.] A longer *Globe* feature article presented four perspectives on the legacy of the Harvard takeover from then-SDS organizer Michael Ansara, Harvard's then-assistant dean A. C. Epps, liberal city councilor Barbara Ackerman, and police sergeant Anthony G. Paolilo, thus providing an in-depth, multi-perspective explanation of the Harvard seizure and its effect on both the institution and the participants. For its part, the *Times Magazine* featured an analytical article written by Morris Dickstein, a young faculty member in 1968 (and, as author of *The Gates of Eden*, a serious commentator on the 60s). Like the *Globe* feature, Dickstein's article provides a more in-depth and critical analysis of the university as well as the student takeover (including a rebuttal to the neo-conservative charges of Allan Bloom and others). In both of the longer articles, the political edge of 60s movements remains alive and relevant.

These news accounts present an apparent anomaly. Every account of 60s reunions I uncovered (even *People's* "where are they now" collage) revealed glimpses into the politicizing impact of 60s experiences and their participants' lasting commitment to Movement values—in contrast to the stereotypical mainstream image of rebel-turned-yuppies. Yet many of these same media used the rebel-turned-yuppie theme (or something equally innocuous) to frame their articles. One can ask, where does the conventional image of rebels-turned-yuppies come from? Why must 60s activists assert that they haven't sold out, that their reunions are not the "*Big Chill*"? Why do the media seem surprised to discover this? Why does the myth persist despite evidence to the contrary?³⁷

One "micro" reason for the prevailing image lies in the media's routine tendency to turn complex political events and issues into conflicts between personalities, to "explain" political movements in terms of the personal motivations and experiences of significant figures—thereby raising a few to celebrity-hood and reducing the rest to an invisible mass. "Human interest" angles increasingly pervade news reporting, especially as the influence of television spreads to other media. When dealing with the 1960s today, what could be more "interesting" or attention-grabbing than the "radical conversion" of a former activist celebrity, especially if that celebrity assists this process through attention-seeking behavior. Thus we have the ubiquitous image of Jerry Rubin, the former-Yippie-now-self-proclaimed-Yuppie,

selling his wares as a Wall Street stock broker; or the threatening Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver now a harmless, born-again Christian. Or, indeed, the likes of ex-radicals-now-Reaganites Peter Collier and David Horowitz. And thus we have the press' preoccupation with ex-60s celebrities' expensive cars and clothes. These comprise the hyper-reality that activists must constantly deny.

More fundamentally, the need to sell its commodity on the market reinforces this media tendency. As a consequence, the very qualities that lend themselves to authentic representation *limit* the possibility that these accounts can keep alive the "lived history" of 60s movements, at least in the mainstream media. The concreteness of the event helps to fragment it from other events and from the 60s as a whole for all except those who lived its history. As news, it tends to appeal only to those who in some way experienced it. Thus both the original event reflected on, and the lives of those reflecting on it, remain as fragments in the mainstream images of the 60s, unlinked in any counterhegemonic explanation of that era and presumably inexplicable to young people encountering them for the first time. These fragments swim against the vast tide of mass media imagery.

Conclusion

The lived history of 60s movements is full of testimony about the inspirational vision of democracy in its various manifestations, the hopeful idealism of speaking truth to power, the contagious effect of principled action, and the disillusionment, radicalization, and despair resulting from encounters with the liberal capitalist system. Many who lived this history were irrevocably changed by it and continue to live by the same democratic vision and commitment. Many also understand why this contagious vision has been frustrated.³⁸

Movements of the 1960s could thus provide a fertile ground of historical experience for people who seek liberation today and tomorrow. Sixties histories can teach lessons in effective empowerment as well as the vulnerability to the image-enhancing forces of mass media and the market. This, after all, is precisely why the 60s are viewed as threatening by established elites and why, at some level, this history must be sanitized.

Twenty-five years after the tumultuous late 1960s, this inconvenient and threatening history has been largely erased from public memory. Instead, two Sixties images prevail. One is "positive," nostalgic, and empty; the other is "negative," offering a "Sixties" that most reasonable people would presumably condemn or reject. At the margins, in what might be called the "vulnerable area" of a liberal-capitalist system, are the personal histories of those who remain committed to the democratic struggles of the 1960s. Their very marginalization, however, removes them from the broad arena of political struggle (except, perhaps, at the local level).

The two-way interaction between an explicit political agenda, promulgated with traditional propaganda tech-

niques, and the implicit purposes embedded in the structure of market-driven mass media, indeed of capitalism, have alleviated what the Trilateral Commission called the "crisis of democracy." It is hardly surprising that the Commission rejected Al Smith's maxim that the "only cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy," a sentiment that would be compatible with 60s movements, and instead advocated *less democracy*. And, surely, less democracy is what we find today: widespread political alienation; a mass-mediated consumerist electoral process, sharply increased racial, gender, and class inequality; a hidden foreign policy of military interventionism (e.g., the Gulf war); the continuing decline of community and the family; and an endangered ecosphere—all presumably "caused" by the misguided 60s rather than the forces opposed by 60s movements. To the degree that the revisionist framing of the 60s finds acceptance in the mainstream media, it is a striking example of profoundly successful propaganda.

NOTES

¹ I draw here on the insights into ideology and hegemony derived from the work of Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, and others. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), and Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

² See Stanley Cohen, "Sensitization: the case of the Mods and Rockers," in Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, eds. *The Manufacture of News: A Reader* (London: Constable, 1973): 451-58.

³ Gitlin provides an excellent example of this dynamic from 1965 when the mainstream media first began to notice SDS (typically, more than four years after SDS organized, nearly three years after its important Port Huron manifesto, and a year and a half after its Economic Research and Action Program began organizing efforts in the inner cities). The April 1965 antiwar march in Washington drew the first mainstream media attention which in turn amplified certain qualities of the fledgling movement: trivializing it with derogatory attention to dress, style, language; polarizing the issue by stressing tiny counterdemonstrations; emphasizing internal dissension, marginalizing demonstrators as deviant or unrepresentative, and disparaging the movement's numbers and effectiveness. In a matter of months, as some elements in the antiwar movement turned to more militant tactics, the media expanded its treatment, relying on official governmental interpretations, emphasizing the presence of Communists, "Viet Cong" flags, or violence in movement actions, giving considerable attention to right-wing opposition, and delegitimizing the movement through the use of quotation marks around terms like "peace march." See Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California, 1980): 27-8.

⁴ Edward P. Morgan, *The Sixties Experience: Hard Lessons about Modern America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

⁵ It has always struck me as enormously ironic, and a marvelous example of hegemonic ideology, how American "conservatives" espouse the values of tradition, family, and community (even religion), yet are the most ardent and unquestioning advocates of the destructive engine of capitalism. In the latter capacity, of course, they are simply being good liberals.

⁶ Samuel Bowles, David M. Gordon, and Thomas E. Weisskopf, *Beyond the Wasteland: A Democratic Alternative to Economic Decline* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1984).

⁷ See Morgan, chs. 6 and 7.

⁸ See Michel J. Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies* (New York: New York University Press, 1975).

⁹ Examples abound not only in the responses of Kennedy and Johnson to civil rights activists, urban riots, and the like, but in the responses of "liberal" academics to student activism. Thus, for example, Berkeley professor Seymour Martin Lipset compared the Free Speech Movement to the Ku Klux Klan. The point, of course, is that whenever and wherever the momentum for change went beyond "business as usual" liberalism, it was denounced and often demonized as fascist or nihilistic. This dynamic, which occurred again and again, was the primary way in which the contradictions of the liberal-capitalist paradigm became manifest in the 1960s and early 70s.

¹⁰ As Carey put it, "'Tree tops' propaganda... is directed to influencing a select audience of influential people—policy-makers in parliament and the civil service, newspaper editors and columnists, economics debate on TV and radio. Its immediate purpose is to set the terms of debate; in a word to set the political agenda in ways which are favorable to corporate interests." [28] Carey's analysis examined the role of corporate propaganda in shaping public opinion at crucial watersheds in American and Australian history. See Alex Carey, "Managing Public Opinion: The Corporate Offensive," unpublished manuscript, 1986.

¹¹ In Chomsky's words, one task that "had to be undertaken in the 'post-Vietnam era' was to return the domestic population to a proper state of apathy and obedience, to overcome 'the crisis of democracy' and the 'Vietnam syndrome.' These are the technical terms that have been devised to refer, respectively, to the efforts of formerly passive groups to engage in the political process, and to the general unwillingness of the population to bear the material costs and the moral burden of aggression and massacre. It has been the responsibility of ideological control and propaganda to accomplish this dual task, and there is no doubt that, in part at least, the goals have been achieved." Noam Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War: Essays on the Current Crisis and How We Got There* (New York: Pantheon, 1982): 4-5.

¹² Like the mass media's treatment of other phenomena in this paper, this claim was superficial, reflecting Reagan's "appealing personality," and an oversimplification of 1980 election results. Conveniently overlooked were (a) the tree tops propaganda efforts of the 1970s, and (b) the fact that the public never did move to the right on most causes Reagan embraced nor was Reagan ever an exceptionally popular president. See Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, *Right Turn: The Decline of the Democrats and the Future of American Politics* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986).

¹³ The purpose of Collier and Horowitz' "Second Thoughts Project," which produced the volume *Second Thoughts: Former Radicals Look Back at the Sixties* (Lanham, MD:

Madison Books, 1989) is transparently to promote the visibility of such reformed "radicals," funded by a \$300,000 annual budget provided by conservative foundations. The term "radicals" is conveniently vague and inaccurate, and thus lends credibility to Collier and Horowitz' thesis. Were they bomb-throwing militants, activated liberals, democratic radicals, or mindless Leninists? On investigation, a few (notably Collier and Horowitz) were either reformed Stalinists or ex-militants who engaged in some violent actions. Most were former liberals. I searched in vain for anyone who was a democratic radical—that is, one who embraced the Movement's democratic vision and whose first-hand experiences led inexorably toward a radical appreciation of the systemic roots of social ills they opposed. Not surprisingly, an otherwise discerning *New York Times* account of the "Second Thoughts Project" simply accepts the project's characterization of "former radicals."

¹⁴ Note *why* Yardley frames the Sixties in this manner: "When we speak of 'the Sixties' what we really mean is the tidal wave of immoderation that swept through the colleges and universities, a wave upon which were carried the white and middle class." This and subsequent citations come from Jonathan Yardley, "Echoes of an Empty Decade: The 60s are Back," *The Globe-Times*, Bethlehem, PA, July 24, 1987, A7 (reprinted from the *Washington Post*).

¹⁵ Bloom's superficial treatment of the 60s is revealed by his dating of the infamous divide by "the last significant student participation in the civil rights movement" in "the March on Washington in 1964 [sic]." Perhaps he means the Mississippi Freedom Summer voter drive of 1964 which was an crucial catalyst for much of what he later decontextualizes. Or perhaps, more consistently, he means the last purely liberal civil rights act, the March on Washington of 1963.

¹⁶ The subjectivity that permeates this critical response is revealed in the difference between Bloom's obvious distaste for rock music, which "has the beat of sexual intercourse," and Yardley's selection of rock as the only thing of value produced in his "Sixties." Yardley himself observes, "Unlike Allan Bloom, ... I decline to take refuge in a hysterical antipathy to all things rock 'n' roll." Why? Because he likes it. Since the response to photography or television imagery is always to some degree subjective, television and photographic imagery can never be fully monolithic in their impact. For a broader discussion on this point, see Douglas Kellner's critique of the postmodernist theories of Baudrillard and others in Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy*, (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990) and Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (London: MacMillan, 1990). For an intriguing argument that television, like the Party in George Orwell's *1984*, progressively erases "all resistant subjectivity" among its consuming audience, see Mark Crispin Miller, "Big Brother is You, Watching," in Miller, *Boxed In: The Culture of TV* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988): 309-31.

¹⁷ See Bloom: 325.

¹⁸ Joseph Sobran, reviewing *Destructive Generation* in *The National Review*, 41: 43 (March 24, 1989): 1150.

¹⁹ Cited by Pamela Constable in "The Sixties: A Testing Time for Values," *The Boston Globe*, May, 1987 (undated column clipping).

²⁰ As perhaps the best-known centrist chronicler of American politics for 20 years, White was an appropriate person to pen this *New York Times Magazine* article, dated April 25, 1982.

²¹ A Nexis search for references to CAP in the four months after the L.A. riot yielded one column that linked the two, an editorial by Edwin M. Yoder, Jr., in the *St. Petersburg Times*, entitled "Placing Blame for the L.A. Riots is Not So Simple," (May 9, 1992). While deliberating the charges and countercharges between liberals and conservatives, Yoder observes, "What mainly fell aside, after the innovations of the 1960s, were such *misbegotten measures* as the Community Action Program, whose basic idea was 'maximum feasible participation' by the urban poor in the design of their own rescue. The idea was appealing in principle. In practice, it led to angry clashes between Community Action officials and local elected officials." [emphasis added]. One doesn't have to know the history of CAP to realize whose interests were threatened by "angry clashes."

²² As Louis Menand put it, "Once the media discovered it, the counterculture ceased being a youth culture and became a commercial culture for which youth was a principal market...." Louis Menand, "Life in the Stone Age," *The New Republic*, January 7 & 14, 1991: 42.

²³ I don't mean to suggest that the music lacked its own intrinsic appeal. See the discussion in Morgan, *The Sixties Experience*, ch. 5.

²⁴ Quoted from Stuart Ewen, *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1988): 255-56.

²⁵ See Jon Weiner's article on the history of the Beatles' song, the Nike advertisement, and reactions to it in "Beatles Buy-Out," *The New Republic*, May 11, 1987: 13-14. As Weiner recounts, the copyright ownership of "Revolution" was purchased by pop singer, Michael Jackson, who authorized its use by Nike (for an undisclosed amount).

²⁶ Ewen: 257.

²⁷ In this the film echoes the way television enters into its viewers' subjective world, their psychic detachment, in order to disarm them more effectively. See Mark Crispin Miller's essay "The Hipness unto Death," in Miller *Boxed In*,: 3-23.

²⁸ Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1988): 277-79.

²⁹ The article drew on reports from Robert Ajemian, Anne Hopkins, and Dan Goodgame, under the by-line of Lance Morrow; it ran from page 12 to page 23 of the January 11, 1988 issue of *Time*.

³⁰ By "mistake," most Americans seemingly meant "wrong," since polls from the early 1970s until (the most recent in) 1990 have demonstrated that about 70% have held the counterhegemonic view that the Vietnam war was "fundamentally wrong and immoral."

³¹ Daniel Hallin argues that Tet was "less a turning point than a crossover point, a moment when trends that had been in motion for some time reached balance and began to tip the other way"—largely within the nation's elite. See Daniel Hallin, *The "Uncensored War"—The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986): 168ff. *Time's* account ignores a substantial Tet literature, though it reflects the arguments presented in Peter Braestrup's Freedom-House sponsored *Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet in 1968* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976). Completely overlooked is considerable evidence that refutes Braestrup's central thesis and its more extreme counterparts on the Right. In addition to Hallin, see, for example, Herbert Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President* (Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 1977), and Gabriel Kolko *Anatomy of a War*, chs. 24-26 for analyses of the erosion of war support among U.S. governing elites; Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988): 211-28 (including notes) for a critique of Braestrup's thesis; and John R. MacArthur, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992): 132-36, for Tet's role in an overall government/Rightist effort to erase the so-called "Vietnam Syndrome."

³² See the detailed analysis and documentation of North Vietnamese and NLF strategy planning by Ngo Vinh Long in "The Tet Offensive and its Aftermath," unpublished paper, November, 1992 and the account of Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), chs. 24-26. My own Nexis search for references to the Tet Offensive on the occasion of its 25th anniversary revealed that the Right's version of Tet prevails in the mainstream media. The only variation is in the degree to which the Right's allegations of Communist defeat, media error, and public opinion "turning point" are embellished. No reference could be found to the critical documentation that refutes these revisionist charges.

³³ See W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion* (New York: Longman, 1988), 2nd ed., especially ch. 2.

³⁴ Although *Newsweek* can't resist observing that one communard "boasts the hippie equivalent of a Mayflower ancestor—he went to grade school with Ron McKernan of the Grateful Dead." "The Graying of Aquarius," *Newsweek*, March 30, 1987: 56-58, written by Jerry Adler with Shawn Doherty, Sue Hutchison, Sharon Walters, and Elisa Williams.

³⁵ Nikki Finke, "Where Have All Those '60s Radicals Gone?" *The Los Angeles Times*, March 23, 1987, Part V: 1, 6.

³⁶ Judith Gaines, '60s Activists Look Back and Ahead," *Boston Globe*, March 14, 1987,: 2.

³⁷ The pervasive impact of this myth can be seen in self-generated images students bring to a course I regularly teach on the 1960s.

³⁸ See, for example, the testimony in Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), and Jack Whalen and Richard Flacks *Beyond the Barricades: The Sixties Generation Grows Up* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989). See also the testimony of French veterans of 1968 in D.L. Hanley and A.P. Kerr, *May '68: Coming of Age* (London: MacMillan, 1989).



Figure 19. Using a crate.

JACKSON STATE COLLEGE: THE LOST EPISODE IN ANTIWAR PROTEST

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Several weeks ago, in a course I teach here at the University, "Black America and the War in Vietnam," I made mention of certain antiwar activities at Kent State University and Jackson State College as it was known at the time. I was not surprised when one of my students asked what happened at Jackson State. He had heard of Kent State—who had not, after all; it is part of the common culture—but because of the minimalist media coverage it has received, few had heard of Jackson State and they wanted to know more about it.

Jackson State, I pointed out, was the concluding event of a decade that had begun as a storm gathering momentum on 1 February, 1960, in Greensboro when four students from North Carolina A&T State University sat down at a Woolworth's lunch counter and which ended in front of Alexander Hall, a women's dormitory, on a warm, humid Mississippi night, 14 May, 1970, most reminiscent of the "Stomp-them-to-death" mentality that found expression in the firepower policies of U.S. forces in Southeast Asia. It was a decade characterized by optimism, doubt and disenchantment.

Both events, I observed, were intended as exercises of First Amendment rights. The first expressed hope. The second resulted in the deaths of James Earl Green, 17, a senior at Jim Hill High School, and Philip Lafayette Gibbs, 21, a junior pre-law student, after a 30-second barrage of 140 shots announced the crash of the decade's modest dreams against the rocks of bureaucratic intransigence, brutality and deep-seated commitment to preservation of the status quo. In between, what we witnessed was a period characterized by the appearance of change and clashes both spiritual and political against traditional American values as more and more people came to understand that the fundamental economic and social structure of the United States was not as sound as the liberal reformers had assumed since the end of World War II.

Still, there was something special and peculiar about Jackson State College. Special and peculiar enough for one to suggest that maybe its decontextualization from the annals of antiwar activity, its relegation to a kind of netherworld in the face of Kent State becoming some kind of cultural icon, had more to do with the fact of what happened there than the simple fact that the folk who died at Kent State were white and the folk who died at Jackson State were black.

In his book on the Jackson State College slayings, *Lynch Street*, Tim Spofford writes that the Mississippi Highway Patrol, which later investigation found did all of the shooting, formed ranks and began the fusillade at the top of Alexander Hall and moved downward floor by floor as if the dormitory were some kind of free-fire zone in

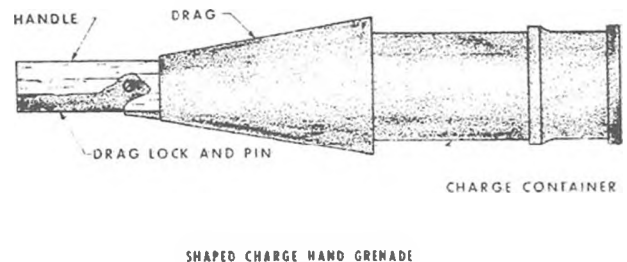
which every living thing had to be destroyed so that the illusions of stability might be saved.

Operating on the assumption (whose was not made clear) that firearms had been stockpiled on the campus, in a climate of opinion that sought to challenge things as they were in Mississippi at the time, the Highway Patrol brought massed fire to bear after a pop bottle breaking on the street was transformed into an alleged sniper threatening life and limb. Clearly, the principal overt threat that day, as it had been throughout most of the decade, was to a way of life—a way of life that had been slipping away since the end of the Civil War when black folks made the transition from property to people.

And the response to that threat was another illustration of the continuing resentment of that transformation in a society where the protection of property is paramount to the perpetuation of capitalism. It sort of makes you wonder where black folk would be today had that transformation never taken place.

Thus it is that Jackson State receives less coverage than Kent State; it's implications for an understanding of the many dimensions, subtleties and insensitivities of democracy in America are more awesome than was the case of 4 May, 1970. Not only were the students at Jackson protesting Nixon's conduct of the war manifest in the invasion of Cambodia—they were also protesting the centuries of racism, inequity and outright falsification that made a lie of the myth that the United States was the land of the free and the home of the brave. And that could not be allowed to continue.

So, in this twenty-sixth year after the assassination of the Reverend, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who has become a one-dimensional cultural icon himself, and though we haven't begun to call it that yet, where his birthday holiday is celebrated by a four-day sale that eager consumers might reap the best bargains, let us pause for a moment to remember those seldom-recalled incidents in our history that helped make us the kind of people we are.



THE IMPENDING CRISES OF THE 1960s: NATIONAL GOALS AND NATIONAL PURPOSE

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I would like to thank Michael Birkner and David Schuyler for reading drafts of this essay.

"In the 1960s, every American is summoned to extraordinary personal responsibility, sustained effort, and sacrifice." This call, similar to that articulated by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, actually came a year earlier from President Dwight Eisenhower's Commission on National Goals. Established in the wake of Sputnik and at a time when other reports, particularly those of the Gaither Committee and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Panels, were critical of the president and his leadership, the President's Commission on National Goals added to a growing debate about American goals and national purpose. Similar themes ran through all of these studies, themes that simultaneously gave cause for alarm as well as sounded a call to action. The Goals Commission articulated them succinctly: "For the nation is in grave danger, threatened by the rulers of one-third of mankind, for whom the state is everything, the individual significant only as he serves the state."¹

Although the Presidential Commission on National Goals began its work in the spring of 1960, and did not issue its report until after the fall election, the idea for such a study originated several years earlier, even before the Soviets launched their Sputnik. A lengthy report in September 1957 proposed a new study on recent social trends to update one prepared during the administration of Herbert Hoover. Administration officials suggested that such a survey would "serve in the guidance of public policy by giving a broader and longer perspective on current problems than is commonly attained," as well as "give a coherent view of the United States to the outside world."² Those officials, particularly in the Office of Defense Mobilization and Health, Education and Welfare, proposed the establishment of a privately funded presidential commission. They argued that policy planning had fallen victim to the pace of social and technological change, and feared that "we are the slaves of outmoded conceptions." "A general survey of trends in our total society is needed," they insisted, "to anticipate problems and to trace the consequences of policies on particular issues." Knowledge had exploded; it was scattered and largely the province of specialists in particular fields, often inaccessible to policy makers and government officials who needed it to make informed decisions. This report also argued that changes in the social science disciplines, an emphasis on methodology and theory at the expense of application, had divorced sociology and other sciences from practical problems. But for the moment no action was taken.³

Then a disastrous showing in the 1958 elections aroused Republican concerns about the future of their

party. In December 1958 President Eisenhower sent a telegram to half a dozen leading Republicans, inviting them to Washington for an evening meeting in early January 1959 to discuss those disasters and what could be done to breathe life into the Republican party. Richard Nixon was among those invited but, perhaps for political reasons, convened a meeting of his own the preceding afternoon to explore ideas on the same topic. Charles Percy, President of Bell and Howell, was present at both meetings and was himself a primary instigator in what became the goals commission. Percy later recalled:

I said at the time that I felt we were engaging in a process where government responds to the immediately urgent but not the ultimately important, that what I found lacking was a program for the future, a vision, looking ahead, some goals for the country, and that we didn't have anything to shoot for and I felt something ought to be done to develop a series of studies that would lead us toward those goals.⁴

At Nixon's urging, Percy repeated those sentiments that evening to Eisenhower. Ike became excited about their portent, and invited Percy back for breakfast where the two men developed the concept of a goals commission. Working off and on throughout the day, by nightfall they had completed a draft message that became part of the president's State of the Union address less than a week later.⁵

When Eisenhower spoke before the Congress on January 9, 1959, he presented his case for a study of national goals. "The basic question facing us today is more than mere survival," he argued. "It is the preservation of a way of life." The United States must either progress or regress, Eisenhower warned, and to progress it must have "long term guides" to define the task ahead. These goals should reflect high ideals, but they would essentially be practical suggestions to accelerate economic growth, improve living standards, provide quality health and education, assure opportunity for all, and offer "better assurance of life and liberty."⁶

Initial public response to his proposal pleased Eisenhower, and he quickly asked Percy to chair the commission. Percy refused, arguing that the panel should be non-partisan, but he did agree to cooperate with it once it was in place. He offered instead to establish a separate study group to develop ideas for future Republican programs. "The two parties, in the best sense of competition," he told Ike, "ought to say then, how we should achieve those goals, and we ought to have competition of ideas, and we haven't really had enough of that in the two party system. If you want a program laid out for the Republican Party as to how we should achieve those goals, that kind of a committee I'd be happy to set up and chair."⁷ After subsequent discussions with President Eisenhower, Vice-President Nixon, and Republican National Chairman Meade Alcorn, the Republican Committee on Program and Progress was formed.

In the meantime, Eisenhower held some confidential off-the-record meetings with selected individuals to discuss the idea of a goals commission. Drawn from universities and from government agencies, these individuals

quickly agreed on the desirability of planning, but had difficulty moving from generalities to specifics. Interspersed with a general conviction that the American people needed a restatement of their concepts, values and ideas was a disagreement about the parameters of such a study. Whether or not there was, or even should be, a national philosophy evoked considerable discussion, and raised fears that while it could not be effective without a spark of leadership, the very effort might create a doctrinaire concept too much like that of the Soviet system. There was in short, a sense of immediacy, but also evidence of confusion and uncertainty even within the circles of the elite.⁸

By this time, however, the media had caught the promise of change implicit in the goals discussions. In April, *This Week Magazine* published a poll for its readers. Listing fifteen goals and a ballot for readers to register their priorities, it sought to arouse public consciousness. The list of goals was quite specific, but did not offer much hint as to what might be done. By July the results were in. Approximately 45,000 individuals supported ten goals: control inflation, raise human standards, reduce crime and labor racketeering, improve international relations, reduce taxes, provide stronger national defense, improve inter-faith and inter-racial relations, provide a college education for all gifted students, stabilize population growth, and conserve natural resources.⁹ While there is no evidence that this poll influenced the president, his staff did clip and save the results.

Eisenhower, meanwhile, pushed ahead with his idea. His biggest difficulties lay in finding the right type of individuals to serve on the commission, establishing a balance of Democrats and Republicans, and in finding someone to chair the effort. Without a careful balancing of interests, he feared that the effort might become politicized and subsequently be discredited. "The only thing I am doing in the whole business," he wrote his former Treasury Secretary George Humphrey, "is to try to get the show on the road—there will be *no government influence or connection with the matter* except as the different Task Forces want to get from the different Departments facts and statistics." In addition, Eisenhower sought moderates: "I do not want anyone who is carrying a torch for any 'ism' or is too much controversial." He wanted, in short, a management tool that the public as well as both parties and all interests would accept.

The final report must be such as to command the confidence of our people. The result would be far wider than merely giving some guidance to the political officials. We would hope to have it so publicized that thinking people in every walk of life and in every corner of our country would see that their daily decisions will be more often correct if they conform generally to the great policies and goals we have set for ourselves extending on for the next eight or ten years.¹⁰

Eisenhower's letter was revealing. In one respect, the president seemed to be trying to put his imprint on public policy for at least the next decade after he left

office. Also evident was his conviction that the path of moderate centrism was the proper course for the American political system and its participants in both parties, an extension of his philosophy of "modern Republicanism." Finally, Eisenhower made clear his belief that an elite consensus was both necessary and sufficient to govern the nation. Once established, right-thinking Americans should conform to that consensus; any idea that there could be some legitimate dissent from it seemed far-fetched. In this respect, therefore, finding the right personnel for the commission was as essential as its final report.

By December 1959, however, little progress had been made. The appearance of articles such as "Lack of Thrust, Purpose Keep U.S. Behind in Space" kept alive the notion that the United States was drifting or stagnating, and fueled Eisenhower's frustration at the lack of progress. Publication of several panel reports from the Special Studies Project of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund also provoked criticism about the country's direction. How was the United States going to cope with population growth or the need to create jobs? How could it produce a rate of economic growth that would provide sufficient funds for the nation to do what was needed at home as well as abroad? But individuals who Eisenhower approached to chair the commission declined, and securing funding from private foundations proved much more difficult than anticipated.¹¹

Not until early February, 1960, was the Goals Commission finally underway, after what Eisenhower himself called "a year of agonizing effort." Henry Wriston, President of the American Assembly, Columbia University, as well as President of the Council of Foreign Relations and former President of Brown University, agreed to chair the study. Frank Pace, Chairman of the Board of General Dynamics Corporation and a former Secretary of the Army, served as vice-chair. The other Commission members were Erwin D. Canham, Editor-in-Chief of the *Christian Science Monitor* and president of the United States Chamber of Commerce; James B. Conant, former President of Harvard University and a former Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany; Colgate W. Darden, Jr., former governor and Congressman from Virginia and recently retired as President of the University of Virginia; Crawford H. Greenewalt, President of E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company; General Alfred M. Gruenther, retired; Judge Learned Hand; Clark Kerr, President of the University of California; James R. Killian, Jr. President of MIT and Eisenhower's former Special Assistant for Science and Technology; and George Meany, President of the AFL-CIO.¹²

Relieved that he had secured a top-notch commission, Eisenhower remained determined not to become involved in their deliberations. Nonetheless, he had some firm convictions about what he hoped the commission would accomplish. He outlined those in a "Memorandum Concerning the Commission on National Goals" in February 1960. The central theme of his thinking was a belief that the United States needed to use its power to meet the communist challenge while at the same time realizing its own democratic ideals at home. He worried that the

exigencies of the Cold War would spur further centralization at home and that a residual isolationism would paralyze America's hand abroad. Eisenhower was not convinced that the American people had as yet fully accepted the realities of the post-war world, and that, bewildered by the present, they lacked confidence in their future. Beyond that, however, Ike remained torn between the need for leadership from government and the fear that the exercise of that leadership would foster "undesirable centralization of authority and responsibility."¹³

Although Henry Wriston had not been Eisenhower's first choice to chair the commission, his philosophy reflected the president's moderate centrism. That Eisenhower drew upon the resources of The American Assembly, which Wriston chaired, was not surprising. This had been a pattern throughout his presidency; the Assembly had frequently served as his brain trust. Under Wriston's leadership, it had become oriented more toward fostering consensus on national goals than toward problem-solving. Wriston described himself, moreover, as a person who was "against extremes," and insisted that the Goals Commission should do a "think job" rather than duplicate research already done by the Gaither Committee or the Special Studies Project of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. He believed that the project could be completed rather quickly, an essential consideration given the approaching end of Eisenhower's second term. Yet Wriston's background also indicated a mindset at one with Cold War conformity. As President of Brown he had helped write the AAU statement on academic freedom in the 1950s, a statement that sought to restrict dissent among academics and which proclaimed communism to be the chief threat to academic freedom. Universities and their faculties, the report insisted, should support rather than defy government actions and policies. This further reflected the "corporate liberal" approach supported by Eisenhower.¹⁴

Much of the early organizing, however, fell to Staff Director William P. Bundy, on leave from the CIA's Board of National Estimates. Bundy's major focus was on the theme of leadership, which he believed could only be exercised with effect at the federal level. With that in mind, he set out to recruit authors to write essays on the major problems facing Americans, essays that would serve as the springboard for the Commission's articulation of national goals. His task was daunting, for almost everyone he contacted had particular ideas about what might be done to improve the quality of American life. It was as if a dam had burst, unleashing thoughts and ideas long checked by Cold War military and political pressures. Even the rather narrow circle of elites within which Bundy operated seemed ready for the country to push ahead in new directions, to break free of its reactive tendencies so evident since the Second World War. Education and health care, some argued, should now be basic rights of all Americans, and the government should find ways to alleviate individual financial constraints which precluded that. Others suggested a need to reach out to other peoples with American democratic ideals, even though they remained uncertain that "the usual framework of the democratic process" remained viable at

home. Yet one theme appeared time and again. The report, to be effective, had to create some sort of "shock" effect. This sense of urgency, many agreed, could only emerge from an emphasis on the competition with Russia and China. Only Cold War fears could provide the motivation for the United States to meet the problems of the 1960s.¹⁵

This constraint ultimately led to a paradox in the search for essayists. While on the one hand Bundy searched for authors with imagination and substance, he also sought individuals who would be synthesizers and political centrists. "There is some sense," McGeorge Bundy wrote to his brother in early March, "in which you are engaged in the distillation of the wisdom of the Establishment, and younger men, whatever their quality, are perhaps at a disadvantage from this point of view."¹⁶ This conflict was also evident in the memoranda of Bundy and Hugh Calkins, the commission's deputy chief of staff. Each sought to shape the agenda, even while they searched for experts to define and discuss the issues from which commissioners would draw a set of national goals. While this often put them at cross purposes with themselves, it had a salutary effect in that it multiplied the factors under consideration. It revealed, however, a belief that the identification of those issues was tantamount to a call for their management by the federal government. In the end, this frequently led to a divorce between the issues outlined in the individual essays that accompanied the commission's report and the goals formally articulated by the commission itself.¹⁷

A March 1960 memorandum from Hugh Calkins outlined what became a pervasive call for planning. Calkins suggested four issues for consideration: 1) "Should we take steps now to preserve the countryside for the future?" 2) "Should we manage our suburban growth and our new cities with more of an eye to the quality of life?" 3) "Can our central cities contribute to the quality of urban life?" and, 4) could central cities and suburban areas collaborate to fight common or related problems?¹⁸ He argued that the unregulated market would not respond adequately to any of these issues, insisting that "a quickened sense of interdependence and responsibility is necessary to the attainment of national goals." A few days later he argued the same point to Henry Wriston, urging that a conservation-oriented person be assigned to a panel and delineating the conflicting schools of thought over issues such as suburban conformity and urban renewal.¹⁹

The search to find individuals who could dispassionately outline the major issues facing the country was revealing. As the Calkins memo to Wriston indicated, the staff sought not only objective analysis but individuals not clearly associated with a particular school of thought. In the end, this served to blunt the force of many essays in the name of consensus, while the search itself revealed the glaring conflicts of interpretation and analysis among policy professionals. For instance, while many participants agreed that better planning was essential, there was considerable disagreement about the urgency of the problem, about whether continued suburban sprawl was desirable, and about whether the decline of central cities

could be reversed or was inevitable. It was difficult to isolate only a few central and agreed-upon themes, whether they were in urban demography or in agriculture. The search for moderate, middle-of-the-road individuals was frustrating and, in many respects, self-defeating.²⁰

Professor Daniel Boorstin of the University of Chicago expressed those same fears. Although he was interested in the goals project, Boorstin argued that the idea ought to be dropped if it would only stratify thinking and produce a series of bland statements in an effort to reach consensus among the commission's members. Boorstin's suggestions for essayists reflected those concerns; he deplored those who might produce unimaginative statements. Furthermore, as Calkins noted to Wriston, even in areas where there was no political controversy a series of contending groups made the choice of writers difficult. Each of the groups, apparently, had a veto over prospective authors. Evidence of this surfaced when Calkins revealed to Wriston that the staff had checked the names of several individuals who might write a section on "human needs" with the various insurance companies. He outlined the problem succinctly:

In an effort to find an author who would be acceptable to these groups as well as to the balance of the interested population, we have searched at length for a philosopher, an historian, an economist or a sociologist who has the necessary qualifications to write the essay. We have also tried to find a person from a welfare organization background, from a state welfare department, or from the business community. The names which have been suggested from these categories have generally been subject to substantial objection, either upon the ground that there is no evidence that they can write, or because they are committed to a polar point of view, or because they lack familiarity with the field.²¹

Wriston himself played an active role in setting the commission's agenda. Personal predilection led Wriston to try to "reconcile old goals with new concepts," and he agreed with critics who thought that the old goals, whatever they might be, were still worthy and found new ones unnecessary. A rugged individualist, Wriston argued that the chief goal of American society should be "the total fulfillment of each individual," and was concerned that Americans seemed too preoccupied with their own security. Excessive planning and a welfare state, he insisted, led to paternalism. Perhaps things were not any worse than they used to be; perhaps Americans were only more self-conscious and aware. If so, then an extended reconfiguration of national goals was unnecessary.²²

In many respects, Wriston's concerns went to the heart of the problem and reflected the sort of fundamental issues that had both fueled a growing criticism of the Eisenhower administration and led to the call for a renewed sense of national goals and purpose. Over the preceding decades, the United States had debated and even adopted a host of new programs, but seemed to have lost sight of its ultimate objective. Daniel Boorstin said it best: "For the first time since our colonial age, the American people have begun to feel fenced in. We feel

fenced in by our world power, by our highest standard of living, and by a strong enemy. Never before have we seemed to have less elbow-room, less hope for discovery in our own life and in that of the world. But we must stop believing that our future consists only of known alternatives. We must open our economy, our minds and our spirits."²³ The United States should become the "apostle of openness," Boorstin insisted. "We cannot allow Americans to believe that the last great unpredicted change has already happened. We should not now begin to select the American future only from the inventory of the American past." Both political parties had produced catalogues of programs, but these neither satisfied nor inspired. The country and its people needed inspiration and reinvigoration.²⁴

The panel on the quality and variety of American life agreed. Meeting in New York City in late May, the panelists developed themes similar to that articulated by Boorstin. Americans pursued a "cult of triviality and personal pleasure," Leo Rosten argued. An emphasis on psychiatric adjustment corrupted education, as did a "cult of happiness." Personal success and comfort appeared to be the object of life; this accounted for the "general attitude that individual achievement and struggle are not a necessary part of life." Personal responsibility and an obligation to do something seriously seemed to have been forgotten; the encouragement of conformity by the educational system fostered this.²⁵

Alfred Kazin agreed, but argued that the issue of individualism and conformity amounted to a moral rather than an educational crisis. American culture, he lamented, was "hedonistic, negative, and cynical." The public and the government had become divorced from one another; he believed that the rise of the beatniks clearly demonstrated this. Lack of purpose encouraged self-indulgence. Like Rosten, he was upset by the lack of moral outrage in the country. Aside from their particular laments, the participants in this discussion were chiefly frustrated that postwar prosperity, the spread of education, and increased leisure had not led to a concomitant cultural renaissance. As intellectual elites, they worried about the spread and influence of mass culture. Undecided about whether it debased or enriched, they nonetheless agreed that the goals should be to "encourage and foster excellence, superior achievement and creativity, unorthodoxy and originality."²⁶

This discussion about human needs mirrored the larger problem before the commission. Convinced that the country needed a stronger sense of purpose, it was constrained by its members' biases and by its search for moderation from moving much beyond pious platitudes in any statement of goals. While economists and urban planners opposed a return to a free market system, other commissioners agreed with Henry Wriston that a return to a rugged individualism was just the prescription for what ailed the nation. This conflict was essentially ideological. Market-oriented traditionalists clashed with devotees of government management and planning. Despite this fundamental dichotomy, the commission tried to avoid public disagreements and did not see its own purpose as one of stimulating debate over essentials

among the larger population. Writing from Berkeley, California, History Professor Raymond Sontag warned William Bundy about that problem. Language was important, Sontag observed, and linking "free enterprise" with "democracy" was "chilling"; it connected "democracy with a thing for which most young people couldn't care less."²⁷

Sontag was more optimistic about the future than many members of the commission. There was a sense of idealism among students on college campuses, he insisted. The new generation was not like the old, and the categories of the past would not fit the future. At Berkeley, he observed, there were "young men and women who don't want to be organization men (or their wives), who jeer at 100% Americanism and free enterprise, but who also see through the Commies, who in my youth would have found a place in the labor movement, but now are no less chilled by Big Unions than by Big Business." He urged commissioners to find outlets for these idealists, and suggested that they might "be trained for an internship in 'backward' countries... an internship during which they'd live, not like Americans, but like lay worker priests." Professional patriots might howl, he admitted, but when these young men and women returned to careers in business and government they would enrich American society. Sontag concluded with a paean to the present generation and a swipe at the current national leadership.

It seems to me this would be a wonderful age in which to be young.... The old is breaking up, and insofar as it was the age of the smug middle class—thank God. For the first time in history, the inert suffering mass of men is stirring, for the first time there is the possibility of a world culture. Because of our power and wealth we are thrown into the lead to this movement.... If we're willing to make the effort, I don't think the generation whose highest ideal is to golf at Augusta (nothing Augustan in that!) can do it.²⁸

That sort of idealism, which offered possibilities for dramatic change—generational, political, and social—was anathema to commissioners who believed that change should be gradual and occur only after the careful formation of a consensus. Two issues before the commission revealed its reluctance to encourage that sort of dramatic change and indicated why it was unlikely to suggest any beyond mild reform in its final report. In March 1960 Vice-President Richard Nixon suggested appointing a woman to the commission. Wriston discussed the idea with Vice-Chair Frank Pace, but they concluded that it would be "unwise." Wriston and Pace argued that it "would open up the question of representation of other 'groups'" unrepresented on the commission and might lead some foundations (from whom they were seeking funding) to conclude that the commission was "a political mechanism." After discussing this with President Eisenhower several weeks later, Robert Merriam of the White House staff asked Wriston to at least appoint a woman to some panel.²⁹

The second, and at that time more pressing, issue that the commissioners skirted was that of civil rights.

Hugh Calkins explored the matter with William T. Coleman, and then passed Coleman's conclusions along to Wriston. Coleman, a supporter of Nelson Rockefeller and a collaborator on the Supreme Court brief in the *Brown* case, argued that people overestimated the resistance to integration and insisted that normal judicial procedures could obtain civil rights objectives. Despite the fact that student sit-ins were sweeping across the South, a clear expression that progress toward integration was insufficient and that legal procedures were too slow, Coleman believed that further enforcement delays were not only inevitable but wise. He argued that establishing the principle of integration was more important than enforcing it in law, and would permit "discretion in enforcement of general legislation...." The issue of voting rights, he concluded, was also "largely behind us," and he opposed a constitutional amendment to prohibit "restrictions on voting other than for reasons of residence, age or confinement in an institution."³⁰

Wriston agreed with the basic thrust of Coleman's views, as he harked back to his favorite theme of rugged individualism and seemed a bit quizzical about the "sudden interest" in integration. Passage and enforcement of new civil rights laws, Wriston feared, would only lead to further government intervention. He opposed action at *any* level of government, concluding that "we must resist the temptation to push the government into everything." What Wriston argued, in essence, was that individuals were individuals, regardless of their pigmentation, and should be treated as such. This was the high moral ground, but it ignored the prevailing realities of American life. Incorporated into the commission's final report (Wriston wrote the opening essay on individualism), it ignored the question of how such a change might be effected and consequently revealed how far removed the commissioners were from the issues that agitated ordinary citizens. This was surprising given the concerns of Deputy Chief of Staff Hugh Calkins:

Can the Southern Negro be given the vote and Southern schools and other institutions be desegregated without driving the Southern white beyond endurance? ... The growing impatience of the Southern Negro, the political significance of Negroes in the North, the temper of the Supreme Court, and the international importance of the racial issue makes this the single greatest challenge to the democratic process in a century.³¹

By mid-summer the report was well on its way toward completion. No conclusions would be announced until after the November elections, an effort not only to avoid making the report a political document but to carry forward an aura of consensus into the next administration. To help ensure that continuity, Hugh Calkins met with Mike Feldman and Richard Goodwin of the Kennedy campaign staff throughout the summer months. Although he withheld the names of individual essayists, he talked openly about the commission's procedures and outlined most of the topics under discussion. In return, Feldman and Goodwin revealed that John F. Kennedy had commissioned position papers and studies of his

own on the issues of economic growth, civil rights, and foreign economic policy. While neither of these groups formally published their studies until after the November election, the themes of the various studies nonetheless informed the campaign. The Kennedy staff did urge the Goals Commission to push the need for higher taxes as a central feature for revitalizing the country, admitting that while their candidate would not stress that during the campaign he would make it a primary objective after the election. At the same time, they insisted that getting good people involved in government was not going to be a problem for Kennedy, and doubted if the commission could say anything new or effective about civil rights. Calkins reported, with some evident relief, that "I could detect no concern that our activities would be beneficial to Mr. Nixon rather than Mr. Kennedy, and no important indication of interest in what we might say, other than the indication that the Senator would, if elected, gratefully seize on our remarks if they could be construed as nonpartisan support for higher taxes." The extent of those conversations with Democratic party officials became evident after the Democratic convention, when a staff member to the platform committee lamented that "it was too bad that we were not able to get the goals a bit more directly into the Platform."³²

By the fall commissioners had received the background essays, and turned their attention to the final report. Some argued that it should more closely focus the attention of the American people on the Communist threat than was evident in the essays. Their opponents warned that an overemphasis on one's enemy too often led to emulation, that the United States should not adopt Soviet practices to keep up with the Russians. The commissioners agreed, however, that the report needed to convey a great sense of urgency, which the establishment of particular goals should reflect. There was a feeling that the essays did not always do that. Clinton Rossiter's essay on the democratic process, William Bundy lamented, was a "well-written hymn to democracy, with useful though not specially striking recommendations for minor tinkering." Morton Grodzins was asked to delete his discussion of Eisenhower's policies from his chapter on the federal system. This was not a criticism, Bundy said, but "rather it is that in the chapters we have gone to great length not to flog the past, and particularly not to flog the recent past." The Commission wanted its recommendations to look to the future and not be impeded by controversies over the past.³³

The final report, barely thirty pages long, articulated fifteen goals along with a plea for tax reform. First and foremost was a declaration that the "status of the individual must remain our primary concern."³⁴ This was also the subject of Henry Wriston's opening essay that accompanied the report, and the Commission reminded Americans to tolerate diversity and not to confuse unity of purpose with conformity of opinion. In the name of competition with the Communists, Wriston urged Americans not to "handicap" themselves by depriving minorities of equal opportunity. Wriston clearly grounded his argument in an appeal to American political traditions of individual freedom, but also sounded a new, potentially

radical, theme when he insisted that a "new moral outlook is more important than new legislation." While he asserted that existing legislation was sufficient if the federal government strictly protected constitutional rights, his call for moral action tacitly acknowledged the need for citizen activism in the absence of a working consensus to effect change.³⁵

The commission reinforced this message with its second goal, the promotion of equality through the elimination of discrimination. Although they asserted that the United States had made great progress, that the country "approached a classless society," and that there had already been a "revolution in the status of women," the commissioners once again mixed a call for activism with an emphasis on progress. "One role of government," it asserted, "is to stimulate changes of attitude." All levels of government—federal, state, and local—should move to guarantee equality in all aspects of life. They provided no prescription for this action, however, and ignored the reality that current civil rights activism reflected both the failure of governments to take action as well as a growing belief that they would not do.³⁶

Despite that reality, the commissioners argued that the democratic process was unsullied and remained a viable vehicle for change. In his essay that accompanied the report, Clinton Rossiter projected the image of a happy, united country, concluding that "the early 1960's appear to be a time of broad consensus on fundamentals." Rossiter argued that change should "proceed slowly through the techniques of compromise," although he warned that the "quiet times are gone forever; forethought, decision and energy are the order of the day."³⁷ Like Wriston and many of the other essayists, Rossiter combined an appeal to tradition with a call to activism. He argued that something fundamental was at stake, while simultaneously insisting on the need for consensus. A morally committed and aroused citizenry, he insisted, could and should channel its energies through existing political institutions. Nowhere did he consider the possibility that democratic activism and a consensus-driven authoritative government might be contradictory. This thread of consensus amid change ran throughout the report and revealed a determination that governing elites should manage change and continue to shape consensus.

The report also called for new commitments in education and in the arts and sciences, commitments that were in large part the responsibility of the federal government. Although arguing that education was "primarily a responsibility of the states," the Goals Commission issued a call for an enlarged federal role in funding and research, insisting that the demands of the Cold War called for renewed commitments. This was particularly essential in science and technology, where military considerations loomed large. Implicit in the statement of national goals and purpose, however, was a larger role for the federal government in all of these areas. In the words of John Gardner: "Our tradition of local control in education is a healthy one, but we must not let it thwart us in accomplishing important national purposes."³⁸

The remaining domestic goals addressed issues related to the economy and the quality of life. The commission seemed particularly concerned about issues of economic growth and technological change, and essays by Clark Kerr, Herbert Stein and Edward Denison, and Thomas J. Watson, Jr. that accompanied the report argued the case for greater federal action. Although they tried not to criticize the Eisenhower administration, the essayists nonetheless insisted that major economic problems confronted the United States in the 1960s. Clark Kerr feared a tendency toward monopoly, and argued that only a democratic economy would be an effective one. But his vision of a democratic economy was one with competing power centers that were effectively managed by the federal government, and rested on a conviction that power was widely diffused. This approach, essentially Madisonian in its outlines, produced paradoxical images of a "democratic" economy constrained by "necessary governmental controls."³⁹

Greater economic growth and the promotion of technological change were the mechanisms most essential to the long-term health of the United States, according to the Goals Commission. In both areas, it warned, the United States faced critical dangers and "inspiring opportunities." Although economists failed to agree on precise figures, they did agree that higher economic growth rates and the use of tax rates as instruments of economic policy were essential to lowering unemployment and stimulating investment. This admitted, in effect, that the Eisenhower administration had failed to realize the country's economic potential and had thereby missed opportunities to improve the quality of life for all Americans. Even though economists Herbert Stein and Edward Denison concluded their essay with a caveat that they were not attempting to decide public attitudes, the tone of the essay was clearly critical of existing policies.⁴⁰

Technological change, particularly automation, was fundamental not only to improving the quality of life but to the struggle with communism. Thomas J. Watson, Jr., President of IBM, stated the issue succinctly: "The way we direct and expand our economy is very closely connected with our ability to triumph over Communism."⁴¹ At home and abroad, technology was a force for good that held unlimited possibilities for human improvement. Watson viewed technology as beneficial, and since he viewed it as politically and socially neutral, he did not explore its implications for the democratic ideals outlined in many of the other goals. In fact, he essentially foreclosed the need for such consideration by warning that people "can spend a lifetime pointing out the administrative complexities and problems involved. But while the problems are being debated, the opportunities may well be lost."⁴²

The other domestic areas of concern were those of agriculture, living conditions, and health and welfare. In each case the Goals Commission concluded that the United States had failed to resolve long-standing problems, but it did not offer any concrete solutions, offering instead an argument that their resolution should be a national goal. Continued price supports for farmers, urban renewal and regional planning, and more doctors combined with additional spending on medical needs

constituted the sum of their recommendations. None were new, and the commissioners did not suggest alternative solutions. The accompanying essays, in turn, documented the problems but admitted that any short-term resolution was unlikely. What they presented, in effect, was a portrait of the United States as a nation in transition. Farm surpluses and the flight of farmers off the farm continued, as did suburban sprawl and the decline of urban centers. The impact of these changes on the physical environment reverberated throughout the nation's political and social structure, but current government policies failed either to adequately address the issues or to understand their implications. All of this exacerbated the problem of human needs. Increased poverty, lack of medical care for all citizens, and the spread of juvenile delinquency all reflected a growing social disorganization. Once again, however, the commissioners recommended increased research, greater public understanding, and more funding rather than innovative approaches to solve these problems.⁴³

Part II of the report addressed the question of goals abroad for the United States. The commissioners argued that American "goals abroad are inseparable from our goals at home." The themes of freedom and individualism remained paramount, but the focus shifted to the threat of communism. Although the Goals Commission warned that the United States was "not omnipotent," it should nonetheless stand firm at every point of threatened communist advance. Domestic tranquillity rested on a successful foreign policy. There were two striking features to the recommendations, however. One was the paradoxical (and essentially contradictory) emphases on freedom and the preservation of stability. In a world increasingly characterized by revolutions, many of which sought freedom from colonial oppression, the commissioners urged the United States to value stability and be wary of change. The second was a clear message that the United States should pursue a policy of peaceful coexistence. Gone was the saber-rattling rhetoric of the early 1950s; gone was the flaming rhetoric of McCarthyism. In their place was a rather bland statement that the United States should "seek to mitigate tensions and search for acceptable areas of accommodation with opponents."⁴⁴

Instead of military alliances, the United States should use economic penetration to advance its objectives. Reduction of tariffs among the industrial nations (even while "safeguarding the national economy against market disruption"), economic aid to less developed nations, and the encouragement of "qualified Americans to live and work abroad" would best advance American objectives in the next decade. Although the commissioners stated these as goals, the reality was that they were only means to other ends. Americans abroad, for instance, would not only provide technical assistance but "represent the United States" and promote "foreign investment." Aid to less developed nations would raise standards of living, presumably making them less susceptible to communist influences. Freer trade would foster new economic relationships around the globe, creating a sense of interdependence that transcended political boundaries.⁴⁵

Accompanying these economic goals was a reaffirmation of some traditional political objectives. The threat of communist subversion and aggression from Russia and Communist China remained paramount, and commissioners warned that the United States would have to continue to strengthen its defenses and vigilantly pursue containment for the foreseeable future. Military aid remained, in their view, a central ingredient of political stability, although they embraced disarmament. This was a new and somewhat striking development, particularly their insistence that the "essential condition of any stabilizing agreement must be that neither side be left in a position of significant advantage."⁴⁶ They urged the government to undertake a major study of the political, military and technical issues involved in any disarmament proposal, and suggested a suspension of nuclear testing as a first step.

Those positive recommendations, however, were offset by the tone of William Langer's accompanying essay on the United States' role in the world. Langer, a Harvard history professor with long-standing ties to the OSS and the CIA, sounded an alarm reminiscent of the late 1940s. He trumpeted traditional American ideals of freedom and democracy, warning that the United States must stand ready to assist nations facing armed aggression or political subversion. If there were limits to American power, Langer did not see them: "The United States should, at all times, exert its influence and power in behalf of a world order congenial to American ideals, interests and security...."⁴⁷ In addition, although the Goals Commission viewed a strong United Nations as a key goal in American foreign policy, Langer warned that while the UN might be useful to that foreign policy, it should not "substitute for a responsible national policy." Goals were not policies, Langer cautioned; nor were they even immediate objectives. "They contain a large measure of idealism, for they represent what a nation considers ultimately desirable.... As such, they are for the most part not immediately attainable. Indeed, they may remain forever in the realm of aspiration."⁴⁸

At the conclusion of its statement of goals, the report included what Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy had hoped for—an argument for increased defense spending and for higher taxes to fund that spending. Tax reform was essential to the attainment of many national goals, the commissioners argued, and "moderate" tax increases would not "materially impair the incentive or the morale of the American people...."⁴⁹ This provided the bipartisan support Kennedy had been looking for, and set the stage for increases in defense spending that would come in the years ahead. It also represented a sharp criticism of Eisenhower's policies and undercut his argument that increased defense spending threatened economic growth. This recommendation, perhaps more than any other, provoked dissent from several commissioners. Colgate Carden, Crawford Greenewalt and others complained that taxes should be reduced, not increased. Their dissent, moreover, reflected the lack of a clear consensus among Commission members about the level of economic growth necessary to accomplish the goals outlined in the report. All agreed

that current rates were insufficient, but as they struggled to reach consensus they ran afoul of conflicting ideologies on tax rates, government spending on social programs, and the effort to define the appropriate parameters of federal policies.⁵⁰

The sharpest dissent, however, came from George Meany of the AFL-CIO. Meany readily associated himself with the goals outlined in the report, although he questioned any recommendation that the United States become less militant against communism and pursue peaceful coexistence. His primary objection, however, was over means rather than ends. The goals outlined were lofty, but the commission failed, in his view, when it was either timid or silent about the methods needed to achieve those goals. How was the United States to increase its rate of economic growth? What steps were necessary to realize increased desegregation and fair employment practices? Where were the state and local governments to find new tax sources? Wasn't federal medical care for the aged more essential than reliance on private insurers? The "Commission's Report," Meany complained, "marches right up to the issues, always faces them boldly, then often turns away, without making the necessary, if sometimes unpopular, proposals for attaining the very goals the Commission believes necessary."⁵¹

While Meany was undoubtedly correct, his criticism points to a problem largely inherent in the very creation of the Goals Commission. The determination that its members should reflect consensus from the outset made recommendations for innovation or structural change unlikely. That the Commission's final report all-too-frequently addressed visceral issues with platitudes, therefore, was hardly surprising. Although Bundy admitted that the report failed to go very far in some instances, he remained hopeful that the few brief dissents incorporated into the final report would "add to the value of the Report and stir up discussion." *Newsweek* was closer to the truth, however. After citing Henry Wriston's belief that the report was "loaded with radical bombshells," *Newsweek* argued that those "radical bombshells" sounded more like platitudinous duds.⁵²

Although Dwight Eisenhower failed to make significant mention of the Goals Committee in his subsequent writings, Henry Wriston insisted that the President was delighted with the final report. By November 1960, of course, he really could not do anything about it. Bundy and others, however, insistently promoted the report. They met disappointment. The press was critical. *The New York Times* called it disappointing, "hardly likely to excite many imaginations or to unloose any great wave of creative enthusiasm among our people." Its conclusions were obvious, and it too often compromised "at a lowest common denominator of agreement...." The only interesting parts seemed to be the dissents, but even they were too brief to be more than suggestive. *The Nation* was a bit kinder, probably because of a conviction that little came from such endeavors anyway. Appeals for national defense, it noted, would likely be followed, whereas suggestions for disarmament, warnings about nuclear war, and calls for a fight against poverty would be ignored. *Time*

magazine and the Catholic review *America*, on the other hand, praised the report and urged all Americans to take personal responsibility for the goals. *The New Republic* praised the Commission and the report as distinguished, but then damned with faint praise. "It is humane, high-minded and vague. It expresses a consensus of moderates, of men who have public roles to play, pressures and personal ambitions to consider."⁵³

Sharper criticism came from the Right. William F. Buckley's *National Review* complained that the report assigned government responsibility for every aspect of human life, highlighting a growing cleavage within Republican ranks. To conservatives, Eisenhower's "modern republicanism," with its acceptance of an expanded governmental responsibility for social welfare, was a betrayal of fundamental principles and a sign that the GOP had lost its bearings. Dean Clarence Manion of the Manion Forum agreed, attacking the report for recommending greater centralization of government. Manion, active in the John Birch Society, complained that the Commission first presented a series of "pious statements" and then repudiated them in the accompanying essays. The report, Manion argued, read "like a studied paraphrase of the 1960 Democratic platform." It was timely during the Christmas season, he noted, because it has Uncle Sam playing Santa Claus for the foreseeable future. Predicated on "federal government omnipotence," it was, in Manion's view, a socialistic document.⁵⁴

Other public commentary was less polemical, moving beyond the particulars to examine larger arguments implicit in the report. In a pre-election address to the Economics Club of Detroit, William Nichols, editor and publisher of *This Week Magazine*, observed that the recent epidemic of discussions about national goals reflected Americans' grave concern about the future. The Goals Commission's ultimate message, he told his audience, was that "*America today is going through a moral upheaval—a Crisis of Conscience.*" The American people wanted to be challenged and were searching for "some new sense of dedication." Gone was the illusion of the postwar years that, because of its great victory over totalitarianism, the United States was entitled to "easy, automatic, prosperous and perpetual leadership throughout the free world." The break-up of old colonial empires together with other political, economic and military challenges were forcing the United States to do something more than merely manage its own success. "By some healthy instinct," he noted, the American people "recognize that we have come again to a time in history which calls for the renewed effort and moral rebirth which are necessary for survival in a fiercely competitive world."⁵⁵

Other reviews of *Goals For Americans* were more sharply critical, both of the report and of the Eisenhower administration. A reviewer in *Christian Century* characterized the report as "progressive but not revolutionary, somewhat bland and always hopeful, well intentioned but often marred by platitude." More significant, the report's recommendations focused on managing change through federalism, suggesting "not one single radical change in national institutions."⁵⁶ A reviewer in *Commen-*

tary agreed, concluding that the debates over national purpose reflected uneasiness rather than searching analysis. Indeed, the very concept of national purpose "supplies a perfect means of criticizing American shortcomings while evading a recognition... that these shortcomings are rooted in fundamental institutional structures." While the reviewer hoped that the debate would become the focus for a new political alignment, he feared that the country would continue on its present course, "stumbling toward the corporate society." The nation's leaders worshipped consensus too much to encourage serious discussion of social issues and sought to rectify critical shortcomings with superficial reforms. The real problem, the review asserted, was that "none of the moderates and liberals who are promoting this idea of sacrifice for the common good would consider for an instant the prospect of making the radical changes in some of our basic institutions that would be necessary to create the new way of life which their criticism seems to demand."⁵⁷ Without that magnitude of change, the malaise would likely continue.

Although members of the President's Commission labored to promote the Goals report, particularly at a Wingspread Assembly in Racine, Wisconsin in March 1961 and through follow-up conferences under the aegis of the United States National Student Association, they were lame ducks as the New Frontier arrived in Washington.⁵⁸ But their work did have an impact, if only an indirect one. Together with the Special Studies Project of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Gaither Committee Report, the Goals Commission report focused on the need for renewed action in the struggle against communism. It did so, moreover, in a consensual manner. That is, it argued that the traditions and institutions of the United States were sound. Radical or structural change was not only an unnecessary but perhaps a dangerous response to the communist challenge. The problem, instead, lay in the American psyche. The current sense of drift stemmed from a malaise, a malaise that could be eradicated by renewed dedication to traditional values and an active commitment to sacrifice. The national purpose, in short, had been waylaid by the attractions of suburbia—the new houses, backyard pools, barbecues, new cars—by which Americans had come to measure their postwar success. It was that sense of malaise, of drift, on which John F. Kennedy seized throughout his campaign in 1960. And it was through his call to action and sacrifice that he communicated a sense that he was the harbinger of change.⁵⁹

Goals For Americans did not live up to its subtitle—"programs for Action in the Sixties"—but it did help create an atmosphere conducive to change. In the end perhaps two themes from the report predominate. First, together with earlier studies that focused on the communist challenge, the President's Commission on National Goals helped raise the temperature of the Cold War. Sputnik had shattered American confidence, and the search for the national purpose sought to restore that confidence by outlining the country's problems and suggesting some solutions. Implicit in the critique, however, was the conviction that fundamental institutional

or ideological structures were sound. The second theme implicit in the report, however, contradicted the first. *Goals For Americans* presented, ironically, a critique of the status quo by individuals who purported to represent the consensus position. This paradox, of the center engaged in self-criticism, opened the door for other attacks, and in effect legitimated critiques from across the ideological spectrum. That the report sought to reaffirm prevailing institutional structures while arguing for change encouraged others in turn to insist that if their analysis was correct then their remedies were misguided. Perhaps not by accident, the same year that saw the hunt for national goals and purpose also witness the formation of various oppositional groups. Young Americans for Freedom formed on the Right, Students for a Democratic Society emerged from the Left, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee formed to prick the moral conscience and search for a "beloved community" as it embraced structural change in the civil rights movement. These movements, rather than the recommendations of the President's Commission on National Goals, came to characterize the sixties.

NOTES

¹ *Goals for Americans: The Report of the President's Commission on National Goals* (New York, 1960): 1-2. For an analysis of the Gaither Committee see Morton Halperin, "The Gaither Committee and the Policy Process," *World Politics* 14 (April 1961): 360-84. The reports of the Rockefeller panels are in *Prospect for America: The Rockefeller Panel Reports* (New York 1961). Cooperation between the staffs of the Rockefeller Panel and the Goals' Commission is noted in William P. Bundy to Laurence Rockefeller, 5 January 1961 and Barbara Donald to Nancy Hanks, Executive Secretary of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Special Studies Project, 19 December 1960. President's Commission on National Goals [hereafter PCNG], Box 2, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [hereafter DDE]. The best summary of the impact of Sputnik is in Robert A. Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge* (New York 1993).

² "Report on the Desirability and Feasibility of a New Study of Recent Social Trends," September 1975, White House Central Files, Official File, Box 941, folder 355(1), DDE.

³ *Ibid.* Also see a memorandum from Joseph S. Davis, 9 October 1957, White House Central Files, Official File, Box 941, folder 355(1), DDE.

⁴ Charles Percy Oral History, The Eisenhower Administration Project, Columbia University: 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 8.

⁶ Dwight Eisenhower, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," 9 January 1959, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1959* (Washington 1960): 5-18 *passim*.

⁷ Percy Oral History, Columbia University: 12. For Eisenhower's reaction see Eisenhower to Percy, 12 January 1959, White House Central Files, Official File, Box 941, folder 355(1), DDE.

⁸ For a record of those confidential discussions, see "Comments on the Proposal to Establish a 'Set of National Goals' by those Attending the Cooperative Forum," January 23, 1959 and "Memo of 'another off-the-record meeting,'" 20 February 1959, White House Central Files, Official File, Box

941, folder 355(1), DDE. In the second, more substantive memo, the participants are identified only by initials. The first memo indicates participants in the January meeting. They included Dr. Arthur Adams, Prentiss T. Conley, General Don Z. Zimmerman, Dr. Paul David, Dr. William F. Osborn, Dr. Durand, Dr. Hagan [Director of the Vanguard Project], Prof. Raffa, Dr. Washburn, Chalmers Roberts, Rexford Guy Tugwell, and a Dr. T. Also see James B. Conant to Eisenhower, 23 February 1959, White House Central Files, Official File, Box 941, folder 355(2), DDE for a discussion of the goals proposal. Eisenhower's frustration at the lack of agreement is in Eisenhower to Raymond Pitcairn, 30 January 1959, White House Central Files, Official file, Box 941, folder 355(1), DDE.

⁹ The list of goals and the ballot are in William Nichols, "How You Can Help the President," *This Week Magazine* (18 April 1959): 8-10. For the results, see the issue of 5 July 1959. Copies of these articles are in the President's Commission on National Goals, Box 30, DDE.

¹⁰ Eisenhower to George Humphrey, 6 November 1959, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, Administration Series, Box 21, folder: G. Humphrey, 1959, DDE.

¹¹ For the slow progress, see Wilton Persons to Robert Woodruff, December 1959, White House Central Files, Official File, Box 941, Folder 355(3), DDE. Typical media reactions are "Lack of Thrust, Purpose Keep U.S. Behind in Space," *Life* 47 (October 1959): 123-26; Max Ways, "The Confused Image America Presents," *Life* 47 (5 October 1959): 157ff.; and Helen Miller, "What America Can Afford: A Review of National Needs in the 60's," *New Republic* 142 (7 March 1960): 15-23.

¹² The list of members and their affiliations is listed in the front of *Goals for Americans*. See also "Ready to Study National goals," *Business Week* (13 February 1960): 30-31. Eisenhower's frustrations are in Eisenhower to Robert Woodruff, 2 February 1960, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, Names Series, Box 34, Folder: R.W. Woodruff (1), DDE; and Eisenhower to W. Alton Jones, 2 February 1960, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 47, Folder: Staff Notes, February 1960 (2), DDE.

¹³ "Memorandum Concerning the Commission on National Goals," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1960-61* (Washington 1961): 159-61. For a similar call from the press, see "National Goals: 'A Call for Greatness,'" *America* 102 (2 February 1960): 603.

¹⁴ For Wriston's background see William P. Bundy, Memorandum for the File, 8 February 1960, PCNG, Box 2, Folder: memoranda for the File, 8 February 1960-4 May 1960, DDE; "Ready to Study National Goals," *Business Week* (13 February 1960): 30-31; and Sigmund Diamond, *Compromised Campus: The Collaboration of Universities with the Intelligence Community, 1945-1955* (New York 1992): 221-25 *passim*. Background on The American Assembly is in David W. Eakins, "The Development of Corporate Liberal Policy Research in the United States, 1885-1965," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1966): 469-91 *passim*.

¹⁵ The best discussion of these ideas is in a Hugh Calkins memo to William P. Bundy reporting on meetings in New York, March 14, 1960, PCNG, Box 1, DDE. See also William P. Bundy, Memorandum for the File, 7 March 1960, PCNG, Box 1 and Hugh Calkins, Memorandum for the File, 14 March 1960, PCNG, Box 2, DDE.

¹⁶ McGeorge Bundy to William Bundy, 15 March 1960, PCNG, Box 9, Folder: Democratic Process, DDE. An example of this dilemma was evident in discussions between the Bundys about the suitability of Clinton Rossiter to write the section on the democratic process. Critics argued that while Rossiter was a superb synthesizer, he lacked substance and might not be solidly professional as a historian or political scientist. Nonetheless, Rossiter did write the essay. See also William P. Bundy to Wriston, 8 April 1960, PCNG, Box 1, Folder: Chronological 1-30 April 1960, DDE.

¹⁷ These problems are evident in several memoranda; see especially Hugh Calkins memo, 21 March 1960, PCNG, Box 8, Folder: City (Metro Areas), and Hugh Calkins memo, 22 March 1960, PCNG, Box 1, DDE. The idea that the Commission not take responsibility for the separate essays came from Stanley Ruttenberg of the AFL-CIO; see William P. Bundy to Dr. Henry Wriston, 24 March 1960, PCNG, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, Chronological 5 February-31 March 1960, DDE.

¹⁸ Calkins Memorandum, 22 March 1960, PCNG, Box 1, DDE.

¹⁹ Hugh Calkins to Henry Wriston, 25 March 1960, PCNG, Box 8, Folder: City (Metro Areas), DDE.

²⁰ For examples of the tone of the search see William P. Bundy to Wriston, 26 March 1960, PCNG, Box 9, Folder: Democratic Process; Guy Coriden to Wriston, 28 March 1960 and Coriden to William P. Bundy, 28 March 1960, PCNG, Box 8, Folder: Correspondence, Agriculture (29 February-16 August 1960); Coriden to Bundy, 31 March 1960, PCNG, Box 11, Folder: Miscellaneous (2), DDE.

²¹ Calkins to Wriston, 12 April 1960, PCNG, Box 9, folder: Human Needs (3), DDE. For Boorstin's position, see Guy Coriden, Memorandum for the Record, 30 March 1960, PCNG, Box 9, Folder: Democratic Process, DDE.

²² For Wriston's ideas see Barbara Donald, Memorandum for the File, 11 May 1960, PCNG, Box 11, Folder: Miscellaneous (1), DDE and Barbara Donald to the File, 27 May 1960, PCNG, Box 1, DDE.

²³ Daniel Boorstin to Charles Percy, 27 May 1960, DDE Papers, Ann Whitman File, Campaign Series, Box 5, Folder: 1960, Campaign Platform (Binder #2) (4), DDE.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ The minutes of this meeting, held 24 May 1960, are in Barbara Donald to the File, 27 May 1960, PCNG, Box 11, Folder: Miscellaneous (5), DDE.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Sontag to Bundy, June 27, 1960, PCNG, Box 8, Folder: Correspondence, U.S. Role in World Panel (7 March 1960-6 January 1961), DDE. For the views of one economist, see Paul Samuelson to Bundy, 8 June 1960, PCNG, Box 8, Folder: Correspondence, Economic Growth Panel (16 March 1960-2 February 1961), DDE.

²⁸ Sontag to William P. Bundy, June 27, 1960, PCNG, Box 8, Folder: Correspondence, U.S. Role in World Panel (7 March 1960-6 January 1961), DDE.

²⁹ Robert Merriam, Memorandum for General Persons, 21 March 1960, DDE White House Central Files, Official File, Box 941, Folder 355(4), DDE.

³⁰ Coleman's views are reported in Hugh Calkins to Henry Wriston, 26 July 1960, PCNG, Box 1, DDE.

³¹ See Hugh Calkins' comments: Issues Arising in the Chapters, PCNG, Box 8, DDE. For Wriston's views see Barbara Donald to the File, 27 May 1960, PCNG, Box 1, DDE, which includes random comments by Wriston from a 20 May staff meeting; and Barbara Donald to the staff, informal

memo on a conversation with Mr. Wriston, 23 July, dated 28 July 1960, PCNG, Box 1, DDE.

³² Hugh Calkins to Peter Grenquist, 9 August 1960, PCNG, Box 1, DDE. For the earlier discussions with Kennedy staff members see the Calkins memorandum for the Commission Report File, 9 May 1960, PCNG, Box 1, DDE. There is no evidence in these files about the extent to which Vice-President and Republican presidential candidate Richard Nixon was kept informed of the Commission's endeavors. The decision not to publish conclusions until after the November elections was announced in *The New York Times* (23 July 1960): 16.

³³ Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the PCNG, 8 September 1960, PCNG, Box 11, Folder: Minutes of Commission Meetings, DDE; Bundy to Peter Edson, 21 October 1960, and Bundy to Morton Grodzins, 24 October 1960, PCNG, Box 2, DDE.

³⁴ *Goals for Americans*: 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 35-58 *passim.*: the quotation is on page 47.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*: 64-65. See pages 4-6 for a statement of the commission's goal in this area; and see pages 61-78 for Rossiter's essay on the democratic process.

³⁸ *Ibid.*: 97-98. Gardner's essay on education, Warren Weaver's essay on science, and August Heckscher's essay on the arts all argue essentially the same point. Only Heckscher was careful to point out the dangers of federal commitments, although he nonetheless insisted that the government should support institutions to nurture the arts. See especially page 142.

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 149-61. The quotation is on page 152. See pages 7-12 for statements of goals in these areas.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 163-90. Their sharpest criticism is on page 184, where they detail the failures of the current administration.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 195.

⁴² *Ibid.*: 204.

⁴³ The goals in these areas are in *ibid.*: 12-15. For the accompanying essays, see pages 207-63.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 15.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 5-20 *passim.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 19.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 301.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 327.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 21.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 24-25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 27-30. The quote is on page 30.

⁵² "Blueprint Critics," *Newsweek* 56 (12 December 1960): 29-30. Bundy's comments are in Bundy to Frederick Holborn of Senator Kennedy's office, 22 November 1960, PCNG, Box 2, DDE.

⁵³ For Wriston's discussion of Eisenhower's reactions, see his Oral History Interview, Columbia University. Thomas Wolanin, *Presidential Advisory Commissions: Truman to Nixon* (Madison 1975): 165 quotes an anonymous commission staff member to the effect that Eisenhower may have been "miffed" at the report for its implied criticism of his administration. Press reaction is measured in the *New York Times* (28 November 1960): 24, 30; "National Goals," *Nation* 191 (10 December 1960): 445; "Goals to Go," *Time* 76 (5 December 1960): 13; "Challenge of Our Future," *America* 104 (17 December 1960): 393-94; "National Goals," *The New Republic* 143 (12 December 1960): 9.

⁵⁴ Dean Clarence E. Manion Program on "Goals: A Socialist Manifesto," Manion Forum, 25 December 1960. Buckley's views are in *National Review* 9 (31 December 1960): 196.

⁵⁵ William Nichols, "National Goals: A Crisis of Conscience," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 27 (January 1961): 162-165.

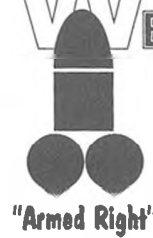
⁵⁶ "While a World Seethes," *Christian Century* 78 (25 October 1961): 1272-74.

⁵⁷ Philip Green, "National Purpose & New Frontiers," *Commentary* 31 (June 1961): 493-500. The quotations are from pages 495, 496, and 500.

⁵⁸ For these and other efforts at promotion see Guy Coriden, Jr., Memorandum for the Record, 4 May 1961, PCNG, Box 2 and related materials in PCNG, Box 4, DDE. The NSA materials are summarized in the *USNSA Student Leader* (Spring 1961): 4, which can be found in the Americans for Democratic Action Papers, microfilm reel 139.

⁵⁹ These themes run through the Kennedy campaign literature and speeches. For a collection of them, see *Freedom of Communications, Final Report of the Committee on Commerce, United States Senate. Prepared by its Subcommittee of the Subcommittee on Communications, Part I: The Speeches, Remarks, Press Conferences, and Statements of Senator John F. Kennedy, August 1 Through November 7, 1960, 87th Cong., 1st Session, 1961.* This is Senate Report 994, Part I. For another, related view, see J.W. Fulbright, "National Goals and National Consensus," in Paul Hanna, ed., *Education: An Investment of National Goals* (New York 1961): 175-91.

WEPTRONICS



You go to the mirror and as you take off your shirt, you see it. A long serpentine river of flesh that flows angrily from your shoulder to a little above your sternum. In a flash you remember how it felt. Hot, jagged, and hissing as the metal settled into your body cavity. It was a long time before you stopped screaming and an even longer time before your body closed over the gash. Your first wife wouldn't let you take off your shirt at the beach.... she said it would scare little Matthew. Your second wife thought it was cute and when she did those great things with her tongue, you didn't really mind it that much. Now Matthew is living with you after drug rehab, and Mildred and her magic tongue are gone, you've started to wonder...

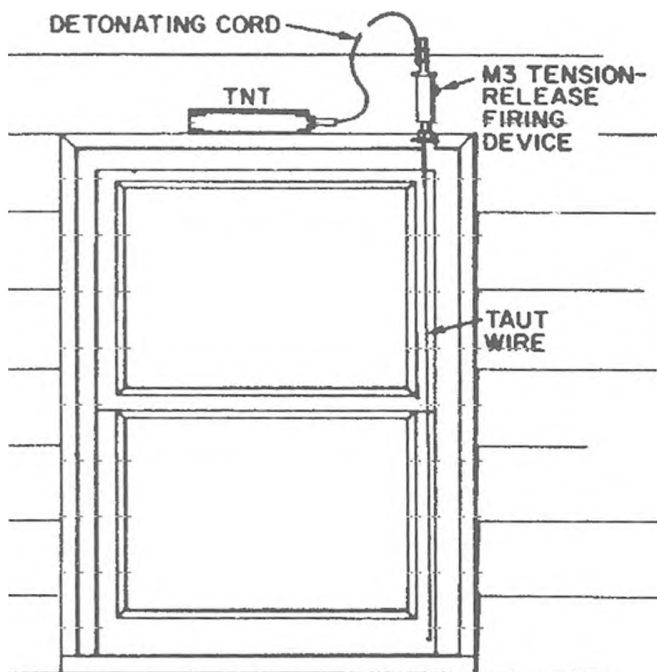
Well, wonder no more Veteran of the Wasteland. Weptronics is here to help! What you need to do is share...what you need to do is to let everyone see the scar... let them put their fingers on it... let them feel it. Oh yes!!!

If you order now Weptronics will send you the **Cogniplast Repro Kit**. When this little puppy comes, follow the simple directions. (You can still read, can't you?) Take the pictures and make the impressions and send the kit back to our plant in Muscatine. In 10 days you will receive your new "sharing" kit.

The kit contains two ties with an embroidered replica of the scar, and one of those great Caterpillar tractor hats (but, instead of a corporate logo... you guessed it!—your scar in bright flesh tones on the bill, and date of injury on the brow). Key chains, pictures, puffy toys, and—best of all—a giant hologram that you can share with your current loved one (suitable for framing).

So now when you get in those arguments about the cost of freedom, you can show them without taking off your shirt. The **Cogniplast** scar never gets smaller.

Tent stake injuries, sever OB Crown cuts, and injuries sustained while crossing the Canadian border need not apply.



EROS ON THE NEW FRONTIER: THE GINZBURG CASE AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL TOLERANCE

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Although the fundamentals of human nature change but slowly, if indeed they change at all, customs and habits of thought do vary with time and place. That which may give rise to impure thought and action in a highly conventional society may pass almost unnoticed in a society habituated to greater freedom.

Current standards of what is obscene can swing to extremes if the entire question is left open, and even in the domestic laboratories of the States such freedom cannot safely be allowed. It is no longer possible that free speech be guaranteed federally and denied locally; under modern methods of instantaneous communication such a discrepancy makes no sense. If speech is to be free anywhere, it must be free everywhere, and a law that can be used as a spigot that allows speech to flow freely or to be checked altogether is a general threat to free opinion and enlightened solution.

—Judge Curtis Bok
Commonwealth of Penn. v Gordon et al.
(March 18, 1949)

When the Government controls your sex
It's just a Communistic Hex
Against gross root enterprise
& rugged individualism
For once they got you by the balls
You get to stand for their roll-calls
They clip you in your private parts
To weaken all your public arts
& this is the true & secret cause
The Pow'rs that Be love their Sex Laws

—Allen Ginsberg
Letter, *Eros*, I, #4
(Winter 1962)

In the years immediately after World War II, the statutory basis for obscenity convictions in the United States, the Comstock law of 1873, buttressed by state penal codes that embodied the same censorious philosophy and uniformly echoed the language of the federal statute, was increasingly being challenged in trial and appellate courts. The approach the courts took towards censorship in the post-war period incorporated a more limited understanding of the pornographic grounded in a discriminating assessment of literary value that had begun to emerge in key state courts in the 1930s. The foundation

for this dissociation of the pornographic from the literary was perhaps best expressed in *People v. The Vanguard Press, Inc.* (New York, 1933), in which presiding Judge Greenspan, exonerating the defendants for publishing Erskine Caldwell's *God's Little Acre*, declared:

The Courts have strictly limited the applicability of the statute to works of pornography and they have consistently declined to apply it to books of genuine literary value. If the statute were construed more broadly than in the manner just indicated, its effect would be to prevent altogether the realistic portrayal in literature of a large and important field of life....'

But the case that most effectively established literary quality as an obscenity defense was *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Gordon et al.* (1949). In a review of nine books by James T. Farrell, William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, Calder Willingham, and Harold Robbins, Judge Curtis Bok provided an extraordinarily thorough and detailed historical and legal overview of obscenity law. He concluded that "the statute [P.L. 872, 18 PS 4524] is ... directed only at sexual impurity and not at blasphemy or coarse and vulgar behavior of any kind."² Bok's carefully argued conclusions served notice of the coming social and judicial struggles over freedom of speech that would become central to the cultural life of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as indicating the basis for the fundamental jurisprudential confusion characteristic of censorship decisions. "Nowhere in the statute," he wrote,

is there a definition of it [obscenity] or a formula given for determining when it exists. Its derivation, *ob* and *scena*, suggests that anything done offstage, furtively, or lefthandedly, is obscene. The does not penalize anyone who seeks to change the prevailing moral or sexual code, nor does it state that the writing must be such as to corrupt the morals of the public or of youth; it merely proscribes books that are obscene and leaves it to the authorities to decide whether or not they are. This cannot be done without regard to the nature and history of obscenity. [Unlike other fundamental laws], that of obscenity has frequently changed, almost from decade to decade within the past century. . . ?

Commonwealth v. Gordon, together with other cases decided in the state courts that reinforced literary latitude in the interpretation of the obscenity laws, posed a dual dilemma for adjudication in the McCarthyite era: Did literary latitudinarianism and statutory imprecision threaten ultimately to undermine the prosecution of any written material as obscene? If the scope and purview of the fundamental obscenity statute continued to be eroded, could its overall constitutionality be maintained? These questions formed the core of the pivotal 1957 censorship case, *Roth v. United States*, that came before the Supreme Court in the early years of the judicial activism of the Warren Court. Due to procedural issues, the certiorari appeal of Samuel Roth, a publisher of erotic literature, who conducted a predominantly mail order business, was reduced to these two questions. Six months earlier, Roth had been convicted in New York District Court under the federal obscenity statutes (18 U.S.C. 1461) of four counts of mailing obscene circulars,

advertisements, and books. Particularly obnoxious was *American Aphrodite*, a hard-cover literary quarterly that reprinted quality contemporary fiction and reproduced classic erotic graphic art. By the spring of 1957, half of the published numbers of *American Aphrodite* had been banned from the mails, and volume 1, number 3, which had been pseudonymously solicited by a postal inspector under the name Archie Lovejoy, had become the central government exhibit against Roth.⁴

Government power to censor the mail derived from the Comstock law and operated through the Post Office Department, abetted by the Criminal Division of the Justice Department. Postal inspectors received no special training for the task of ferreting out obscene material in books and magazines, but operated on an empirical rule: "Breasts, yes, nipples, no; buttocks, yes, cracks, no." According to one critic of the postal inspection service, Roth became a primary target because he had engaged in intermittent but extended litigation with the Department since 1928; he was considered by the government to be the most prolific and dangerous pornographer in the country; and he ran a profitable business (annual revenues were reported to have been \$270,000, with a mailing list of 400,000 customers).⁶

The government's strategy in prosecuting the case was shaped by the newly-confirmed Solicitor General, J.[ames] Lee Rankin, who adroitly played on the justices' fears, by convincing them that if they reversed Roth's conviction they would thereby invalidate the Comstock law and leave the nation defenseless against the floodtide of the vilest and most physically graphic and morally degrading publications imaginable. To reinforce his arguments with the power and immediacy of images, Rankin had recourse to Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield's "Chamber of Horrors," a collection of hard-core pornographic materials withdrawn from the mails by postal inspectors.⁷

The government won its case in a 6-3 decision, which upheld Roth's conviction; but the majority opinion, written by Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., established new judiciary standards for identifying legally actionable obscenity, and constitutionalized or legitimized the public discourse on sex and sexuality. In his summation, Justice Brennan declared: "We hold that obscenity is not within the area of constitutionally protected speech or press." But justifications of actions against individuals under the obscenity statutes had to meet certain criteria to demonstrate that the speech involved did not fall under constitutional guarantees. In the first instance, Brennan made a crucial distinction between discussions of sex and obscenity. "Obscene material," he said, "is material which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interest." In assessing the material's prurience, Brennan insisted that the Hicklin standard (*Regina v. Hicklin* [1868])—the focus on isolated passages, scattered images, or single words, and their impact on the most susceptible or impressionable part of the community—be rejected. The test, he argued, "is the effect of the book, picture or publication considered as a whole, not upon any particular class, but upon all those whom it is likely to reach. In other words, you determine its impact upon the

average person in the community." To what extent, though, did the protection of the average citizen from public solicitations to lewdness legitimize the interference of police and prosecutors with the free expression of ideas? Brennan's answer established a bold new formula that would effectively protect literary and artistic speech and expression. The deciding test of obscenity, he maintained, was that the material be shown to be "utterly without redeeming social importance."⁸

With its decision in the *Roth* case, with Warren Court laid the foundation for the liberal approach to obscenity adjudication, and more particularly for the doctrine that the arts were inherently subject to First Amendment protection. The Brennan doctrine freed lower courts to assess censorship cases by determining whether the material of the indictment had "even the slightest redeeming social importance."⁹ The significance of *Roth* for both liberals and conservatives was that it had breached the traditional statutory and judicatory standards (the Comstock law and the *Hicklin* test) for obscenity. Liberals saw the case as a promise of complete liberation for artistic and sexual discourse, while conservatives feared that it would lead to the abandonment of all standards of public discourse and all standards of public morality. Over the next decade, conservative pressure groups and unofficial moral police would conduct an intermittent struggle in the courts with civil libertarians over the limits of freedom of speech in America. That struggle would reach its culmination on one extraordinary day, March 21, 1966, when the Supreme Court handed down three decisions in obscenity cases—the *Fanny Hill* case, *Mishkin v. State of New York*, and *Ralph Ginzburg et al. v. United States*. Although the latter two cases sustained the petitioners' convictions in the lower courts, these decisions satisfied neither conservatives nor liberals. The decision in *Ginzburg*, however, coming after a decade that had witnessed a series of progressive decisions sustaining the freedom of public erotic discourse, was profoundly disquieting. *Ginzburg*, read in tandem with *Mishkin*, demonstrated the limits of liberal tolerance in the area of erotic speech in the mid-1960s, and raised the more disturbing question (that would be increasingly put to the test by the demonstrations against the war in Vietnam) of the perdurability of the commitment of liberal politics to the protection of freedom of speech when that speech challenged the political ideologies and social vision of establishment liberalism. It is with the *Ginzburg* case and its reflection of the limits of liberal tolerance that the substantive portion of this paper will be concerned.

In order to gain a vantage point for an informed assessment of *Ginzburg*, it is necessary to contextualize the case. The pressures exerted on legislatures and courts by organized moral decency groups and conservative political constituencies, the struggles over changing standards of public erotic expression and exhibition, and the evolution of popular sexual mores are all relevant here. In historical context, the *Ginzburg* case can perhaps most readily be understood in the framework of the reaction to the *Roth* case, with which it shares several common aspects. Since both cases involved sending allegedly obscene materials through the mails, opponents of por-

nography concentrated their attention on the Post Office Department and the legislative committee structure tasked with postal oversight. The national focal point for the anti-porn forces was the House Post Office Operations Subcommittee, chaired by Congresswoman Kathryn E. (O'Hay) Granahan (Dem., Penn.).

During her tenure as chair of the Subcommittee (1959-63), Granahan personally conducted extensive hearings in 1959 on the use of the mails to send obscene and pornographic materials. The general tendency of the Subcommittee's work was suggested by two hearings it called in the 1960s. The first was convened in May, 1960 to establish a foundation for the establishment of a Commission on Noxious Printed and Pictured Material, whose main mission would be to ascertain whether any causal relationship could be established between pornography and crime and anti-social behavior. The second, meeting first in June, 1963 (its extended deliberations were concluded in a second session in March, 1965), was concerned with the "protection of postal patrons from obscene and obnoxious material and communist propaganda."¹⁰

In her report to the House on the availability of printed copies of the hearings she had conducted on obscene matter in the mails, Mrs. Granahan laid out the primary concerns and sociological assumptions of the anti-porn activists. The mails, she maintained, were being illicitly employed to send obscene material "to people who resented receiving such materials." Pornographers' mailing lists too frequently included children for whom such materials were "bound to impair the years of training that parents have devoted to their children."¹¹ One witness, whose testimony Granahan read into the record, John C. Hughes, President elect of the National Council of Catholic Men and Dean of the Law School at Loyola University, Chicago, had declared that "there is a direct relationship between the increase in smut made available to our youth and the increase in juvenile delinquency," while Dr. Clyde W. Taylor, executive secretary of public affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, had claimed that pornography "triggers emotionally warped individuals into committing many of the sex crimes reported throughout the Nation."¹²

Mrs. Granahan's lieutenant, Rep. Glenn C. Cunningham (Rep., Neb.), the ranking minority member on the Subcommittee, brought out the personal dimensions of the almost viscerally paranoid fears of the protectors of the privacy of the post. "These dealers in smut," he cried,

are vicious men who are more and more aiming their material at children, trying—like the dope peddler—to snare children to the habit of pornography so that as they grow up they will be constant customers. J. Edgar Hoover of the F.B.I. has said repeatedly that these dealers are aiming their material at teenagers not only in the slums and rundown areas, but in every suburb, too. No more can parents assume that because they live in a "good neighborhood" that children cannot be subjected to the filthy message of these dealers in smut. These peddlers work from their cars all across the Nation and in every town and city, first giving away samples of their trash and then—having awakened the

teenager's curiosity—returning to sell the material from time to time.¹³

But even worse than the porn-pushers, according to Cunningham, was the mail-order smut service that had penetrated the very sanctity of the home itself. Children as young as eight years old, who had responded to comic-book ads for stamps, model airplane plans, etc., had their names added to mailing lists for pornography and had been sent samples.

The champions of purity pursued a three-tiered strategy through which they hoped to empower law enforcement officials to more effectively impede the flow of pornographic materials and to encourage the judicial system to move away from the liberal conception of the erotic embodied in the Brennan doctrine of the *Roth* decision. Granahan and Cunningham sedulously pursued the first level of the strategy on the floor of the House. They sponsored several parallel bills in the Eighty-Sixth Congress to amend the statutes governing the mailing of obscene matter (18 USC 1461-65 and 70 Stat 699, pub law 821), one of which, HR 7379, was overwhelmingly adopted by the House on September 1, 1959. The Granahan Bill strengthened Sect. 259 B of the postal laws. Its intent was clearly to empower the postal inspection system to operate, unhindered by liberal federal courts, to protect public morals. The act essentially embodied the principle of effective prior restraint insofar as it provided for an extension (from twenty to forty-five days) of the period during which the Post Office could impound the mail of persons suspected of violating postal obscenity laws. The Postmaster General was further enabled to impound mail on his own initiative, whenever he felt such action was "in the public interest," and was not required, as formerly, to act only in pursuance of a judicial writ. Finally, the act prevented the federal courts from setting aside postal impounding orders except in cases where they "appeared to be wholly arbitrary and capricious."¹⁴

If the Granahan Bill sought to endow the Post Office Department with independent adjudicative power, the second level of the social purity strategy undertook to buttress the Department's policing powers. As outlined by Cunningham, it encouraged parents to report the receipt of all obscene mail to local postmasters; to turn over the materials, including any envelopes or packaging, to postal authorities; and to be prepared to appear as governmental witnesses when offenders were brought to trial.¹⁵ A variety of religiously-based, conservative organizations helped to promote this kind of anti-porn activism on the local level. They constituted a loosely-organized smut lobby that kept pressure on the Justice Department and the courts.

The final part of the protectionist strategy involved the exploration of the possibility of institutionalizing prior restraint in the publishing industry using the model of the film industry's (and comic books') programs of self-censorship. The models would be the Production Code of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, effectively established in 1934, and the Comics Code Authority, set up in 1954. It is worth remembering

that the latter censorship program proudly declared itself "the most stringent code in existence for any communications media,"¹⁶ and that its chief avowed purpose was to protect the morals of children. It censored language, graphics, plotlines, characterization, and advertising material. Of particular relevance to the Comics Code, unlike the Motion Picture Code, was the drastic reduction in comics production, reflected both in the greatly diminished numbers of publishers and the severely curtailed volume of books printed. As a model for other forms of publishing, it offered a daunting prospect indeed.¹⁷

What made this aspect of the protectionist strategy so powerfully attractive was the apparent analog these two popular art forms represented for pornographic publications. As with most popular cultural forms, the audience for films and comic books was extraordinarily diverse. The Motion Picture Production Code acknowledged that diversity when it declared that "most arts appeal to the mature. This art appeals at once to every class, mature, immature, developed, underdeveloped, law abiding, criminal."¹⁸ What made the quest for a self-regulatory framework for publishing seem attainable was the realization that both the film and comics codes had been achieved largely through the efforts of private citizens organized to protect children and youth from art forms too often unsuited to their jejune experiences. In the case of the film code, while it had been endorsed by the MPPDA in 1930, it remained largely unenforceable until 1934, when the Catholic Legion of Decency undertook a devastatingly successful campaign against immorality in motion pictures. The film industry created the Production Code Administration Office (PCA) to protect itself, and worked with the Legion of Decency over the next decade to censor film production.¹⁹

In the case of the comic book industry, the initial agent of change was a single zealot, the abnormal psychologist, Dr. Frederic Wertham, whose sensationalist book, *Seduction of the Innocent* (1953), sparked an uprising of enraged popular support manifesting itself in boycotts of newsdealers selling objectionable comic magazines. Wertham stressed the effects of cheap literature on children, whom society had "left entirely unprotected." He deplored the exploitative "come-ons" comic book publishers used to lure the puerile. "Some crime comics," he pointed out, "are especially marked on the cover 'For Adults Only' (which of course entices children even more)... and some of the love-confession comics are marked 'Not Intended for Children'." The reader is not surprised to learn the professional backgrounds of these cynically depraved comic book publishers—"before they published comic books for children, some of them published semipornographic literature for adults."²⁰

Wertham's overall argument about the insidious threat of comic books made this connection even more forcefully. As a subgenre of the pornographic, comic books, he argued, provoked violent, erotomaniacal behavior; in short, they were the seedbed of the increasingly anarchic, anti-social behavior of American youth, the fountainhead of juvenile delinquency. Wertham appeared as an expert witness before the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency in the Kefauver hearings,

and was instrumental in bringing William Gaines of E.C. Comics (the most prominent publisher of crime and horror comics) before that committee.²¹

In Wertham's hands, Freudianism became the means for determining the extent of the psychopathology of the collective analysis—the whole of American society. Since the good doctor had identified the source of the nation's social pathogens, expurgation seemed a reasonable antidote; censorship could masquerade as liberal, therapeutic humanism. Wertham implied that comics were "un-American" insofar as they did not foster the mutual tolerance and respect for civil order so essential to a pluralistic society. In his catalog of the vices of comics, he stressed their exercitation of racial stereotypes, their sexual exploitation and victimization of women, their persistent persecution of the weak and defenseless, and the subversion of the morals of their youthful readers. They also were noxious to the educational system since they encouraged the reading of pulp fiction and impeded the cultivation of the comprehension skills requisite to the appreciation of highbrow literary culture. Particularly offensive in this regard was the line of *Classic* comics.²² Overall, the tone of Wertham's crusade was pitched to appeal to the female middlebrow culture of 1950s suburbia, women who thought of themselves as modern, enlightened, and socially concerned. The conscious appeal of Wertham to the behavioral standards of middle-class domesticity was underscored by the fact that an earlier, abridged version of *Seduction* had been published in *Ladies Home Journal* under the title "What Parents Don't Know About Comic Books." What they didn't know was that comics were "the devil's allies," a "design for delinquency," and that while "there is a whole machinery to protect adults from seeing anything that is obscene or too rough in the theater, in the movies, in books and even in night clubs, the children are left entirely unprotected."²³ Under the impetus of the drive to protect America's children—and who could oppose such a noble motive?—the Comics Code Authority's seal became in 1954 the symbol for the most pervasive and successful censorship program in the nation.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Kathryn Granahan's Subcommittee on Postal Operations should have looked to the comics and motion pictures codes as paradigms for its campaign to clean up America. As the 1950s drew to a close, legislators shared with parents the paranoiac vision that American youth were in imminent danger and that the future of the nation hung in the balance. In floor debate on Mrs. Granahan's Bill, her fellow law makers made this quite clear. Rep. Thomas Johnson (Dem., Md.) pointed to the rising tide of obscenity. "Traffic in obscenity has doubled in the last 5 years," he cried, "and if action is not taken, can double again."²⁴ Rep. George M. Wallhauser (Rep., N.J.) expressed legislative solidarity with "the fathers and mothers of our youth, and all decent American citizens [who] are thoroughly aroused at the menace of this nefarious business"; and Rep. James C. Oliver (Dem., Me.) recommended draconian measures. "I strongly believe," he declared,

that we should impose penalties against these violators of decency and exploiters of filth, of similar severity as those which are levied against narcotic peddlers and kidnapers. This problem will never be met with inadequate fines and mild prison sentences. This is big business and big penalties are required. The purveyors of pornography, in my opinion, are the scum of society and should be handled as such.... Congress must lead in this crusade to clean up these sewers of the community which are despoiling and fouling our Nation.²⁵

This fear of the impending defilement of America's children through mental addiction and spiritual abduction was a response to changing social mores. While the social and moral attitudes of the 1950s persisted, personal behavior and social standards experienced unsettling change in the 1960s. Reflecting retrospectively on the literary marketplace in the mid-1950s, Erica Jong noted that such works as *Fanny Hill* were available only through private dealers in erotica, and even works like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Henry Miller's *Tropics* trilogy could not be purchased at local bookstores. A decade later, the cultural proscription of such materials had clearly ended. In 1955, *Playboy* (founded in 1953) had a monthly circulation of 400,000; by 1964 its circulation was 4.5 million. By the mid-1960s, a host of *Playboy* clones had appeared, which dispensed with the editorial content and focused on full-frontal (but still air-brushed) nude pictorials. Magazines like *Sir*, *Cavalcade*, *Rogue*, *Ace*, and *Man to Man*, were expressive of a tendency in the publishing world to challenge the limits of the socially acceptable in the imagery of the visual discourse on sexuality. In 1964, Bob Guccione created *Penthouse* magazine, the powerful and aggressive British rival to *Playboy*. When *Penthouse* and *Playboy* came into direct competition in the American market in 1969, pictorial standards for the depiction of (female) nudity were shattered.²⁶

Two of the underground erotic classics of the eighteenth century English rogue and gentleman, John Cleland, saw their first large-scale American publications in 1963. *The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure [Fanny Hill]* was published in a hard-cover edition by the reputable house, G.P. Putnam's, and in an inexpensive paperback edition by Bell Books. The sequel, *Memoirs of a Coxcomb*, was published in a cheap paperback edition by Lancer Books, publisher of mildly erotic pulp fiction. This edition was described as the "Unexpurgated First American Edition." A third edition of *Fanny Hill* was printed in 1964 by El Cajon Books.²⁷

In the 1960s, the Supreme Court successively legitimized *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (*Grove Press v. Christenberry*, 1960), *Tropic of Cancer* (*Attorney General v. The Book Named*, 1962), and *Fanny Hill* (*A Book Named John Cleland's Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure v. Attorney General*, 1966). Greater permissiveness in the legal discrimination of obscenity liberated the print and pictorial media during this period. But that permissiveness also pushed the logic of *Roth* up against the resistant core of public opinion that did not accept the notion that all speech, however noxious, was constitutionally protected. Increasingly, those of this more con-

servative temperament, who felt beleaguered by an unchecked flood of erotic words and images, pursued a course of moral vigilantism against those they considered ministers to the libertine, and brought to bear moral pressure against the police, legislators, and courts. Their fears were most eloquently expressed in the initial court decision that ruled *Fanny Hill* obscene:

Free rein should not be given under the guise of constitutional guarantees to vilely depict perversions and sexual adventures as John Cleland saw fit 200 years ago. This is not the highway to a better constitutional world; it is rather the path to decay and decline. The Constitution should not be the sword of a shameful profiteer of filth. It must be the shield to protect our sense of moral decency.²⁸

The courts had established a precedent for the selective application of that judicial protection in the first *Tropic of Cancer* case, *People of New York v. Marguerite Fritch, et al.* (1963), in which the presiding magistrate, Judge Scileppi, had noted "the alarming moral decline of our times," and read into the record the summary conclusion of the New York State Joint Legislative Committee to Study the Publication and Dissemination of Offensive and Obscene Material, "that the perusal of erotic literature has the potentiality of inciting some young persons to enter into illicit sex relations and thus of leading them into promiscuity, illegitimacy and venereal disease."²⁹ Scileppi's hearty endorsement of this position and his foregrounding of public fears of erotic publications in his decision suggest that the purity campaign had staunch friends among the judiciary. Even in the case that finally liberated *Fanny Hill* in Massachusetts (1965), although the book was deemed not statutorily obscene, Justice Spalding saw fit to prohibit "distribution of this book to persons under the age of eighteen," on pain of liability to penalty for violation of the state obscenity laws.³⁰

Into the heart of this controversy over the delimitation of the obscene in the public discourse on sex and sexuality, this firestorm of anxiety over society's need to protect its young against purveyors of salacious materials, stepped a thirty-ish, happily-married father of three children—the New York editor and publisher, Ralph Ginzburg. He had worked as an editor and circulation director for *Look* and *Esquire* magazines from 1951 to 1957; but buoyed by the success of *Playboy* and the promise of greater freedom of erotic expression he perceived in the *Roth* decision, he resigned his position at *Esquire* and began a career as an independent publisher. His first venture was an expanded version of an article he had written in the early 1950s, entitled *An Unhurried View of Erotica* (1958). He founded his own press (Helmsman) to publish the piece, and by his own estimates earned \$150,000 to \$250,000 from its sales.³¹ This venture underscored two prominent characteristics of Ginzburg—his sensitivity to the main chance, and his uncanny promotional ability.

It is unclear whether Ginzburg sought to explore the limits of freedom or erotic expression in the post-*Roth* era; whether he simply hoped to capitalize on the greater

openness in the public discourse on and depiction of sexuality that seemed to be emerging; or whether he believed that his prospective publication fell within the guidelines of the Brennan doctrine. In any event, early in 1961 he was ready to launch an ambitious new project which, like Sam Roth's *American Aphrodite*, was to be a quality, hard-cover, large-format quarterly, published on glossy paper, dedicated to intellectual discussion of sexuality, tasteful erotic illustrations, and sophisticated sexual humor. Ginzburg called his new publication *Eros*, and his conception of its potential social and literary significance as well as his attempt to position it in the market were clear in his editorial description of the erotogenic periodical:

Eros is a new quarterly on the joys of love. Like *Time*, *Life*, *The New Yorker*, *Reader's Digest*, and every other magazine of importance, *Eros* is a child of its time. Its appearance has been occasioned by recent court decisions which have realistically interpreted America's stultifying obscenity statutes and have given to this nation a great new birth of freedom of expression. We refer to the decisions which have enabled the publication of such heretofore suppressed classics as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, for example.³²

Like Samuel Roth, Ginzburg undertook a massive advertising program to solicit subscriptions. *Eros* was never sold over-the-counter or at newsstands, and the subscription rate (\$25 annually) assured that it would remain a publication for the mature and the reasonably well-heeled. Ginzburg posted nine million subscription cards that announced that

Eros will be a handsome magazine... to be treasured as a thing of beauty forever. It will be edited for broad-minded adults and will not be inhibited by formulae or fig-leaved by censors. It will be the mirror of love in *beaux-arts* and *belles-lettres* of all mankind.³³

Eros, another promotional notice said, "handles the subject of Love and Sex with complete candor. . . [it] is frankly and avowedly concerned with erotica." It rested firmly on the foundation of the recent court decisions that established that literature "that [is] explicitly sexual in content, has a right to be published if it is a genuine work of art."³⁴

The response to Ginzburg's blitz was gratifying. It generated 150,000 paid charter subscriptions for a total revenue of \$3 million. *Eros* also elicited 10,000 unsolicited replies from regular letters to brief messages scrawled on Ginzburg's own returned advertisement cards. He estimated that 80% of the comments received were favorable. The critical responses ranged from the comic to the obscene. A letter from an upstate Republican lawyer, for instance, claimed that the "enclosed literature is so lascivious and lewd that it probably would shock even a Californian or possibly even a Democratic [sic]." More serious were two communications—one bilious, the other vituperative. The first attacked *Eros*, using Werthamian logic, as a medium of seduction and destruction of the innocent:

After being habitually entangled with nude art, the objective personality first seeks sexual novelty, and indeed, he never gets enough of it right up to the end. Second, sexual novelty leads him eventually into new sexual techniques which cannot be called anything but sexual perversion. Third, the necessity of sexual perversion leads into an acquisition of the dope habit or habitual use of whiskey or some other adequate alcoholic crutch. Fourth, the trail finally ends in some sanitarium or a hospital, where the victim dies...

The wages of sex addiction is death. The other letter was a vile, anti-Semitic rant, but is worth quoting at some length because it touched the fundamental theme that underlay the sustaining of Ginzburg's conviction on obscenity charges in the Supreme Court. The author, one K. Bronson of San Francisco, began with a conspiracy theory—most publishers of "gutter paperback books... are Kikes." But America would yet be rescued from this plague:

One of these days... Americans will take their revenge on bastards like you. We'll castrate you filthy corrupters and hang your balls on the front door of City Hall to show everyone what happens to animals like you who call yourselves men.

With very few exceptions, the writer continues,

the money behind the literary sewage in the country is Kike money.... Fuck you, you Kike. Your kind are good at money-making-by any and all means—but you're absolutely worthless liars, exploiters, disgusting insects reveling in noisome filth.

Even more serious than his meretriciously pathogenic commercialism, however, was Ginzburg's threat to national security. Americans for Decency made the connection between sex and subversion most unequivocally. "It is a well-known fact," they informed Ginzburg, "that it is part of the Communist Master Plan to undermine through sex and dope, before they take over the country. You may fool some stupid people, but most will see through your sinister plan." This letter concluded with a portentous warning: "We plan to see you prosecuted and put in prison where you belong."³⁵

It is important to remember that this virulent reaction to *Eros* was to its prospective publication; not a single issue had yet been sent to subscribers. Given the persistence of this initial reaction to the periodical in certain quarters, it is necessary to consider the actual nature of its contents. *Eros* can best be described as a publication that took sex seriously, but that consistently portrayed the humor as well as the pathos of human sexual behavior. Much of its content was educational—articles discussed polygamy, the female sex drive, contraception, aphrodisiacs, and the philology of colloquialisms for the clitoris. Photo essays were generally restrained, providing atmospheric reflections of strippers, male prostitutes of Bombay, exteriors of the red-light district on Rue Saint-Denis in Paris, and the erotic carvings of Konark, based on Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra*. Quality reproductions of famous art works featuring

nudity and erotic themes were also included. One series was entitled "The Brothel in Art" (in most of the illustrations those depicted were fully clothed); another, racier series was attached to an article that raised the question of the obscenity of the Bible, and was comprised of masterpieces of European painting. The humorous stance of *Eros* was evident in such pieces as the reproduction of late-nineteenth-century advertisements for mail-order products to enhance male potency, and of a Patent Office form for a male chastity belt. A more straight-forward humorous approach was the five-page selection of "Bawdy Limericks" that appeared in *Eros* No. 4. Ginzburg also published selections from classic erotic texts still not generally available outside the erotica emporia that catered to collectors of expensive editions. Examples of these literary fragments included: poems from the 1680 edition of John Wilmot's (the Earl of Rochester) works; the first American publication of selections from Robert Burns' long-repressed *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*; the first periodical publication of Mark Twain's *1601*; the first open publication of a drastically condensed version of *Fanny Hill*; portions of the underground Victorian memoir, *Frank Harris: His Life and Loves*; and a newly illustrated translated of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*.³⁶ *Eros* was also the first periodical to publish the last photos taken of Marilyn Monroe (by Bruce Stern) before her death.

But there were also potentially more provocative contributions. These pieces made the activist editorial stance of *Eros* on contemporary obscenity law perfectly clear. Robert Antrim's article, "Sam Roth, Prometheus of the Unprintable," established the tone. The final number of *Eros* was even more confrontational. It included two provocative features. The first was a muted photo essay by Ralph M. Hutterley, entitled "Black and White in Color," that depicted a Black man and a Caucasian woman, touching, embracing, and kissing one another. The other was a long letter by Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, that directly attacked those who would legislatively and juridically obtrude their standards upon general sexual behavior. "Where does any politician get off," he asked,

controlling other men's penises?... telling women what [they] can do with their vaginas? Are our stalwart statesmen going to make us stand in the corner and repeat a thousand times I WILL NOT HAVE AN UNAUTHORIZED ORGASM? The plain fact is that this bunch of shrewd SEX FIENDS intrude their hands underneath our pants and bloomers, and these filthy hands (one set of politicians after another) have been touching us without invitation in our private parts, as far back as we can remember. And that is MASS RAPE, the vilest kind of sexual perversion practiced on this planet. Done in the name of Virtuous Social Order to make it sound respectable inevitable natural only a matter of course absolutely necessary dearies quite proper for you harrumph.³⁷

Eros was welcomed by the sophisticated New York literati, and was widely admired as a tasteful and classy publication in the publishing world. It also won the critical acclaim of the New York Art community. The

National Society of Art Directors voted Herb Lubalin, *Eros*' art director, Art Director of the Year (1962), and the Art Director's Club of New York awarded *Eros* its coveted gold medal for outstanding design and layout³⁸ Despite the overwhelmingly positive critical reaction to *Eros*, however, in the early 1960s any complacency about legal protection of erotic speech was foolhardy. Allen Ginsberg was closer to the mark when he remarked that "all these pious sex laws only hinder the process of enlightenment." His picture of the modern censor was chillingly proleptic. He evoked a vision of Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield underlining all the sexually explicit passages in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and placing the defaced volume on President Eisenhower's desk. Ike's thunderous response was, "Dreadful ... we can't allow this!"³⁹ Neither could official America allow *Eros* in the 1960s.

The first official salvo of the "Virtuous Social Order" came on the floor of Congress some three weeks after the publication of the first issue of *Eros*. On March 8, 1962, Philadelphia's moral crusader, Rep. Kathryn Granahan, exposed the "campaign of filth being waged by a smut merchant going under the name of '*Eros*' that is spawning its advertising solicitations through the mails from New York City... much of it has been sent indiscriminately to school children and adolescents."⁴⁰ She reported that the Post Office Department had declined to institute legal action against Ginzburg despite the selected complaints against *Eros*' mail advertisements forwarded to the postal service by her Subcommittee on Postal Operations, alleging that in the context of the *Lady Chatterley* decision (1960), "the *Eros* mails were not deemed in violation of the postal obscenity criminal statutes."⁴¹ With the unanimous support of the subcommittee, Mrs. Granahan had sent a protest vigorously objecting to the decision of the Post Office as well as separate letters expressing the committee's views on the "unmitigated vileness" of *Eros* to the Postmaster General, (J. Edward Day), and Attorney General Robert Kennedy. The letter to Kennedy, in the perdurable rhetoric of McCarthyite America, linked "*Eros* and its fellow travelers," and protested the preferential postal rates the publication received (largely subsidized by taxpayers) at a time when "every ounce of our Nation's strength is needed in our vital defense effort and in combating the threat of international communism."⁴²

Mrs. Granahan was ardently supported in her "children's crusade" by her committee colleagues and by a groundswell of popular opinion orchestrated by vigilante purity organizations. Such groups as the Legion of Decency, the National Office for Decent Literature, Citizens for Decent Literature, the Guardians of Morality in Youth, Operation Moral Upgrade, Americans to Stamp Out Smut, and Operation Yorkville (established, November, 1962), provided the foot soldiers in the battle to repel the subversion of "the moral fiber of our younger generation" by "these 'pornographers for profit'."⁴³ Ginzburg, they declared, was the "King of Smut," "the 'New Yorker' who had launched a (new) pornographic magazine titled '*Eros*'. . . whose sole aim was to undermine the morals of American Youth!"⁴⁴

Ginzburg may have escaped for a day, but the hounds of decency were on his scent, the tide of moral outrage was rising. On the very first day of the first session of the Eighty-eighth Congress (January 9, 1963), six bills on obscenity in the mails were proposed. By June, ten more bills were under discussion. Since Granahan had opted not to stand for re-election in 1962 (she was elevated to the position of Treasurer of the United States in 1963), her able deputy, Rep. Glenn Cunningham, assumed leadership of the anti-obscenity forces. Amid continued concern over juvenile delinquency (statistics actually showed a *decline* of 19% in offenses committed by minors in 1961), it was profoundly discouraging to many legislators to discover that "new loopholes [in the obscenity laws] have been created, and that new publications have appeared, designed to evade the laws. Such magazines as *Eros* and *Liaison* are offered through the mail to even 12-year-old children."⁴⁵

On March 7, 1963, Mr. Cunningham had taken the initiative of writing to President John F. Kennedy. In his letter, he called attention to a recent meeting of the Attorney General with leaders of Operation Yorkville. The problem of exacerbated obscenity, he argued, arose not from the law itself, but from its legal-interpretation in the courts. "Increasingly, in recent years," he observed, court decisions have allowed great laxity and license in printed matter. "What solution did Cunningham offer to judicial liberalism? The organized power of public opinion. Since obscene material "offends the morals and sense of decency of nearly everyone... no publisher will stay in business nor will his filthy wares be distributed or displayed when public opinion runs strongly against him." The President was urged to play a direct role in moral reform, "to set a climate which will encourage the courts to recognize [that] the existing moral climate in this country is considerably higher than some rulings would seem to indicate." Cunningham suggested that the President send a special message to Congress on the problem of obscenity and that he consider personally participating in "the nationwide effort to end this traffic in filth."⁴⁶

The President's reply to Mr. Cunningham's letter was indirect and evasive. It came from the Assistant Director for Legislative Reference, an official of the Bureau of the Budget, an adjunct of the Executive Office of the President. While it recognized the need for more effective governmental initiatives against pornography, it cautioned that such overtures must be "carried on without jeopardy to our free institutions"—standard liberal doctrine.⁴⁷

Cunningham and the social purity organizations found this response unacceptable, and intensified pressure on the chief executive and on the Post Office Department. Operation Yorkville, the ecumenical, religiously-based smut busters of New York City, won the endorsement of Governor Nelson Rockefeller, and secured a promise from New York City Police Commissioner Murphy to strictly enforce all extant obscenity laws. The group coordinated its efforts with those of the American Legion and mounted a "Petition the President for Action" campaign. In three weeks (March 4-28, 1963) it gener-

ated thousands of letters and telegrams.⁴⁸ Individual complaints arising from receipt of unsolicited copies of *Eros* subscription cards and publication announcements had first been received in the Fall of 1961; by the end of the year they were being received at the rate of 900 a day. While the peak of the protest came in early 1962, the Post Office continued to receive complaints into the early months of 1963, and postal authorities estimated that the total volume of mail generated in opposition to *Eros* comprised the greatest number of complaints received against a single publication in the history of the postal inspection system.⁴⁹

The saviors of the public had found a broad field of reform—obscenity; a remarkably elastic and universal set of manifestations of evil examples of obscenity's scope—from magazines and books to movies, greeting cards, and even "millions of phonograph records"; a generic villain who embodied the ubiquitous evil—the "smut peddlers," the "hucksters of immorality"; and an individual face as target for the frustration and rage that fueled the reform impulse—that of Ralph Ginzburg, "King of Smut."⁵⁰

In order to determine how and why Ginzburg became the ideal scapegoat for the smut industry and how his case became a trial of contemporary social mores and of the limits of liberal tolerance as well, it is necessary to examine his experience *sub judice* and *sub poena*. In the wake of the intensified petition and write-in campaigns of the early spring of 1963, Ginzburg was called before the bar for the first time in May, 1963. G.P. Putnam had only recently published an unexpurgated edition of *FANNY HILL*, and in April, 1963, the Citizens for Decent Literature had been able to persuade the New York D.A.'s office to undertake an investigation to determine whether Ginzburg's publications were statutorily obscene. On May 4, a New York County Grand Jury declined to return an indictment against *Eros*, and Justice Mitchell D. Schweitzer dismissed the case. Less than a week later, Ginzburg was charged with a twenty-eight count indictment by the U.S. District Court, E.D., Third Circuit (Philadelphia) for mailing obscene publications and advertisements therefor in violation of Title 18 U.S. C.A. 1461. The specific charges stemmed from mailing copies of *Eros*, Vol. I, # 4 (Winter 1962), *Liaison*, Vol. I, # 1, and *The Housewife's Handbook of Selective Promiscuity*.

The Philadelphia trial, which had been initiated by the Justice Department, began on June 10, 1963. Due to the venue of the case (this was Kathryn Granahan's bailiwick), the defense decided to waive the right to jury trial.⁵¹ Ginzburg's attorneys conducted a text-book defense, addressing the three standards for assessment of obscenity established by *Roth* in a thorough, point by point rebuttal. To graphically demonstrate that *Eros* did not violate contemporary community standards, for example, the defense called to the stand a parade of effective expert witnesses, and brought into court fifty sample publications plucked from central newsstands in New York City and Philadelphia—"girlie" magazines, erotic pulp novels, and fetish publications. The government attorneys did not contest this evidence and declined to cross examine most of the defense's witnesses. In the

end. Judge Ralph C. Body, offended by the nature of Ginzburg's publications, by the arrogance of the man himself, and incensed by the passivity of J. Shane Creamer and the government's prosecution team, took an active role in the prosecution of the trial.

Ginzburg's deportment and demeanor certainly did not help his own case. At no point, all the way through the final appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, did he appear the humble petitioner. He was more characteristically brash, abrasive, confrontational, and theatrical. Always one for the symbolic gesture, he had appeared, on the morning his trial opened in Philadelphia, on the steps of the central New York post office building (8th Avenue at 33rd Street) and attacked Postmaster J. Edward Day for "instructing the Justice Department to bring obscenity charges against *Eros*," and quite accurately publicly identified the material that had likely **provoked** the government to action. "A photographic essay about interracial love, Mr. Ginzburg said, was particularly objectionable to the Post-Office Department."⁵² When he appeared in court, later in the day, he was wearing a black pin-striped suit with a white lapel carnation and a straw hat, the epitome of the flash, sophisticated, urban confidence man.

Such appearance and behavior were not calculated to inspire credibility or to placate Judge Body, a kind of super-Babbitt—member of the Church of Christ and the American Legion, a Shriner and a Rotarian.⁵³ After a five-day trial, the case went against Ginzburg and he was convicted on all counts and faced a maximum penalty of 140 years in prison and \$280,000 in fines. The key elements in Body's decision applied to all three indicted publications, but his arguments on *Eros* were most detailed. But there was inconsistency in the application of the *Roth* standards to these materials. *Liaison* and the *Housewife's Handbook* were deemed obscene in that they appealed solely to the "prurient interest of the ordinary person," and because "the only idea [they] advocate is complete abandonment of any restraint with regard to any form of sexual experience." *Eros*, on the other hand, while it "includes reproductions of recognized works of art," which might be thought to mitigate its obscenity, was obscene nevertheless because those reproductions were "merely a facade to disguise and protect the basic purpose and effect of the entire work." "Here," Judge Body concluded, "is a craftily compiled overall effect, and since the work must be considered as a whole, material which might be innocuous alone partakes of the obscenity elsewhere in *Eros* and becomes part and parcel of the overall plan and intent of the work.... *Eros* has no saving grace."⁵⁴

Judge Body recognized that Ginzburg could not be punished for disseminating the idea of "complete sexual freedom," and therefore his offense must lie in the manner of dissemination. He went on to identify the most clearly obscene elements of *Eros*, the three most offensive of which (to him) were the selection of limericks, the Ginsberg letter, and the photo essay, "Black and White in color". The photographic piece was deemed obscene because it "constitutes a detailed portrayal of the act of sexual intercourse between a completely nude male and

female, leaving nothing to the imagination." Ginzburg's letter was identified as "a statement of the purpose of *Eros*"⁵⁵ And in that purpose lay the real threat of *Eros*. The key issue, as stated by Judge Body in his summation, was clear. *Eros* had entertained:

a single purpose of destruction of all barriers against sexual behavior of any kind... along with advocacy of removal of restraint by government over the dissemination of any written material whatsoever. [thus] there is but one conclusion. That conclusion is: there is specific intent to destroy any limitations whatsoever over any medium of human communication regardless of the extent of abuse of that medium through the use of obscenity.⁵⁶

In sum, *Eros* was the preceptor of the sexual revolution and a militant forum for the advocacy of the termination of all official limitations on public erotic discourse. In his opinion, Judge Body also touched on the religious mockery and exaggerated sexuality of *Eros*, No. 4, and underlined Ginzburg's intent to reinforce the prurient appeal of his publications by seeking mailing permits from Blue Ball and Intercourse, Pennsylvania and Middlesex, New Jersey (the eventual provenance of most of the advertisements for *Eros*). He also concisely summed up, in his inversion of the "community standards" requirement for obscenity, the popular opinion of the anti-smut groups. The community, he argued, was comprised of people of all ages, of psychotics, the feeble-minded, and "other susceptible elements" that were entitled to legal protection. Therefore, when the court considered the community as a whole, "an ideal person without any failings or susceptibility is not the man to protect. Society as a whole, replete of course with various imperfections must be protected."⁵⁷

These apparently adventitious remarks would prove to be more substantive as Ginzburg's appeals moved through the judicial system. During the official New York City drive against pornography late in 1963, that had been sparked by Ginzburg's conviction, some 786 bookstores received warning notices. They were deemed to be in violation under a New York state statute that forbade the dissemination to children under eighteen years of age of material that "consists of pictures of nude or partially denuded figures, posed or presented in a manner to provoke or arouse lust or passion or to exploit sex, lust or perversion for commercial gain." Police in their Times Square raids confessed themselves hamstrung by recent judicial decisions that required them to "establish that the person who sold the material knew it was pornographic."⁵⁸ It was precisely on these three points—the attempt to corrupt the morals of minors, the commercialization of sex, and the calculated promotion of erotic material to titillate prurient interest—that the fate of Ralph Ginzburg would hinge.

Ginzburg's attorneys immediately filed an appeal from the Body decision on procedural grounds—Judge Body had admitted that he had not read the *Housewife's Handbook* in its entirety. As the appeals process went forward, Ginzburg continued his high-profile dramatics

that kept him in the forefront of the erotic free speech forces in New York City. For example, when the Rev. Morton A. Hill, S.J., Secretary of Operation Yorkville, went on a hunger strike, and was joined by the Orthodox rabbi, Dr. Julius G. Neumann, Ginzburg announced a counter hunger strike to protest "the obscenity panic that is plaguing our city and country.... The number of obscenity cases in the courts of the country has increased alarmingly. We're really dealing with something akin to witchery, because obscenity is neither measurable nor definable nor worthy of the law."⁵⁹ The courts were caught in the middle between those who felt they were too activist and intrusive in seeking to regulate and limit erotic speech and those who thought the courts were in the pocket of a sinister "smut lobby." The latter group shared Ginzburg's perception that the number of obscenity cases had increased, but disputed his reading of the meaning of that increase. They feared that "recent court rulings all over the country and from the lowest to the highest courts have decreed that anything goes. The untouchables are just that."⁶⁰ Ginzburg: victim or outlaw hero; the higher court would have to decide.

Ginzburg's appellate case was heard in the U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, on June 16, 1964, and the decision was handed down on November 6, 1964. The court's three judges found the materials at issue filled with "sordid narrations dealing with sex," "devoid of theme or ideas," and in sum "all dirt for dirt's sake and dirt for money's sake." In upholding the verdict of the lower court, they emphasized the circumstances that to them constituted an even more serious offense to decency than the nature of the materials themselves: The "appellants' fundamental object obviously was and is to, more or less openly, force their invitations to obscenity upon the American public through the U.S. mails." And they found its editorial arrangement hypocritical, describing the manifest attempt to shield the prurient by the inclusion of the non-prurient and the artistic to be a "sham device," "brazen chicanery."⁶¹ The criterion of intent opened an avenue of judicial flexibility that would allow courts to find material statutorily indictable even though that material was not, on its face, obscene. The Brennan standards for establishing obscenity might thus be set aside and particularly obnoxious and provocative material that might have met the standards if "taken as a whole" could now be legally condemned. With the loss of his appeal, Ginzburg began to perceive that this was the direction in which the courts seemed to be moving on the obscenity issue. When he heard the court's opinion, drafted by Judge Gerald McLaughlin (a seventy-two year old bachelor), he cried,

I'm beginning to wonder if we're going to be able to communicate meaningfully on the subject of sex with any judge. A span of 30 years stands between me and the average Federal judge, nearly a whole generation of the most rapid change in sexual attitudes this country has ever known. Hell, we don't even speak the same language! To me sex is exhilarating and a source of great strength, but to Judge McLaughlin and his colleagues it's still viewed as "one of the greatest weaknesses of human beings!"⁶²

Despite being chronologically on the side of untrustworthiness himself, as these matters were determined by 1960s youth culture, Ginzburg identified with the sexual attitudes of the "Boomer" generation, and saw himself as an intellectual champion and prophet of the sexual revolution. But in his bid for a Supreme Court review of his case, he became a generic symbol of the continuing struggle for free speech for the broader artistic and literary community. The ACLU (which had presented *amicus curiae* briefs in his earlier trials) came to his support, as did the 4,000 members of the Authors' League of America.⁶³ Empowered by this support, Ginzburg's attorneys filed a petition for a writ of certiorari, which brought into question the lower court's application of the Brennan doctrine; the insufficiently precise definition of obscenity, and the vagueness of its distinction from hard-core pornography; and which asked the Court to rule on the constitutionality of the federal obscenity statutes as they applied to the mails, i.e., to rule definitively on the Comstock Act. The Court agreed to hear the case on April 5, 1965, and it was placed on the docket as **Ralph Ginzburg, et al. v. United States**, No. 42. The case was argued on December 7, 1965, and the decision was handed down on March 21, 1966. Justice Brennan, who wrote the majority opinion (concurring were Justices Earl Warren, Abe Fortas, Byron White, and Tom Clark) seemed to accept Ginzburg's vision of himself as a standard-bearer for the sexual revolution, and perhaps by implication reinforced the intellectual distance that separated the political liberalism of the Warren Court from the sexual liberalism of the 1960s. Brennan cited the "Letter from the Editors" in Vol 1, No. 1 of *Liaison*, which announced the bi-weekly newsletter's dedication to "keeping sex an art and preventing it from becoming a science." *The Housewife's Handbook*, he continued, expressed the author's ("Rey Anthony," pseud.) Mrs. Lillian Maxine Serett) belief in the frank and complete sexual education of children, her opposition to laws regulating private consensual sexual acts among adults, and her hearty support for absolute female equality in sexual relationships. But the crux of Ginzburg's offense lay in his promotion of these publications. The outer envelopes of the advertising materials for *Eros* and *Liaison* boldly asked, "are you a member of the sexual elite? That is, are you among the few happy and enlightened individuals who believe that a man and a woman can make love without feeling pangs of conscience? Can you read about love and sex and discuss them without blushing and stammering?" Such promotional tactics, Brennan concluded, would insure that "the brazenness of such an appeal heightens the offensiveness of the publications to those who are offended by such material."⁶⁴

Brennan's opinion placed the Court closer to Kathryn Granahan than to Ralph Ginzburg in its sexual attitudes. Like her, they seemed to feel that "to the merchants of filth, sex is for personal enjoyment, a biological necessity like eating and drinking," and they may have sympathized with her fear that such sexual criteria, manifested "by the rising volume of vicious and

horrid advertisements being sent through the mails by unscrupulous merchandisers of obscenity and pornography" were detrimental.⁶⁵

Since the Government's counsel had conceded during its initial statement that the advertising circulars for Ginzburg's publications were not obscene in themselves, and the Court had conceded that the publications, taken as a whole, were not obscene *ipso jure*, the affirmation of the *Eros* conviction came to rest on the Court's assessment of the attitudes, conduct, and motives of the defendant. In other words, it was the character and not the publications of Ginzburg that was on trial here. Ginzburg's work had been aggressively promoted, the majority held, with an "offensiveness" and "brazenness" through which gleamed the "leer of the sensualist." "The circulars sent for *Eros* and *Liaison*," for instance,

stressed the sexual candor of the respective publications, and openly boasted that the publishers would take full advantage of what they regarded an unrestricted license allowed by law in the expression of sex and sexual matters.⁶⁶

The Court found Ginzburg's solicitation "indiscriminate," seeking to appeal to a broad general audience by "animating sensual detail to give the publication a salacious cast." "*Eros*," Brennan wrote,

was created, represented and sold solely as a claimed instrument of the sexual stimulation it would bring. Like the other publications, its pervasive treatment of sex and sexual matters rendered it available to exploitation by those who would make a business of pandering to "the widespread weakness for titillation by pornography."⁶⁷

Substantive evidence of pandering, according to the majority, was found in the "Guarantee" slips inserted into advertisement circulars for Ginzburg's publications. These slips assured a full refund of the purchase price "if the book fails to reach you because of U.S. Post Office censorship interference." These slips, the Court felt, "highlighted the gloss petitioners put on the publications, eliminating any doubt what the purchaser was being asked to buy."⁶⁸ The "circumstances of dissemination of [the] material," demonstrated the illegitimacy of its pretense to social importance; in sum, Ginzburg's assertion that the material was aimed at "intelligent, educated adults" was "a spurious claim for litigation purposes."⁶⁹

Thus were "Cupid's Chronicle" (*Liaison*) and *Eros* condemned by the Court, not on the basis of their content but solely because of the marketing strategy of their publisher. Justice John M. Harlan in his dissenting opinion quite correctly pointed out that the Court's grounds for sustaining the verdict of the lower courts were "entirely unrelated to the language, purposes, or history of the federal statute now being applied, and certainly different from that used by the trial court to convict the defendants."⁷⁰ Justice William O. Douglas questioned the wisdom of the "condemnation of the use of sex symbols to sell literature." "After all," he argued, "the advertisements of our best magazines are chock-full

of thighs, ankles, calves, bosoms, eyes, and hair to draw the potential buyer's attention to lotions, tires, food, liquor, clothing, autos, and even insurance policies." If the exploitation of sex for merchandising were condemned in a literary circular, where would that policy end? Such a ruling ignored the logic of the marketplace, viz., that "the sexy advertisement neither adds nor detracts from the quality of the merchandise being offered for sale."⁷¹ The Court in the *Eros* case had established a new standard for judging obscenity, an amendment to the Brennan doctrine: "Evidence of publications' pandering... could serve in context of record to resolve all ambiguity and doubt. Where purveyor's sole emphasis is on sexually provocative aspects of his publications, that fact may be decisive in determination of obscenity."⁷² In short, in marginal cases, evidence of pandering could be probative, and any evidence of pandering could move merely socially offensive material into the category of the legally obscene. *Eros*, as Ginzburg had boasted, had proven to be "the rage of prudes everywhere,"⁷³ and it seemed that the decision of the Court's majority had given judicial legitimacy to the puritanical backlash against the liberalizing trend in the public discourse on sexuality.

In seeking to understand how and why the liberal Warren Court handed down such a decision, we have surveyed the social, legislative, and judicial contexts of the Ginzburg case. There are two remaining questions, however, that remain to be addressed: Why did Ralph Ginzburg become the vehicle for the Court's restriction on the freedom of erotic expression?, and, What does the case tell us about the limits of liberal tolerance in the 1960s?

Ginzburg's publications, after all, were rather mild. Erotic bookstores in large urban areas might well stock a thousand titles, many more offensive than anything Ginzburg published. While racier "girlie" and fetish magazines remained largely underground, pulp sex novels, with titles like *Flesh Hunt* and *Flesh Whip*, had become a legitimate business, generating revenues of \$18 million annually. In 1963, the New York Supreme Court had ruled that such materials, while "profane, offensive, disgusting and plain unvarnished trash, [still] have a place in our society." Why was Ginzburg singled out of what the Mayor's Citizens Anti-Pornography Commission called "a veritable floodgate of obscenity"?⁷⁴ In the first instance, the fact that he was a Jewish New Yorker counted heavily against him, not only in the conservative heartland but in other urban areas like Philadelphia and Boston as well. He embodied, even gloried in the raucous, anything-goes environment of Gotham, with its fleshpots in the heart of Times Square and along the lust belt of 42nd Street. While the crude eroticism of New York City may have provided some of its primary allure for the less sophisticated in search of forbidden thrills, Middle America did not want the values of the big city imposed on their communities by the courts. Even the New York police, through the course of a series of clean-up raids on the erotic emporia, had to confess failure. Many of those who shamelessly marketed their wares were able to avoid legal restrictions because

they were fly-by-night operators and their publications were sold in dingy back rooms. Ironically, Ginzburg, who openly advertised his publications was a much easier target of opportunity—he wasn't moving. He also advertised and distributed his materials by mail, which brought his activities under federal statute (unlike most dealers in erotica, who were only subject to state and local regulations). Thus, Ginzburg could be tried for his "New York" crime, openly selling allegedly obscene materials, thousands of miles away from his place of business. Ginzburg gave Middle America an opportunity to impose its moral standards on a prototypical, bigtime New York "pornographer."

Then too, Ginzburg's personality, temperament, editorial stance, and marketing strategy focused attention on his productions. We have already considered his theatricality and his penchant for provocative gestures and statements to the press at crucial points in the controversy over *Eros*. He was quite self-consciously confrontational in rejecting what he felt were outmoded standards of sexual expression and in challenging the legal limits of censorship laws on public erotic discourse. His real "crime," it seems, was his genius for self-promotion. His reputation among the moral Right was summed up by the nickname conferred on him by the doyen of American conservatism, William F. Buckley—"Ralph ('Sex is What Life is All About') Ginzburg."⁷⁵

By contrast, consider the censorship problems of two other notorious erotic publishers of the 1960s—Hugh Hefner and Bob Guccione. Almost contemporaneously with Ginzburg's trial in the U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, Hefner was arraigned on charges of obscenity stemming from *Playboy's* publication of a nude photo spread of Jayne Mansfield in her Hollywood boudoir and in her bath. When the case finally came to trial in December 1963, the Chicago jury was unable to reach a verdict and the suit was dismissed.⁷⁶ By the time Ginzburg's case came before the Supreme Court, there were Playboy Bunny Clubs in most major US cities.

Guccione faced a charge quite analogous to Ginzburg's in 1965, but he came before a tribunal in London. Guccione had introduced his men's magazine, *Penthouse*, to the British market through a massive direct-mail campaign. One million photo brochures featuring nude and partially nude women had been sent out in what Guccione claimed was the largest mail-campaign in British history. After the distribution of the first 500,000, the British postal service seized 200,000 copies of the brochure and Guccione was served with a summons for allegedly sending indecent material through the mails. He was convicted on March 5, 1965 and was fined \$280 plus \$88.20 in court costs.⁷⁷

Apart from the issue of venue—Guccione was tried in the hangover atmosphere of the Profumo scandal and Hefner on his home turf in Chicago—the major distinction between the cases of these publishers of slick erotica and that of Ginzburg was that they had taken no public philosophical stand on the censorship laws. They simply took advantage of the liberalizing trend in contemporary erotic imagery and discourse without calling attention to the role liberating court decisions had played in render-

ing their publications legitimate. Indeed, Ginzburg had once commented that *Playboy* "represents a baby-step forward in sex. But it's not mature; it's voyeuristic."⁷⁸ Ginzburg, who took an outspoken stand directly challenging the limits of erotic freedom of speech made it easy for Granahan and the vigilante forces of purity to identify as the fountainhead of obscenity in America, the "King of Smut."

The closest analog to Ginzburg's experience in the courts in the 1960s was that of comedian Lenny Bruce, who was harassed by local legal authorities between 1961 and 1964. Convicted for performances in New York and Chicago in 1964, by the end of the year there was a virtual nation-wide injunction against his performances, and he was the object of continuous police surveillance. In his New York case in appellate court, he had described himself as an "author, lecturer, and social satirist."⁷⁹ Like Ginzburg, Bruce directly confronted the censors in such bits as "What is Obscene?", which referred to the *Jacobellis* and the *Roth* cases, and brought the hypocrisy of American sexual attitudes to the fore: "The prurient interest is like the steel interest. What's wrong with appealing to the prurient *killing* interest."⁸⁰

Bruce's problem was that he was a moralist; like all satirists, he was really in earnest, and he tackled the pious fraud and sanctimony that characterized American social values in such areas as religion, sex, politics, business, law, race, and interpersonal relations. Bruce attacked the ultra-patriotic, McCarthyite pieties in sketches like "How to Relax Colored People at Parties." Like Ginzburg, Bruce pushed at the boundaries of acceptable verbal expression, especially in bits like "Those Words Are Now Liberated From Shame." He often went beyond good taste and outraged liberal pieties, which was the crux of his New York conviction in 1964. He questioned the loyalty and motives of Jackie Kennedy in the moments after John had been shot. *Time* had piously declared that she was struggling to help her husband, but Bruce maintained that the photographic evidence suggested her attempt to "haul ass to save her ass."⁸¹ Ginzburg and Bruce outraged the liberal community because they called its attention to how far it fell short of its professed ideals, while at the same time providing grist for conservatives who held liberals accountable for those who operated on the fringes of acceptable public discourse and who persistently strove to remove all barriers to absolute freedom of speech.

Essentially, political liberals in the early Sixties were being pressured from two sides. On the right were those who sought to reverse the direction that had been established by liberal court decisions, to empower local law enforcement officials to clean up their communities, and to encourage lower courts to seek more definitive rulings on what was legally cognizable as obscenity so that the scope of public erotic discourse could be reduced. To the left was the artistic, literary, and intellectual community, acting in solidarity with those caught in the toils of archaic censorship laws, in ad hoc organizations like Allen Ginzberg's Committee on Poetry to protest Lenny Bruce's New York trial on obscenity charges, and Sloan Wilson's Committee to Protest Absurd Censorship, cre-

ated to show support for Ralph Ginzburg in the wake of his Supreme Court case and to protest official censorship. To the right stood Cardinal Spellman and Kathryn Granahan, to the left Allen Ginsberg and Theodore Reik.⁸² It was in the interplay between the censors and the civil libertarians that the liberal response to fluctuating standards of erotic discourse and the ambiguities of obscenity law was formulated.

Moral and political pressures within the government bureaucracy in the period 1962-63 were reinforcing the demands of the social purity contingent on the Kennedy administration, and there is evidence that there was a significant, if low-profile, anti-obscenity activism within the administration from the outset. Deputy Commissioner Walter Aron admitted in late 1963 that the Post Office Department had no accurate figures on the amount of obscenity being sent through the mails, but insisted "there's a hell of a lot of it, there's no question about that."⁸³ The porno traffic had increased steadily since World War II, but the battle to contain it had intensified dramatically in 1961. Aron reported that convictions for violating postal obscenity statutes had totaled 637 for fiscal year 1961, which constituted a 108 increase over fiscal year 1960. He attributed that increase in large part to stricter enforcement of the law. If Aron's assessment were correct, this would suggest that the anti-obscenity activities of the postal department intensified under Postmaster General J. Edward Day (1961-63) at the outset of a liberal Democratic administration.⁸⁴

It was certainly true that the postal service continued to serve as a medium of domestic surveillance during the Kennedy and Johnson years. Despite the March 17, 1961 executive order to abandon Cold-War-era postal interference designed to intercept Communist propaganda, Day's successor, John A. Gronouski, was called before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in February of 1965 to explain the questionable practices of the postal inspection system.⁸⁵ The embattled, paranoid Cold-War censorship mentality clearly continued to dominate thinking in the Post Office Department during the first half of the 1960s. The accelerated postal anti-obscenity activity was a logical extension of that mind-set.

Within the context of more energetic postal enforcement, the *Eros* case took on unique significance. It drew the Justice Department, and thereby the inner circle of the Kennedy administration, into the campaign against obscenity. As U.S. Attorney J.T. O'Keefe (a member of the government's legal team in both Ginzburg's District Court [Philadelphia] and Circuit Court cases) saw it, the case was crucial because it was national in scope. "This case is important to every citizen," he declared, "as well as to the Attorney General."⁸⁶ But Robert Kennedy had been under pressure from the Post-Office Department and Reps. Kathryn Granahan and Glenn Cunningham, and the organized pro censorship lobby, for over a year before he finally decided to act against Ginzburg. A consideration of the pressures and influences that led to the resolution of his ambiguity over *Eros* suggests much about how pragmatic liberal politics came to predominate over liberal principles in the early 1960s.

Temperamentally, Victor Navasky has argued, Robert Kennedy had much in common with the nation's longtime chief law enforcement official, J. Edgar Hoover. "Both were puritanical and moralistic," he wrote, "in their pronouncements about vice, prostitution and obscenity. Hoover made speeches about 'smut peddlers' and Kennedy gave the green light to the prosecution of Ralph Ginzburg."⁸⁷ The Kennedy code, the Camelot mentality, valued integrity, courage, and compassion for the weak and the victimized; it detested corruption, wiseacres, and "conspirators of evil."⁸⁸ Ginzburg, in terms of this code, was clearly a villain, and Kennedy's decision to move against him was clearly rooted in moral principle. Yet, the Attorney General continued to vacillate on the case. Nicholas Katzenbach, one of Kennedy's assistant attorney generals, described the source of his boss' indecision: "Bob felt, 'I ought to prosecute him but it will hurt politically. They will blame it on my Catholicism.'"⁸⁹ What seems to have tipped the scales and set in motion the Justice Department's prosecution of the case was *Eros* No. 4, and particularly the photo feature "Black and White in Color." Again, Katzenbach gives us a glimpse into the decision-making process: "He was terribly offended but terribly reluctant. I said I think it's a clear-cut case and you ought to do it. Ginzburg was saying if you don't prosecute me this time I'll force you to prosecute me next time. But he wasn't vindictive. He was always distressed when the verdict came down."⁹⁰

Robert Kennedy's ambiguity over the Ginzburg case was political rather than moral. He found *Eros* personally offensive, but feared the political consequences of acting against the publication. But two cherished liberal principles came into conflict as the case developed—support for freedom of speech and support for racial equality. Against the background of intensified southern resistance to the implementation of the school desegregation program mandated by *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the liberalization of federal election laws to facilitate Black participation, the activist politics of the Freedom Riders, and the mounting pressures on the administration to secure the enactment of a civil rights bill, Kennedy saw the interracial photo feature as inflammatory, especially since the *Eros* advertising campaign had reached throughout the South. In the context of military stand-offs between federal troops and local authorities in such notorious cases as the forcible integration of "Ole Miss" (September 1962) and the University of Alabama (June 1963), Ginzburg's erotic boldness seemed racially provocative and politically incendiary. Any Democratic coalition that could be expected to command enough votes to carry a civil rights bill would have to include moderate southerners. Ginzburg's feature, insofar as it flaunted the physical intimacy of a Black male and a White female, played on the worst and most visceral fears of white southerners, and thus threatened to subvert the administration's efforts to advance its integrationist civil rights program. Ginzburg became an obstacle to the higher good of liberal politics and had to be silenced. Thus, for Robert Kennedy, moral and political principle were reconciled in the decision to prosecute Ralph Ginzburg.

And yet, Kennedy and the Justice Department remained profoundly ambivalent about the *Eros* case. There is strong evidence that having agreed to pursue the case, government attorneys tried to lose in court. Such a strategy would have both protected liberal principles and quieted conservative opposition to liberal policies. The Justice Department would have taken a public stand on obscenity and by implication against miscegenation; the civil rights voting bloc in Congress would have been preserved; and there would have been no intensification of effective censorship. In the District Court case, government counsel, as we have seen, was so ineffective that a guilty verdict was only secured by the judicial intervention of Judge Ralph C. Body. When the case was discussed in the Justice Department, Paul Bender, later chief government counsel in Ginzburg's Supreme Court appeal case, advised against pursuing indictment. "You know we shouldn't be opposing this," he told his superiors, "this is ridiculous. We've got to confess error."⁹¹ Bobby Kennedy consulted with Archibald Cox, Solicitor General, and showed him copies of Ginzburg's publications. Cox advised to proceed. When the case came before the Supreme Court, Bender admitted that "I was trying to lose. He [Justice Brennan] knew I was trying to lose it. He was writing the opinion in the other direction. I was furious at him. For a while he wouldn't even talk to me because he knew what I would say.... I wanted to confess error in that case."⁹²

The politics of the Warren Court also displayed the logical agility of the liberal conscience on the issue of the specifically erotic realm of freedom of speech. In the end, their deliberations were more affected by pragmatic political decisions than even those of elected officials had been. The Warren Court had been a conservative target since the mid-1950s, and the Chief Justice had been the focus of recurrent impeachment campaigns for over a decade by the time the *Eros* case came before the bench. William O Douglas, the most consistently and outspokenly liberal justice on the Court, had been the subject of two impeachment attempts. The Court, then, was controversial and unpopular with vocal right-wing critics. As the case proceeded, it became clear that the pivotal figures on the bench were Warren, Brennan, and Fortas.

Brennan, who had been given the assignment to draft the majority opinion in *Roth* would be assigned the same role in the Ginzburg case. The Brennan doctrine, it was presumed, would provide the Court's standard in deciding the question of the obscenity of *Eros*. But the situation was complicated by the fact that three decisions on a group of related obscenity cases were to be handed down on the same day. One was the case against G.P. Putnam's for publishing *Fanny Hill*. The second was the *Eros* case; and the third was the Mishkin case, involving the publisher of fetish magazines of a sado-masochistic variety. Brennan wrote the majority decisions in all three cases. The effects of the Court's decisions in these cases were to liberate a recognized erotic classic, to forbid the publication of marginal materials directed at a deviant audience, and to punish the commercial exploitation of erotic materials.

Chief Justice Earl Warren had been described by Brennan as "a terrible prude... [who, if he] was revolted by something it was obscene."⁹³ Warren was increasingly concerned about the post *Roth* direction of the Court on obscenity. It seems likely that Brennan was convinced to sacrifice Mishkin and Ginzburg to protect *Fanny Hill*. By restricting the shield of its protection to literary works of some social significance, the Court signaled that it was still possible to sustain an obscenity conviction in the courts, that the court did not disdain the local community standards of Middle America. It also took some of the pressure off the liberal Court that had arisen from those who felt that the rapidity of the pace of the Court's civil rights actions was unseemly and socially unwise.

Edward De Grazia suggests that Brennan, who may well have seen himself as Warren's successor, maneuvered to get the nod from the Chief to write the decisions. It is certainly true that Brennan had initially voted with Warren to affirm the conviction of *Fanny Hill* as well as that of *Eros*. Justice Abe Fortas, in his private court papers, implies that he convinced Brennan to change his mind on the *Fanny Hill* case. The indirect effect of the three linked decisions was to insulate the Brennan doctrine from further criticism, and thus not only to protect the integrity of recognized literary works, but to shield from censorship most serious literary and artistic expression.⁹⁴ The *Eros* conviction may have been the price the Court was forced to pay to placate the forces of organized purity.

The swing vote in the Ginzburg case was that of Abe Fortas, who had been appointed to the Court in October 1965 to replace Arthur Goldberg, who had resigned to accept the post of Ambassador to the United Nations. As an intimate friend of the Johnson family and as a political ally and confidant of the President, Fortas might reasonably have seen himself as the heir apparent to the Super Chief.⁹⁵ But Fortas had a problem that would make any confirmation hearings difficult. His championship of civil rights and his outspokenness on freedom of erotic expression were well known and strongly resented in conservative circles like those that revolved around the powerful Sen. Strom Thurmond (Rep., S.C.). Fortas had, for example, filed an *amicus curiae* brief on behalf of the publishers of *Rogue* and *Playboy* magazines during the *Roth* proceedings.⁹⁶ Indeed, when Fortas was brought forward as the successor of Warren, when the latter resigned somewhat unexpectedly in June of 1968, one of the issues raised against him in Senate confirmation hearings was his obscenity record.⁹⁷

It is not unreasonable to assume, then, that Fortas, like Brennan, was engaged in political maneuvering as the *Eros* case was decided and that his maneuvering had some bearing on the outcome of the case. Fundamentally, while he voted with the liberal majority on most obscenity cases, he signed only one opinion (*Ginzburg v. New York*) on the subject. While he claimed credit for the "pandering" formula used to amend the Brennan doctrine and to secure the conviction of Ginzburg, most scholars of the Court agree that concept originated with Warren. Much of the language of the majority opinion in the *Eros* case, in fact, suggests the powerful influence of

the Chief. Fortas, it seems most likely, as a moderate on obscenity issues, was the architect of the compromise that secured the liberation of *Fanny Hill* and the amended standard of obscenity that insured the affirmation of the Ginzburg decision.⁹⁸

When the Court's decision was handed down on 21 March 1966, the reaction of the mainstream liberal press was muted. A *New York Times* editorial (24 March) flatly stated that "Ginzburg was clearly publishing pornography," and endorsed the pandering standard as a valid way to assess the intention and appeal of suspect materials. A *Saturday Evening Post* editorial, aptly titled "The Porn Problem," asserted that "the basic facts are that pornography does exist, that the production of pornography is self-evidently bad, like a foul odor in the air."⁹⁹ While this sentence could have been written by Kathryn Granahan in 1959, the magazine claimed to "naturally favor an extremely liberal interpretation of the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech and free press." The Court had, in fact, it held, shown remarkable restraint;

Precisely by refusing to rule on whether all of Ginzburg's various publications were obscene, the court has, it seems to us, deliberately avoided the role of censor. Instead, it has implied that there are general limits, and that anyone who advertises lurid erotica may be judged on his own promises, regardless of how faithfully he fulfills them. That makes sense.¹⁰⁰

What those general limits should be was made even clearer by an editorial in the *New Republic*, entitled "Obscenity and the law." While it found "Mr. Ginzburg's sentence... an outrage" and thought there was little to be said for the majority opinion in the case, neither did it support Douglas' ringing libertarian dissent. A publisher like Samuel Mishkin or Ralph Ginzburg

should be allowed to cater to those who seek out his wares. Beyond that, careful lines need to be drawn. Neither he nor they should be allowed to flaunt those wares in public or create or enlarge the market for them. That should be discouraged—as is the dumping of one's garbage on the street and a great variety of other nuisances and obnoxious acts—by administration, inspection and regulation. A man should be entitled to have dirty pictures in his inside coat pocket, but they should stay there, and it is not beyond lawmaking ingenuity to see to that, and only to that.¹⁰¹

There was a line, then, beyond which mainstream liberals were not prepared to go in the liberation of erotic speech and expression; general limits that insured the protection of children and the general public against public exhibitions and offensive erotic discourse, reinforced by restrictions on the advertising and sale of sexually-oriented materials, by local regulations, and by community oversight. The decision of the Court on *Eros*, influenced as it was by pressures from the anti-obscenity right, the attitudes towards erotic materials of the Attor-

ney General and the Chief Justice, the political considerations that dictated a strategy of playing off one liberal political goal against another, and the personalities and ambitions of the major players in the case, seems to have found that line as precisely as any product of the political process might reasonably be expected to do. Early 1960s liberalism remained a prisoner of the rhetoric of the Cold War, the phobic public preoccupation with juvenile delinquency, and the peculiar American penchant for privileging violence over sexuality in social discourse. And yet, the predictions of Ginzburg, who naturally saw his case as a triumph of censorship over free speech," and the fears that the decision "was likely to result in massive prosecutions across the country against book publishers, booksellers, and the movie industry,"¹⁰² were largely unrealized.

In the *Eros* decision and its two companion decisions, the Court had identified certain categories of publication and certain marketing techniques as outside the pale of constitutionally protected speech. They had thus established a symbolic category of forbidden speech. By implication, other categories of speech were thereby legitimized and privileged as protected erotic speech. A general adherence to freedom of erotic expression had been explicitly abandoned. By narrowing the purview of protected speech, the Court had insured the safety of "quality" erotic literature and "socially valuable" erotic expression. That compromise would prevail during the next four years to secure the protection of erotic speech within the narrowed limits of tolerance established in *Ginzburg* and *Mishkin*. But it laid the foundation for a conservative reaction that would come in the Nixon years, when the Court began to shift to the right and a more restrictive obscenity policy would be essayed.

The *Eros* decision, grounded in liberal moralism and pragmatic politics, allowed the Court to protect privileged erotic expression without significantly threatening accepted social standards and traditions of behavior. In essence, the case established a dangerous precedent by confirming intent rather than content as the head of Ginzburg's offense, and by considering the advertisement copy as separable from the publications themselves. In sustaining Ginzburg's conviction on these grounds and by refusing to rule on the constitutionality of the obscenity statutes themselves, the Court limited constitutional protection of erotic expression solely to legitimate works precedentially protected since *Commonwealth v. Gordon* (1949), gave new life to the Comstock Act, and laid the foundation for a new generation of censors who would seek to turn back the tide of the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Ginzburg had temerarily and obstreperously challenged the political ideology and social pieties of establishment liberalism; he had reflected in the sensationalist light of *Eros* the responsibility of the judicial system for making possible the more open discussion of sexual themes and the more revealing depiction of the human body. At the same time, he was an annoying gadfly of the liberal left, challenging the courts to go further and protect all erotic speech. The response of the Court to the provocation of Ginzburg's philosophy, as expressed in his publications, was to draw the line of

liberal tolerance around him by throwing the veil of censorship over *Eros*' "mirror of love... for all mankind."

NOTES

- 1 Quoted in *Commonwealth v. Gordon, et al.* in Edward De Grazia *Censorship Landmarks* (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1969): 150.
- 2 Quoted in De Grazia, *Censorship*: 153.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Edward De Grazia, *Girls Lean Back Everywhere: The Law of Obscenity and the Assault on Genius* (New York: Random House, 1992): 281.
- 5 *Ibid.*: 279.
- 6 John N. Makris, *The Silent Investigators: The Great Untold Story of the United States Postal Inspection Service*, cited in De Grazia, *Girls*: 278. Makris claimed that in the mid-1950s ten postal inspectors maintained a perpetually open case against Roth (280).
- 7 De Grazia, *Girls*: 802. An attorney in Rankin's office had coined the term "hard-core pornography" to describe the strongest materials in Summerfield's collection. See De Grazia, *Girls*: 297.
- 8 *Roth v. United States*, 77 S. Ct. 1304.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Congressional Committee Hearings Index, 1959-64.*
- 11 *Congressional Record*, 105, Eighty-Sixth Congress, 1st Session: 10189.
- 12 *Congressional Record*, 105: 10189.
- 13 *Congressional Record*, 105: 10190.
- 14 For debate and discussion of the bill, see *Congressional Record*, 105: 17575-77. For provisions of the bill, see Bob Reitman, *Freedom on Trial: The Incredible Ordeal of Ralph Ginzburg* (San Diego, CA: Publishers Export Co., 1966): 45.
- 15 *Congressional Record*, 105: 10190.
- 16 Les Daniels, *Comix: A History of Comic Books in America* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1971): 84.
- 17 For the text of the Comics Code, see Daniels, *Comix*: 89-90. For the Motion Picture Production Code (ratified in 1930), see Cobbett S. Steinberg, *Film Facts* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1980): 390-98. The (Joseph) Breen code for motion pictures censored language, depiction of sexual promiscuity and nudity, and established the twin bed standard for the depiction of domestic marital scenes. See Gerald Mast, *A Short History of the Movies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976): 264-65.
- 18 Steinberg: 394.
- 19 *Ibid.*: 389.
- 20 Frederic Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (1953; rpt. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1972): 13, 38, and 258, respectively.
- 21 Daniels: 86.
- 22 Wertham, *Seduction*: 31-32, 52, 76-77, 110-111. Chapter V (pp. 120-45) is entitled "Retooling for Illiteracy," and makes the case for the role of comics in the decline of children's reading skills.
- 23 Wertham: 13. The two phrases quoted are chapter titles.
- 24 *Congressional Record*, 105: 17577.
- 25 *Congressional Record*, 105: 10191, 17577.
- 26 Jong's observations are from her introduction to the thirtieth anniversary edition of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, quoted in De Grazia, *Girls*: 251. For a detailed discussion of

- these pictorial magazines, their illustration policies, and circulation figures, see Mark Gabor, *The Illustrated History of Girlie Magazines: From National Police Gazette to the Present* (New York: Harmony Books, 1984): 106, 113, and 118. *Penthouse* "went pink" (showed explicit, full frontal, vaginal nudity) in August 1971. *Playboy* followed in January 1972.
- 27 *Fanny Hill* had been virtually continuously in print in underground editions since it had first appeared in 1749. In fact, it seems to have been the first predominantly erotic work published in America (prior to 1789). It was, furthermore, the first book published in America to be prosecuted for violation of obscenity laws (*Commonwealth of Massachusetts v. Holmes*, 1821), the first imprint of a native American erotic book industry (1846), and widely popular in cheap, underground editions during the Civil War. Cf. Ralph Ginzburg, *An Unhurried View of Erotica* (New York: Helmsman Press, 1958), 73-74. For a summary of the decision in the Holmes case, see De Grazia, *Censorship*: 40-41.
 - 28 *G.P. Putnam's Sons v. Calissi* (1964), quoted in De Grazia: 514.
 - 29 Quoted in De Grazia: 465 n4.
 - 30 *Attorney General of Massachusetts v. A Book Named "John Cleland's Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure"* (1965). Quoted in De Grazia: 521.
 - 31 Reitman: 33.
 - 32 *Ibid.*: 35.
 - 33 Reitman: 35-36.
 - 34 Reitman: 36.
 - 35 Letters quoted were reprinted in *Eros*, 1:2 (Summer 1962) at the end of the volume.
 - 36 The printing of the erotic limericks was also a first for an above-ground publication. The rapidity with which popular standards of acceptable public erotic expression were changing, however, was evident with the publication of Gerson Legman's definitive, variorum edition of 1700 examples (the largest single collection ever published), *The Limerick* (Bell Pub. Co., 1964).
 - 37 *Eros*, 1:4: 24.
 - 38 Reitman: 38.
 - 39 *Eros*, 1:4: 24.
 - 40 *Congressional Record*, 108, Eighty-Seventh Congress, 2nd Session: 3761.
 - 41 *Ibid.*: 3762.
 - 42 *Ibid.*
 - 43 *Ibid.*: 3761.
 - 44 Reitman: 47.
 - 45 *Congressional Record*, 109, Eighty-Eighth Congress, 1st Session: 4277.
 - 46 *Ibid.*: 5174.
 - 47 *Ibid.*
 - 48 *Ibid.* De Grazia sets the number of complaints received by the Post Office Department at 35,000, but it may well have been higher. See *Girls*: 509.
 - 49 Reitman: 68.
 - 50 The phrases quoted are respectively from Inez Robb and Joseph P. Addabbo. See *Congressional Record*, 109: A 7524 and A 1821.
 - 51 In 1962, in the largest newsstand raid in the city's history, police had confiscated seventeen van-loads of obscene materials. The vigilante purity group, Christian Force for Our Righteous Christian Environment, 25,000 strong, had forced the removal from the shelves of all forty of the city's public libraries of Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. In an orgy of righteous wrath, the city's

superintendent of schools had burned a huge pile of impounded reading material on the steps of the Messiah Lutheran Church while angelic choir boys sang "Gloria in Excelsis." See Reitman: 72-73.

⁵² *New York Times*, 10 June 1963, 29: 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ 224 F. Supp. 134 and 135.

⁵⁵ 224 F. Supp. 135.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ 224 F. Supp. 137. Ginzburg, it is worth remembering, was a self-proclaimed atheist. See Reitman: 69.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, 29 November 1963, 22: 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, and *Congressional Record*, 109: A 7524.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Quote of Inez Robb.

⁶¹ Fed. Reporter 2nd Series 338: 14-15.

⁶² Quoted in Reitman: 139.

⁶³ *New York Times*, 15 January 1965, 23: 2 and Reitman: 145.

⁶⁴ Supreme Court Reporter 86A 383-384 U.S.: 945-46.

⁶⁵ For the Granahan quotes, see Reitman: 44-45 and *Congressional Record*, 108: 3761, respectively.

⁶⁶ 16 Led 2d: 37.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 38.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 37.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 38.

⁷⁰ Supreme Court Reporter 86-A 383-384 U.S.: 954.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*: 969.

⁷² *Ibid.*: 942.

⁷³ The quote is from an advertisement for *Eros*, quoted in 16 Led 2d, 37 n9.

⁷⁴ *New York Times*, 5 September 1965, 1:1 and 2 respectively. A full text of this article is reprinted in Thomas Emerson, David Haber, and Norman Dorsen, eds., *Political and Civil Rights in the United States*, 1 (Boston: Little Brown, 1967), 782-85.

⁷⁵ *National Review*, 18: 14 (5 April 1966): 302.

⁷⁶ See *New York Times*, 26 June 1963, 26:6; and 8 December 1963, 81:1. Jayne Mansfield made her first appearance in *Playboy* in 1955 as the February Playmate of the Month.

⁷⁷ *New York Times*, 24 February 1965, 38: 1; and 5 March 1965.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Reitman: 218.

⁷⁹ De Grazia: 944.

⁸⁰ John Cohen, ed., *The Essential Lenny Bruce* (New York: Ballantine books, 1967): 283. For the affirmation of Bruce's Chicago conviction by the Illinois Supreme Court, *People v. Lenny Bruce*, see De Grazia, *Censorship*: 508-09.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*: 261.

⁸² The Bruce petition is reprinted in Albert Goldman, *Ladies and Gentlemen, Lenny Bruce!* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), 657-59. The Ginzburg support letter appeared in the *New York Times*, 3 April 1966, 14E. The letter was signed by Hugh Hefner and the petition by Henry Miller and LeRoi Jones.

⁸³ *New York Times*, 29 November 1963, 22: 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ For the careers of Day and Gronouski, see Nelson Lichtenstein, ed., *Political Profiles: The Kennedy Years* (New York: Facts on File, 1976): 110-11; and Nelson Lichtenstein, ed., *Political Profiles: The Johnson Years* (New York: Facts on File, 1976): 238-39.

⁸⁶ Quoted in the *New York Times*, 20 December 1963, 27: 5.

⁸⁷ Victor S. Navasky, *Kennedy Justice* (New York: Atheneum, 1971): 5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*: 332.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*: 391.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Quoted in De Grazia: 502.

⁹² *Ibid.*: 502. In his oral arguments, Bender had signaled as much in open court. He had conceded that 75-90% of the material the Justice Department routinely sought to suppress was more objectionable than *Eros*. See *New York Times*, 22 March 1966, 25:1.

⁹³ Quoted in De Grazia: 274..

⁹⁴ De Grazia: 500.

⁹⁵ Fortas would occupy the traditional "Jewish seat" (first occupied by Louis Brandeis, appointed 1916), and he was to replace the man who, with his appointment to succeed Felix Frankfurter in 1962, had tipped the balance of the Court in an even more liberal direction. Johnson's appointment of his longtime friend and advisor to the Court was therefore critical.

⁹⁶ Thurmond had been the Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1948, and in 1964 had switched his party allegiance to Republican. On Fortas and *Playboy*, see De Grazia: 309n, and 527. William Hamling, publisher of *Rogue*, would later fund the defense of Robert Redrup, the clerk at a New York newsstand indicted for selling "girlie" magazines—*Robert Redrup v. State of New York* (1967).

⁹⁷ See Bruce Allen Murphy, *Fortas: The Rise and Ruin of a Supreme Court Justice* (New York: William Morrow, 1988): 441-530.

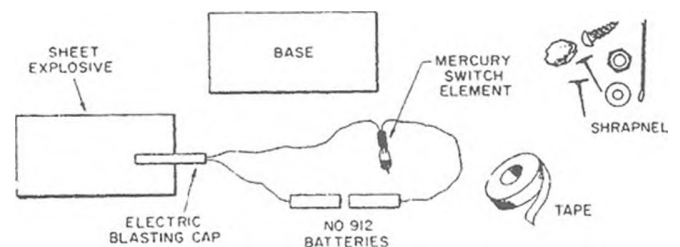
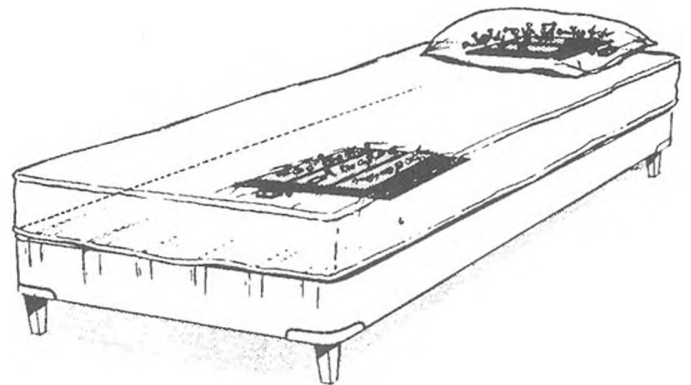
⁹⁸ Ginzburg, in his Supreme Court appearance seems not to have done himself any good. There is evidence that suggests that his appearance and demeanor, and perhaps his taste, offended Justices Brennan and Fortas. Fortas, in his private court papers, attributed his misjudgment in the case to Ginzburg's "slimy" personality. See De Grazia: 506n.

⁹⁹ *Saturday Evening Post*, 293:10 (7 May 1966): 98.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *New Republic*, 2 April 1966: 6.

¹⁰² *New York Times*, 26 March 1966, 25: 2; and *New York Times*, 26 March 1966, 4: 6, respectively.





EVERY

POETRY by LAURIE WAGNER BUYER

SESTINA FOR MY FIRST LOVE

Late light always flowed blood-like through the window
pouring warm sanction over the way I humbled and hurt
myself beneath the rhythmic rise and fall of your body—
always waking cold, my back shoved against the wall.
Sent away, bruised by the woman taking my place,
I heard you say, "Love's a grave disease."

A decade withdraws and memory becomes the worst disease
of all—remembering December dawns haunting your window,
the weed-spiked snow fields I tramped to reach your place:
I choke on the memory, trying to swallow the bitter hurt
of being too young. The past looms like a mirrored wall
reflecting your adonic face, finely chiseled body,

flawless, knowing hands that caress my body
now only in dreams. "Disease" ... "grave disease" ...
so grave for me who cannot forget the shadows on the wall
or the pillowed sheen of dark hair caught in window-
curtained light. A howling predator of hurt
trails me as I search for the safe place

you must be, the mysterious place
I cannot find where your hair whitens, your body
wrinkles, your proud demeanor grievously hurt
by passing years. I cannot cure this fatal disease
with another's life, with another bedroom window
spilling sacrificial light, another concrete

wall as cold and hard as yours. Like tiny wall
rue I cling fern-like to a sheltered place
out of the wind, to the only window
in my memory that gives me light. Searing my body
with remorse, I pray the deep disease
you left me can be cauterized by slow self-hurt

Between my young thighs you planted a hurt
so colossal that it grows wall-
eyed and accusing in your direction. Disease-
ridden, the once rich giving place
in my heart is eaten away—for you alone embody
that part of me that stood naked by the window,

asking innocently to be hurt, asking for that place
in your disease-infected arms where my fledgling body
first found flight, my fluttering heart an open window.

KESTREL

Body like a bullet, wings
tucked, a shushing
rush of August air,
the kestrel keens past my
summer scarved head
a blurring whirl
before my eyes.

Transcending a thermal, rising up,
a black cross against
lingering light,
dives into the deep
shadow of the divide
and calling "kill-ee"
disappears.

Magic, medicine, miracle
or simply the wonder
of the earth, timeless,
resurrecting your dark aura,
the mystery of memory,
entwines you with a
sparrowhawk, hunting at day's end.

Laurie Wagner Buyer is a ranch wife. She squeezes in time for poetry and nonfiction articles between feeding cows, calving, cleaning barns and houses, cooking and sundry other tasks. Her work has appeared in *The Western Horseman*, *Farm and Ranch Living*, *The George Williams Review* and *Dry Creek Review*. She also writes frequently for a small weekly agricultural magazine, *The Fence Post*, out of Windsor, CO.

POETRY by GEORGE HELD

PRAISED BE NO ONE

Gelobt seist du, Niemand.
—Paul Celan

Not pride our sin
for we are cowardung
on clogs

Not proudly
we deny
thee

We doubt
no one
could create

the pain
the angst
of Holocaust

Cambodia
Somalia
Bosnia
ad nauseam

ANOTHER FALL

Already I see the Zapruder-esque Nightmare
flash on the screen of my mind's eye—
The graying blond brillo sprayed with crimson
As a hole in the head opens and chunks
Of skull and brains spatter the first lady
Riding beside her man in the limousine's
Back seat, the secret serviceman scrambling
Up over the trunk, reaching out to her
As she leans out to lend him a hand
And draw him into the catastrophe;
Another leader rubbed out like a punk
Who'd let his tab run too high with the mob,
And right out in public again, before
Incredulous millions viewing the tube,
Another pledge to renew the nation
Cone up in gunsmoke on a sparkling fall
Day, one more conspiracy that will go
Undetected, protecting privilege
And ushering in yet another
Season of black crepe and torn hearts
As the serpents recapture the garden,
Osiris fractures beyond redemption,
And all the Government's women and men
Can't put the country together again.

MORNING AFTER

I know it's a bummer, kid, coming down
to breakfast knowing yr mom's still
shacked up with the bum
she dragged in from the bar
down the block last night
but I'm different, you'll see,
I'm no one-night stand
corny as it sounds it was love
at first sight
between yr mom & me

We waited till you were asleep
before she shut yr door as gentle as a Marine
dismantling a landmine
then she shut her own door & the night
long we tried to mute our pleasure
but maybe love's release
did echo down the hall a bit
maybe you even heard it all
but whatever you heard could only sound
dimly the blast our syn-
ergy created

so you'll be seeing a lot more
of me from now on I won't
run off or be run off
by a son who guards
his mother's gates like a Marine
guarding the White House & my motto
is "Semper fi"

o o o

O Christ Mom not another
deadbeat met at O'Toole's
another jerk who'll call
me "Junior" or "Sonny"
in the morning & slip
me a five & tell
me to run down to the corner
for a *News* & a pack
of butts & keep
the change

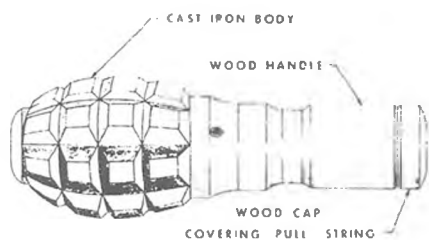
i know you're lonely since Dad
moved out, but aren't i
enough or can't you wait
till i get out of school
in a few years or just go
to his place for a change
i'm tired of your alley cat
wails at midnight the first time
i thought you were being
murdered & nearly broke in
to save you can you imagine
that scene me with my ball
bat & you with some slug
crawling on your belly & me
seeing my mother...

but tonight you're quieter
 than usual as though you
 closed my door like a book
 before you come
 to the good part contented
 to take it slow
 before the real turn-
 on & this Joe doesn't do much
 grunting or hollering
 like the other slobs
 so maybe you finally broke
 your loser streak.

o o o

I wish I could be a good mother
 like Diane Keaton in that movie
 but she didn't seem to need it
 as bad as I do I always heard
 a woman peaks in her thirties
 and it's sure true for me in a way
 maybe it's better Matthew's father
 took off when he did 'cause he probably
 couldn't satisfy me now a little
 went a long way with him like he was saving
 it up for some big celebration that always
 got pushed back a while longer and when
 I came on to him he might oblige
 me or not but this Carney he's really got
 the hots for me and so what if he's
 got that silly "Semper fi" on his bi-
 ceps and me with my peace pendant I liked
 the way he understood we'd wait till
 the boy was asleep and tried to swallow
 the song he sang when he came
 and he'd been holding back to make
 sure he'd brought me off at least half
 a dozen times and when did anyone else
 think of anyone but himself I'll keep
 my fingers crossed that he'll see me
 again as he said he wants to and that he
 and Matt will hit it off and I won't
 have to bring anyone else home
 for a while

George Held, 285 West 4th St., New York, NY 10014-2222.



STICK HAND GRENADE

POETRY by TIMOTHY F. KENNEDY

**This isn't
 THE WAY
 IT COULD'VE BEEN**

At the house of a friend,
 dogs lie on the summer sundeck
 under an umbrella topped table.
 The smell of slow-cooking bacon
 blows through the house
 like salty wind off the sea
 while he bakes fresh bread
 in a special machine.

My apartment seems smaller
 on these days I recognize
 the chunk of wasted years passed.
 With a choice of ways to view
 what I've missed,
 I choose the way without tears.
 Kind of like I never slept with Betty Grable,
 not that I didn't want to,
 I just wasn't able.

On a walk
 through a sun-shortened day
 in a park
 I see
 a dwarfish,
 narrow-trunked tree.
 Its branches blossom with white petals
 billowing out
 into a perfect circle
 like a snowball on a stick.
 A sparrow sits
 on a drooping branch
 and mechanically moves its head
 as I watch the sinking sun
 breathe out slowly
 a vaporous spectral sketch.
 It saturates the evening sky
 with hues of orange and red
 like a distant fire's luster
 glows bright on the horizon's edge.

Suddenly
 a stranger approaches me fast,
 and says, "someday we're all gonna die,
 and our aching chests
 will heave forth
 iridescent saliva
 that'll glow in the dark."
 I nod, say "yep,"
 smile,
 and as he walks away
 the sun slips from sight.

In a waking dream on Bowne Street
 I hear spirits mimic
 the voices of passersby.
 Looking through the window of a fish market
 I see black eyes gape out at nothing
 as people hurry nowhere,
 and I think, maybe this isn't the way
 it could've been,
 but it's better than the way it was.

SURE

Of some things I've been sure.
 Like when the pin was pulled from a grenade,
 my focus clear and complete,
 my crowded mind given a zen-like
 break, and I just shotputted that fucker
 towards the target and dove to the dirt.

Or when the hospital doors slammed shut
 on the silent and the scared,
 and the loud and laughing,
 locked inside
 cold corridors,
 left to wander
 like players in slow, surreal,
 Bergmanesque scenes.

Like the French artist in the hall
 whose pottery persuaded him to slash
 his wrists, who stood, rocking,
 in front of a litho of Paris.

Or another with phantom friends
 who, upon my arrival
 and amazed at my appearance, asked,
 "What's it like to be normal?"

You're not crazy!

What's it like to be normal?"

A question I had no answer for.
 But the routine was steady—and sure.

Also sure that dope sizzled in the spoon
 when ready.

I just drew it up
 into the syringe, tied off,
 pumped the fist,
 held the arm steady
 and found a good vein,
 then pushed the pinpoint
 in and killed the pain.
 Sitting sure and still
 in my porcelain hell,
 body numbing,
 eyelids heavy, held open only
 by the faucet's
 endless
 drip
 so even—and sure.

*Timothy F. Kennedy, 42-35 159th St., Apt. 4-D, Flushing,
 NY 11358.*

POETRY by JAMES SCOFIELD

A THOUSAND YEARS OF WAR

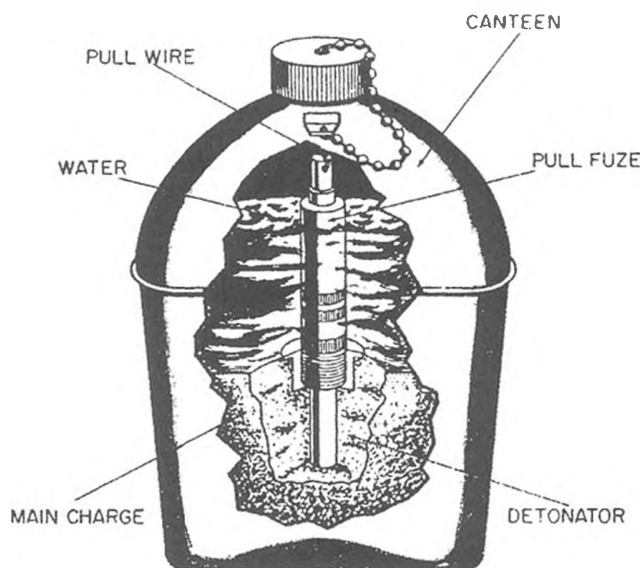
Only the neutral is free.
 —Thomas Mann

He is a boy, with a club, pounding the sand.
 A howling, whirling, divided, dervish boy,
 chasing birds at rest, while waves charge the shore,
 manes flying, collapsing then on the gull scarred sand.
 A thousand years of war in this beast most innocent.

Castles on the beach are falling, gulls shrieking,
 the machine gun rattle of kites, clusters of birds
 exploding off the beach, isolated clumps
 of green trampled, the charred logs cold and dead.
 The tide is in, the clouds hang grey and heavy.

A young hunter, his blows and shouts coming
 from some stony place. The blood unfurls beneath
 the stars, which are like soul and body, cloven.
 If hands could set us free, where would we run?
 Back to war, or toward all beauty under the sun?

James Scofield, 3303 Pear St., SE, Olympia, WA 98501.



WHEN THE TRUTH IS FOUND

Theodore M. Lieverman, 41 South Haddon Ave.
Haddonfield, NJ 08033.

For most Americans, Vietnam was never a country. It began as a problem, and then became in rapid succession a crisis, a war, a tragedy, a metaphor of decline, and finally an "experience." With the ending of the trade embargo on February 3, 1994, President Clinton has taken a step that will soon transform Vietnam into history.

A quarter of the American population was not yet born at the time the Paris Peace Accords were signed and the last American troops came home in early 1973. That distance, in time and temperament, from the war permits developments that earlier would have seemed, if not inconceivable, at least farfetched.

Travel magazines and major newspapers now regularly feature stories on the pleasures of touring Vietnam. Cruises to Vietnam are becoming popular. In January 1993, the Harvard Alumni Association sponsored a cruise to Vietnam, their guest host Neil Sheehan, former Vietnam war correspondent and Harvard Class of 1958. Seven Seas Cruiseline now offers luxury cruises to Vietnam, such as the 10-night "Voyage to Vietnam" aboard the five-star ship *Song of Flower* last November. As a resource for interested passengers, the ship was scheduled to carry H. R. Haldeman, former chief of staff to Richard Nixon and later convicted felon for his role in Watergate. (Haldeman died of cancer just a few days before departure.) Last December, the *Aurora I* took some 80 members of the Stanford Alumni Association to Cambodia and Vietnam, guided by Admiral James Stockdale, former candidate for vice-president on the Perot ticket and commanding officer of the American POWs held at the Hanoi Hilton 1965-1973—returning to Vietnam for the first time in 20 years. This coming November, Pearl Cruises will conduct its "luxury cruise seminar" to Vietnam featuring former Middle East hostage (and Vietnam veteran) Terry Anderson and John Wheeler, who helped build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Vietnamese clothes are all the rage now in the fashion world. Ralph Lauren's spring collection is based on traditional Indochinese styles; at the November show in New York, "Rice paddy hats were the accessory of choice."

A news photo in the Philadelphia Inquirer in the Summer of 1993 shows a group of tourists walking through the Virginia woods while an American dressed in black pajamas and conical rice hat fires at them. The caption states:

A Viet Cong soldier (portrayed by Vietnam veteran Vernon Duke) fires blanks at surprised visitors walking through "Nam Land" during the 7th Annual "Vietnam Revisited" in Suffolk, Va. Vietnam veterans walked groups through the woods yesterday to explain

how booby traps were laid. The event aims to foster an understanding of the Vietnam war.

The woods portrayed in the photograph bear no resemblance to the Southeast Asian jungle, and one wonders what "understanding" the surprised visitors will gain by seeing a large caucasian American dressed in a cheap imitation of Vietnamese garb.

But if "Nam Land" looks more like a theme park than a battlefield, it is not very different from some current Vietnamese war attractions. Some 70 kilometers northwest of Saigon, interested tourists can visit a portion of the famous Cu Chi tunnel complex built over a period of 30 years by Vietnamese guerrillas fighting first the French, then the Americans. Similar to battlefield historical sites in this country, the Cu Chi center contains a small visitor center (complete with films and videotapes), a diorama of the tunnels, and various refreshment stands. At the souvenir shop, one can pick up copies of Ho Chi Minh sandals made from rubber tires, black guerilla "pajamas," and even T-shirts that say in English, "Cu Chi Tunnels Vietnam." Tourists are invited to sample the terrors of the tunnels by crawling through a short portion of the underground complex specially widened for Westerners. Another sign in English, "Go shooting, please," directs the happy visitors to the newly constructed rifle range where, for a dollar per round, they can fire AK-47's and M-16's at pictures of animals (including a poster of a fierce looking bear).

U.S. veterans of the war can now return to Vietnam as guests of CCB Tour, the Vietnamese Veterans Association of Ho Chi Minh City. These are former liberation fighters, not South Vietnamese army vets, welcoming American soldiers to visit "in an atmosphere of friendship, reconciliation and hospitality." According to its glossy color brochure, CCB Tour offers a variety of different tours, many of which are tailored to specific American military units. Thus, Tour 1 is "especially arranged" for veterans of the 1st Infantry Division, attached elements of 101st Airborne Division, and First Cavalry Division. Tour 4 is reserved for veterans of the 9th Infantry Division and attached elements. CCB Tour will also put together special tours, seminars, interviews, and hunting and fishing trips for interested American veterans.

The passing of the Vietnam War into the unyielding past, where the decisions and their consequences can no longer be changed, has transformed the discussion about the war. In September 1993, Hampden-Sydney College in Farmville, Virginia hosted a conference entitled **Vietnam: 20 Years After**, which illustrated just what has changed about the debate. The conference boasted a stellar list of speakers: General William Westmoreland, Walt Rostow, Ambassador William Colby, Senators Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern, Oliver Stone, Morley Safer, Neil Sheehan, Stanley Karnow, Peter Arnett, Colonel Charles Beckwith, and others. Over a three day period of speeches, panels and informal bull sessions, students and local residents heard key players from that period explain, with the perspective of twenty years, what they did and why.

Hampden-Sydney seems an incongruous setting for a retrospective on Vietnam. Nestled in the gently rolling fields of Southside Virginia, the rural campus has a simple beauty, with broad, well-tended lawns, Federalist-style redbrick halls, and an old graveyard. Listed by Princeton Review as one of the best 268 colleges in the country, Hampden-Sydney is known for a student body that is, as one student put it, "very white, very rich and very male"—in fact, it is one of the few all-male private colleges left in the country. Fiske's Guide to Colleges calls Hampden-Sydney "a radical student's worst nightmare." The students are largely politically and socially conservative, a "handful of southern gentlemen" according to Fiske. The young men largely follow the college traditions of politely greeting people met in passing, and of asking strangers if they can be of help. Those students who may not be immediately familiar with these and other traditions of civility are reminded by the booklet entitled *To Manner Born, To Manners Bred: A Hip-pocket Guide to Etiquette for the Hampden-Sydney Man*, sold in the campus bookstore (on a different shelf from the *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines).

Formally organized in 1776, the founders named the college after John Hampden and Algernon Sydney, two English gentlemen who were executed in the 17th century by the British government for their outspoken defense of freedom from government interference. During the Revolutionary War, Hampden-Sydney students organized a militia company and marched off to defend Williamsburg in 1777. At the beginning of the Civil War, the students banded together to support the Confederacy. Fortunately for them, they were captured during the Battle of Rich Mountain in July 1861 and paroled by Union General McClellan on condition that they return to their studies.

At a time when other college campuses were home to demonstrations, sit-ins, even riots, the Vietnam War seems to have largely passed Hampden-Sydney by. While most students gave passive support to the war, relatively few Hampden-Sydney students fought. Between 1967 and 1972, the student newspaper *The Tiger* carried occasional articles about the war, but largely without any air of urgency. During the school year 1967-1968, student Jim Beckner contributed a regular political column expressing liberal views. In the September 15, 1967 issue, he wrote, "The war in the South is going badly. The bombing of the North has accomplished nothing." Later in the year, he commented on the paucity of the solutions offered by the Republicans, noting in passing, "Reagan is unthinkable as anything above Governor of Death Valley, which is where his politics come from."

The February 2, 1968 issue carried a long interview with alumnus Peter Youngblood, who had just returned as a platoon medic with the First Cavalry Division. Youngblood felt unqualified to explain or justify the politics of the war, stressing that his main purpose in the field was just to stay alive. However, he thought that draft-dodgers were cowards: "If I were among them I would be ashamed to vote, ashamed to call myself an American." The following month, the paper contained

two full centerfold pages of articles on campus opinions about the war. Some of the writers favored more drastic military activity, others urged negotiations and withdrawal. Everyone thought the Johnson policy was a failure.

During the school year 1969-1970, a more liberal crowd gained editorial control of the paper, opposing the draft and supporting the October and November Moratorium activities as an opportunity for war opponents "to make a valid and responsible statement...." The student government organization sponsored a teach-in for the October Moratorium, and some 200 students and faculty signed a petition calling for withdrawal. Ronald Heinemann, then an assistant professor of American history, ended his speech by saying, "We have lost our perspective, our rationality, our pre-eminent moral position in history."

These mild messages of protest, and a few others on civil rights, were faint whispers on the largely quiescent campus. Far more space in *The Tiger* was taken up with an examination of the fraternity system. Starting in 1969, every issue featured the Tigress of the Week, a large photograph of a leggy, miniskirted coed from nearby women's colleges. In a special feature on racial attitudes, students were asked if Hampden-Sydney should actively seek Negro enrollment: 51 said yes, 199 said no. (As of last year, the student body was 94% white, 3% black, 1% Asian, 1% Hispanic, 1% foreign. Princeton Review reports problems with discrimination against gays and minorities.)

If there is a natural connection between the Vietnam War and Hampden-Sydney that gives any special significance to a large conference, it is in the personage of its president. Retired Lieutenant-General Samuel V. Wilson, known to friends and subordinates as General Sam, spent 37 years in the U.S. Army and other high government positions before his inauguration as president of the college in 1992. The Wilson family boasts a long connection with Hampden-Sydney. Just outside General Sam's office window is the original building which in 1775 housed the law office of his great-great-great-great grandfather Nathaniel Venable, one of the founders of the college along with Patrick Henry and James Madison. The Wilson family comes from farms near Rice, just a few miles from the college. Members of the Wilson family have frequently served as trustees of the school or attended as students.

General Sam might have attended Hampden-Sydney himself but for the European war. In 1940, high school valedictorian Sam Wilson heard Prime Minister Winston Churchill on the radio, giving his famous speech about blood, toil, sweat and tears. A few days later, young Sam, just 16, walked the seven miles from his farm to Farmville and enlisted in the army by falsely telling the recruiter he was 18. Wilson served with the Office of Strategic Services, the country's wartime intelligence agency.

In 1943, Wilson, a first lieutenant, volunteered for an elite unit designated the 5307th Composite Unit, more popularly known as Merrill's Marauders. General

Merrill, his marauders—and Sam himself—earned themselves a place in military history by fighting their way across 700 miles of mountains and forests in Burma to attack the Japanese and help take Myitkyina. Wilson commanded an intelligence and reconnaissance platoon behind the lines—an excellent introduction to the art of guerrilla warfare. The Marauders sustained almost 100% casualties during the several month operation and were literally destroyed by the ordeal. Wilson himself was airlifted out of Myitkyina in May 1944 with typhus, malaria and amoebic dysentery.

In 1944, General Stillwell—who had sent Merrill and his unit on their arduous mission (and who was roundly cursed by the Marauders as a result)—arranged Wilson's appointment to West Point. Wilson couldn't pass the physical as a result of his war injuries and illnesses. Although Wilson later attended Columbia's School of International Affairs and became an expert on the Soviet Union, he never received an undergraduate degree.

After the war, Wilson became an intelligence officer with the CIA. Between 1963 and 1967, Wilson, a lieutenant colonel ostensibly on loan to the State Department, helped to create and run the pacification program in Vietnam. Unlike many U.S. policy-makers and military leaders, Wilson had few illusions about what the U.S. could accomplish in Vietnam; perhaps his service with the Marauders had taught him the realities of guerrilla warfare that the traditional generals and policymakers never understood. In January 1965, Wilson attended a high-level meeting in Saigon with U.S. Ambassador (and General) Maxwell Taylor and 11 members of the U.S. Mission Council to discuss the topic of whether to send U.S. ground combat troops to Vietnam. Alone among the attendees, Wilson opposed the use of American combat forces. Seven years later, a somewhat rueful Henry Kissinger told Wilson, "You know, you were right."

Wilson went on to command the Sixth Special Forces Group and the U.S. Army Special Warfare School, and later serve as U.S. military attache in Moscow. From 1974 to 1976, Wilson was CIA Director William Colby's deputy, coordinating foreign intelligence. In 1976, he was named director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Although he retired the following year, Wilson continued to be an important consultant on intelligence and special operations. For years he acted as an advisor and informal father-confessor to the Army's secret counterterrorist group known as Delta Force. After the failure of Delta's 1980 hostage-rescue mission in Iran, Wilson was appointed to a blue ribbon panel to investigate the mission. *Newsweek* published a report in 1981 that the Reagan White House, dissatisfied with William Casey's running of the CIA, was considering Wilson for the post. He has chaired the Special Operations Policy Advisory Group and still frequently consults with national security officials.

When he retired in 1977, General Sam came back to Farmville, signed his papers, and walked the seven miles back home to the farm. He started teaching a course in national security at Hampden-Sydney and adult bible Sunday school classes at Jamestown Presbyterian

Church. When problems caused the trustees to look for a new president in 1992, they chose Wilson.

Soldier, scholar, Sunday school teacher, spook. General Sam has pulled together a number of disparate themes in his life, and all of them seem to have propelled him to organize a conference on the Vietnam war for his undergraduate students. He knew that the controversies and deep feelings about the war still existed, but he wanted to see if the issues could be examined "on a plateau of less emotionality," without the smoke and heat. He knew that the students had little knowledge about the war; in order to be useful, the conference would have to be like Vietnam War 101. Further, Wilson thought it important that the college not make a statement about the war itself, but provide a forum for "responsible" views. Fortunately, he had worked with most of the players and could get them to a conference by saying, Hey, this is Old Sam, I need one.

Viet Nam 20 Years After opened on Thursday afternoon, September 16, 1993, to a crowd of some 2,000 in the sweltering heat of the Kirby Field House. From the start, the conference showed a fondness for ceremony. Each session began with General Wilson and the session moderator leading the featured speakers in a procession down the right aisle to the podium, accompanied by an honor guard of student escorts in blue blazers. General Wilson opened each session with words of welcome and an introduction of the speaker. Even the Tiger Inn, the college dining center, got into the spirit. The cafeteria line had scooped out one of the glass shelves of breakfast cereal to display, on crushed cloth, a series of books by participants in the conference—separated by World War II standard issue hand grenades (hopefully lacking explosives).

The conference also reflected General Sam's own history as a national security official. The most honored slots were reserved for war managers: Rostow, Colby, Westmoreland. A large number of the speakers were alumni of intelligence agencies, special operations, and elite military units. There were no Vietnamese speakers (Wilson says he tried without success to arrange some, and was delighted when a former South Vietnamese fighter pilot made a short statement from the floor). The attractive, professionally produced program booklet featured a montage of U.S. military images, all positive and noble. To his credit, Wilson did not put together a one-sided portrayal of the war, and he undoubtedly disagreed strongly with some of the speakers that he warmly welcomed to his campus. Still, the emphasis of the conference was skewed in a way that was noticeable, particularly by those of us who had never seen a college meeting on the Vietnam war that did not reveal at least one banner of the National Liberation Front.

As Wilson had wanted, the conference was geared to today's students. Most of the presentations offered little that had not been said in the past; many seemed to be summaries of the books the speakers had already published about their Vietnam war years (Peter Arnett was correcting galley proofs of his memoirs during the conference). Senator McCarthy even cracked some jokes he had

first used during his 1968 campaign for presidency—they still got laughs. For observers familiar with the history of the war, the conference provided an opportunity to see all the *dramatis personae* together after so many years. Westmoreland and Arnett not only spoke for the first time since Vietnam, they warmly shook hands and held animated conversations about what, from each of their perspectives, had gone wrong. Westmoreland even held his plane home for a half-hour to finish their talk. It was worth attending the conference to see Oliver Stone slouching next to a stiff Marine Colonel Ripley, to watch General Kingston listening to Neil Sheehan tell the audience that the U.S. was lying in those years, to see some Vietnam vets tell the higher-ups that the war was senseless. But it was also sobering to hear some of the same old arguments in a different age, after the Khmer Rouge, after Gorbachev and Yeltsin, after the collapse of European communism, after Grenada, Panama, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, after Iran-contra.

The conference led off with Walt Rostow, former national security policymaker under Kennedy and Johnson, one of the principal architects of the Johnson escalation of American involvement in Vietnam, and one of the last Americans who thinks that policy was correct. Rostow began by informing the audience that to understand the American policy in Indochina, one had to look at a map of the region. With that, a campus employee switched on the overhead projector to reveal a map of Indochina—turned upside down. Amid chuckles from the audience, Rostow was unfazed and shrugged, "It's the view from China."

Rostow's own view of Indochina seemed remarkably unchanged from his White House days. We went into Vietnam because of a solemn treaty signed in 1955 that created the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). The U.S. has a vital interest in protecting the South China sea from domination by a hostile power, an interest recognized by ten presidents prior to Clinton. John Kennedy developed his global view as a result of a 1951 trip to Asia, and came to appreciate the importance of the developing countries. Similarly, Lyndon Johnson acquired a "very deep view" of Asia during his 1961 trip to the region as vice-president. Johnson noted then that the U.S. strategy concerned all of Southeast Asia. There were plans to defend Thailand by fighting in Laos. Unfortunately, the Lao were not very good warriors; better, thought Johnson, to fight on the Vietnamese side of the border.

Rostow pointed out that by late 1964, the military situation in Vietnam was desperate. The decision to commit U.S. troops, however, involved not just a crisis in Vietnam, but a crisis throughout Asia. Although the war ended in 1975 with a "dreadful debacle," it in fact accomplished its purpose by allowing a strong, vibrant and increasingly democratic Southeast Asia to emerge. Lee Kuan Yew, the prime minister of Singapore, reportedly told everyone this message, but the journalists never reported it. Rostow described Yew as a moderate, liberal socialist who once visited America and, hearing the

intellectuals' views of the war, told Rostow sadly that, "They don't care about freedom for the yellow man." (Those familiar with Yew's strong-arm, free enterprise, authoritarian regime may be puzzled by the description of Yew as a liberal socialist).

It was this central point, that the U.S. had accomplished its primary objectives by fighting in Vietnam, that Rostow wanted to convey. Nixon gave Hanoi encouragement to resist by announcing he would eliminate all U.S. forces within three years, thus trying to outflank the Democrats. When the Communists attacked South Vietnam during the Spring offensive of 1972, there were no U.S. ground troops. Nevertheless, the U.S. managed to defeat the North with air power. If Nixon had honored his commitments to former South Vietnamese president Thieu, things would have been different. Rostow deplored how Congress had cut the throats of the Vietnamese by refusing to vote more aid to South Vietnam in 1975, how we still haven't got the story of Vietnam straight.

In response to questions, Rostow showed no signs of mellowing. Asked about Ho Chi Minh's nationalist temperament, Rostow replied that Ho was a "classic apparachik" in the Communist movement who had his competitors for power assassinated. Ho wanted to succeed the colonial power, and he wanted Laos and Cambodia as well. The communists were never a serious political force in the South, and their guerrillas were largely decimated by the time of Tet 1968. He had nothing good to say about the press or the antiwar movement, but then noted that the U.S. defeat was caused by the defection of the hawks. The war had only a limited economic impact on our country. All of Asia outside of China supported the U.S., even where, as India, they could not publicly say so (India, he says, sold its soul to the Soviet devil over Kashmir). He even spoke respectfully of Ngo Dinh Diem, the autocratic president of South Vietnam ultimately assassinated during the generals' coup in November 1963.

What we should have done, said Rostow—and what he told the White House during the war—was to close the open frontier to South Vietnam by putting U.S. troops across the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. Also, we should have made better use of our air power, its use in defense of the Marine garrison at Khe Sanh was "brilliant."

Conforming to the conference format, all questioners gave their names and brief background information. It was evident that in addition to students from Hampden-Sydney, Longwood and other neighboring colleges, there were a substantial number of alumni, former military and government personnel, and veterans of the war. One might have thought that this audience would be uniformly supportive of the pro-war speakers, but from the very beginning interesting flashes of dissent emerged. One questioner began by stating in his Virginia drawl that he had served in Vietnam with the Navy in 1965 and 1967. He had read Neil Sheehan's book, **A Bright Shining Lie**, and he promised himself that if he were ever in the distinguished company of policymakers from the war, he would ask this question for his own piece of mind: did the second Gulf of Tonkin incident really

happen in August 1964? A few seats from me, an older, rotund man exclaimed, "Goooood question!"

Rostow replied that he had not read Sheehan's book but knows for sure that the second incident really took place. Rostow himself had seen the intercepts from the North Vietnamese boats. The questioner persisted: page 378 of Mr. Sheehan's book states that Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara purposely deceived Congress about the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Rostow cut off the Navy vet, more animated now, and stated two more times that he has not read Sheehan's book—"When you write 17 books of your own, you don't have time to read Neil Sheehan." This was said in such a way as to make clear that Rostow had no intention of *ever* reading Sheehan, time or not.

Rostow ended by invoking the names of the American dead on The Wall—the Vietnam Memorial in Washington—and emphasized that they did not die in vain, and that was in part why he had come to Hampden-Sydney that day.

Answering questions at his press conference just prior to the speech, Rostow sounded like a man who had not changed his mind, but who was weary of the debate over the war—which was also a debate about his own judgment, character and morality. Asked about McNamara's anticipated memoirs in which he will reportedly talk about how he came to view the war as a mistake, Rostow refused to comment. We've all got our positions, he said, I'm not going to criticize what others think. He showed little interest in debating the U.S. strategy in Vietnam, noting that he was now writing about urban problems. "If anyone wants to ask what is the correct strategy toward our inner cities, I'll be glad to talk about that." Attrition? Free fire zones? Napalm? No one asks.

Rostow has not lost what used to be considered "toughness" in his geopolitical views. Discussing the need to confront communism in Asia, he approvingly observed that General Suharto of Indonesia "knocked off all the communists he could find, and other Chinese as well" during the counter coup of 1965. "It was a very raw thing," said Rostow, "but it saved the area." Rostow did not get more specific, and it was unclear how many of the student editors and local reporters in that small press conference recalled that the number of "communists" that were "knocked off" totalled at least 300,000, with a similar number arrested by the strong-arm military government amidst widespread use of torture.

Near the end of the Rostow press conference, a tall, thin man with a florid face and ringlets of blond hair worn in a loose mane entered the room and sprawled in a chair. He was dressed in a black shirt, black trousers, and black cowboy boots. At the first opportunity, he joined in the conversation with the enthusiasm of a hyperactive schoolboy. Yet he didn't ask a question, but began a defense of American policy. The press conference ended a few minutes later, and he went up to Rostow. "I'm Dolf Droge, sir, and I had the great honor of serving under you on the National Security Council staff." There was no evidence that Rostow remembered him. Later, during the questions after the speech, Droge rose, identified himself as a former staff member of the NSC, repeated how

honored he was to serve under Rostow, and asked a leading question designed to let Rostow reaffirm the wisdom of the American policy. At the end of the session, Droge leapt to his feet in a frenzy to lead a standing ovation. The conference program promised that we would see Mr. Droge again, as a singer of soldier songs of the Vietnam war.

As the crowd was dispersing after the session, I caught up with the man who had commented on the critical question about Sheehan's book. He was a retired Army captain who had been an advisor in Vietnam in 1963. He had no love of Sheehan and the other journalists, but he thought the Johnson policy in Vietnam was idiotic.

Wilson introduced William Colby as one of his very best friends and a role model. The vigorous applause from the audience was a far cry from the times during the war when college campuses in Washington featured "Wanted" posters with Colby's picture because of his role in the CIA's campaign to eliminate the "VCI"—Viet Cong infrastructure. Colby was more nuanced than Rostow, more detailed, seemingly more objective and even-handed. Noting that he spent most of 16 years working primarily on Vietnam, he thought that he had a better picture than many other policy-makers. Most Americans tend to think of the war as a series of still pictures: Buddhist monks burning, a naked Vietnamese girl running after being burned by napalm, a South Vietnamese general shooting a Viet Cong prisoner in the head. In reality, says Colby, the war was a motion picture, something that changed and developed over time. Colby divides the U.S. experience into four chapters.

First, he says, is the beginning through 1963 (but what is "the beginning?"—he doesn't say). The North started a "people's war" in South Vietnam and in 1959 started building the Ho Chi Minh trail through the jungle. The U.S. sent military advisors to build up the South Vietnamese military. In addition, "thanks to some people in the CIA," the government also tried some programs to counteract people's war; the enemy saw these as a major threat.

Colby mentioned the Buddhist monk immolations of 1963, ominously comparing the monks to the Ayatollah Khomeini without providing any real explanation. Diem he describes in neutral terms as a nationalist seeking to create a new modern elite. This chapter ends with the assassination of Diem.

Chapter two, continued Colby, begins with President Kennedy's assassination. ("And since I know you will be hearing from Oliver Stone later on, I just want to say: Lee Harvey Oswald. Alone. No problem." Applause.) As Saigon saw a series of revolving door governments, the situation went from bad to worse. Some were predicting that South Vietnam would fall to the communists by the end of 1965. U.S. combat troops, which first arrived in the South in March 1965, staved off defeat. The problem, Colby believes, is that we still focused on the military problem. After awhile, President Johnson saw the need for a different focus—a war for the loyalty of the South Vietnamese people. Thus was born the integrated paci-

fication programs known as CORDS, headed first by Robert Komer and later by Colby himself.

The chapter ends with Tet 1968, a massive military defeat but psychological victory for the communists. Colby said that the U.S. knew there would be an attack on Saigon about a week before, although we did not anticipate a coordinated, country-wide attack.

The third phase of the war starts with the U.S. and South Vietnam rebuilding their forces. President Nixon does not give up but commits to withdrawing American troops within three years; by mid-1971, they are mostly gone. However, the pacification program in the countryside is making enormous progress. Colby says he knows it was successful because he used to ride around in the countryside himself. During Tet 1971, Colby called John Paul Vann—the former Army advisor, then pacification official, immortalized after his death by Neil Sheehan in *A Bright Shining Lie*—and suggested that for a lark they drive across Vietnam on motorcycles. They did it, ending in Chau Doc without incident.

According to Colby, the communists recognized they were facing total defeat in the people's war, and so in 1972 shifted to a classic soldiers' war. The Spring offensive of 1972 was defeated by South Vietnamese soldiers, backed by U.S. air power and logistical support. This was the victory the U.S. was seeking: a Vietnam which could defend itself with the U.S. in a supporting role.

The final phase of the American involvement begins with the peace treaty of January 1973, which required the U.S. to remove its military forces. The problem was that the U.S. abided by the agreement while North Vietnam flagrantly violated it within a few days. The North had promised not to use Laos and Cambodia, yet U.S. intelligence showed North Vietnam turning the Ho Chi Minh trails into roads. Instead of responding, the U.S. Congress cut the aid to South Vietnam, showing that we had little or no interest in supporting them. North Vietnam bided its time, then struck with a well-equipped army in spring 1975. The South disintegrated, and Colby invoked that vivid scene of the North Vietnamese tank breaking through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Saigon bearing an enormous flag of the National Liberation Front.

The problem, concluded Colby, was the American people were tired of the war. It wasn't just the antiwar movement; we mistook our priorities, should have fought a people's war from the beginning. The soldier's war option was forced upon us by the Diem assassination. If Diem had survived and pursued pacification, he would have won the war with U.S. support—or we would have lost within a year. It would have been better for the world, Colby concluded, to have lost in 1965 rather than a decade later.

Answering questions from the audience, Colby displayed the skills he had honed responding to Congressional inquiries twenty years before: reasonableness, professionalism, and a careful phrasing of the answer that sometimes hid more than it revealed. As a CIA officer, he said, I made it a practice never to knowingly tell a lie to the American people; that didn't mean that I always told them the complete truth. He cited the time he was

asked by a reporter whether the CIA was raising a Soviet submarine from the Atlantic Ocean. "Absolutely not!" Colby told the reporter - because, as he explained to general laughter from the audience, the CIA was busy raising the sub from the *Pacific* Ocean.

Colby's careful parsing of the truth came up in several ways. A former Navy pilot prefaced his question by pointing out that Colby and Vann had a number of people guarding them and providing security during their famous motorcycle trip—it was not quite the carefree romp that Colby made it sound. In discussing Operation Phoenix—the plan to "eliminate" the "Viet Cong Infrastructure"—Colby asserted that a lot of baloney has been written about it, most of those killed actually died in firefights with the Provisional Reconnaissance Units. We took steps to minimize wrongful killings, to instill good interrogation methods and insisted they be handled properly (presumably a euphemistic way of saying they discouraged the use of torture). *Of course*, once the program was turned over to the South Vietnamese, he couldn't say they followed our standards. (Other Americans who had been in Vietnam, perhaps less attuned to the techniques of bureaucratic speech, have affirmed the deliberate use of torture and assassination by various American "black" programs, such as the Counter-terror Teams that preceded Phoenix). Asked about Air America—the CIA proprietary company used to run military missions in Laos to avoid the appearance of breaking the Laotian peace accords—Colby asserted that notwithstanding a "lousy movie" about it, there was no drug trafficking involving its planes. *Of course*, he couldn't say the same for Air Lao or the Royal Lao Air Force.

A young woman asked if Colby thought the U.S. needed to beg forgiveness for its actions in the war. The audience murmured—here was a question which at last seemed to question the very morality of the war. Colby replied no, he was sorry we made mistakes because then we weren't effective, but we were right to support the South Vietnamese people. During the Cold War, we had to contain communism everywhere, even far away. State Department planner George Kennan described the containment policy in his 1947 *Foreign Affairs* article, and it ultimately worked. "Do we have to apologize for winning the cold war? Not by a long shot. *We were right all the time.*" The audience applauded enthusiastically.

"Vietnam: Role of the Media" featured Morley Safer of CBS *60 Minutes* renown, who had reported from Vietnam in the mid-1960's; Peter Arnett, who covered Vietnam for Associated Press and more recently could be seen live from Baghdad on CNN during the Persian Gulf War; Neil Sheehan, who reported the Vietnam war for AP and the *New York Times* and won a Pulitzer Prize for his release of the Pentagon Papers; and Stanley Karnow, who was diplomatic correspondent for the *Washington Post* during the war and later wrote the history of the war that accompanied the 1984 series on Vietnam aired on PBS.

General Wilson introduced the press panel with curious compliments. There are a "bunch of wonderful guys up here" who "held all of our feet to the fire." Arnett,

he said, was "one tough cookie—and none of us served in Vietnam as long as him." Sheehan is "a thoughtful guy with a nose for controversy. I never caught him in a lie, and I made sure he never caught me in one." Karnow he called the "brains of the crowd—tough, stubborn, a bit of a curmudgeon, but has a sense of humor too." Wilson ended his introduction by stating that American journalists in Vietnam, despite their iconoclasm, were "just as patriotic as any of us who carried a gun."

All four panelists had become critical of the American War early on in the effort, and it is hardly surprising that they all still held similar views. The press did not cause the public to turn against the war; it was the war itself and the lack of progress that caused the American people to lose confidence. Sheehan and Arnett pointed out that they initially went to cover Vietnam for the Associated Press as supporters of the war. Sheehan remembered that after a while, he was confronted with a dilemma. The U.S. Ambassador and high level officials were telling the press that we were winning the war, but U.S. advisors in the field were telling a far different story. So you wrote what you saw, and were then attacked for doing your job.

Later, Sheehan continued, he found out that the advisors' reports to the Ambassador were even more pessimistic than what the journalists themselves were writing. Sheehan obtained the transcripts of the conferences of the senior policymakers on Vietnam. It was then that he realized that our leaders weren't lying to the American people about the war—they really believed we were winning because they were so arrogant. "Our leaders had lost their ability to know what was happening. We were pursuing fantasies in Vietnam, led by deluded people."

"It's a terrible thing to face," Sheehan concluded, "and our people still haven't faced it."

Responding to the notion that the press as a whole was against the war, Arnett remembered what it was like when he arrived in Vietnam in 1962 as a stringer for the Associated Press. You didn't mention the CIA, you had your copy checked by the Embassy before publication, and you demonized the enemy. He recalled a memo AP reporters received in 1965: don't send in stories about how the Viet Cong are brave, dedicated or competent, the editors don't want to hear about it. To Arnett, it was people like Sheehan, Malcolm Browne and David Halberstam who changed the face of traditional war reporting.

At the end of the panel discussion and the student questions came a last question from the audience. Dolph Droge, the tall, blond, florid-faced interrogator, now identified himself as a former journalist but did not mention his employment on the National Security Council. After some flattering remarks about the importance of the press, he adroitly shifted into a criticism, masked as a question, of how the press misled the people about the war. He cited as his example the report that the Viet Cong had seized the U.S. Embassy during the 1968 Tet Offensive—when in fact the guerrillas had been stopped on the grounds but outside the building.

Arnett responded forthrightly. "I was the guy lying in the gutter" outside the embassy who reported that the VC were in the building. He reported it to AP because that's what the U.S. military told him had happened. When they—and he—learned differently, Arnett sent in and AP published the correction. Arnett let the lesson of that vignette—and the deeper response to Droge—speak for itself: the press misled the people when it reported what the officials told them, rather than what the reporters saw for themselves.

One of the liveliest and best attended sessions of the conference presented the views of the "The Soldier in the Field." General Sam had organized a truly stellar group, including Charles Beckwith, a Special Forces hero in Vietnam best known for later organizing the Army's elite Delta Force and leading the unsuccessful raid to free U.S. hostages in Iran in 1980; Jack Ripley, a U.S. Marine who became a military folk hero when he almost single-handedly repulsed a large North Vietnamese force at the Dong Ha bridge (to become known forevermore as "Ripley at the Bridge"); Harry J. Summers, veteran of Korea and Vietnam, military intellectual who appears frequently on television (he was omnipresent during the Persian Gulf War) and whose books on strategy are required reading at the Army War College; and Oliver Stone, whose service in Vietnam with the 25th Infantry Division and 1st Cavalry in 1967-1968 formed the basis for his movie *Platoon*, as well as for his biting opposition to the war.

For this panel, Hampden-Sydney made its own contribution: Alan Farrell, professor of French and decorated veteran of Fifth Special Forces Group who, in the euphemistic language of the Army, "advised" Montagnard strike forces on "reconnaissance" missions in Indochina in 1968-1969. There's an old saying, said Farrell, that war is hell, but combat is a son of a bitch. He quoted British military historian Basil Liddel Hart who said, "Direct experience is inherently too limited to form an adequate foundation either for theory or for application." "Hart seems to be saying," Farrell added in wonder, "that those who have looked into the mouth of the bear know the least about bears."

How small is the focus of the soldier in the field, Farrell asked, then drew the answer out of his shirt pocket. "Here's the rear sight of an M-16—my M-16. I watched a man die through this. I saw the unbuttoned flap of his breast pocket and the sweat stain under his arm. That's all. You know, maybe old Basil had something there."

Farrell and Wilson had envisioned that panelists would talk about personal experiences of combat. The problem, it turned out, was that the group was professionally overqualified. These were not draftees who had humped through the bush, lived the horrors of combat and then went back to their "real" lives. Most of them were professional military men who went on to achieve high-ranking positions or who were in elite fighting units. Robert Kingston commanded a rifle company in Korea, but went to Vietnam in 1969 as commander of a First Cavalry brigade and retired as a four-star general. Beckwith served most of his career with elite units and

said he never saw any of the problems with drugs or fragging that plagued many traditional army units in Vietnam. Ripley had been at the Naval Academy before Vietnam, made a career in the Marines, and served at one point as a planner with the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; he is currently president of Southern Virginia College for Women. William Coenen was a Marine captain in Vietnam but served in the Marines until 1983, when he became a special assistant to the director of the CIA. Summers pointed out that his defining experiences were in Korea, not Vietnam. Even Farrell, who talked only about Vietnam, served for another 20 years as part of the 11th Special Forces Group (Reserve), rising to the rank of Sergeant Major. ("Nobody fucks with a sergeant major," Farrell once said. "You've got to be at least a colonel to even think about fucking with a sergeant major.")

The only real citizen-soldier on the panel was Stone, and he didn't want to talk about combat but about the politics and immorality of the war. After describing features of Vietnamese culture that we never understood, Stone concluded that "it was the ghosts and spirits of Vietnam that defeated us." This was evidently a view not shared by the professional soldiers. General Wilson had not intended the panel to be a confrontation between Stone and the others, but Stone almost seemed to want one. His very appearance seemed designed to provoke; while everyone else wore a suit or coat and tie, Stone wore a bright red casual shirt with matching red socks, and black jeans.

Still, for a group of trained killers, the panelists were remarkably civil to Stone and to each other. Beckwith, who was not known in Vietnam as "Charging Charlie" for nothing, was the most outspoken. Commenting on "the media guy who said we couldn't have won, I say to you, that's pure bullshit." The problem was that "Washington lost its political will and the soldier lost his way." When someone mentioned that Clinton never served in Vietnam, Summers pointed out that Vice-President Gore went, to which Beckwith indignantly growled, "He was a REMF!"—military slang for a "Rear Echelon Motherfucker," or someone who did not serve in a combat role (Farrell declines to give the audience a literal definition of the acronym).

About combat, they had few stories and only some elliptical comments that sketched its contours. Ripley's unit in Vietnam suffered 300% casualties. There was a rule that a Marine had to serve 3 months in order to qualify for R&R; no one in his unit qualified, because by the end of three months they were either dead, wounded or transferred. There were centipedes as big as web belts, and 100 types of snakes in Vietnam—99 were poisonous "and one will eat you whole." There were also the unreported atrocities by the North Vietnamese against Americans: a Marine skinned alive, captured radio operators nailed to trees through the shoulders, mutilated bodies recovered after combat. Summers remembered that GI's hated the press as an institution but always liked the reporters who covered *them*; he told of the two AP reporters who picked up M-16s and covered him when he was wounded during a battle.

Panelist Joe Galloway was a 23-year old reporter when he was plunged into one of the most vicious encounters of the American War, the battle for the Ia Drang Valley in November 1965. Trying to describe their experience, Galloway read a section from the prologue of his acclaimed book, *We Were Soldiers Once... And Young* about the battle, written with the commander of the U.S. troops in that Valley. He referred to his description as a sort of "War 101:"

We discovered in that depressing, hellish place, where death was our constant companion, that we loved one another. We killed for each other, we died for each other, and we wept for each other. And in time we came to love each other as brothers. In battle our world shrank to the man on our left and the man on our right and the enemy all around. We held each other's lives in our hands and we learned to share our fears, our hopes, our dreams as readily as we shared what little else good came our way. . . .

So once, just this once: This is how it all began, what it was really like, what it meant to us, and what we meant to each other. It was no movie. When it was over the dead did not get up and dust themselves off and walk away . . . Not one of us left Vietnam the same young man he was when he arrived.

Later, describing the soldiers who fought at Ia Drang (eight from a single high school, mainly Mexican-Americans), his voice broke as he said, "They were the best Americans I ever knew."

If the professional soldiers were short on war stories, they were long on analysis and retrospection. Beckwith said he would not go to Vietnam today without a declaration of war. Galloway pointed out that as a result of the one-year tour of duty, experience and continuity got lost. Vietnam was not a fifteen-year war fought by one army, but a series of fifteen wars fought by fifteen armies. To Coenen, "When you ask people to support a bad government, all you're doing is polishing a turd." He recalled how in 1966, a friend said to him, "Bill, don't worry about it—this will go down in history as the best managed war we ever lost." We should have done what the enemy did, fought a Southeast Asian war, not a Vietnam War. During the press conference before their panel, Summers talked about the failed vision of the military and the policymakers in Vietnam, a subject he analyzed in his book *On Strategy*. The American people showed remarkable restraint in supporting the war for so long, he said, given that nobody knew the point of it.

After the formal presentations, a number of local veterans invited by Wilson rose to comment on their war experiences, and demonstrated the truth of Summers' observation that there was no one Vietnam experience but a thousand, maybe a million. Roger Hempill announced that he had commanded Bravo Company, 25th Infantry when Stone was in it. Another said he was glad to get the generals' point of view, "I never did get that before." He thanked Stone for making *Platoon*. Another vet said he had been the Air Force action officer on Vietnam for General Curtis LeMay, and consistently briefed LeMay "to stay away from this place." He chal-

lenged the notion that any part of Southeast Asia was "one bit better or worse" as a result of our actions: "We can't democratize the world."

Farrell then called on Mary Anne Murphy, who began in a halting, quavering voice that stilled the large room. She had been a psychiatric nurse in Vietnam, 1962 to 1964. For 20 years she's tried to forget, hasn't talked about Vietnam with anyone except her husband (also a vet), their son, and one student who asked. "I haven't visited the Black Wall yet, I'm not ready." Her voice rose now, still gasping, controlling herself with difficulty, speaking to the audience. "The Vietnamese were fighting for their homes. We were the intruders, fighting for a corrupt government. Many of the soldiers I treated should never have been there—and we shouldn't have been there. And I'm sorry, generals"—she suddenly rounded on the panelists—"we weren't ever gonna win that war and we shouldn't have." She sat down to strong applause.

Murphy's husband Ed then stood up and spoke briefly, quietly. He had been with MACV-SOG, he said. He wears a hat with his South Vietnamese decorations, but not his American ones. Then he sat down. MACV-SOG is the acronym for the "Military Assistance Command-Vietnam/Studies and Observation Group" (or "Special Operations Group" as it was more accurately called), a special military team that undertook highly classified missions, many of them in Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam.

The same student who had queried Colby now said she'd like to ask Mr. Stone and Colonel Ripley if they believe we need to ask forgiveness for our actions in Vietnam. Beckwith lunged toward his microphone and Farrell deadpanned, "Well, I think Colonel Beckwith might want to give you an answer."

"And I think I know what it is," the student replied, "but I'd like to hear from the other two gentlemen." Beckwith would not be deterred. "In a word, *shhhittt no!*" The question animated the other soldiers as well. Ripley discounted any need to ask forgiveness, he's at peace, we've done nothing wrong, but, certainly reconciliation is a worthy goal. Summers said the question "doesn't jive with history" because it was premised on the notion of a war between the U.S. and Vietnam, whereas the war was really between North and South Vietnam. General Kingston firmly said, "I certainly wouldn't apologize for a goddam thing I ever did in any war. There's only one thing I wish I had done more of and I won't say what it is to this audience." The audience murmured. Killing? drinking? sex? No clarification was forthcoming. Only Stone seemed unmoved by the question. Forgiveness is an individual thing, he observed, we can't do it as a nation because we are divided.

During the soldiers' panel, Coenen told the audience that it was a mistake to think that the military liked war. Doctors work with cancer, he pointed out, but nobody says that doctors like cancer. Lawyers work with criminals—"and some of them are criminals"—but nobody says that lawyers like criminals.

A delicate subject this, for the lawyers no less than for less genteel combatants. Lawyers often develop a symbiotic relationship with criminals and the crimes themselves. It's not just the money—many do it on a public defender's poor salary—and not just the trial work, since civil cases get tried to juries as well. It has to do with the adventure, the excitement of doing something where the stakes are high, where a man or woman's freedom depends on your craftiness, your strategy, your mastery of the courtroom. Anyone who has seen criminal lawyers interact with their clients would know in an instant that for many of them, it is the aura of crime itself which holds the appeal, the forbidden act which the lawyer can savor without actually committing.

One may be forgiven for believing that professional soldiers, those who make war their careers, share some instinctive attraction for combat. As one West Point instructor proclaimed in a notice posted in his office during the Vietnam war, "Fighting is our business; business is good." Wars were so important for promotions in the army that during Vietnam, the Army generally limited command positions to six months so that more young officers could "punch their tickets" with combat experience. Special military formations like the Marines, Special Forces, the officer corp of the Army, see themselves as brotherhoods in which the members are consecrated to one another by oaths and bonds and shared experiences, beside which many marriages pale. It is no coincidence that many books about elite units begin by invoking Shakespeare's *Henry V* just before the Battle of Agincourt: "We few, we happy few/We band of brothers."

War may be a nasty job that somebody has to do, but there are a lot of other nasty jobs that do not come enshrined in pomp and splendor. You don't see city sanitation workers swearing fealty to each other with sacred oaths about duty, honor, country. You don't see solid waste disposal engineers wearing dress white uniforms to special occasions with medals gleaming, honoring the lions of their profession. You don't see slaughterhouse employees parading with ceremonial slaughter knives, saluting their officers at the barked command.

William Broyles put the dark issue on the table with his 1984 essay, "Why Men Love War." Broyles completed a combat tour in Vietnam as a Marine lieutenant, came back to eventually edit Newsweek magazine and later create the hit television show about Vietnam, *China Beach*. To Broyles:

War is a brutal, deadly game, but a game, the best there is. And men love games. . . . [I]f you come back whole you bring with you the knowledge that you have explored regions of your soul that in most men will always remain uncharted.

The enduring emotion of war, when everything else has faded, is comradeship. . . . [W]ar is the only utopian experience most of us ever have. Individual possessions and advantage count for nothing; the group is everything.

Broyles describes the feeling of freedom that war brings; the normal rules of daily life are suspended in the service

of the struggle. He also describes the love of war as stemming from "the union, deep in the core of our being, between sex and destruction, beauty and horror, love and death. War may be the only way in which most men touch the mythic domains in our soul."

Of course, Broyles did not become a career officer, and his combat experience, by his own admission, was relatively free of terror. He and other writers may not be the best explorers of the motivations of professional soldiers. Still, he is not the only observer to notice that for something so terrible, we voluntarily enter into war with great frequency and eagerness. The professional soldiers on the panel at Hampden-Sydney were all intelligent, dedicated men who had all "seen the elephant"—experienced combat—at one time or another, but no one was prepared to look, in public at least, into that mirror of war and confront those darker images.

Friday night belonged to General William Westmoreland, commander of all U.S. ground forces in Vietnam during the worst part of the American war, 1964 through 1968. Westmoreland, who seemingly took a bad strategy from the Johnson administration and made it worse. Westmoreland, who in public refused to believe we were not winning even as the prospects for victory grew steadily bleaker. Westmoreland, who in 1967 professed to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Westmoreland, who brought a disastrous libel suit in 1982 against CBS for reporting that he had deliberately undercounted the adversary's forces; the trial aired afresh, with new evidence, the poverty of the strategy and the judgment exercised by Westmoreland in implementing it.

He looked old and unwell, but still stood straight and received a spirited standing ovation as he marched with Wilson to the podium. General Wilson lavishly praised Westmoreland, calling him a "man after whom many officers seek to pattern their own careers," a man of honor who has "never done anything to dishonor his country."

Westmoreland read his speech slowly, haltingly at times. In essence, the General told the students that we won, we accomplished our geopolitical objective to create a shield for ASEAN countries to develop. We had to go into Vietnam, he said, it held a strategic location as guardian over the narrow straits. (Unfortunately, the General did not further enlighten the audience, some of whom undoubtedly knew that Vietnam has no straights anywhere near its borders. The nearest land is Borneo, over 600 miles southeast across the South China Sea. Later, Westmoreland mentioned the Malaccan Straits, which are over 375 miles southwest from the Southern tip of Vietnam, on the *other* side of Malaysia).

Westmoreland acknowledged that there were problems—the incompetence of the South Vietnamese government, the serious problems within the American army ("people who should have been in jail were carrying guns")—but remained upbeat about the war and its results. He recounted with some pride how he visited the People's Republic of China six years ago and found that his memoirs, *A Soldier Reports*, had been translated into Chinese to help China learn how to fight the Vietnamese. Left unexplored was the suspicion that what-

ever the Chinese military learned from Westmoreland, it was not for the purposes of emulation. (André Malraux reported in his memoirs that during the long Chinese revolution, Stalin had once sent a handbook on partisan warfare to Mao Tse-tung. Mao gave the book to an associate with the words, "Read this if you want to know what we ought to have done—in order to end up dead.")

Westmoreland's handling of the question period proved something of an embarrassment, highlighting not just the general's infirmities of age but some old-fashioned attitudes. Wilson had said in his introduction that one of the best things about Westmoreland was that he was a good listener. Maybe that was true in Saigon in 1965, but as Westmoreland struggled with the first student question, he showed that his years as an artillery officer had left him as deaf as a fencepost. One of the school's professors, moderating the session, gamely shouted the essence of each question into Westmoreland's better ear.

A member of the audience asked the general to comment on the "devastating effects" of Jane Fonda visiting North Vietnam. Westmoreland replied charitably, "I think Jane was sucked into sitting on the anti-aircraft artillery seat.... But Jane Fonda is now history." She didn't have any effect on our troops, people tend to discuss her now as a kook. "But that's history," he concluded, "I think Ted Turner's now got her under control." Apparently, the general regrets that, for the sake of the war effort, Jane didn't meet the right man twenty years before.

In response to a different question, Westmoreland explained that war "is not an emotional thing for the soldier on the ground," because he's been trained, he's a professional. The notion that the United States fielded an army unaffected by emotions as they fought their way through Vietnam is too fantastic to even consider. One could believe that professional soldiers can overcome their fear or anger in combat—although even this seems out of touch with the testimony of most soldiers from the ranks.

One student asked Westmoreland how he answers charges that he displayed a racist attitude toward the Vietnamese by saying such things as Asians don't respect life the way we do. At first, the general misunderstood the question, seemed to think it questioned the attitudes of the Vietnamese. "I was not aware of any racism in Vietnam." The student repeated the question, again referencing statements made by Westmoreland himself. The moderator shouted a truncated version of the question into the general's right ear. Westmoreland became slightly defensive, even angry. "I never made such a statement in my life. I've worked with Orientals all my life. I don't know where you got that, it's baloney."

Baloney it may be, but it's on film. The 1974 documentary *Hearts and Minds* shows the general, casually wearing a seersucker suit and looking fit, telling the interviewer:

Well, the Oriental doesn't put the same high price on life as does the Westerner. Life is plentiful, life is cheap in the Orient, and the philosophy of the Orient expresses it—life is not important.

Droge managed another softball question that allowed Westmoreland to deny that in 1968, he asked for another 210,000 troops, which would have brought the U.S. total to some 731,000. Westmoreland maintained that all he said in 1968 was that the additional troops would be needed to invade North Vietnam and cut the Ho Chi Minh trail complex. (Westmoreland seems partially correct on this point: the request technically came from General Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on behalf of Westmoreland and the military as a whole. However, the Defense Department at the time considered it a request by MACV—which Westmoreland commanded—for the full amount. There was also no mention about “going North;” the request was based on a pessimistic view of the war on the ground in the South.)

In part as a tribute to Westmoreland, General Wilson had arranged the final event of the night to be a performance by the 82nd Airborne Division’s Chorus. As they set up, it seemed that they must be some special auxiliary unit, they couldn’t be *real* paratroopers in this elite combat unit, they were impossibly young, some still with adolescent acne, incongruous in their freshly pressed camouflage fatigues with red berets. Someone pointed out to me the Combat Infantry Badges on the chest of many of them, veterans of Panama or Desert Storm. I experienced an eerie feeling watching spit-shined soldiers in uniform snapping their fingers and singing songs like “Under the Boardwalk.”

The Saturday morning session, “Vietnam: The American Home Front,” drew a very light crowd. Wilson regretted the small turnout; he thought this panel needed to be heard as much as the others. Twenty-five years ago, the presence on a college campus of Senators Eugene McCarthy or George McGovern would have attracted large, enthusiastic crowds of idealistic students. McCarthy sought the Democratic Party’s nomination for president in 1968, running against President Johnson and later Vice-President Humphrey. McGovern actually won the Democratic nomination in 1972 on an antiwar platform, only to lose ignominiously to Richard Nixon while Watergate was still a small, unfocused story in the press. They were joined on the panel by William Crandell, who served in Vietnam as a lieutenant with the Americal Division 1966-1967, coming home a year before another young lieutenant in his Division presided over the massacre at My Lai. Deeply disillusioned about the war, Crandell joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War and eventually became national coordinator.

Rather than give formal or polemical presentations on the war, the panelists opted for informal, personal talks on what led them into opposition. McCarthy had lost none of his rapier wit over the years, dispensing scathing judgments about the politicians that led us into the war. He recalled a Wednesday night meeting with President Johnson at which Secretary of State Dean Rusk assured McCarthy and the assembled Senators that the government of General Nguyen Khanh, the current leader of the military junta then leading South

Vietnam, was stable. Friday morning, the newspaper headlines announced that Khanh had been deposed. About Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, McCarthy quipped, “We should have worried about him when they said he made no *small* mistakes.”

McGovern had grave misgivings about the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, and about the U.S. efforts in Vietnam generally at that time. He believed that Johnson would end the war shortly after winning the 1964 presidential elections, because he thought Johnson was too shrewd to get mired in a war. The following year, McGovern went to Vietnam to see what was happening, and to see his son-in-law who was serving with the Third Marine Division in Chu Lai. When he visited a civilian hospital and saw the misery of the civilians wounded in the war, he knew he had to be against it.

Asked about the Rostow/Westmoreland declaration of victory in Vietnam, McGovern professed high regard for Westy but called the notion of victory “a misreading of history.” McCarthy more acidly noted that he had never heard the theory of saving ASEAN from communism until he attended this conference and observed, “Sounds like it was worked out in the Johnson Library.” Lyndon Johnson’s presidential library is, of course, located at the University of Texas and was directed initially by Walt Rostow.

A month after the conference, I asked Wilson if he thought the conference was a success, and he said yes, he wished he had built a little more controversy into the program, but it got the students thinking. He gave as evidence the reaction he received from a number of students. They came up to him and said, General, when I heard Rostow and Westmoreland, I thought that was the truth, that’s where I wanted to plant my flag. When I heard Colby, then I thought *that* was the truth, and I’d move my flag a little to one side based on that. Then I heard the journalists, and then the soldiers in the field, and I became less sure of my position. And then when I heard the final panel of the dissenters, I became really confused. Where is the truth? And Wilson, with a delighted smile, would say, “Gotcha!” They now understood that there were a lot of truths about the war, not just one.

What was his truth about Vietnam? General Sam says he hasn’t changed his view markedly over the years. We were right to try to help South Vietnam achieve self-determination, but we did it clumsily, with incomplete intelligence and lacking in knowledge about Vietnam’s history. We should never have sent in ground combat troops; if we could not accomplish the objective with indirect support, we should not have attempted it at all. Vietnam demonstrated “the tar baby syndrome in spades.”

The Hampden-Sydney conference revealed no new truths, no tantalizing disclosures, no reversal of beliefs by any of the players in that sad drama. Still, seeing so many of them together again twenty years later, just as the American government was about to change its relationship with Vietnam, invites meditation anew on the

war. History is never simply a recitation of objective facts, but rather a dialogue between the present and the past, between the spectators of today and those who shaped the events years before. Who *we* are determines to a large extent how we understand our predecessors. The dialogue between today's students and those who planned, fought, reported, and resisted the American war in Vietnam, offers a small promontory upon which to stand and look back at the years of war.

When the truth is found to be lies
And all the joy within you dies

So begins the Jefferson Airplane's acid-rock anthem of 1967, a fitting description of what happened to American attitudes toward the war that year and after. The Vietnam war shattered the public myth that America built out of its triumph and ascendance to world leadership during the Second World War—that we were unalterably good and decent, fought only against evil, fought fairly, and told the truth to our own people (if not always to outsiders). When Harry Summers points out that there are a million truths about Vietnam, he neglected to mention that there were also a million lies, many of them told by high government officials to the American people and—in the final tragic irony that Sheehan observed—to themselves.

While evaluating the adoption of an escalate-then-negotiate policy in November 1964, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy wondered how the U.S. could carry out this option "under the klieg lights of a democracy." The Johnson—and later Nixon—administrations concluded that they could not. Rather than tell the truth about what we were doing there, they decided to go ahead and escalate the war but to lie to the American people about what was happening. U.S. military attacks in Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam were hardly secrets to the North Vietnamese, the Chinese or the Soviets, nor did the U.S. expect them to be. The purpose of plausible denial was to avoid the kind of retaliation or condemnation that a publicly admitted action would require from the international community. Thus, contrary to Colby's stated principles, our policy was to let our enemies know what the U.S. was really doing, but not the American people.

One of the popular ways now of discussing the war is to ask if we have learned the "lessons" of Vietnam. There are certainly lessons to be learned, and some of them have been absorbed by the players of national security policy. The military learned to fight low intensity conflicts (or counterrevolutions, depending upon one's point of view) with indigenous troops supported by elite U.S. military and intelligence teams, to keep those damn television cameras under control, to resist committing U.S. ground forces without Congressional authority, and above all to fight wars to *win*—with short, explosive violence instead of gradual escalations of force. Politicians learned that wars cannot be fought without public support and absolutely must not drag on, that the objectives of the conflict must be well-defined, that Congressional support is critical, that committing the troops is always easier than extricating them, that you never promise the public a risk-free conflict, and that if

you can't claim victory, always try to leave it to the next administration to pick up the pieces. Even foreign policy dissidents learned some lessons: mix criticism of the war with praise of the warriors, stake out a position of patriotic dissent that includes labor unions and other traditional institutions.

But improvements in political strategy and military tactics do not address the more important questions of law and morality that govern whether the country should have gone to war in Vietnam at all. Our sin in Vietnam was not that we followed a bad strategy, but that we committed unpardonable violence against a country and a people which had done us no wrong. Even twenty years later, each justification for the war rings hollow. Were we there to defend democracy?—there were no democratic institutions in South Vietnam during the 21 years of American military support, and we never made democratization a serious demand in exchange for our aid.

Were we there to resist aggression?—we encouraged South Vietnam to violate the 1954 Geneva peace accords and refuse to hold a nationwide election; we insisted on treating a provisionally partitioned Vietnam as two separate and autonomous countries, which allowed us to think of Vietnamese fighters who returned from the North as outside forces.

Were we there to resist Chinese communist expansion?—for two thousand years, Vietnam had resisted Chinese encroachment, communist or otherwise, and indeed defeated China in a short but nasty war in 1979.

Were we there to resist the International Communist Conspiracy?—as U.S. policy analysts well knew, it no longer existed; the communist world was seriously fragmented and most Chinese and Soviet troops were facing each other across their mutual border. And anyway, what gave us the right to wreak such destruction on Vietnam to pursue our own geopolitical vision?

Were we there to protect the dominos in Asia?—U.S. intelligence accurately concluded during the war that the only countries which might be swept into Vietnam's orbit as a result of a communist victory were Cambodia and Laos, which had their own well-developed insurgencies fighting autocratic governments.

Looking back, it is easier to see how Vietnam became America's tar baby, how a mixture of noble and imperial assumptions about the world, forged as a result of the "lessons" of World War II, led to a policy that—both in goals and methods—was at once stupid, naive, and criminal. Condemning the war does not—and never did—mean condemning the American soldiers who fought honorably. Indeed, the soldiers remind us that war is always an unmitigated evil—all the more reason to hold senior policymakers to the strictest standard of responsibility when they propose to commit the nation to battle.

After the Second World War, the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan led to the war crimes trials, denazification and the restructuring of social power that opened the way to purge the causes of aggression in those countries. America's defeat was hardly in the same class, and our democratic institutions, while flawed, prevented any comparison to the Axis

powers. However, precisely because of this, there was only a limited attempt to rethink the underlying assumptions that led us into Vietnam. So on we go, supporting death squad governments in El Salvador, invading Panama to make a drug bust, and directing Oliver North to run the secret *contrawar* in Nicaragua out of the White House basement while lying to Congress. When the young woman at the Hampden-Sydney conference asked if we need to beg forgiveness, she posed precisely the question of morality that the policymakers always want to avoid—in Vietnam as elsewhere.

A few months after the conference, I stopped in Washington to revisit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Many have written about the memorial's unique design, its popularity, its healing power for veterans and the families and friends of those who died. Little is written about Vietnam's memorials to its fallen soldiers in the war, the hundreds of military cemeteries where the graves of North Vietnamese soldiers and Southern liberation fighters are neatly laid out in rows near the ricefields, usually surrounding a tall stone obelisk. The *Nghia Trang Liet Si*—Cemetery of Heroes—near Cu Chi contains some 5,000 small, above ground sarcophagi with a titled plaque on the cover of each. Near the front is Tran Quan Nguiem, born 1937, who died August 5, 1970. Pham Van Ga, born 1947, died April 28, 1975—two days before the end of the war. *Nobody wants to be the last American killed in Vietnam*, went a popular saying among U.S. troops during the long winding down of our involvement. No one ever asked what it might be like to be the last Vietnamese killed in the war. Towering above the graves is the tall stone monument with the inscription, "To Quoc Ghi Cong"—The Motherland Remembers Your Contribution. A short distance behind the tower is a smaller memorial in a modernist style to the unknown liberation fighters buried there. "You are anonymous, yet your name lives forever," says the caption.

In fact, many of these war cemeteries in Vietnam honor only the memory of the fallen, not their remains. Most of the graves are empty, their namesakes' bodies never recovered from the battlefields. Some of the corpses were bulldozed into vast pits by the American Army, some were vaporized by napalm or B-52 carpet bombings, some disappeared into the prisons and torture chambers of the South Vietnamese government. No matter, the memorials throughout Vietnam, like our memorial in Washington, use the names to celebrate the memory of the fallen, separate from their corporal remains.

At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, the polished black granite walls create the impressions of both depth and reflection. Through the mirror-like quality of the surface, the viewer can see himself among the names of the war dead. Lose the image for a moment, however, and the dark stone beckons as a gateway to the netherworld, the "profound dull tunnel" that Wilfred Owens scampers down during the enemy bombardment in his First World War poem, "Strange Meeting." Here is war, the Wall seems to say, no heroic figures, no trium-

phant fanfares, just the unending, uncaring darkness of death. And in that void appears again the pale reflection of the viewer.

In looking back, Vietnam has always been a mirror. We looked at Vietnam on a map in the 1950's and 60's but saw only our own reflection, the images that we projected onto its surface. We could not see a popular revolutionary movement because we were looking at international geopolitics. We projected our own fears, our own power, our own sense of destiny, and saw those concerns reflected back to us. We could not see the Vietnamese hopes, fears, aspirations, only our own. We believed only those Vietnamese government and business leaders who told us what we wanted to hear - and who were happy to do so, since their well-being was directly linked to our presence.

Chapter 172 of the Vietnam Veterans of America sells a poster of the Memorial entitled "Reflections." A middle-aged man, clearly a veteran, still trim, stands at the Wall. He's wearing a three-piece suit, but his coat is draped over his briefcase as he places a hand on the Wall, leans forward with his head bent downward, and weeps. Out of the darkness of the Wall comes a reflection—not the reflection of the visitor, but a soldier in tattered fatigues, one of the names on the Wall, pressing his shadowy hand to that of the visitor. Around the soldier are several ghostly comrades in arms, also reaching out their hands and looking at the visitor. Their eyes do not show anger or pain, but reach out to the visitor with quiet sympathy. Perhaps they are saying, don't worry, we are still with you. Or perhaps they are saying, there's no sense crying, soon you will be with us anyway.

Soon enough, we will all be with them. Soldiers and draft resisters, heroes and cowards, immolated Buddhist monks and napalmed villagers, politicians and protestors, guerrillas and Green Berets, all slipping down that profound dull tunnel to oblivion. As with all wars, the years quickly muffle the clarion call to battle, leaving only the aching silence of loss. If we listen carefully in that silence, perhaps some wisdom can be discerned, so that the sufferings of war might be avoided in the future.

Theodore M. Lieverman is a labor and civil rights lawyer living in Philadelphia.



Figure 165. Improvised sunglasses

Radical Observations: John A. Junot's Account of the Sixties

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The 1960s spawned a variety of significant political and cultural elements known collectively to their participants simply as The Movement. These people often combined the political outlook of the generally non-ideological student New Left with the lifestyles and the social views of the counterculture. The Movement was largest and most influential on the prestigious college campuses of the east and west coasts and in the upper midwest, but its influence reached into every area of the United States. That it existed even at conservative universities is made apparent in these observations by former University of Kentucky student John A. Junot. His comments, while not necessarily representative, are valuable for their insights into the lives of student activists on the fringe of radicalism. Mr. Junot attended Kentucky from 1967 to 1971 where, as a member of Students for a Democratic Society, he took part in many of the events that made up one of the university's most turbulent times. During the confrontations of early May 1970, Junot was arrested and convicted of disorderly conduct and found guilty of two of eleven charges by the University of Kentucky Judicial Board. The tapes of the Judicial Board hearing as well as related tapes and papers can be found in the University of Kentucky Archives and Special Collections.

The following comments by Mr. Junot are divided into three parts. The first essay, written during the summer of 1971 at the end of his undergraduate studies, provides a personal account of the cultural transformation of the University of Kentucky campus and of the accompanying political changes as well. The second part is a portion of a 1987 letter in which he describes the impact of the late 1960s and early 1970s upon his life. In the intervening years, Junot experienced a number of unusual events. He claims to have been under evaluation in a mental hospital after making verbal threats toward President Nixon around the time of his 1971 visit to Lexington. He was acquitted on charges of possessing illegal explosives and of planning to stage a false terrorist attack on the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in 1982. Six years later the Secret Service arrested and held him when, during a George Bush campaign rally in California, he pulled and dropped a starter's pistol before trying to escape.¹ The final section is primarily Junot's criticism of my own article on Kentucky student activism in which I claim, based on numerous written and oral reports from observers and participants, that antiwar activities during that period were primarily peaceful.²

Mr. Junot's observations have been edited for length and to correct obvious typographical errors, but the wording and meaning has not been changed in any way.

* ☮ *

It was my fate, to enter college, first the University of Louisville, and then the University of Kentucky, where I have remained, just as The Movement was beginning to hit the campuses [sic] hard: a romantic, idealistic flame, but one, it seemed, that could ravage and destroy no less than other kinds.

Now about myself. My name is John Junot. I am poor and bright. I believe those two qualities define, and have defined, me better than any other labels you could apply. My poverty (comparatively speaking, I never had to fight a rat, but there have been times when I went to bed cold and hungry) and my intelligence have defined where I've gone and what I did there, and thus, what I am.

I came to UK in August of 1967, because UK came through with some government money for me and because I wanted to stay out of the draft. My loan and grant just barely gave me enough to get through the year, if I worked part time. As with many others, I had many desires I could not fit into my finances: I am very much the extrovert and wanted a wide and exciting social life; I wanted to meet exciting and intelligent people; I wanted to be popular and perhaps even become known as a leader.

Unfortunately, even at that late date, the campus's culture, what there was of it, was controlled by the Greeks. UK was just then beginning to get away from being a "party school". Had I been richer, I would have joined a fraternity. As it was, I "joined" the campus chapter [sic] of SDS.³

There were maybe 50 Movement people at UK then; no more than 100. Most went to SDS meetings now and again. You joined by going to the meetings, associating with the people who described themselves as "members of SDS," and finally, by describing yourself that way to[o]. Occasionally [sic] I paid dues (\$1 a semester) and carried a card.

We were outcasts, of course. People with long hair were occasionally cursed and even attacked my first year here. That just made us that much more solid and brotherly. One or two people outcast are outcasts; 50 or more make an alternate social system. One where money didn't make any difference; one where money, once subsistence was assured, was actually irrelevant [sic].

And that's about all we were then. Our main organizational activity was—throwing parties. I think we did better than the Greeks on that score. For the first six weeks or so of fall, before the chill set in, and for three or four weeks before finals, there would be two, three, or more parties each weekend. It almost seemed the object was to get so drunk or stoned—pot and LSD⁴ had just the smallest toehold then—that you couldn't say "participatory democracy". Also UK hosted the National Council of SDS in April that year, two weeks before Columbia. Legend has it Mark Rudd, later a leader of the terrorist Weatherman, made his final plans for the rebellion in one of my friend[']s apartments here.⁵

1968-69: There were more and more "hippie-types" around. The mass media was making it acceptable and fashionable. SDS r[e]mained small, but we had a myth

or image attached to us which, on one hand, gave us more impact and sway on the campus than we deserved, and, on the other, made people afraid to join us directly.

Chicago radicalized a lot of kids the very first days of school.⁶ We had our first really large turnouts—500 or so on the patio the first week of school. Most of these gathered together, formed a liberal organization eventually named CARSA—disdaining SDS, while electing SDSers to the steering committee—and marched to the City Council three consecutive Thursdays demanding reforms in the police department. CARSA was co-opted by lip-service concessions and died in December, unable to find another issue to justify its existence.⁷

Little else happened the rest of that year till spring. Lethargy and apathy settled over the campus New Left. We got our rocks off reading accounts of student strikes in other parts of the country—especially Berkeley and San Francisco State.⁸

“This ain’t Berkeley,” we all said to ourselves and each other, over and over again. “This ain’t Berkeley.” Meaning: we’d *never* have a massive demonstration here. We’d *never* have a real confrontation where we faced the pigs and put the admin[is]tration up against the wall and maybe got teargassed on the *Hunt[ley]-Brinkley Report* on NBC.

But we sure did a lot of dope: A hell of a lot. Pot and acid mainly. In fact, I remember that year as the one where almost nothing else was talked about; you couldn’t avoid the subject. It was on everyone’s lips. It spread like wildfire. I did my first trip in February of ’69—Ground Hog’s day, as a matter of fact.

So no one was more surprised and less able to handle the situation than we were when 2,000 students marched across campus that April protesting injustice. Four students had been summarily suspended after having been busted for dope. Guy Mendes, editor of *The Kernel*,⁹ printed a front page editorial calling for a protest meeting. You may find the rest of the story in the 1969 *Kentuckian*; my memories of it have faded. It was a disappointment and we considered it a failure; the administration refused to confront us and we were thoroughly co-opted. The students were readmitted, however.

1969-70: The peak year for the Movement at UK, I’d say. It was evident that “the revolution was over and we had won”—on the campuses, at least. I could no longer say I knew every Freak or Hippie or drug user at UK; nobody could; there just didn’t seem to be any other type of person on campus. We had remade the campus in our image. Organizational work was at an all-time high.

In October my best friend an[d] I went to Chicago to watch and perhaps participate in the “Four Days of Rage”.¹⁰ This was when the Weatherman first came into existence. We stayed in Chicago exactly 12 hours, just long enough to see the Weatherman trash Clark Street. In fact, I went into a panic, eventually persuading my best friend that we should split back to Lexington.

The next week was the October Moratorium—local actions on campuses across the country.¹¹ I’d helped organize and lead it; it was beautiful. About three or four

thousand students and streeters marched from the campus and rallied at the Courthouse steps.

The final event that fall was the Moratorium in Washington;¹² it lasted three days, and many of the hours and sights I spent and saw there even now remain fresh in my memory. It was a religious experience for me; climaxing with over a million people rallying at the Washington Monument, covering every square inch of the grounds, packed so tight that there wasn’t room for all of them to sit down. I stuck around the grounds, listening to a free rock concert, for a couple of hours after the rally was over, leaving just in time to be caught in the police sweep of Constitution Avenue after the Justice Department riot. And so I rioted with the Weathermen for a second time.

And so you now have the historical context of the events of the spring of 1970 on the national, local, and personal levels. Naturally, I’ve had to be brief—any of the dozens of events and trends I have touched upon can, and have, filled a hundred books when fully accounted. Even now the Kent State Massacre of May 4, 1970, when four students were killed by National Guardsmen,¹³ is just beginning to be fully documented and analyzed

As I’ve said before, things are calmer now.

There must be a reason for this, and I am going to give in to the chronicler’s tempt[ation] to be an historian and interpret these events.

The National Student Strike ended something,¹⁴ on the campus and I’m sure on others; perhaps it ended more than it began. I think, perhaps, that The Movement, in fulfilling its goals, may have killed off the one part of it that made it work.

The Movement lost its innocence that first week of May, 1970. It lost, once and for all, its feeling of living in historical limbo. That is, that its actions were of no consequence, no meaning; that not[h]ing we did made change, or, at least, there were no changes that could be directly and undoubtedly credited or blamed to our actions. Of course no one lives in such a limbo, but of what use or meaning were our deeds if they were to be nothing more than flickering images to amuse and shock the masses on the news reports, or acres of magazine pages to be interred in a cobwebbed corner of the library, never to be seen again. I think in each of us up till then, there was this constant whispering doubt: “Are we real? Are we real? Are we real?”

Now, one can not shut down a third of the nation[’]s campuses, strike panic in the heart of the country, face unarmed an army, see a part of your school go up in flames, and risk death, and still maintain any illusions as to your reality.¹⁵ No, we *knew* then that we were making history, and that we are forever a part of it.

But

With that innocence was ecstasy, a rejoicing in childish freedom. For when nothing one does makes a difference, one may do anything. And we tried to do everything we could think of. And so there was excitement and fantasy and just plain bullshit, but it was by that stream of dreams and even outright lies that we came to define ourselves. Such was our Identity, our Myth: People of a Dream, mysterious and unknown, seeming

almost supernatural to those who only saw us fluorescently flickering in the dark caves of living rooms.

And that was our attraction, and our glory, and the source of our power, even while technically powerless.

Now, finally, there are signs that we have translated, or are beginning to translate, that power into concrete political power. And there's the rub; for now we must be responsible, pedantic, slow and thoughtful, or at least crafty and sly. We have risen to be a vested interest. There is little romance to a vested interest.

This is a one sided view; you would be wrong to judge the Movement cynically on the basis of the above paragraphs. For that is only superficial—at the core of it was—and is—an intense humanitarianism, a hungering for justice and good will among men. To the extent that it bore and stood for such values, and produced individuals committed to making them real, The Movement is alive and will live forever. To the extent—and only to the extent that it was a source of cheap sensationalism and titillation —The Movement is dead.

John Junot
Lexington, Kentucky
June 27, 1971

* ✌ *

Perhaps it will not surprise you that I thought of myself as making history back then. Or, rather, this is what I remember thinking.

It costs to make history, my friend.

And what it cost me was 15 years of spiritual and emotional development. And it will cost me even more, but now I think I have at last cut the costs to an irreducible minimum. I bleed with tiny drops instead of steady streams now. I do not fear as much. I do not feel fear as much. If two Mexicans speak Spanish on the street, it does not cross my mind that they are talking about me. I do not believe God hates me if my shoestring breaks in the morning.

But when you've stared down the barrels of loaded rifles aimed by the soldiers of your government, some faith is broken forever. It is like meeting your wife whoring on the street. Much can be forgiven; much can be never spoken of; but nothing can be as it was before.

We have only begun to reckon the cost of what those days of my coming-of-age are. We are at last making good progress at integrating the experiences of G.I.s. But the cost is much more than that. . . .

When the national anthem is played, people of my father's generation, and people of our children's generation . . . and people of my generation all get that lump in the throat. All feel some stirring. But for people older and younger than me, it sticks a few moments; for me and my cohort it stops at the fading of the last note. And there is even, one moment later, some fleeting uneasiness of having felt it in the first place.

We are somewhat more cynical, somewhat more . . . cold-blooded, more squinty-eyed.

Multiply that by millions.

John Junot
Los Angeles, California
April 20, 1987

* ✌ *

There seems to be a hell of a lot of 60s retrospectives going on now. I went to one at USC recently One of the things I asked people was, "How are we different from a lot of World War II vets drinking beer and telling war stories at the American Legion bar?" They gave me a rather eloquent answer in terms of wanting to build on our experience, and go on, and so forth. I'm not sure but that the beer-gutted W.W.II vet couldn't say the same thing, though

Anyway, I just found your article at UCLA and I'm writing now to give my responses

Look my friend, you're going to have to *trust* me. *I was there*. I will grant, for sake of argument, that the march started with some dignity and calm. But we marched on the sidewalks about 200 feet or so, then someone yelled, "Take to the streets! The streets belong to the people!" And we left the nice, peaceful, *legal* sidewalks, and went into the street where the cars were, and blocked the cars, because all together, we were bigger than the cars. And my friend, from then on, we were *looking for a fight!*

And the *truth*, my friend, is that we'd been looking for a fight a long time. Or rather, we felt like Nixon and Agnew and Wallace, et al., were pushing us to fight, and we finally decided "okay, we'll give you one, you bastards"¹⁶

While our previous demonstrations were "peaceful" in terms of being legal, with no arrests or property damage, its a gross misinterpretation to think of them as being "peaceful". *Verbal* violence was the norm, remember. Mine is the generation that became infamous for gratuitous profanity

Finally, the "Mother-May-I Revolution" of April, 1969. You can't understand what happened at UK in May of 70 without knowing a little about what happened there in April of 69.

What happened was, the local narcs had a bullshit bust. What they did back then was put a spy in the student community. If that spy got your name and address, you got busted, all in one fell swoop—made great headlines "200 busted in UK drug raids" and so forth.

In April of '69 four students were busted and *charged—charged*, mind you—with selling drugs.

Jack Hall¹⁷ suspended these students under a "clear and present threat" clause in the student Code—a phrase any idiot (except J.Hall) would have known was meant to apply to violent psychos.

The *Kernel* ran a front page editorial and advertised a meeting in the Student Center ballroom.

5,000 students showed up! We radicals were entirely flabbergasted! Not to mention unprepared!

My memories are foggy. But [what] happened was, *whatever* we'd do to start a confrontation, the administration gave us permission to do it, *after the fact*. We took over the Student Center, they gave us permission to do it. We'd camp out on the Maxwell Place lawn. They'd give us permission to stay. One group took over Memorial Hall—

only to find out that UK didn't own Memorial Hall at the time. It was leased to a construction company doing remodeling!¹⁸

As I remember, the students were, in fact, reinstated. But we radicals—and most of the rest of the students—felt like we'd been had, snookered, co-opted, out-maneuvered; that in other words, we'd just been too goddam nice about the whole thing.

And. . .

Given the chance, we sure as hell weren't going to let them do that again

So we didn't.

John Junot
Los Angeles, California
March 13, 1988

NOTES

- ¹ Don Edwards, "Character's Curious Tale Probably Not Over," *Lexington Herald-Leader*, November 13, 1988, page B-1; *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1988, page I-12.
- ² Mitchell K. Hall, "A Crack In Time: The Response of Students at the University of Kentucky to the Tragedy at Kent State, May 1970," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 83 (Winter 1985): pp. 36-63.
- ³ Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) emerged in the early 1960s as the leading organization of the New Left, an ideology concerned with overcoming the gulf separating the principles from the practice of American democracy. For additional information, see James Miller, *'Democracy is in the Streets': From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973); Irwin Unger, *The Movement: A History of the American New Left, 1959-1972* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1974).
- ⁴ Marijuana (pot) and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) are hallucinogenic drugs that achieved wide popularity within the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s.
- ⁵ Beginning April 23, 1968, white student radicals and black militants at Columbia University occupied several buildings in protest to a variety of perceived injustices. After nearly a week, New York police responded to their provocations with mass arrests and abusive treatment that radicalized additional students. The university was effectively shut down for the remainder of the semester. For events at Columbia, see Jerry Avorn et al., *Up Against the Ivy Wall* (New York: Atheneum, 1968). Weatherman emerged in 1969 as the most dangerous remnant of a disintegrating SDS. Embracing a Marxist view of class conflict, the few hundred members of Weatherman saw themselves as the vanguard for the violent overthrow of American imperialism.
- ⁶ The 1968 Democratic nominating convention in Chicago was the scene of bitter confrontations between protesters and police. Prohibited by the mayor from holding rallies, demonstrators and neutral observers alike were brutally attacked in what a government report termed a "police riot." The nationally televised violence virtually ended the chance for a Democratic victory in the election. See Daniel Walker, *Rights in Conflict* (New York: Dutton, 1968).
- ⁷ Approximately 100 people formed the Community Alliance for Responsible Social Action (CARSA) at the beginning of the fall semester in 1968. Motivated by the recent Chicago police

riots, CARSA members believed that the potential for violent police repression existed in Lexington and marched on city hall to demonstrate the need for local police reform. The following spring CARSA mounted occasional actions against the Kentucky Un-American Activities Committee and in support of the California grape boycott, but it suffered a severe erosion of its energy and effectiveness.

⁸ The University of California at Berkeley was the scene of some of the earliest and most consistent student activism of the Vietnam War era. It was the scene of the Free Speech Movement in 1964 which triggered a series of protests against local restrictions on campuses across the country. San Francisco State achieved notoriety in 1968 when its president, S. I. Hayakawa, brought in police and national guardsmen to put down demonstrations conducted by a broad coalition of student radicals.

⁹ The *Kentucky Kernel* is the daily student newspaper of the University of Kentucky. The *Kentuckian* is the school's annual yearbook.

¹⁰ In early October 1969, Weatherman held the "Days of Rage" to mobilize and radicalize working class youth by trashing the streets of Chicago. The action attracted little support and the vandals were subdued by police during four days of violent confrontation.

¹¹ Participation in the Moratorium of October 15, 1969 was estimated in the millions and took place in thousands of communities across the nation. It marked the high point of moderate antiwar dissent. Several members of congress and other political leaders endorsed the day's events, which included church services, candlelight marches, silent vigils, and reading the names of Americans killed in the war. A personal view is Paul Hoffman's, *Moratorium: An American Protest* (New York: Tower Publications, 1970).

¹² The Mobilization held November 13-15, 1969 attracted as many as 750,000 people to Washington, D.C. with perhaps 250,000 more in San Francisco. A two-day March Against Death and a mass rally with music and speeches highlighted the Washington demonstration. Speakers tended to be more radical in tone than those heard during the previous month's Moratorium. For more information on this and the antiwar movement in general, see Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

¹³ When President Nixon announced the American invasion of Cambodia on April 30, 1970, Americans across the country reacted with disbelief and outrage. At Ohio's Kent State University, student response included acts of vandalism and the burning of the ROTC building, which prompted Governor Rhodes to call out the National Guard. On May 4, guardsmen needlessly fired into a demonstration, killing four students and wounding nine others.

¹⁴ The Cambodian invasion and deaths at Kent State generated an unprecedented response from American students. Protests occurred at over half of the nation's colleges and universities and more than five hundred schools canceled classes. These actions were generally peaceful, but episodes of violence prompted authorities to call the National Guard out at twenty-one campuses.

¹⁵ During the week of May 4, 1970, hundreds of students at the University of Kentucky demonstrated their opposition to the war and the deaths at Kent State. Though the protests were nonviolent, an unknown arsonist burned down a building on the edge of the campus. The governor called in the state police and National Guard to break up further

student gatherings. For a full description of these events, see Hall, "A Crack in Time."

¹⁶ President Richard Nixon, Vice-President Spiro Agnew, and Alabama Governor George Wallace antagonized political and social activists through their divisive appeals to the public and their blatant attacks upon radical and liberal political forces. Nixon, for example, referred to student protesters as "bums . . . blowing up the campuses" and dismissed the murders at Kent State with the statement "when dissent turns to violence it invites tragedy." Agnew attacked "the pampered prodigies of the radical liberals in the United States Senate" and identified leaders of peace demonstrations as "ideological eunuchs." "If any demonstrator ever lays down in front of my car," said George Wallace, "it'll be the last car he'll ever lay down in front of."

¹⁷ Jack Hall served as the university's Dean of Students.

¹⁸ Maxwell Place, residence of the university President, was located at the edge of campus. Memorial Hall sat near the center of campus. Its main floor served primarily as an auditorium for special events, and it backs up to an outdoor amphitheater.



Helpful Hints

How to tell if you are not an "issue" wife:

1. General Mundy will not return your calls.
2. You insist on having your own career.
3. You did not attend the last neighborhood practice grenade throw.
4. None of your underwear is green.
5. Medical care means more to you than a three-hour wait for an aspirin.
6. Semper Fi sounds a lot like Gettin' By, and you are not having any of it.
7. Men whose hair is shorter than their attention span leave you cold.
8. You do not own a spandex tanktop, Jesus sneakers, and none of your kids has a 'rat tail.'
9. You know that a double wide is not a measure of distance but of life style.
10. You are not comforted when you hear the news announcer say, "The Marines have landed."
11. The light of expectancy of something better has not gone out of your eyes.

YOU ASKED, "WHAT WAS HAPPENING, THEN?"

Paula Friedman, 1045 Page St., Berkeley, CA 94710.

Even in the birthmothers' groups, I've been told "You had some choice." I was neither impoverished nor a frightened teenager, after all, but a highly educated *radical*—"running around with those other tie-dyed, fanatic, family-dumping spongers through the streets, is that what you think?"

"Hey, it wasn't really like that," I'd tell—whom? the groups? my kid? Myself, more likely. "My 'choice' wasn't 'free,' and the baby wasn't some glitch I just tossed—"

But if I were to tell my son this, he would shake his head, with what I'd wish still to believe spontaneous sincerity, "No, no, I never—" and, glancing about, politely change the subject. Yet, if we still could speak, I'd recount my half of what we well understood, in our silent tears and sobbing hugs, those first weeks—or would if I'd only the pristine voice of someone never trapped by the inhibitions of her times.

For, while I may have been radical or intellectually advanced, by the mid-1960s I was still in the sort of extreme self-hatred common to "fifties repression." I had grown up in Washington, DC, a middle-class misfit in that first Cold War generation. It was a world where little girls had to be round with yellow curls, and to compete in sports and over boys; there was no place for anyone different. Short, thin, dark, last chosen, easily made to cry, I stood alone year after year on the playground, "unpopular."

(When my son told me he grew up longing to be popular.... But could it have been different had I been there?)

Fleeing to college didn't change much; I was too socially and sexually naive. Seeking philosophical truths, I didn't know to put this more attractively as "'truths' of the, you know, 'universe' and, as it were language"—or, in general, to repackage my style; when I finally found a peer group, I threw out everything to *adapt*. I learned to find "the parents" despicable and at fault, to drop earlier interests, and to doubt—the groping sex and competitive class debates precisely targeting the natural and the curious—my body and mind. What I could *not* learn was to cover emotion, and so, too thin to appeal to many men, too obvious in love to keep them, I suffered a series of unrequited loves and was suspended—not for having missed classes in fear of bodily and intellectual embarrassment but for wearing jeans, going stockingless to dinner, expressing the wrong opinions—a so-called "nervous breakdown."

It's not that there were no beautiful days or brilliant teachings. But what I, and many others, experienced was well expressed by a slogan of late-sixties Berkeley, "Oppression means to think 'What's wrong is wrong in me.'" This may seem seriocomic amid today's stark economic suffering—our insistence that internalized oppression

might be basic must seem damned dumb. But was it? One can still read Fanon.

"Actually, I'm glad you don't understand," I have told my son, of that forced self-destruction. For what was wrong, in that period when even those too philosophically sophisticated to swallow popular Freudianisms were swallowed by them, was seen as deeply wrong indeed. What was wrong had to be some underlying twist or dearth in our basic human feelings, mind, or, above all, sexuality. We did one another in. It was a venerated professor who slighted my poorly dressed presentations for the same answers from a long-braided bohemian, but it was *we* who took seriously the writers who denounced "aggressive/possessive" women or found frigidity in whoever didn't "come" as "came" the characters of D.H. Lawrence. It was the closeted young man who blamed his failure on my "unconscious anger" and "castrating vagina"; it was I who later ingested the theories denouncing (in a time when disability rights would *only* have met laughs) my love for a scarred man as necessarily perverted. And it was I who questioned my care for another woman and listened to the social workers who recommended psychotherapy when in fact I was too skinny and Jewish, my typing too slow, to get hired.

But these were our times, and, "Again," (I wouldn't tell the child; he needn't know all this), "these experiences were standard." The webs of self-condemnations, the equation of failure or weakness with "regressed personality," of sexual or economic success with maturity, and of maturity with "the capacity to really love" meant few people *could* have considered themselves whole and not believed "I must change what's wrong in me before I can—really—judge, live, love."

We fell for this who in other areas knew better—who questioned segregation, bomb shelters, national security, for instance, and saw past the commonplaces—religious to relativist—of the times. We questioned, but we failed to see certain evident discriminations or formulate obvious challenges—observing, for example, the teleological absurdity and daily drudgery of parenthood yet ignoring the related denigration of life issues—children, old people, the mother-infant bond.

When the world's inside out, "It took," I might really say to this witty grown, politically conscious son, "little intellectual slippage to fall into mirror-land."

Then one day—summer of 1965, 50,000 troops going off to Vietnam, and in Berkeley I had been working (because, however trivial "meaningful" activity or dubious my inner motives, it was necessary to counter massacre) with something called the Citizens' Committee Against the War—I answered the door to an older, dark-eyed man from another country.

He was radical beyond my experience. He respected and cared for people in a way I'd never known. I came to love him. One afternoon—he had been away—he visited unexpectedly.

Afraid that trying to hide response must seem defensive, I offered myself. ("I want you." Did I believe something wrong in my love, to risk—to give up—so much on those three words? But he reached out his hand—"It's all right.")

Only it wasn't—because my offer was sexual but my love was deeper. I didn't know if he had acceded from kindness, but I sensed something and, between this hesitance and the old body-doubting fear not to open, I held back, said "Wait" (a strange—laughable?—request, even today, in such circumstances, and then self-perceived as unspeakable, unwomanly). Sensitive, not like the men of this country, he stopped. I never learned what he thought. Much later he said he had missed me and, "There are no judges—but also you must let me be by my way."

The next weeks, waiting, I broke into ricocheting bits. "Let's just be natural," he had told me; I came to think it my sexual inhibitions that had failed him. *Something* must have, surely, since he did not return but could not have shown such care unless he loved—or was his an all-encompassing love beyond my comprehension? Not to judge meant to trust in his return, to make no judgment of what was true, no decision what to do. And any judgment came of a system—suspicion and doubts of love from that life-destroying system we opposed.

It was not, finally, only the one afternoon, the one man, but the whole of my past and times led to the belief—first, that even the hesitance of my body and proclamation of desire meant to entice and sacrifice the beloved to those (superego "parents," as it were) who judged—and, subsequently, that I'd *not* some inner demand for sacrifice but rather clung like a child to love for a parent and thus, in a sort of "transference," to the unreal needs and loves defined by elders' judgments and, even, words. My one hope was to regrow a truer self and experience what I'd never known, that I find new ways to—nonjudgmentally, maturely, *really*—love.

But I can't further explain how the ideas of that period led to this conclusion, or how, for so many of us, evolving external events and concepts—spontaneity, play, distrust of systemic judgments—cross-fertilized internal query and change. What is important is that interwoven with the confusion and denial were truths.

My son would have seemed immediately to understand this, those first weeks, but not today. How can one era know the cultural mazes of another (but also there was his need, after our re-bonding, to separate). And, I think, the fear that there might have been only some casual "summer of love" shaded his at first exhilarated words, "I used to think—Berkeley, 1967, maybe somehow the radical scene was involved." (Yes—because "You were borne, child," I'd say, "on something very deep.")

However, it's not to that gently sardonic young man I'd say, "The quest for meaning, universal love, and peace is old, but to meld this search with the need to climb from under psychological oppression began, for so many of us, what *was* (as far as it went) revolution; our antiwar actions *also* sought new identity, new forms. It was not that we joined the Movement "to work out pathologies," but rather our involvement in the ever-growing need for peace of a society at war, our search for new ways to care in a society of frozen compassion, forced us to evolve—strand by strand, and often threaded with mistakes—

larger tissues of structure and self." (But this old knowledge now seems cliché.)

To "use my words for others, not to express false 'problems,'" I returned to antiwar work through underground reporting. At that time, this meant the *Berkeley Barb*—no focus of compassion, but one of the few antiwar papers and not yet exploiting sex. It was a base from which to reach the people exploring new ways to care, and to meet the urgent need—every day in the papers were the photographs—to oppose the war, to save lives.

I was writing the events column ("Sat 3 pm Lincoln Brig dinn; Fri 8 pm Avalon, Jeff Air"—*Barb* tending to tight spacing) and reporting on the peace movement. As spring went on, amid rumors that Johnson would soon bomb Hanoi, we began hearing of a demonstration planned for the Redwood City napalm plant—"far more than civil disobedience." By mid-May, however, I had nearly given up seeking leads on the "Redwood City thing" and, nearing the midnight issue deadline, turned to phone about a "first anniversary picnic" of the Vietnam Day Committee. But I could not reach that once-crucial organization's headquarters.

The editor, Max, tossed me another number. "He'll know."

"A picnic—we're about to bomb Hanoi, and they'll end the war with their picnic.' This," I may yet tell my son, "is how I remember your father's voice on the phone. 'But do you care what we're doing to the Vietnamese? Why aren't you covering Redwood City—if you really want to stop the war?'"

"You know about Redwood City? I've been trying—"

"Yes. If anyone's interested. Give me an hour, I'll—"

"We're on deadline. Get here in fifteen minutes, if you really want to end the war."

He'd been drinking; when he arrived he staggered around the room. I said, "You want some coffee?" and he said, "Yeah, I should drink coffee," and then he put some clips and photos on the table and, after awhile, a jar of some sort of jelly—"Guess what?"

I jumped, and he said, "That scares you? They have to live with napalm dropping from the sky."

It was three days later we went to look at the bomb-storage sites, and the same week—"This was in our days," I told the child—we went to bed. With love, on my part—and over the next month we found we could have real (if superficial) arguments without making the other go away. But there were tacit limits; I had to avoid judging, never ask "false needs" nor fall into "unreal closeness," and he could not drop his self-image of focused challenge against the war, and so we never discussed that "system's" self that is biography; everything was of the moment, only the body and emotions connected.

"But they did," I'd say; "Dear child, they did."

After some weeks, we began to open more—and of course at that point he was gone. Twice in the next weeks, I stood on the sidelines of a nighttime crowd as he drove up to a rally, daring in his imaginative, risky, *funny* antiwar actions. By then, this country had bombed Hanoi and Haiphong, and that day the pregnancy had been confirmed.

Therapeutic abortions existed—I had the requisite contacts. My struggle for renewal prevented asking parental help, and, like most middle-class radicals, I was ignorant about welfare; meanwhile, there'd been threatening phone calls and my fear, termed paranoid by *Barb* coworkers (COINTELPRO was still unknown), clearly meant I must still be trapped in closure and judgment and it was necessary to question "my" decisions. And yet finally the outcome was never in real question; it came down to life, to *giving* (even though to have a man's baby would seem, in many systems, symbolic possession), to love for the growing life within.

I would have the child. I would give up the child. Neither I nor anyone else could regard this matter as so important as the struggle against the war.

Around this time, someone came to the *Barb* with word of a demonstration planned for Port Chicago. This was Tom, who would later show me what it is to risk one's life from love, and who would know to reach past fear and anger, to listen and be vulnerable, to speak of his need for me, so that I came to see I could love, had always loved and been whole, and that in this awareness is the strength of a world where people trust their own love's possibilities.

Once, my son asked, because I had mentioned the event several times, "What *happened* at Port Chicago?" What I told him was more the events than their crucial effect; (words, in those first weeks, only emerged slowly from shared depths).

The demonstration began in early August with a march to the Port Chicago/Concord Naval Weapons Station, shipping point for the bulk of American weapons to Vietnam. There, protesters would block the weapons trucks, however briefly—by this nonviolent civil disobedience focusing attention on the war. Tom was among the leaders, even though, like many of us, he questioned the limited action. I had begun to know him well—this big, gruff, not well-educated army veteran who was always aiding people, who had promised to help me through my pregnancy, who intuited the core of issues—and to whom, only partly from his Korean experience, the Vietnamese were not vague victims but *persons* who must be saved. During long talks, I had tried to explain my changes, he had recounted his lonely past. "We all need to be like children," he would say. "They're curious about everything, they care about everyone."

Outside the base, that first night, across from what was called Main Gate, few remained. We slept fitfully. Only with dawn came the trucks—and, as one after another protester stepped out to nonviolently halt their onrushing approach, a new, "impossible" form of community, a love for, and through, one another. I understood this, when Tom put his hand on one brave woman's shoulder; I *felt* his care for her, our love for her and one another—even for those lounging Marines across the road, even for the distant, unknown people in Vietnam.

But after Tom was arrested, I—pregnant, afraid, trying not to judge but still skeptical of strict civil disobedience—only carried the tapes and photos to the press.

In the next days, a separation began between those arrested and those not, between those constantly on the lines—as what became a vigil continued—and “new people.” Out there only occasional nights, I became distanced from Tom.

Meanwhile, over several days the vigilers’ numbers shrank, and the danger from the Marine guards, sheriff’s deputies, and local hecklers grew.

So we came to “that night,” I told my son, “August 16-17, 1966.”

A few well-known activists had reacted, in Washington, to subpoena by the House Un-American Activities Committee with widely publicized agit-prop. A rally had been called in Berkeley to back these activists, and the crowd in the steaming auditorium quickly moved to support the Port Chicago Vigil. Two young ABC reporters were present, and people were encouraged by the media presence, the challenge to HUAC, the intense commitment at Port Chicago; at the speakers’ crescendoing calls, they swarmed outside, moving by carloads toward the Vigil in the night.

I didn’t go in the van with Tom. By then, I didn’t dare; it was “their scene,” they’d been “out there.” Instead, I guided a bunch of “new people” to the base.

Suddenly, Tom was running toward me; we held each other, across from Main Gate, on the narrow roadside strip of grass.

But soon he moved off. In spite of his doubts, “If we keep coming back and stopping the weapons,” he had told me, “more people will come—they care, they’ll see they *can* care, they’ll see it’s possible—and we can close this base and we can stop this war”; with masses of people—and publicity to bring more—finally arrived, it was necessary to act.

Without a glance back, he went loping up the slope to the crest of the road, and I could see him standing there with several others, by the triangle of dirt formed by what was called the Overpass Road turnoff. Here the weapons trucks entered the base, and here, clearly, people planned to stop them. As I walked hesitantly up the hill, an older pacifist shouted, “You know the scene. Tell any new people the rule—if someone goes out to stop a truck and is attacked, no one is to try to help them, it’ll only make things worse.”

There was a long wait. Near the triangle of ground, Tom and the other Vigil veterans—the fragile-looking legal secretary Pamela, the tough farm mother we knew as Jo, the *Barb*’s cynical photographer Eliot, one or two others—stood apart, beside the two young men who planned to stop trucks; their quiet voices now and then rose as they planned tactics. Nearby, the television crew sat, smoking cigarettes. Across from them, the Marines, cops, and hecklers lounged in a taut threatening silence. Only occasionally Eliot would wander over to where I waited, isolated between this “in” group and the line of vigilers stretching down to the massed “new people” across from Main Gate.

Sometime after midnight, someone pointed. Five yellow lights were approaching—a truck, coming in from Concord. Behind it, another five lights. Both vehicles were moving fast.

As the first rushed up the hill, still accelerating, the two young men raced out to meet it—and jumped back, it was coming *too* fast; in a moment, it had made its turn and gone on, napalm bombs gleaming, into the base. Then—again, *too* fast—the second truck appeared.

Someone, in the television lights, was running toward it.

In that moment, I saw it was Tom, his arms lifted, and that the person would be killed. And if I ran out, I and the baby might also die—or I might confuse his timing, increase his danger—and was I really trying to possess him?

The road at my feet in the light shone white. Something, the truck, was passing. If I took one step, he, someone (—was it Tom? I’d not liked how the person held his arms—) might be killed, I might be hurt, the baby, these people might be hurt—and he might not want me there, it would intrude upon his scene, his courage—he was the one who cared, who could love; I’d only make things worse.

I don’t recall the exact thoughts, but then the truck had passed; the demonstrator had not been killed but the Marines had pulled him down, were striking him, and if I took one step—

Someone—Pamela—had raced forward and was tearing at the Marines, breaking through their lines. As she and two others brought Tom back, in the white television lights the people’s hands were raised in V-signs and their voices sang “We Shall Overcome.” “Now I am dead,” I thought. “Now I shall never overcome.”

Later—Pamela and Tom were still by the turnoff, each demanding to stop the next truck—I said, “I’ll stop the next one,” but no one heard. As I turned away, Eliot came over; together we walked down the hill “to find a ride before,” as he expressed it, “someone gets himself killed.”

There was a long wait, standing around with the newcomers by the food table before Eliot returned, saying, “I’ve found a car; let’s go.” I nodded, glancing up—and beyond him, down the road, there were five yellow lights.

“Truck,” I said. “Truck, Eliot, truck.”

He was trying to put film into his camera. The lights kept coming nearer; he said, “Run; go put your arms around him or something—run.”

I did. (I don’t know why I never rushed out before that truck). Then Tom and Pamela and Jo were moving toward it; I could see Marines grabbing the women and throwing them back. For a second, the load of bomb-crates blocked the light, then it was past; the scene had repeated, Tom lay cordoned off by Marines.

But this time it was like a dance, my feet could move, and I ran across the road.

Only, for a long time there was no way through. Once a Marine grabbed me and Jo and pushed us toward the base. But we fought, my sandal strap broke, the Marine—he was very young—let go. I kicked off my shoes and ran back towards Tom. But no way opened; for so long we swayed there, lines in silent confrontation; then suddenly two Marines stood in the light, one was black and one was white, and then there was a space. I ran to Tom.

I leaned over him—“They’ll have to hit me first,” I thought, but I only told him, “We’re here.” I heard him say

"I'm all right," knew he mustn't move his injured leg. I feared the Marines' return.

But they had pulled back, the demonstrators had got through.

Everything was safe—and then abruptly the security guard's half-ton truck rolled toward us from the base. But no one expected danger, everyone jumped aside; only, I, standing by Tom's head, I was still in its way. I didn't see how I could help Tom—hold onto the hood and push him sideways with my feet, possibly—but somehow I would; I stood between him and the little truck, while its headlights approached within inches, and then it stopped. "My feet," (as I've said, too often, of this), "took root."

(Sure must have—she hasn't left the '60s since, one might say, and some have. But it was to the changes and—though I did not understand—the child, I have clung.)

We were still in the wonder of reunion when I told my son, in less detail, of that night—though little of its role, soon after, as the critical metaphor of "getting through," of fighting past the bars of one's own or others' fear, shame, guilt, denial, to the love and strength in everyone—a metaphor for both personal, intimate love and for a more loving, "order"-less society.

But I can't, even now, explain how this comprehension came from recognizing the deep response of my love, over the next two months, when Tom would say he needed me, and from those glimpses at Port Chicago of communal love and heroism, and from the love for the baby growing in my womb. Only, what became clear during this time (even as Tom, caught up in the Vigil where I could no longer go, slowly left me)—the message of this metaphor—was that my love, everyone's love, had always been whole and real, simply love. There was nothing wrong or unreal in feelings or self. The feared aggression was a way to fight for people (even words or judgments might be tools), a way to struggle through barriers (even those of words, of judgments, of denial's "Too late—this isn't real") to help where one cares. The feared empathy for a man who is vulnerable (—it was still the wake of the 1950s, the moment before women's liberation, and these ideas novel—) was simply loving, tender response, was even desire to renew the wholeness and strength in the beloved and receive his giving love. The deepest need—in a person helpless, in a person laughing, in a calling child, in a lost beloved, in any heart—was the same; the cry to be loved and the murmur of love's offer were one voice, the child's need and the "giving, mature" love not distinct. This deepest need, the love for the love, in everyone yearned for this same love in each.

But in this truth lay also the possibility of peaceful anarchy, of the natural "good life"—for to know one's depths are love, and one's worth thus unbreachable, is to step beyond fear into revolutionary hope, reaching out with curiosity and courage to care, no longer held back by barriers of doubt or interdictions, by the guilt or shame of any eyes, denial of any system, but letting love lead—even through actual lines of cops, of Marines, of those

who kill—forward, together in the struggle to create a world of peace and the possible dream.

I know—again what once seemed liberating sounds parody or trite. There is no way now to make intellectually convincing the wonder, the awareness (unexpected, for the struggle then was against oppression, not for—or from—philosophical "answers") that everything—the beautiful, the good, the natural—could merge in the love for which we most deeply long. Especially when these newly opened eyes could be blind to what was clear.

In a way, mine was a homespun "woman's definition of love," distinct from the dominant climax-oriented version. (It was two years before the women's movement, but I was influenced by Helen Lynd's *Shame and the Search for Identity*; social movements have wide roots.) But I'd not enough seen through that earlier definition, with its insistence on the emotional primacy of lovemaking and its tacit paradigm of maturity as the "couple" with kids. I could not fully believe the deepest love was equally the *agape*, the heroic, even the bond (I could not see, child) between parent and newborn that—growing, speaking in my soul but the words uncomprehended—hovered those months when the baby's heart met mine and perhaps I cried his cries and dreamed his dreams and (as later in the time of our re-bonding) not only hope from new concepts brought euphoric joy.

This is, of course, also the love that bears the faith to raise a child.

But early in 1967, six months after Port Chicago, eighteen months after Watts, one week after the first Be-In, when the baby was born I still, like my "vanguard" peers, thought love for a child *must* be secondary and a baby needed the love of a two-parent home. When I held close my newborn, feeling nothing but tenderness, decision was already made and the mind moved too slowly to change; besides, the mental struggle against the years' losses and the loss to come occluded the simplest recognition: *I'll be giving my baby into the unknown.*

And so it was remainders of ignorance and shreds of recent loss—not simply circumstance, not only the insecurity of "How could I raise such a wonderful child?" nor folklore of the perfect, carefully selected, adoptive parents—made my decision.

Afterwards, I lived two years "as if"—(something like the Movement's *as if* to create a better world by believing it)—"as if" there would be response, as if there would be the loving need, as if by acting "as if" loving I might come to care. I marched with 100,000 in the April Mobilization, leafleted the docking Enterprise, organized workers at the *Barb*, helped build the Peace and Freedom Party, stood before the cops—at Stop the Draft Week, Third World strikes, People's Park.... I made efforts toward new lovers—and there were an agit-prop, a fledgling women's group, a magazine. But the crest was over; and perhaps it was as if I could never have been *giving enough*, no matter how much I gave, and, like so many—and this is one reason our revolution ebbed too soon—I had given everything away.

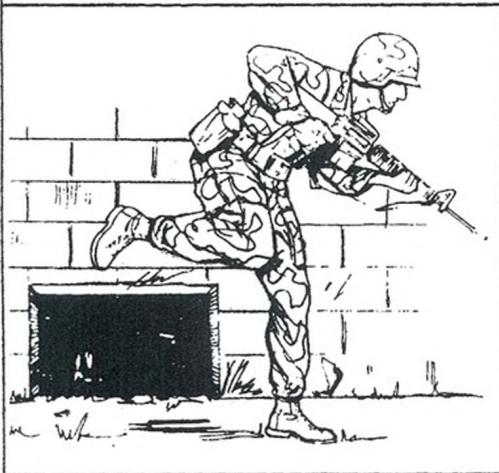
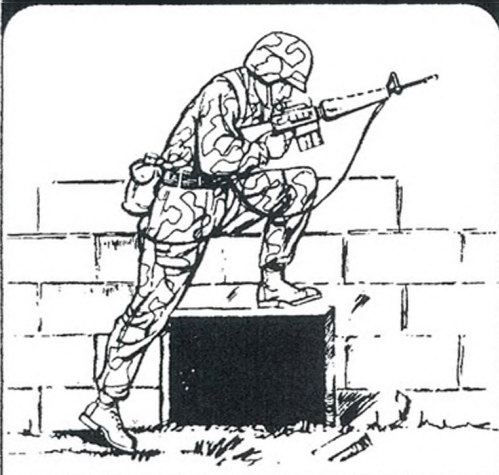
The child's new parents would indeed be *parents*—loving, doting, providing a good childhood. The truths—the trust that one can love, the recognition that love and

our trust in it may heal the world—would hold firm. And the self-acceptance and internal changes, the loves of those days, the care and heroism of Port Chicago, “revolutionary hope” itself, and the social progress of those times *were* crucially important and deep.

Only, in clearing out the layers of false voices and destructive systems of this false society—in finding, in the world and self, what was loving, liberating, life-protective, *motherly*, and coming to brief revolutionary (so to speak) fruition—somehow that theoretical-minded, “giving” young woman I was had made a big mistake. I had *thrown out the baby with the bath water*.

“The changes and commitment of ‘those days’ were real,” I would conclude. “Only, the yearning for you, unrecognized in that culture (and veiled as mere curiosity or goal-less seeking even in dreams), lingered, colored the world; and it was only when you found me—you, son who’d the courage to dare the impossible search—that fear’s occlusions could lift and the joy of our reunion spring forth, for the necessary time, from the heart’s deepest need, the love that is the depth and hope of human life.”

**BASEMENT WINDOW
MOVEMENT**



Looking for Woodstock

Chris Bruton, Rt. 2, Box 156, Halifax, NC 27839.

My wife and I had been hiking in the Catskills and on the way back, as we had to go through Woodstock, we decided to stop and see where the famous concert was held. At first we roamed around the outskirts of the town, searching for familiar features in hillsides and pastures, half expecting to come upon one of those historical plaques, like “Lee’s Retreat” or “First Congregationalist Church Here,” designating the spot. I say half expected because it seemed, on the one hand, impossible that Woodstock could ever become that “Establishment.” But then, as they say, stranger things have happened. Who would have believed the song “Revolution” would one day be parlayed into a tennis shoe jingle?

To be labeled a member of “the Woodstock generation” has become almost a stigma, but I would have to identify myself this way. The haggard blanket tents, the hippies bathing nude, the blasphemous chants and ridicule of Ronald Reagan, and those immortal rhythms and words, *It’s been a long, long time coming* (but exactly *what* was coming? what two people would agree?)—they are like inscriptions carved into the bottom-most layer of who I am. But it was an influence that happened indirectly, in bits and snatches, by osmosis. I could not have said where the concert took place; it was never important to me before now. And so I was a little surprised when the attendant at the Sinclair station in town told us that Woodstock had not actually happened at Woodstock—it was supposed to, he thought, but they hadn’t been able to get the right permits or something—but at a farm many miles away.

“You know—Yazgur’s farm?” he said, grinning like someone admitting he used to believe in Superman. He was about our age. “He was a dairy farmer, I think. Lived over by Monticello, somewhere over there.”

“Any idea how to get there?”

“I know you go down 209 a ways, then you got to turn west.”

“Think you can see it from the road?”

“What, where they had the festival? I don’t know.”

Then he gave us that funny smile again, almost like what we used to call a “stoned smile,” and said, “Maybe you’ll meet somebody who can tell you.”

So we decided to go looking. It was a gray, cloudy day, the kind you could picture Rip van Winkle falling to sleep on. As we drove out of town it started to rain.

“There’s 209 up ahead.”

“Don’t you think we ought to find out how far it is first?” Gwen said. “We’ve got mileage to think about, you know.”

“Yeah.” We were driving a rent-a-car. “Look, there’s a diner. We can ask there.”

It was one of those aluminum, boxcar-shaped diners, a defunct neon fish in a chef’s apron and cap loudly displayed on its roof.

"Why don't you go?" I said to Gwen when we parked.
"No way."

"But don't you have to use the bathroom or something?"

"No. And I wouldn't use theirs even if I did. You go."
"Me? But—I haven't shaved in three days."

Gwen looked at me, and in our eyes we read what was behind this little pantomime: the fear of stares, of the sardonic faces, the contempt our query would provoke from people who had been here when the self-important event happened. Wouldn't it be like going to Hanoi and asking where Jane Fonda slept?

"Hell," I said, pulling away, "I'm just gonna go the way the guy said."

It was raining harder now, the tires swishing loudly as we moved down the highway. You could hydroplane in these conditions; once, on another wet day, I'd gone into a skid on an unmarked hairpin curve, sliding into the opposite lane for a moment before slamming into the guardrail. I wondered if Gwen was thinking of that.

"Did you ever imagine what it must have been like for the people around here, seeing all those freaks jamming the highway?" I said.

"Provided this was the highway." There was a deadpan tone to her voice that translated: what a waste of time this is.

"Look, if we can't find the place pretty soon we'll just head back, okay?"

"Okay."

"I mean, don't you want to see it?"

"I could live without it."

"What's the matter with you? Think of all the history that was made there: Joe Cocker doing 'With a Little Help From My Friends,' Jimi Hendrix—"

"But Rick, chances are it's just a cornfield now."

As obvious as this sounded, I admit it hadn't occurred to me.

"I can't help it. I think I'd recognize it."

"How?"

"Well, I remember it from the movie, and, I don't know, I just think there has to be a, a—"

"An aura?"

"I guess so. Yeah."

"Wow, you really are a Sixties man."

The road crested a hill and I looked out at the gray vistas, wondering if an aura would show in the rain.

"What do you remember about Woodstock?" I said.

"What do you mean, the movie or the record?"

"Either. I mean when it was happening, that time."

Gwen sighed. "Well—I was only what, thirteen?—I remember it being on the news, Walter Cronkite I think. We were all in the den and Daddy looked up from his paper and said, 'How the hell can they let them tramp all over the man's field like that?' You know he was farming then. And Mama said, 'They got permission. The man that owns it, he's letting them.' And Daddy just said, 'What?' squinting like he does, then disappeared again behind his paper."

This was typical of Gwen, looking at the past through the narrow lens of what her family had to do with it. They were not a close family, but she was very close to them.

"Is that all? What about the concert?"

"I was only thirteen, Rick."

"What about Joni Mitchell?" She had been Gwen's idol at one time, though Gwen denied this. She still had all her albums, stacked in a box under our bed, and when Gwen sang her voice unerringly betrayed the pop star's sway over her, like a tree bent by the wind. In college she had even looked a little like Joni—the Joni of one incarnation anyway—favoring whimsical sashes and berets, her brown hair long and straight. Now it was very short, and fashionably disheveled.

"She wasn't in Woodstock," Gwen said.

"But she wrote that song about it."

"So?"

"So that didn't affect you?"

"It's a nice song. I liked it. Maybe I put some flowers in my hair or something. But I wasn't looking for a revolution to happen, Rick, if that's what you're getting at."

I winced inwardly; she had scored a hit with that one. Actually, at thirteen—Gwen and I are the same age—my own interests had ranged little beyond playing football and stealing a secret glance at my brother's sequestered *Playboys*. But later when the prevailing rebelliousness settled down on me like some kind of transforming magic wand I remember remarking to a visiting aunt, who was lamenting the tumultuousness of the times, that "everything would be different, after the Revolution." Gwen knew the story. I had operated under that misapprehension for years. It was a source of lingering disillusionment to me and others my age that institutions did not actually crumble. What did we want? We couldn't have stated it, only something better. Was our myopia total, or had there been something in the air that could warrant such outrageous expectations? The question couldn't be answered. The time, the music, the politics, the fashions—they were all like facets of a dream, none of which has meaning by itself. So why go looking for Woodstock? I knew it was pointless, but I wanted to see it, the way a person is drawn to look again and again at old family snapshots.

"How far have we come?"

I checked the odometer. "Eleven miles."

Gwen said nothing, but that in itself was a statement. The more miles, the more we would have to pay, the later we would get back to the city.

The rain had slackened, but everything was fuzzy in the mist, fields and farmhouses all a dull off-white.

"What time of year was Woodstock anyway?" I asked.

"Summer. July or August."

"It would have been pretty around here then, everything green."

"Yeah."

"Plenty of flowers for the flower children."

"Look, don't you think this is getting a little morbid?"

"What?"

"All this. Rehashing the past, looking for something that doesn't even exist anymore. Just what do you expect to find, Rick? Woodstock's in your mind, it's not a place."

"But it was a place. It really happened. That's what I want to see, that, I don't know, verification."

"So what are you saying, that it might have been just a big hoax or something? Like those people who think the moon landings were filmed out in the desert?"

"No, of course not."

"Then why do you have to see it?"

"It's sentimental, okay? It's self-indulgent, narcissistic. But Woodstock was important to me, wasn't it important to you?"

"I guess. In a superficial way."

"*Superficial?*"

"It was a rock concert, Rick."

"Oh come on, it was more than that, it was a culmination, the whole counterculture thing—where were you?"

"Antreville, South Carolina."

It was like hearing a hick accent; the name of her hometown a perfect evocation of its backwardness, its imperviousness to change.

"I see what you mean."

We rode on in silence. Then after some miles Gwen said, "You know what I've been thinking about? The Court of Swing."

"Sounds like some Benny Goodman tune."

"It was this dancehall in Antreville. It's gone now, burned down sometime in the Seventies I think. I was thinking about what you said, about the counterculture and all, and I guess Antreville wasn't totally out of it; after all, we had The Court of Swing. The Zombies played there."

"The Zombies played in Antreville?"

"I know, it sounds incredible. I guess they were on their way to Atlanta or Charlotte and they had a free night between shows; I can't believe the owners of the Court of Swing knew what they were getting into either. It was right after 'The Time of the Seasons' came out."

"Wow. You go?"

"Are you kidding? First of all I was underage, and Mama never would have let me step foot in The Court of Swing regardless; it sort of had a *reputation*. But Marie, one of my best friends, went. Did I ever tell you about Marie?"

"Probably. If she's from Antreville."

"Marie was wild. Her mother died when she was about six and her father, Dr. Hall, never really tried to raise her. Marie always just fended for herself. She cooked all the meals and cleaned the house, and that made her very independent. She did pretty much what she wanted to. Boys were attracted to her early because she was very pretty—jet black hair and a trim, curvy figure—and because she tended to be even more daring than they were. Even at the time I'm talking about, when we were thirteen, fourteen, I'm sure she'd already 'done it.' But she was a sweet girl, Marie, very witty and real smart."

"So Marie went to see the Zombies. She didn't have any trouble getting in?"

"Her brother was gonna be taking tickets and I think she promised to wash his car for a year or something if he'd let her in. I mean this was *big*. You remember what it was like back then. A British accent was about the coolest thing on earth. The Beatles were like gods. And

rock music, it wasn't just music, it was a statement, what separated us from our parents. I envied Marie. I mean anybody who was even vaguely 'with it' wanted to see that concert. But it was just unthinkable for me. It would have meant lying to my parents, and doing something I knew they would disapprove of, and I was just too much of a good girl to do that. But I heard about it all from Marie.

"She came and tapped on my window late that Friday night, or by then it must have been Saturday morning; she would do that whenever she had something urgent to tell. The Court of Swing had been packed, she said, mostly high school juniors and seniors and even a few kids who had come home from college. The Zombies didn't come on until late, about eleven; Marie spent the long wait wandering through the crowd, bumming cigarettes and sips of beer off boys she knew and trading catty looks with girls in heavy black mascara. Finally the lights dimmed and there was a mass movement toward the stage. Everybody got quiet and then in the darkness you could hear feet shuffling, funny-sounding mutterings, then a patter of drums, some guitar licks. A few shrieks and moans escaped from the crowd. Then a single purple light aimed down at the stage that was only a few inches above the floor, there was a heavy thud from the drums and bass, and the lead singer stepped into the light. It was just pandemonium, Marie said. You know how at Beatles concerts people were always going berserk? It was just like that, she said. Girls screamed, cried, chewed their beads. The boys just looked dumb and amazed. Marie glanced over by the door where the sheriff and the owner were standing and they both had their jaws wide open. It was the noise, she said. Nobody had ever heard anything like it. It was like this big swollen wave that kept crashing and crashing into you. But in a way you weren't even conscious of the noise because your eyes were too busy taking in the spectacle of those four young men on the stage, with their shoulder length hair and bangs half covering their eyes, their turtlenecks, their nehru jackets, their beads and medallions and pointed black boots, so stern, so solemn, so distant—it was like they were messiahs. Marie said, young messiahs come to preach the truth to Antreville—and all the time the sound was battering its way right inside you until you were part of it, at one with it. She didn't even realize until the song was over that they'd just done 'A Time of the Seasons.'"

I stole a glance at Gwen to see if this would be all. Yes, she had that look she always wore when we came back from visiting her family—a mask of good spirits bravely put on to camouflage the feeling of loss.

"The messiahs of Antreville," I said. "That's really good."

But Gwen, of course, would say nothing.

The rain had stopped now, and though it was still overcast the clouds had lifted considerably. After a while I asked Gwen if we ought to start heading for the city.

"I don't know. Why don't you turn up there?"

"Why there?"

She smiled and said just, "Looks pretty."

At the crossroads I turned right—west, the way the guy back at the Sinclair station had said to go—onto a narrow cinder road. It led into some pretty country full of

old barns and rolling pastures. The rain had blanketed the ground with broad yellow leaves and those still on the trees were at their peak of color. It was arresting, compared to the more muted autumn of the South.

"So what ever happened to Marie?"

"I lost touch with Marie our last year of high school. She got into drugs, and that made her different, moody. Then about a month before we were gonna graduate she eloped with a boy who drove one of those crazy-colored Volkswagen busses. I don't think she ever came back to Antreville; I know she didn't when Dr. Hall died, probably didn't even know about it. I saw her brother a few years ago and he said she was somewhere in Florida; said she'd been in the Navy for a while."

It was funny how few people we saw while on that road. The country seemed empty. It was beautiful, but desolate. It felt, with the leaves falling and that gloomy sky, like a haunted place.

We came onto the top of a hill and I slowed the car, then pulled off the road and stopped. Below us was a broad, gently sloping pasture the vague shape of an amphitheater. At the same time I noticed a man some ways down the road, walking toward us. But I paid him no mind. I was looking at the pasture. It was bordered by trees on one side; at the bottom there would have been room for a stage—

"Wow," Gwen said, "do you think that's it?"

"I don't know. I'm looking."

"No aura?" she said softly.

"No."

The man approached us now. He was about forty-five, rather stout, a man who looked neither happy nor sad, only patient. I thought about asking him. But he did not look at us as he neared the car. His eyes stayed on the ditch alongside the road. Suddenly he stooped, picked a flattened can out of the grass, and after examining it dropped it into the burlap bag slung across his back. Then he moved on, and even when he passed in front of us gave no sign he knew we were there. Gwen and I looked at each other. It was one of those moments of perfect harmony, of perfect understanding, that so rarely happened between us.

"He's like a—"

"I know," I said, because it seemed ludicrous to say the word out loud, but to both of us he was a ghost, some kind of caretaker ghost if there are such things.

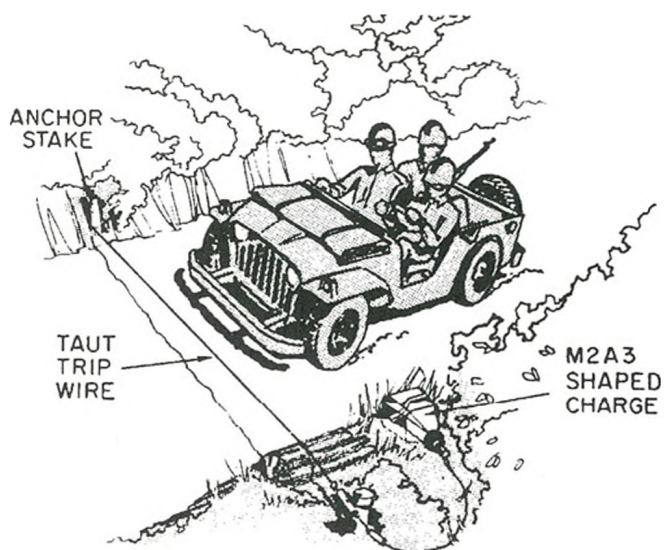
Chris Bruton witnessed the Sixties from the sidelines, since at their apogee he was only thirteen years old. For that very reason he has a peculiar susceptibility and fascination for the era: "It was like watching from indoors the heralding of spring which before you could go forth into it had turned back to winter. I hear a song from that era and alternate between rapture and self-loathing for the emotions engendered." He has a B.A. from Duke ('78); resided in Brazil and Chile during the early eighties; drove a taxi for a living in New York during a three-year stay. Currently, he divides his time among writing, raising sheep, and teaching at a local prison.

POETRY by Rod FARMER

WET SAIGON

In Saigon in '69,
once the Paris of the Orient
now fading fast in abnormal air
as sex runs high down streets
like full open street sewers
after a monsoon rain.
Everyone, the bar girls dressed
in sex, the pimps banking on sex,
the soldiers drunk on sex,
everyone smiles, especially the GIs
these pale sons of Henry Miller,
they all fail to think
it through so the tears
are unconsciously aborted,
guilt will overflow later,
like flooding street sewers.

*Rod Farmer, University of Maine at Farmington, Farmington, ME 04938. Rod Farmer has published poetry in numerous journals, including **Manna**, **Mind in Motion**, **Pegasus**, **Thirteen Poetry Magazine** and **Wordsmith**. He lives in Maine and drives a Jeep but wishes he had a classic Corvette—any color would be fine.*



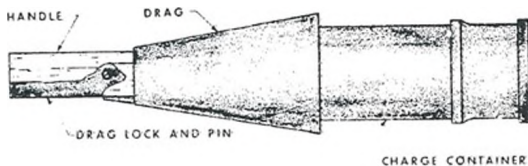
POETRY by VICTOR H. BAUSCH

STAND-OFF

The disabled Vietnam veteran checking into a dingy hotel in downtown San Francisco has traveled over fifteen hundred miles to be near his estranged wife and twelve year old son. Inside the bare room he feels the gnawing presence of loneliness and depression, the painful gut-wrench of separation, the despondency that has come from being unemployed the past few years. He visualizes his phantoms in group therapy, shouting and sobbing, as he unpacks his personal possessions. On this cold winter evening in December, he imagines being asked to discuss his difficulties and problems freely, to come out of silent isolation and accept the truth about himself. In his world he pictures a fairy tale reconciliation, a chance to repair the rips and damage in what she called an unpredictable marriage. As he considers this unexpected possibility, he tapes an explosive device to his chest, triggered by a photoelectric cell, which he will activate at daybreak. Now, he calmly phones the police.

OAKLAND ARMY INDUCTION CENTER

Terrified and dazed,
we stand with our toes flat
against a yellow line
that separates us from them,
four military doctors
in white coats
from each branch
of the service,
who yell like tough guys
for us to bend over
and spread our cheeks.
I look to my right and left
seeing young men
with both hands
clutching the fleshy part
of their face.
They just don't get it.
We're all hemorrhoids
here anyway.



SHAPE CHARGE HAND GRENADE

BENEATH A THIN LAYER OF LIFE

Xuan Loc 1968 Tet

Incoming mail arrives,
a barrage in the black hours
of the night,
messianic visitors from space.
Meteoritic showers
of mortar rounds,
defying darkness,
penetrate the perimeter,
malignant in execution, I see Mase.
our new point man,
take a direct hit, a lob shot
that lands on top
of his steel pot.
He vanishes. At the entrance
of a corrugated iron bunker
a buddy lies frozen
in the fetal position.
Beneath a thin layer of life,
he ruminates about the progeny
of permanence, as Viet Cong,
overseeing death and destruction,
infiltrate the landscape like ghosts.

THE DIOXIN BLUES

An unemployed Vietnam veteran in his mid forties requests a physical examination at an army hospital. He has discovered a group of tumors near his rib cage, each tumor no larger than a button. Also, he has had a mysterious pulmonary condition for the past five months, unsuccessfully diagnosed recently by two private doctors. A half an hour later, a nurse draws a sample of his blood. While the syringe fills, he recalls a sweltering afternoon when his recon platoon had stopped for a ten minute rest, tracking VC on a crossroad of the Ho Chi Minh trail. He removed his flak vest and trudged mechanically toward a dying flower, inspecting it like a botanist studying an unidentified specimen. Its petals hung lifelessly like loose wires attached to the arms of a jointed puppet. Near the weakened flower, a People Sniffer registered his body odor, its metal snout saturated with Agent Orange. Earlier that morning, he had seen low flying aircraft upwind in his area administering an aerosol attack, engulfing the surroundings in a mist of fog. When the missiles struck the ground, they exploded with a pop instead of a boom. Now he looks morosely into the nurse's eyes. He tries to tell her this arm belongs to a VC, an NVA, a Vietnamese peasant. Faltering, he asks if he can take a smoke break, somewhat like a condemned man about to be hanged would, moments before the black hood of death is lowered over his head.

Victor H. Bausch, 165 Dolphin Circle, Marina, CA 93933.

POETRY by R.S. CARLSON

THANK YOU, FIRST SIGNAL BATTALION

I stroll up out of our bunker to scope the valley from the copter pad and here's Matthews from the Quad-50 gun crew kickin' back on his own personal folding chair, stirring hot roast beef gravy into a mound of genuine steaming mashed potatoes.

"You guys oughta go get some of this. The commo battalion on the second hill got hot food flown in today."

I look across the saddle and, yup, under their half-dozen erector-set antennas and shade tarps there's still a knot of guys with somethin' goin'. Prob'ly all gone by now, or UNIT ONLY, but what the hay? It's worth a try.

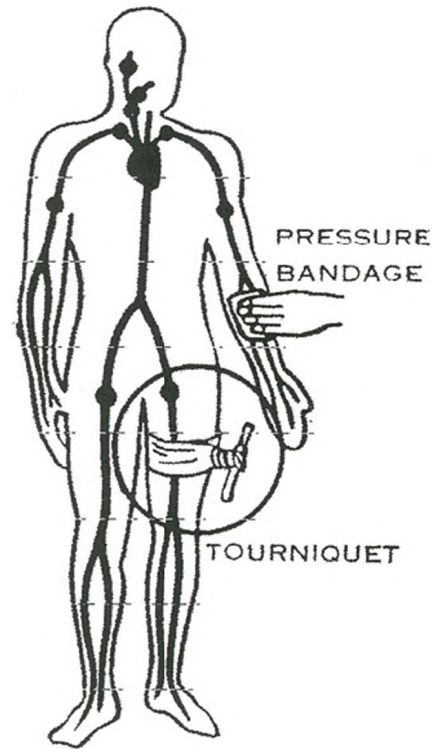
So I ease down the north slope of our hill on all those steps made of spent 105 shells pounded into the clay and slick as spit even when dry and zig through the six barbed wire switchbacks without losing blood or snagging my fatigues, trot across the gangway over the minefield to the lower chopper pad, then hike open trail up the second hill.

"Got any left?" Their mess sergeant, out for the afternoon, just says "How many?" I say, "Four," and he ladles up the roast beef and gravy and green peas and covers each plate with another so I can carry them stacked, and I step the set slow and easy back down their hill across the saddle and through the wire and on up to our crew in the bunker.

The gravy's been soothing spuds in my belly for ten minutes before I realize, and I hump it back down our hill and through the wire and across the saddle and back up commo's hill where the visiting mess man's packing his empties for his return chopper.

"Hey sarge. I gotta apologize. Our guys ain't seen more than C-rats in a month, so I just took off with the hot chow 'n' didn't stop to say thank you."

The man barely glances my way.
"Aaah. Get outa here."



TUTOR

Thursday
tall, spindly redhead
Trask shuffles back
from the mess hall, and
halfway over to his
hooch, bends down to
pick up something shiny—
looking like a spent
cartridge tromped into
the Quang Tri clay...

Friday,
two fingers clumped
tall in gauze on his
right hand, and freckles
reinforced with spatters
of burn and brass, Trask
is ready to give refreshers
on sizes, shapes and
avoidance of
blasting caps.

NIGHT VISION ORIENTATION

Doors close on M-16 chatter
from the night fire range.

The training cadre Adonis
starts the show.

Four companies stand at attention,
boxed by walls blacked with silhouettes.

Report me to your Mama or Congressman
and I'll deny every word.

Sit trainees!
Kill the lights!

You think you'll be different.
You won't.

In this building,
I teach you to see things in the dark.

Once you find your buddy
with his belly slit open, head stuffed inside,

Listen up trainees!
Look high on the wall to your right.

don't think you won't grab
the next VC villagers you find,

Except those of you
who are night blind,

chop off his prong,
stuff it up her box,

you should see silhouettes
of your enemy advancing.

hack off her tits,
ram them down his throat...

Look at them directly,
and they lose focus.

Think you won't
because you're Christian?

Therefore,
in night observation

I've seen it work
dozens of times.

of any
possible targets,

Give the fine Christian boy
the taste

you must always
look slightly

of taking God's power
of life and death

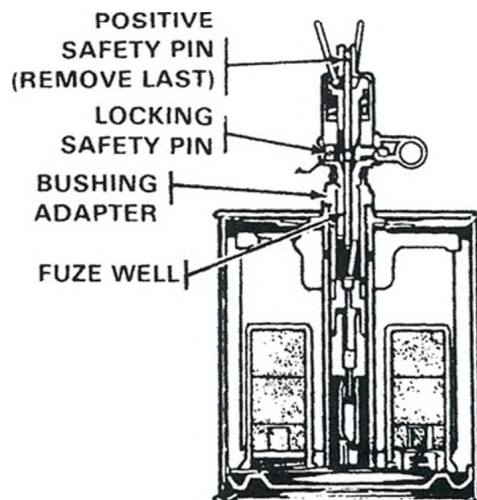
to one side,
shifting your eyes

into his own hands,
and

every few seconds,
left and right...

no fighting machine more terrible
walks this earth.

R.S. Carlson, English Department, Azusa Pacific University, 901 East Alost, Azusa, CA 91702.



FORGIVENESS

Tom Perrotta, 129 Nicoll St., New Haven, CT 06511.

Fifteen minutes before the opening kickoff of our '76 state championships game, Rocky DeLuca quit the football team. Harding High never forgave him. Rocky was not only starting halfback and varsity co-captain, he was also the president of the Student Council, which voted to impeach him the following week. A lot of people stopped talking to him. Nasty messages were scrawled on his locker. But Rocky barely noticed. All he wanted to talk about was love.

"You know what it's like?" he asked me. "It's like the whole world's in black and white, but Wendy and I are in color. I don't know how else to explain it."

In the weeks before Rocky's downfall, I had gotten to know him pretty well. We were the only two football players on the Student Council, and he had gone out of his way to be my friend even though I was nobody special, just a sophomore benchwarmer. He gave me a ride home a couple of nights in September when practice ran late; gradually it turned into a regular thing.

Rocky was a short muscular guy with a big Italian Afro, olive skin, and a dazzling smile. On Fridays during the season, when football players were required to wear their game jerseys to school, he wore his under a corduroy blazer with patches on the sleeves. He was so cool that it took me a while to admit to myself that he was also a little strange. As popular as he was, he didn't have a girlfriend or a group of guys that he hung out with; as far as I could tell he spent his nights at home. He had a cassette player in his car, but only one tape—"I Got A Name" by Jim Croce—which he played over and over, despite my protests. I gathered from remarks he made that he had experienced Croce's death as a personal tragedy.

One rainy night in October he turned to me and said, "You ever get the feeling that everything's a dream?"

"Only when I'm sleeping," I said.

He ignored me. "Sometimes, right in the middle of the most ordinary situations, I get this weird humming noise in my head and everything starts glowing a little around the edges. It happens a lot during football games. I feel like I'm the only person alive, and everyone else is just a figment of my imagination."

"Jeez," I said. "Maybe it's time for a new helmet."

Another night, after a grueling practice, he asked me if I liked football. Actually, I was having a miserable season. I hated sitting on the bench. But Rocky was team captain so I said, "Are you kidding? I love it."

He shook his head. "I don't know what's wrong with me. I just can't get excited about it this year."

I was stunned. Our team was undefeated, ranked fifth in the county, ahead of many larger schools. Rocky was playing well.

"What don't you like about it?"

"The mind control. I listen to the coaches for five minutes, and the word 'bullshit' starts running through my head like a mantra."

"A what?"

"A mantra," he said. "A word you meditate on."

Before the impeachment, Rocky's main presidential duty was to say the Pledge of Allegiance over the school PA every morning. You could tell from his voice that he wasn't too thrilled about it. At Harding, it was considered uncool to get too worked up about saluting the flag. The unwritten rule was that you had to stand up, but were not required to put your hand over your heart or actually say the words.

While the rest of my homeroom slouched and mumbled along with Rocky, Wendy Edwards remained seated and went on with her reading. Wendy was a fanatical reader; it was hard to tell if she was making a statement or was simply oblivious to the ritual. But she wasn't a troublemaker, so Mrs. Glowacki left her alone.

On the Wednesday before the state championship game, Coach Whalen was walking in the hall when Rocky asked everyone to please rise. Whalen didn't want to miss the Pledge of Allegiance, so he stepped into the nearest classroom, which happened to be ours, and slapped his hand smartly to his chest.

Coach Whalen was a school legend. In only three years, he had taken a losing team at a second-rate school and turned it into a football powerhouse. He was handsome and charismatic, a Vietnam war vet with chiseled features and shaggy, wheat colored hair (a lot of girls thought he looked like Robert Redford). The class responded to his presence. We stood straighter and pledged allegiance with more fervor. Only Wendy seemed unaware of our visitor. She was sitting Indian-style in her chair, holding a paperback close to her nose and twirling a strand of hair around her finger. I saw Coach Whalen's head snap in her direction, watched the blood travel up his thick neck into his face, like mercury rising in a thermometer. When the class sat down, he strode past Mrs. Glowacki's desk and tapped Wendy on the shoulder.

"What's the matter?" he asked, a little too politely. "Are you tired?"

Wendy gave him a blank look, then shook her head. Whalen's hands curled into fists, then slowly relaxed. He looked like he wanted to spit.

"Get up," he said, "and march your butt down to Mr. Wyzniewski before I lose my temper."

Later that day, word spread that Mr. Wyzniewski had given her two weeks detention for sitting through the Pledge of Allegiance. Rocky was fascinated by the news.

"Do you know her?"

"Yeah," I said. "We grew up together."

"What's she like?"

"Not bad. Pretty nice tits."

He gave me a look, so I started over.

"I mean she's smart," I said. "But kind of spooky."

Wendy and I were in first grade together when her brother died of leukemia. He was nine years old. A minister took her out of school, and the next day we made condolence cards with crayons and construction paper. Mine had a picture of a little boy floating above a house. "I'm sorry about Mike," it said.

Wendy lived around the corner from me. Her dog, Angel, was a goofy-looking mutt, all black except for three white paws. He trotted around our neighborhood at a brisk clip, as though he were late for an appointment, but would always stop and allow his ears to be scratched by anyone who knew his name. I didn't have a dog, so I stopped him every chance I got; we were friends. But one day when I was in the sixth grade, after years of mutual affection, Angel bit me for no reason. He sank his fangs into the meat of my hand, then hustled off with his tail wrapped tightly between his legs.

The pain wasn't terrible; it must have been the betrayal that made me so furious. I ran home and showed my mother the torn flesh, expecting her to share my outrage. But she didn't say anything as she cleaned the wound.

"Aren't you going to call?" I demanded.

"I don't know, Buddy. I hate to bother Jeanette."

"Angel's dangerous, Ma. What if he bites some little kid?"

My mother called, but she was a bit too friendly for my taste. After about five minutes of small talk she finally got around to mentioning that I'd had a run-in with Angel.

"Run-in?" I said, loud enough for Mrs. Edwards to hear. "He almost took my hand off."

My mother glared at me, but kept talking in her sugary voice. I could tell she was mad at me when she hung up.

"Hey," I said. "Angel bit me. I didn't bite him."

"Buddy, Mrs. Edwards has more important things to worry about than Angel."

"Yeah? Like what?"

"Like her husband's dying," my mother said softly. "That's what."

A couple weeks later, when my hand was healed, Wendy burst into tears in the middle of social studies. Mr. Wallace asked her what was wrong.

"My dog got put to sleep," she said. "I miss him."

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Wallace. "Was he old and tired?"

Wendy sniffled and shook her head. I felt sick to my stomach.

"No," she said. "He bit people."

Not long after Angel, her father died. Wendy was only out of school for a week, but she looked different when she got back. She kept her eyes wide open all the time, like she'd forgotten how to blink.

Despite detention, Wendy refused to stand on Thursday. She sat with her hands folded and stared straight ahead at the empty blackboard. Mrs. Glowacki spoke to her at the end of homeroom, but whatever she said, it didn't work. Wendy remained seated on Friday, even though Coach Whalen and Mr. Wyzniewski were watching her from the doorway. She didn't even wait for them to speak.

As soon as the pledge ended she followed them out the door. She was suspended for three days.

Whalen would have busted her on Thursday, but he'd had a more pressing problem to deal with. Randy Dudley, our all-county middle linebacker, had gotten arrested. With just two days before to go before the big game, his timing couldn't have been worse.

Randy was a great player but a frightening person. On Wednesday morning his girlfriend, Janet Lorenzo, had come to school with a black eye. No one had to ask her where she got it. That night, Randy got drunk and went to her house to apologize, but Janet's father wouldn't let him in. Heartbroken, Randy took a crowbar to the windshield of Mr. Lorenzo's Oldsmobile, then led the cops on a high-speed chase through three towns that ended when he missed a turn and flattened a mailbox.

As far as Whalen was concerned, drunk driving was the most serious charge. Team training rules prohibited smoking, drinking, and drugs during the season. The policy was simple: get caught and you were gone. Two scrubs had already been kicked off the team when they made the mistake of buying a six-pack in a bar where a couple coaches happened to be drinking.

At Thursday's practice, Whalen gave us the verdict: Randy wouldn't be allowed to play on Saturday.

Rocky was glad to see Randy go. He said that if we couldn't win without a guy like that, we didn't deserve to be state champs. I disagreed. If we beat Pine Ridge, the Booster Club was going to buy us expensive championship jackets with leather sleeves and our names written over the heart. I believed that the jacket would redeem the whole wasted season, and I didn't want to lose it at the last minute, just because Randy Dudley rammed his Skylark into a mailbox.

The cheerleaders kicked off Friday's pep rally with a foot-stomping routine. Their saddle shoes raised a thunderous din in the big drafty gymnasium. They clapped their hands and sang to the crowd; the crowd clapped and sang back:

We are Harding
Mighty, mighty Harding!

They ended with their most famous cheer. They turned their backs to the bleachers, bent over, and flipped up their pleated skirts. Sitting on the gym floor, all I could see was a row of red smiling faces, but I knew that they had each ironed a yellow letter on their blue panties, so their butts together spelled "GO HARDING!" The crowd loved it.

The cheerleaders scampered off the court. Coach Whalen took the microphone. He said that he had planned on talking about the game, but something else was on his mind. Something more important than football. He pointed to the American flag hanging on the wall next to the banners commemorating our conference championships in 1974 and '75.

"When I was in Vietnam," he said. "there were people at home, not much older than you, who got their kicks out of spitting on that flag. I guess they thought it was fun.

But let me tell you something: for those of us who were serving our country, it wasn't a helluva lotta fun."

He didn't sound angry. His voice was so calm, he could have been lecturing us about the rules of paddleball.

"I don't know," he said. "I thought I'd put it all behind me. I thought it was ancient history. But something happened this week in this school that brought it all back to me. I've been thinking about my friends again. The ones who came home in bags. The ones who were buried in coffins with that flag draped on top."

A hush came over the gym. Whalen looked up, as though his speech were written on the ceiling.

"A lot of brave men died in that war. And they didn't just die of bullets and shrapnel. They died of broken hearts. It broke their hearts to know that people at home were rooting for the other team. Just remember one thing: we didn't lose that war because the other guys were better. We lost because the people at home weren't behind us one hundred percent."

"The players on this football team are about to take part in the most important game of their lives. They're ready. They've made the sacrifices. They've paid the price. But you know what? It doesn't matter how good we are. If the students of this school aren't behind us a hundred percent, we don't stand a chance. So let me ask you one very important question: Are you with us?"

A roar rose from the bleachers. Whalen cupped his hand around his ear. "That doesn't sound like a hundred percent to me."

This time the gym just exploded. People clapped, screamed, and stamped their feet. The cheerleaders shook their pompoms; someone blew an airhorn. The noise wouldn't stop. It sounded like a Zeppelin show at the Garden.

"What did you think of that speech today?" Rocky asked.

We were sitting in Bella Roma Pizza after the Friday night team meeting, where we had watched a depressing film of Pine Ridge's last game. They had this great 200-pound fullback, and I didn't see how we were going to stop him without Randy Dudley.

"I thought it was pretty good," I said.

He brushed imaginary crumbs off the tabletop.

"It was bullshit."

"Why?"

"Come on," he said. "What does Vietnam have to do with anything?"

"He was there. If you fought in a war, I bet you'd talk about it."

The owner's daughter came out with our slices. Her family had only been in America for about a year, but she was already wearing green eye shadow and a Lynyrd Skynyrd T-shirt.

"My brother was there," Rocky said. "He doesn't talk about it."

"I didn't know you had a brother."

"He's older."

"What's he do?"

Rocky tipped his slice to let the grease drip onto his paper plate. "I keep telling him he should go on *Jeopardy*, but he says it's rigged."

It was almost curfew time when we got back to the car. Team members were supposed to be home by nine on game nights, in bed by ten. Rocky slipped the key in the ignition.

"You think Wendy's home?"

"Now?"

"It's not even nine o'clock."

"What about the curfew?" I asked.

He started the engine. "What about it?"

Wendy and her mother lived in a big rundown house with crumbling front steps and a weedy lawn. The neighbors (my parents included) considered it an eyesore, but they understood it more as a sign of misfortune than neglect. Wendy came to the door holding a book, wearing a pair of rumpled men's pajamas, white with blue stripes. Her hair, which she usually wore in a pony tail, hung loosely around her shoulders. She gave me a look that most people reserve for vacuum cleaner salesman and Jehovah's Witnesses.

"What do *you* want?" she asked.

"My friend wants to meet you," I said.

Rocky stepped forward and introduced himself. He held out his hand. Wendy hesitated, then reached out and shook.

"We're going for a ride," Rocky said. "Would you like to come?"

"Where are you going?"

"Nowhere special."

Wendy's brow wrinkled. She looked down at her baggy pajamas.

"I'll have to change."

Rocky smiled; it was like a gift he gave to certain people. He had smiled at me in exactly the same way when he decided to be my friend.

"Take your time," he told her.

We waited in the living room. Rocky examined the bookshelves while I studied the pictures on the mantelpiece. There was an old black and white photo of Wendy's brother Mike pulling her in a wagon, Angel trotting behind. All three of them wore birthday hats, the pointy kind with elastic chinstraps.

As soon as we got in the car, Rocky and Wendy began to talk nonstop. About the Pledge of Allegiance, about the possibility of ever really knowing someone, about places in the world they'd like to visit. Then they got onto religion. I was sitting in the back seat, listening to the song "Operator." I'd heard it a hundred times, but never realized how sad it was, that when Jim Croce said there was something in his eyes, he was talking about tears.

"If God loves everyone," Wendy said, "then what's the point?"

"Don't even try to figure it out," Rocky told her. "Religion's just another form of mind control."

We were heading west on Route 22. Neon martini glasses and bowling pins flashed in the roadside darkness. I loved the feeling of driving at night, the edgy

combination of security and adventure. You were safe; anything could happen.

"What about you, Buddy?" Rocky asked. "Do you believe in God?"

"Sure, somebody created the world."

"Not necessarily," Wendy said. "It could just be this big chemical accident."

"Yeah, right," I said.

Rocky turned off the highway onto a narrow two-lane road. We passed a series of signs for the VA Hospital, and finally the hospital itself, this bright hulking complex in the middle of nowhere.

"When my brother was shot," Rocky said, "my mother felt the pain. We were sitting at the kitchen table eating supper and all of a sudden she screamed and grabbed her shoulder. She almost fell off her chair. 'My God,' she said. 'Chuck's been hit.'"

"Come on," I said. "That didn't happen."

"I believe you," Wendy told him. "A year after my father died, I saw him on *Truth or Consequences*. He was sitting in the studio audience, waving at the camera. And it wasn't just someone who looked like him, either. He was wearing the sweater I gave him for Christmas."

"Jesus," Rocky whispered.

My scalp tightened. If anyone else had told me these stories, I would have laughed at them. But Rocky and Wendy were different. Things had happened to them that hadn't happened to me. I had the awful feeling they were telling the truth.

The car labored uphill through Watchung Reservation, past the water tower I'd climbed a long time ago with my cub scout den. You could see the Manhattan skyline from the observation deck, which had been closed for a couple of years now, ever since a kid had thrown himself off, an honor student. We followed the bumpy road until it petered out in a gravel parking area not far from Surprise Lake.

We walked in single file down a moonlit path. The night air was cold and still. We stood together on the shore and stared at the quivering silver surface of the lake. I picked up a rock and threw it in the water.

Saturday was crisp and sunny, a perfect day for football. Rocky was supposed to pick me up at ten, but he didn't show up until quarter after. He was grinning like an idiot, his hair still wet from the shower.

"What's with you?" I asked.

He closed his eyes, shook his head in slow motion, the way my father sometimes did in the middle of an especially good meal.

"It happened, Buddy. I fell in love."

"Gimme a break."

"I'm serious," he said. "Wendy's an amazing person."

He turned right instead of left on West Street, just so he could circle past Wendy's house.

"There she is," he said.

Incredibly, she was standing on the front porch in her pajamas, holding a coffee mug. Rocky honked as we drove by; Wendy smiled and waved. I should have been happy for him, but I was vaguely annoyed. I wanted to tell him that he could do better than Wendy, that there were

lots of normal, pretty girls who would have gone out with him in a minute.

"You just met," I said. "You hardly know her."

"After I dropped you off, Wendy and I stayed up talking until three in the morning. I feel like I've known her all my life."

"Three in the morning? Christ, Rock. I hope you're ready for this game."

"I'm ready." His voice was quiet and confident.

"You really think we can win without Randy?"

"Absolutely."

The rest of the team wasn't so sure. The atmosphere in the locker room was almost unbearably tense. Starters were lined up three and four deep in front of the bathroom stalls, waiting for a chance to puke up their butterflies. Other guys were sitting half-dressed in front of their lockers, mumbling to themselves. My stomach was in a complicated knot.

We took the field for about a half-hour of warm-ups, then returned to the locker room. While Coach Whalen gave the pep talk, one of his assistants, Coach Bielski, wandered through the room, smearing black goop under the eyes of important players. My heart raced as he approached; I had the strange feeling that today, for the first time, he was going to reach down and blacken my eyes, initiating me with that simple gesture into the inner circle of the team. But he just walked on by, as usual.

On paper, Whalen said, Pine Ridge had all the advantages. They were bigger, faster, more experienced. They had nicer uniforms and a better marching band. Their parents made more money than ours did. But that was just on paper, and paper didn't win football games. Heart did. And the rich boys from Pine Ridge didn't have the heart to beat us, especially not on our home field. As far as we were concerned, they were foreign invaders, and we were to treat them accordingly. From the opening kickoff to the final whistle, it was our job to make them suffer, to make them good and sorry they'd ever heard of Warren G. Harding Regional High School. Because tonight, when it was all over, they were just going to be a bunch of beat-up rich kids. We were going to be State Champions. He paused to let that sink in, then led us in our customary pre-game prayer.

I always felt close to my teammates when we prayed, all of us on one knee, heads bowed, listening to Whalen ask God to prevent serious injuries and grant us the strength and wisdom to prevail, Amen. When the prayer was over, he said something that surprised me.

"Men," he said. "What does Jesus Christ stand for?" No one answered.

"Come on," he coaxed. "Don't be afraid."

"God?" someone suggested.

"Miracles?"

"Eternal life?"

"These are good answers," he said. "But Jesus also stands for something else. He stands for forgiveness."

You didn't have to be a genius to see what was happening. Whalen motioned toward the corridor, and Randy Dudley stepped into the room. The tension in the air dissolved like smoke. There he was, big number 56, rescued from oblivion. I felt like I had just witnessed a

neat magic trick, like Whalen had pulled Randy out of a hat.

"Men," he said. "Randy has something to tell us."

Randy tried to keep a straight face as he spoke. It wasn't easy. "I'm sorry I let the team down," he told us. "What I did was wrong."

"What do you say, men? Will we let bygones be bygones?"

My head was nodding along with the others when I heard the voice.

"This is bullshit."

Whalen's head jerked to one side, as though he'd been slapped.

"Who said that?"

Rocky stood up. He looked fierce with the black war paint underlining his eyes.

"I did."

Whalen stayed calm. He glanced around the room to make sure he didn't have a mutiny on his hands. Since we had a difference of opinion, he said, our only alternative was to take a vote on whether or not Randy should be forgiven.

Rocky was my friend, but even so, there wasn't much of a choice. I wanted to be a state champ. I wanted to stay on the right side of the coaches. And I wanted that jacket with my name on it. The idea of betrayal didn't even enter into my calculations. When the time came I made sure not to look at Rocky. I just raised my hand along with everyone else and voted yes, in favor of forgiveness.

The game itself turned out to be pretty boring. The score was tied 0-0 until late in the fourth quarter, when Rocky's replacement, a slippery junior named Tim LeMaster, ran forty yards for what turned out to be the winning touchdown. When the game ended Coach Whalen cried and led us on a victory parade through the streets of Springdale. Hundreds of people lined the route cheering us on.

There was a wild celebration that night at Eileen Murphy's. People were drinking grain alcohol mixed with Kool-Aid. The music was louder, the dancing crazier than usual. It was like that picture from the end of World War II: you could grab any girl you wanted and kiss her on the lips. I saw Randy Dudley and Janet Lorenzo making out on the couch. He had his hand inside her sweater. Her black eye had almost healed. In a day or two, I thought, no one would even remember it.

I left around ten and walked across town to Rocky's house. His brother, Chuck, answered the door. The resemblance was striking, even though Chuck had straight hair and a beard streaked with gray. I tried not to stare at the empty shirt sleeve tucked neatly into the pocket of his jeans.

"Is Rocky home?"

Chuck shook his head. "He's at his girlfriend's."

I headed back to my own neighborhood. Wendy's house was dark, but I saw with relief that Rocky's station wagon was parked out front. I climbed the steps, took a deep breath, and rang the bell, already rehearsing my apology. The door creaked open. Wendy put her finger to her lips before I could speak.

"We're having a seance," she whispered.

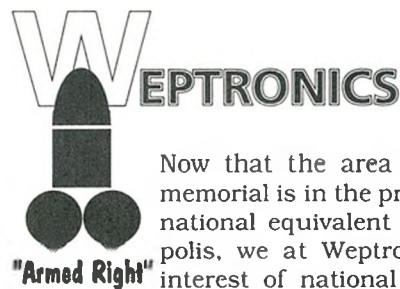
"I didn't mean to interrupt," I said.

"Don't be silly. We were hoping you'd come."

A single candle was burning in the middle of the kitchen table. Shadows trembled on Rocky's face as he watched me walk past the refrigerator and sit down across from him. I was nervous at first. I had never taken part in a seance and wasn't sure about the procedure.

It's not that complicated. You hold hands. No one makes a sound. You try not to smile.

*Tom Perrotta is the author of **Bad Haircut: Stories of the Seventies**, recently published by Bridge Works. In the fall, he will begin teaching in the Expository Writing Program at Harvard.*



Now that the area around the Vietnam memorial is in the process of becoming the national equivalent of a memorial necropolis, we at Weptronics propose, in the interest of national healing, that a uni-memorial be built before another group of virtual veterans is allowed to place some other ill-designed piece of artistic jetsam on Mr. Lincoln's lawn. No memorials to the valiant members of besieged draft boards, tortured college admission officers, hard-working ferry pilots, mail persons who filched 'contraband,' or recruiters who kept the pipeline full of naive children who could be ill-trained and then killed in unusual ways. We'll have none of it.

What we propose is the **LESSER INCLUDED MONUMENT (LIM)**.

Built out of **COGNIPLAST** dough, the new memorial will be prominently ensconced at the head of **SIGNIFICANT SOUVENIR ES-PLANADE (SSE)**. Envisioned is a spectacular Visitors' Bureau, a computerized map to the various groups having informational kiosks along the **SSE**, and **WEEPY WOODS**, the theme picnic area.

So now when you want to go to the Emerald City to commune with what was good and right, you will be able to visit the **LIM**, walk into it and envision your memorial, and the magic of **COGNIPLAST** will make it real. Bus Drivers for the War? You got it! Academics with Angst? They will dance your tune!

As weepy as you need it to be. Make your reservations!

THERE ARE STILL NICE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

Mark Devaney, 37 Caldwell Place, Springfield, NJ 07081..

We were in the midst of our war with the Gypsy Moths when Gardy Offerman, Jr. pedaled into town. He soon replaced our current insect problem. Before that we had rat trouble because of road construction around our sewer system. The rats started getting bold and moved into a few garages on the Sefton Circle where our mayor, Ned Brytte lived. His neighbors complained about the rats but he didn't do anything. He was still grieving over his wife's untimely death so we understood. And then when his teenage daughter got pregnant by God knows who and had the baby for God knows why and named the child Destiny we understood that too. Then Tiny Eddie Metzger got bit by a rat on his ankle when he was getting his bike out of his shed and we realized that it wasn't Ned Brytte's fault; he had other things to feel guilty about; and, after all, we didn't elect him just to have someone to blame for everything.

Regardless, when the Gypsy Moths started threatening our precious Piscataway trees, Ned Brytte mobilized us citizens. We were using large oil drums to burn the nests after they'd been yanked down with long poles or garden rakes. Ned was working alongside Ben Metzger when Leo Collins, who was also pitching in, became the first adult to catch a glimpse of Gardy Offerman, Jr. Leo's son, Sean and a couple other boys were sitting on a curb four houses down, resting after a knee-scraping street hockey game. Out of nowhere he appeared. Ben Metzger was busy puncturing a nest, spilling Gypsy Moths like brackish blood. The mayor had his hands full of a writhing, cottony mess of caterpillars; he couldn't peel them into the smoldering fire of the oil drum. Twenk, our youngest Piscataway policeman, chuckled from his patrol car. To Twenk, Leo and Ned and Ben looked like they were roasting marshmallows. He was about to make a joke about Boy Scouts when Leo squinted through the smoke and spied a man on a red, white, and blue bicycle parked near his son down the block. He asked Twenk, "Who's that guy?"

We should have known there and then that Twenk and Gardy Offerman, Jr. were on a collision course, Twenk was a genuine, clean-cut, quick-tempered ass-kicker. The stranger was a scrawny, near-sighted, pony-tailed, thickly bearded transient. Twenk twisted his fat neck and spat out a splintered toothpick that he had been gnawing. The mayor saw that his son, Randy, was among the group of boys gazing up at Gardy Offerman, Jr., on his high bike. Ned flicked off as many Gypsy Moths as he could and walked over to Twenk. "That's a funny looking character," he said. Twenk nodded; he didn't like funny looking characters, especially the type who wore the kind of t-shirt that guy was wearing. It was black with white words: NO MORE VIETNAM.

Everyone knew that Twenk's dad had been killed in Vietnam. Twenk's house was a shrine to the decorated soldier he never met. He joined the army and the police force in his father's honor; so he was understandably touchy about the subject of the war. He was about to flip on his lights when the mayor cautioned him to wait. He and Leo Collins were concerned about their boys; Tiny Eddie Metzger was too tiny to play with those particular boys so Ben wasn't as worried as the other two fathers, but he watched, transfixed, anyway. None of them seemed to care about the Gypsy Moths frying behind them.

"What do you think he's after?" asked Ben.

"He ain't white, is he?" asked Leo Collins. He was referring to the deeply tanned color of Gardy Offerman, Jr.'s weathered skin. If not for his dirty-blond pony-tail, he could've passed for a Puerto Rican or something. "Don't tell me he's some other kind of Asian."

"He ain't no gook," said Twenk. He'd studied the war extensively and even spoke a fair amount of Vietnamese.

"How do you know if you can't see his eyes?" asked Ben Metzger. That was a legitimate question because we couldn't see the stranger's eyes; they were hidden beneath rust-colored goggles, the style designed to deflect the sun's destructive ultraviolet rays.

"I just know," was Twenk's answer and since he was our local expert, we took his word. He then put his patrol car in gear and the men stepped back and watched him turn around. But in the instant that they took their eyes from him, Gardy Offerman, Jr., was gone.

"He just disappeared," said Ned Brytte.

"Just like a gook," remarked Leo Collins.

They signaled to the boys and waited for them to collect their equipment and return home. Leo asked his son, Sean, "What did that guy on the bike want?"

"Nothing," Sean shrugged.

"He must've wanted something," Ben Metzger demanded.

"He said that he used to play street hockey when he was a kid," said Randy Brytte.

"Where was that?" asked the mayor.

"He didn't say."

"What did he say?" Twenk asked impatiently.

"He said he was lost," said Sean.

"Lost? In Piscataway?" Ben wrinkled his brow.

"He said he always gets lost in the suburbs."

The three men swapped glances hoping that one of them was able to decipher the stranger's comment.

"Where was he headed?" asked Ned Brytte.

"He didn't say," his son answered.

"You didn't give him directions?"

"He said he always got by better without directions."

The men snickered and scoffed. "Did he even know where he was?" asked Leo Collins.

"Yeah, he knew all about Piscataway. He said it's an Indian name. It has two meanings. 'Getting dark' or 'red river clay.' This whole town used to be part of a glacier and when the mud hardened it turned into reddish soil good for growing trees, he said," Sean told them.

"Yeah, and he also said that all Algonkian tribes believed that the trees were their ancestors. And when

the English asked the Indians how they got to America, the Indians said, 'We came from trees.' That guy seemed cool for an old hippie dude," Sean concluded.

Twenk was not at all impressed. "He didn't mention his name while he was giving you the history of the town, did he?"

The boys shook their heads.

"I guess that's all," surmised Ned Brytte.

The boys then made faces that suggested that Gardy Offerman, Jr., had one more thing to say. Their fathers sensed this and stared it out of them.

Together they announced that before the stranger left he said that, "There are still nice people in the world."



Our women didn't like the sound of it. They had Gardy Offerman, Jr., pegged as a child molester. They pestered us husbands so much about him that we regretted even riling them up about it. To them, a mystery man on a patriotic bicycle did not a modern day Paul Revere make. "He sounds un-American to me," said Carol Collins, Leo's wife. "Talking nonsense about Indians and badmouthing suburbia." Teresa Cacciola predicted that her daughter Stephanie would be his next target. Lately, since her husband, Angelo, had been working crazy hours, she had been feeling vulnerable. News of Gardy Offerman, Jr., amplified her sense of dread so that one day when he actually did appear beside Stephanie, Teresa took it calmly, walked to the telephone, and dialed for help.

Little Stephanie was just outside the Cacciola house pedaling in circles on her first two-wheeler. She had discovered that running a bike tire over the middle of a Gypsy Moth caused the unfortunate creature to explode. She was enthralled by the snapping sound made by the bursting bugs and didn't notice that she wasn't alone. Teresa could hear the conversation that was already in progress when she hung up the telephone.

"They pop!" exclaimed Stephanie.

"If you run anything over, it's bound to pop," said Gardy Offerman, Jr.

"You mean I could go POP if I got run over?"

"Let's hope not. But you're no Gypsy Moth, are you?"

"No way," Stephanie shook her head. "Are you?"

Gardy Offerman, Jr., circled around Stephanie and zigzagged his bike to avoid squashing the foolish caterpillars trying to cross the road. "I used to be a Gypsy Moth. But now I'm a butterfly," he said. "I used to live in trees. I used to crawl around on my belly. I used to be homeless."

Teresa was tempted to call her daughter home but was scared that she might make the stranger act rashly. And besides, the operator had informed her to wait for the police. Twenk was only a few blocks away.

"Gypsy moths don't have homes?" Stephanie asked him.

"That's why they're called gypsies," he explained.

"I'm squishing them when they're only looking for a place to live?"

"Yup, a place to eat and sleep in is all those critters are after."

"But my daddy burns them. He says that Gypsy Moths are bad. They gobble up our trees, he says."

At that, Gardy Offerman, Jr., quit circling the little girl. Teresa crept out from behind her fence. "What's louder," he asked Stephanie. "a caterpillar going pop or an ax going chop?"

Twenk's patrol car edged around the corner of Balch Avenue. Stephanie gazed up at the treetops and then counted the gooey orange stains she had made on the tar. Her head was so busy trying to calculate the cycle of slaughter she had taken part in that she didn't even hear Gardy Offerman, Jr., say that, "There are still nice people in the world," before he split down a narrow bike path which ran between houses and into the woods.

Twenk's police lights and brakes startled Stephanie more than the disappearance of the bearded man.

"Are you okay, Steph?" asked Twenk.

She saw at least three crushed Gypsy Moths under Twenk's driver side front tire.

"Steph, where'd the strange man go?"

Teresa came out to the street and clutched her daughter's shoulders. "He took off down that trail. Are you okay, honey?"

Twenk waited for the little girl's response before he sped off on a useless pursuit. Stephanie craned her neck to the adults towering over her and to the elms above them and scowled. "Mommy, do trees scream when we kill them?"



The next sighting occurred three weeks later. By then a rough sketch of Gardy Offerman, Jr., had been circulated and we were all concerned about our children. However, it was one of our senior citizens who encountered him on the outskirts of town. Loyola Sharpe got a flat tire on River Road and was far too feeble to change it. Old Caleb Brunz drove by and saw her sitting on her bumper waiting for a good Samaritan. Since his stroke he could barely drive so he pulled up and told her he'd get to a phone and call for help. As he was pulling away he saw in his rear view a man on a red, white, and blue bike skid to a stop beside Loyola. After a mile or so Caleb recalled the mug shots that had been posted around Piscataway and it registered that Loyola Sharpe was stranded and at the mercy of the bearded bicycling fiend.

Twenk and two other cars converged on the scene within fifteen minutes. They feared the worst when they found Loyola Sharpe in tears in her driver's seat. "What's wrong, Mrs. Sharpe?" Twenk asked.

"That young man who helped me," she pouted.

"What young man?" To Twenk, Gardy Offerman, Jr., was an old man. "I mean what did he do to you?"

"He helped me!" Loyola cried. "Can't you hear well?"

Twenk flinched; he had forgotten how cantankerous Loyola Sharpe could be. He also saw that she now had four inflated tires. "But if he helped you, why are you crying?"

"That's right, my eyes are prone to leak, but I can remember you blubbing when your momma whipped you with a strand of spare clothesline."

A flush tinted Twenk's face. "My mom has a drier now, ma'am."

"She still does your laundry too, I bet," said the old woman as she cleared her nose. It was then that she seemed to discover money in her hand. She shrugged and stuffed it back into her purse.

"Did the man on the bike try to take your money?" Twenk asked.

Loyola turned her engine over and smirked so hard at Twenk that her face froze that way. "I couldn't give it to him. Darndest thing considering how you used to take me for \$20 a lawn cut."

Twenk finally lost what little cool he had brought onto the scene. "I don't know why you're acting so crotchety to me, Mrs. Sharpe. I'm just trying to be helpful, that's what I get paid to do now."

The old woman shook her head. "Maybe so, but you're not nice about it. It should be like that young man with the beautiful long hair said, but brats like you make it impossible for me to believe it."

"To believe what?" asked Twenk.

"That 'There are still nice people in the world!'"



Ned Brytte, our mayor, caught a lot of flak at the next town meeting. Remember how he hesitated about our rodent trouble two years back? We didn't like the thought of some strange man popping in and out of Piscataway and we wanted something done before something was done to one of us. Ned was just your run of the mill civic-minded BellCore exec: paper pushing and personal tragedy had thinned his pale skin.

"We don't even know his name," said Alyce Brunz.

"He preys on children," said Angelo Cacciola.

His wife, Teresa, jumped in, "Our daughter, Stephanie, can't sleep nights because she says the trees are screaming!"

"Our sons want to know where the Indians went," said Leo Collins. "And they don't mean Asian Indians either."

"The elderly aren't safe either," testified Caleb Brunz. "He had Loyola Sharpe in tears according to Officer Twenk."

Twenk nodded seriously. "That's the truth." Loyola Sharpe had stopped attending town meetings when she became a widow five years earlier. The other policemen in the room supported Twenk's statement.

"His pattern seems to suggest that an older man will be his next victim." Twenk speculated.

At that remark our mayor reacted strongly. "Now don't you think that you're all being a bit unfair and overly paranoid. I mean what has the guy done but tell a couple of boys about the Indians who used to live here, have a playful chat about bugs with a little girl, and assist an old lady in distress?"

Our voices were ready to counter Ned's argument.

"You see it the safe way, Ned," said Leo Collins. "But these guys work just like this guy. I seen it on TV and read stories."

"Yeah," said Carol Collins, who had obviously seen and read the same stories as her husband. "They establish trust, corrupt the minds of our youth, and make old people feel indebted to them."

"At best, he's a scam artist or a drug dealer," said Twenk. "At worst, well, Ned, do you want to be mayor of this town when children start disappearing?"

"He could be abducting someone right now!" shouted Angelo Cacciola.

The crowd before the mayor rippled with tension. People shot out of their chairs and gasps surged through the air like snaps of electricity. All of a sudden we were a pretty powerful bunch. And our mayor knew that he alone couldn't convince us that our fears were unfounded. After all, he fretted about Gardy Offerman, Jr., too. His son, Randy, had already met the stranger and his daughter, Rachel and his infant granddaughter, Destiny, were his primary concerns. So he sat attentively while our neighborhood watch groups were formed, while Teresa Cacciola promised to pass out more pictures of the bicycle man, and while Twenk advised everyone as to how they should proceed in the event that they spot Gardy Offerman, Jr. Everyone vowed to keep their eyes and ears peeled and to notify the proper authorities if even the slightest oddity was observed. We hadn't had this much community spirit since we gathered around the Metzger's shed and poisoned the rat that had nipped Tiny Eddie. Leo Collins said he was going to register his pistol so that way, "If I shoot the bastard, it'll be legal." We all got a hoot out of that one. In fact, we laughed so hard that none of us heard Ned Brytte bang his gavel to declare that the meeting was adjourned.



We didn't care that we might have injured Ned's feelings. Deep down he must have sensed that we kept him in office because we felt sorry for him. I guess we figured that since we voted for him, he was ours to do with as we wished. The consensus was that he was a pleasant enough fellow and a whiz on a computer, but Ned just didn't have what it took for surveillance. For the next few days Ned just stepped aside and let Piscataway run itself. We coordinated a network of two-man units and cruised around in cars, checking the areas where kids congregated. Curfews were strictly enforced, too. The streets grew silent as the children were yanked in before dark. If we really listened, we could almost hear the Gypsy Moths munching away mindlessly at our prized trees.

We now know that Ned must have felt useless as he watched us ignoring the slow death of our dogwoods and magnolias, all because we were too busy chasing after an enemy we knew too little about to catch. So it was ironic that it was Ned who brought Gardy Offerman, Jr., to justice, so to speak.

After a week of frustrated vigilance, our mayor got a rather ticklish idea for apprehending Gardy Offerman, Jr., it wasn't that he thought the man to be a menace; Ned just wanted us to get back to saving Piscataway's trees. He donned a helmet and pulled his son Randy's mountain bike from the garage. Ned reasoned that the best way

to locate the man in question would be to assume his mode of transportation. Of course, he didn't get the length of a football field before the neighborhood watchdog, Diane Greenwood, glimpsed a man on a bicycle and sounded the alarm. Twenk's car tore down Washington Avenue and formed a gauntlet at the Stelton Road intersection. Luckily, he recognized the mayor from a far enough distance to call off the rest of his troops. Ned also breathed a sigh of relief when he saw Twenk release his hand from his holster.

"What do you think you're doing, Ned?"

Ned struggled to apply his son's brakes. "It's called a bike ride, Twenk. Did you all pass an ordinance against bike rides while I wasn't looking? Not that it would matter if I was looking."

Twenk jumped back into his car. He was more visibly dejected about not running into Gardy Offerman, Jr., than he was about Ned Brytte's sarcastic crack. "We're just taking precautions, Mr. Mayor. You probably don't believe our trap's gonna work, but then again you ain't much for trapping rats." Twenk then got on his radio and announced the false alarm. "It's only the goddamn mayor."



After they parted, Ned Brytte found himself quite contented to pedal clean out of Piscataway. He soon crossed the Raritan River and rolled on into Bound Brook. Perhaps just getting out of our town eased his worried mind and invigorated his spindly legs because without even knowing it, he went through the southern tip of Bridgewater and into the first reaches of Manville. And it was there, on a dirt trail that slithered alongside polluted FINDERNE Creek, that a red, white, and blue blur flew right past him.

Before Gardy Offerman, Jr., could become a speck on the dusky horizon, our valiant mayor shifted gears and did his utmost to keep the pace. It wasn't long, though, till Ned grew weary and lost his bead on Piscataway's most wanted. In his exhaustion, Ned later confessed, he admired the man he was following. It seemed impossible that they were riding the same type of vehicle. Ned may as well have had the whole town on his back for the pitiful speed he was able to generate. By the time he wobbled out of the forest trail, Gardy Offerman, Jr., was long gone. Ned collapsed on the ground and wheezed in the air that no doubt smelled of the vapors of the nearby Manville Tool & Dye Factory. Once he caught his breath, Ned pushed on to that very factory to call his daughter, Rachel. He was beat and he was three towns away from Piscataway. She could bring the station wagon; he'd work on an explanation later.

As he was sticking Randy's bike in among the other bikes locked outside the Manville Tool & Dye Factory and fishing for change in his pants pocket, Ned was surprised to see something curious. One of the bike seats had a sticker on it which read: BOUND TO COVER JUST A LITTLE MORE GROUND. It was a read, white and blue Schwinn.



Ned didn't catch the name of the gruff foreman with a pockmarked face and purplish complexion who finally gave him the name of the owner of the colorful bike. But he did get 'the' name—Gardy Offerman, Jr.

"He insists on the 'Jr.' part," said the supervisor. "His dad was some kind of hero died in the war."

Ned thought of Twenk. "In Vietnam?"

"No, the big one. Gardy was in Vietnam. That's why he wears them goggles; fucked up his eyes there. Oh, excuse my French. You ain't a priest, are you?"

"No, I'm the mayor of Piscataway."

"I know that cop you guys got."

"You know Twenk?" asked Ned.

"Yeah, Twenk," said the foreman, "that guy's a prick!"

Ned swallowed rather loudly but no gulp on earth could be heard inside that factory. "Yes, well, I guess Twenk can be..."

"Anyway, Gardy ain't here. I just sent him out on an overnight. He's picking up some shit we need. Parts for a fucked up lathe we got and a bitch of a drill press that won't cooperate."

"But if he has bad eyesight, why do you send him out at night?" Ned interrupted.

"No, you don't get it, bub. Gardy's like a vampire bat; he sees everything at night, during the day he don't see too good."

"Vietnam did that?"

"Says he didn't sleep much over there. His eyes ain't adjusted yet, he says. Second tour did him dirty."

"Second tour?"

"Yeah, who knows what the fuck that guy's seen? Who cares, right?"

Mayor Brytte didn't answer the foreman's question. "How long has he been here?"

"Couple months. Damned good worker."

"He drives a truck for you?"

"He does anything I tell him to. Told you, he's a damned good worker." The foreman scratched the stubble beneath his jowls. "And I bet he must've been one damned good soldier, too."

Ned nodded awkwardly and stared around the factory floor. He saw men harnessed and tugging at machinery, sparks kicking off their black masks; their bodies appeared briefly then shoved into the steel ailes like armored ants oblivious to the larger world beyond the darkened view of their visors. A haze hung in the air the same shade of swamp muck. "If I left my address and a message do you think Gardy will get it?"

"Told you mayor. When the guy's here, he knows how to follow orders. Who knows what he does out there."



Randy woke his father because he was the only one in the house to hear the doorbell ring at six in the morning. The boy let the man in even though he knew that he was the alleged pedophile of Piscataway. He showed Randy his father's note: "Dear Mr. Offerman, Jr.: Please come to my home as soon as possible. There's been a terrible misunderstanding concerning you. And it's urgent that you and

I get together to set things straight. Yours, Ned Brytte, Mayor of Piscataway Township."

So, at last, Ned Brytte, Mayor of Piscataway Township and Gardy Offerman, Jr., stood face to face. They shook hands and Ned invited Gardy to sit down. Randy waited to be told to leave, but wasn't; so he loomed behind Gardy and studied his pony-tail and thought of the Lenape Indians he'd researched since that day after the street hockey game. Ned stared at Gardy's goggles; his eyes were the size of blueberries.

"Is it too bright in here for you, Mr. Offerman?" he asked.

Gardy checked the light above him and bit his bottom lip. His thick beard moved like a furry rodent. Ned confessed that at first Gardy's beard reminded him of last summer's rats. Before he could order Randy to hit the light, Randy hit the light. The three of them sat uncomfortably in darkness.

"Well, Mr. Offerman, I don't know where to begin."

"Mr. Offerman was my dad," he said curtly. "Gardy's fine, Mr. Mayor."

"Oh, yes, your father," said Ned, "your foreman mentioned that he died. I'm sorry."

Gardy nodded, "Well, my foreman probably knows too much about the both of us. He told me your wife died last year, Mr. Mayor, son," he bowed his head in Randy's direction, "and I'm sorry for that. Death ain't a fairly run business. I, myself, got out of that line of work, sir."

We don't know for sure how Ned reacted inside to Gardy's words, but he did ask him to drop the formalities, "Please call me Ned."

"Okay. Ned, have I done something wrong?"

Ned Brytte looked at Gardy and noticed that his eyes had grown. They were big blue eyes and the hair on his face was not at all rat-like. Ned felt a twinge of envy because he could never muster more than several scraggly hairs on his own chin. Ned saw that his son was fascinated with Gardy Offerman, Jr., and he felt even more envious. Suddenly, Ned's granddaughter let loose a shrill scream. They could hear Rachel get up instantly. Her door opened and both girls entered the room.

Gardy got to his feet and Rachel halted when she saw the stranger. "Is he the bike man?" she asked her father.

"Rachel, this is Gardy Offerman, Jr.," clarified Ned.

"The bike man," confirmed Randy.

Gardy chuckled at the boy. "I guess I am the bike man. I've pedaled all over this country. Europe too."

"Get out, no way!" cried Randy excitedly.

"I've been biking for ten good solid years."

"You've biked through Europe?" asked Rachel, hugging her baby. "I always wanted to bike ride around Paris. The Eiffel Tower."

"I've done that, miss," said Gardy. "I even been to the Tour de France."

"Did you win?" asked Randy.

"Nope, but I was just proud to be there. I knew going over I could never win such a thing." He looked to Rachel. "You should to it, though, miss, Paris and the Eiffel Tower. I didn't think much of France until I went to Paris. It's quite a city."

"Yes, you should do it, honey."

Rachel and Randy both appeared shocked to hear their father agree with Gardy Offerman, Jr. "Really, daddy? And what about Destiny?"

The three males in the room exchanged guilty glances. "It ain't dad's fault you flunked sex ed," said Randy.

"Randy, be nice to your sister for a change, especially around company." He did a poor job of suppressing his embarrassment.

"I always like to think there are still nice people in the world, boy," said Gardy Offerman, Jr. "Why not prove me right and be one of them, like your father says. Besides, who says your sister flunked sex ed. If anyone knows how to get an 'F' in that course, it's me. I got me a son and I ain't never seen him. I left him halfway round the world, and I don't mean Europe neither," he finished his sentence staring straight at Ned. "Destiny there looks like a pretty baby girl to me. If I were dishing out grades, I'd give Rachel an 'A'."

Rachel blushed and Randy's blood boiled in his face as well. He apologized immediately.

"That's more like it," Gardy smiled. "Keep that up and maybe your dad will let you go on a bike ride with me. I'm planning on seeing all of New Jersey while I'm here. The Pine Barrens, Cape May, Sandy Hook, even Hoboken. Pick a place and we'll bike it, boy."

"Dad, can I?"

Ned's first impulse was to agree. He wanted to go himself. But then somehow our murmuring started a debate within him. Perhaps we were right; what did any of us really know about Gardy Offerman, Jr.? Was he merely saying nice things to sway Ned's judgment? Was he gaining the mayor's confidence so that he could do something God-awful to his children? To Destiny? We, including Ned, would never be sure. "We'll see, Randy."

Gardy swapped a grin with the boy and pardoned himself from the room. "Is there anything else then, Ned?"

"No," said Ned abruptly. His humiliation was plainly discolored his face.

"What was the 'terrible misunderstanding' you wrote me about?" asked Gardy from the front door.

Randy and Rachel turned to their father. Destiny wiggled in her blanket, which surely made Ned recall the Gypsy Moths. He searched for something to say only to end up staring at Gardy Offerman, Jr.'s bicycle parked on his sidewalk. "It's your Schwinn," he said with a sigh of relief. "The Collins boy had a bike just like it that was stolen recently." He checked to make sure that his kids didn't give his lie away to Gardy Offerman, Jr. "I assured Mr. Collins that you couldn't possibly have... taken it. I mean criminals don't really return to the scene of the crime, do they?"

Gardy Offerman, Jr. put his goggles on over his impassive face. "I wouldn't know, Mr. Mayor. You ought to ask a criminal."

"I'm sorry for troubling you, Mr. Offerman, Jr. And thanks for coming out here so quickly. I'll tell Leo Collins you're... that..."

"Tell them all that I'm innocent," said Gardy Offerman, Jr., as he straddled his bicycle. "It's up to them whether or not they believe it. But you all know what I like

to think." And with that Gardy Offerman, Jr., coasted off of the front walkway and lighted down the street. They were the last to see his reflectors spinning just before dawn.

Ned found himself embracing his family on his porch and noticing the start of the sunrise just above the Greenwood's house. He also noticed Diane Greenwood slamming the front door hard enough to rattle her milk bottles. Once that particular tingling noise died out, we all heard some much more frightening sounds—the screech of tires, a clear pop, and the unmistakable crash of glass.



The back of Gardy Offerman, Jr.'s head was submerged halfway through the windshield of Twenk's patrol car. Blood-filled spider webs within the glass wove out from his skull in every direction. His legs sprawled at inhuman angles upon the hood of the car. Those of us who got to the scene first knew that he wasn't dead because he managed to say something we'll never forget. His goggles were focused above us on the still dark sky, which prompted him to whisper, "When the leaves go, you'll see everything." Some of us tried to see what he meant. The oaks on that street had lost patches of leaves and the cloud-like nests of Gypsy Moths were exposed, high and beyond our reach.

"I didn't see him coming," exclaimed Twenk, as two other cops assisted him from the scene. "I never saw the guy, I swear."

It took the paramedics an hour-and-a-half to remove Gardy Offerman, Jr. from the police car and strap him to a stretcher. During that time, the Bryttes told us all that they knew. We never heard Gardy Offerman, Jr. utter another word; he was unconscious when they lifted him into the ambulance. A tow truck hauled Twenk's car right after that. When all traces of the accident were taken away, except for the twisted bicycle, we sheepishly returned to our homes. Ned Brytte's son, Randy, fixed the bent frame as best he could, but, when his father learned from JFK Hospital that Gardy Offerman, Jr. wouldn't be needing it, he placed it on the curb for the garbage men to take. One of them kept it and spray painted it orange.

After that we all felt that we should do something for Gardy Offerman, Jr. But just like when he could operate a bicycle, he just disappeared. Ned tried to follow up on his whereabouts, only to be informed that Gardy Offerman, Jr. was missing. One sketchy rumor claimed that as soon as he got the feel for a wheelchair, he bolted through the electric doors of the rehab wing and never looked back. We've been trying real hard not to look back too. Sometimes we can pretend that the whole rotten mess didn't happen, but that just lasts until we see the empty branches of our dead trees. Ned Brytte promised to start a fund to replant them, but his heart isn't in it anymore. We figure he's had one too many setbacks this year. But even though our community spirit has been kind of sapped, we still approved his last mayoral motion to buy new maple and pine and ash to replace the ones that the Gypsy Moths got. The God's honest truth is that it'll take at least a lifetime for everything to grow back like it was. One thing's for sure, we'll never see it.

POETRY by PAUL ALLEN

FOUR PASSES

FIRST PASS

Left Patsy's wild legs and bruises
on his back back in Montgomery,
went west for the weekend, home
to Selma for money for the bursar
in a basement cage at Huntingdon—
a school he chose unseen
for the ringing name alone,
those rounded letters
anywhere but home.

Highway 80 covers old, old land,
hills worn down to smooth rolls
water to water, creek to creek,
out to higher ground and pasture land—
no jarring, bristly hedge stuff here
(hawk? hawk ahead?)—land and green
and close-in, lined with rich, thick vetch.

That Patsy part's a lie,

a dream the little pissant yanks on
alone at school when he's not out drinking
with Ronnie or roomie—Hank Williams,
his grave in the rain—
a pint in his London Fog,
or bummed on bennies and Captain Morgan rum
in a nest of LP's, cross legged,
becoming a dust jacket photo,
a liner note. Wishing he knew Joan Baez...
what the hell: wishing he were Joan Baez.

More west, past Selma, perhaps as far as Marion,
clouds! *and it's a hard, it's a hard,*
it's a hard, it's a hard,
it's a hard raaiinnn's a'gonna fall...
Yes! Prophesy—metaphor turned fact.
He is Dylan:
*How far have the marchers come toward me
on their way to Montgomery, gomery, gunnery....?*

Up ahead the voting march will come.
They tried last week and badly failed.
His uncle, oral surgeon, was called
all hours to Good Samaritan,
worked with nuns and Jews
to suture faces, unskew jaws.

Some would have carried the body
of Jimmy Lee Jackson, gut shot by a cop
in Marion, to dump at the feet of George Wallace
on the capitol steps. But they went symbolic,
decent burial and a march.

He reaches behind him, tries to pull
his guitar ("This guitar kills Fascists")
from under his hanging-up stuff, swerves badly.
He is not Robert Zimmerman,
he is a little shit.

He wants to drive through Selma,
white and enlightened.
Bloody Sunday, his mother could not eat
her dessert for the radio
going on about the march being stopped
at the bridge. Through the transistor
you could hear it, the screams,
as though the family were playing
the rims of their goblets.
But he ate his dessert plus one
for the leftist statement it would make.

Damned right it's a hawk:

*high in a dead tree,
looking back to Montgomery,
white house of the confederacy,
or something easy*
er, a field mouse
stupid, closer in, feeding on
whatever junk's around, spilled seed, stems.
Hawk hunches at his passing, beak open,
looking for Patsy back there?—
her bare legs spread on a flatcar
on the L&N. Eighty miles an hour in the sun,
naked, pines blurred on either side
like they do only in the movies.
Her head rests on his guitar.
He towers over those smiles of hers,
stands naked in the middle of everywhere
at her feet, her bony ankles.
And between those legs, making their way
against the grain of the planks,
swirls of sawdust, oat chaff, sand—
little tornadoes moving up from the knees
through Jungle Gardenia toward her box canyon.
She reaches for him through his shadow.
Bark shards stick to her resinous elbow.
Her hand moves up his bare brown leg,
which is not his—Tim's leg,
up toward the thigh of someone else
yet again—altogether himself.
But ah! brunette this time,
uncircumcised this dream.

Hawk appears in the mirror at his silly face.
It is far, far back, black, stuck like a canker
on a broken limb of a dead tree, topped out,
bark lightening stripped and eaten clean.
He orders himself to turn back.

Look again. Look at it again.

SECOND PASS

Surely if it is still there
when he rounds the curve, the hawk will fly;
when he gets close, it will fly;
when he eases on the shoulder of the road, fly;
fly when he takes his .22 out from under his seat;
fly when he slips a .22 short in the chamber;
when he points the ridiculous 6 inch barrel, eases himself
through the window, half man, half VW,
the hawk will fly,
and fly when he finally shoots wild, surely.

This is how he lies himself through anything
that could be sin—son and father,
young brother tagging along and older brother
he never had, home for good with his medals
and a classic limp—he is both

tempted and tempter,
his conscience always outvoted by the bigger guys
he dreams he is. He has watched himself
pay the black porter at the Graystone Hotel
to get him to a hooker's room, watched himself
drawn in to the service entrance,
up a narrow hall painted dirty beige, dirty,
heard his cool, unruffled self talking small talk—
weather—to his guide,
but seeing the shadow of the dippy kid
in the brass on the mezzanine.
Just once he's like to be the self he sees.
Or see the single self he is.
Isn't it he, after all, who puts out \$10
for the woman? Isn't that his little weeny
she washes at the sink?
So who is that, when it happens, on her?—
the bronzed brother,
the definitions of a glistening someone else

he has become who makes him come
too quick to himself and live
with the guilt of what didn't go well at all.

-&-

Near here, tilled, is Holy Ground.
 Red Eagle (William Weatherford),
 half-breed Creek whose holy men
 drew circles on the ground, magic
 circles no white man could enter,
 no white man's weapons could reach.

Weatherford (Red Eagle)
 was the first not to believe
 in that silly circle shit,
 sent all who couldn't or wouldn't fight
 down the cliff and across the river.
 Built a tall-walled fort.
 (So let the whites run around whooping
 for once.) Red Eagle (Weatherford)
 was one of the last few to escape,
 holding his gun high, horse and warrior
 one figure in the sun
 flying down to his people out of range.

Don't do it. The voice of God
 mumbles like a bad tire on the narrow shoulder—
Don't do it don't do it don't do it don't do it...

.22's a mongrel sound, click and ping bred together.
 The hawk falls as if it were dead all along
 as if an easy breeze would have done it easily.
 It lies on its back, feet ready
 to grab whatever he is that is coming.
 He kneels. Female. Her eyes on him—
 through him to whatever comes next.
 Mouth open, ready for the slightest touch
 of flesh. She is ready to tear
 past the silly hippy hair
 to get at the meat of his head, breast ready
 to take his weight in a fight to death

with this dry lipped, flush-cheeked
 pasty little shit that brought her down.
 They stare a long time.
 He touches her tongue with twig,
 touches the breast, the raised palms.
 She is dead, and like a realistic western
 that simply stops the film on a face in the dirt,
 he does not know the moment of her death.
 He folds her wings, wraps her in his coat
 to keep the feathers from breaking,
 lays her on the passenger side.

Third Pass

A U-turn across 80 again, and home.
 Home to make room for her
 among the casseroles and beef
 until he goes back early Monday.
 He would like to keep going—
 go so far west he rides a freight train,
 sings blues in the rain near Okema, Oklahoma.

Preacher Casey.

But if he comes home like this,
 hippy-hair, he'll get sent back out
 from the porch, suitcase in the drive,
 to get that hair in shape.
 You can't come into a Christian home
 looking like a goddamn girl.

Sun's going down.
 No scene on the infamous bridge.
 He crosses into town, and it is only town.
 Selma, as always. No marchers.
 Almost nobody. Haircut.
 He turns right off Broad—
 goes to the big Negro barber shop
 across from Bendersky's Sporting Goods—
 guns and knives and musical instruments,
 the eye-burning smell of canvas and camouflage.
 If he could move Bendersky's to the barber's
 he could stand off everyone with a good scope
 and the .303. This haircut—this barber shop—
 a dull gesture: no one but himself saw him going in,
 and no one watched his dumb ass dragging out.

Surrendering at Horseshoe Bend
 Red Eagle stepped out from his people,
 faced Jackson:
I am Weatherford.
I am a Creek warrior.
I ask nothing for myself.

His neck was cold.

FOURTH PASS

Monday he was running late,
heading back, hawk's flesh made ice,
bagged in a cooler in the back.
Going too fast, missed the place
where he'd knelt two days before.

Black taxidermist worked at home, out some.
On the porch, a frog's face on a rat,
its wood-burned base: "Frat."
Egg cartons with assorted eyes.
He spent too much time there, thinking of a pose:
taking off? coming down? diving? with a snake (extra)?
His black brother, this fellow man, didn't care:
"Hell, boy, it ain't my bird. Nothing
but feathers and skin. I can make her
coupling with a pig, you pay me for the pig."
This shirtless man in boxers, black-black arms and head
stuck on a bloated carcass
the color of swollen river,
leaned against the door-jam
like a fat, required novel.
"Make her...." "Make her...."
Past the corporeal landscape
of this man's hip and love handles,
he saw a beaver with a golf club,
a rabbit with small antlers,
saw the wife, molting in the man's shirt,
scooping grits down her youngest.

"Fly.... look like... look like she's flying."
He paid the whole amount,
in cash, left a fake name, a wrong number.

He knew he was not coming back out there.

He was late for Chemistry.
The smell of hides and hair peeled off him
for the smells of the sciences,
bright hall by hall, preservatives on first,
sulfur as he climbed the stairs—
could hear his name, name, Mr. name?
coming up from the pit
as he entered from the back,
eased into his assigned seat.

And there, next to him!—in the very
flesh!—who'd swapped places with Joe—
Jesus!—Patsy herself—smiling at him,
her finger tapping the page.
He opened his own text,
took a long breath of Patsy
and said, "Here."

POSTSCRIPT

Twelve days later, Viola Liuzzo, a white civil rights worker, was killed on Highway 80 between Selma and Montgomery by a sniper. If it was spoken of at all in white quarters, men would mention that *she was in a car full of young bucks and was wearing no panties*. True or not, that seemed to help somehow.

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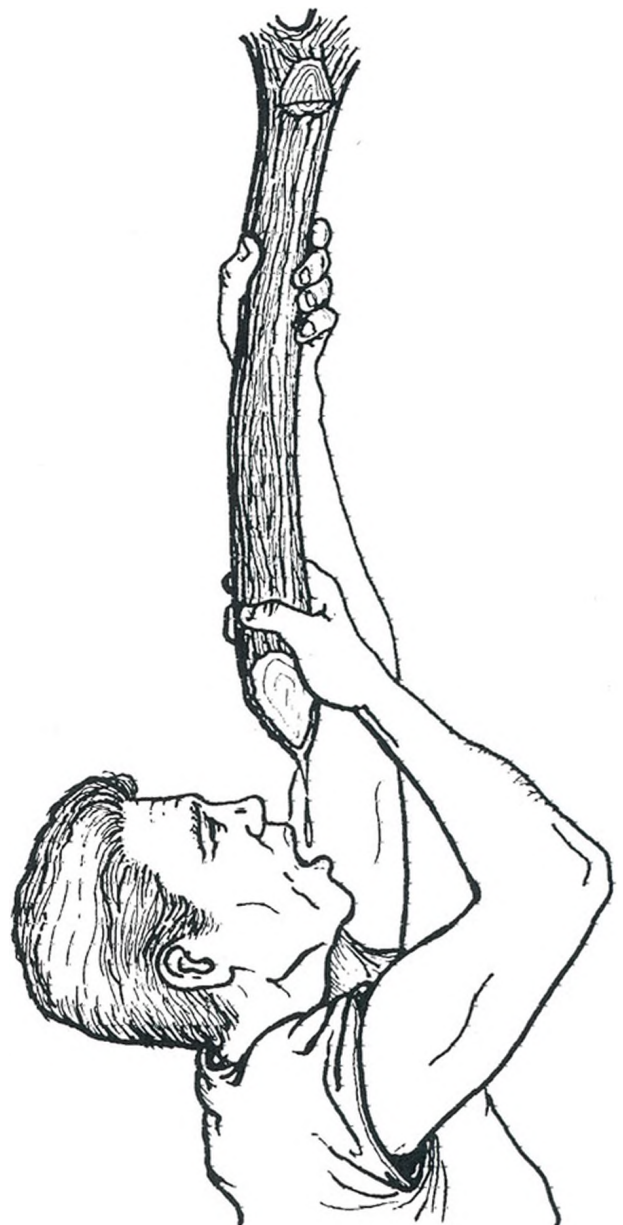


Figure 29. Extracting water from vines.

POETRY by ELLIOT RICHMAN

**WALK ON, TROOPER
UPON A SPRING DAY IN 1970
AT THE PEACE DEMONSTRATION IN WASHINGTON
D.C.
AFTER THE MURDERS AT KENT STATE**

At the rectangular reflecting pond
many of them have taken off their clothes
and plunged naked into the water,
tossing frisbees and laughing,
two red dogs joining the bathers.

Enjoying their nakedness I feel so like Whitman.
Sunlight and laughter glitter from women's breasts.
Penises and balls bound from the pool.

And then I flash to an unnamed stream
and yellow men and women bathing naked,
a sentry on the other bank napping,
a WWII American carbine on his lap.

Jamie Lee took out the sentry.
Then we killed them all in the water.

A girl with long braids tried to climb
up the bank and I put four rounds in her back.

Before the war, I had been a boy from Georgia
and would never even have considered striking a woman.

We went through their belongings and brought back
several documents written in Vietnamese.

Some asshole from Intell congratulated us on our war effort.
We had waxed an artistic company who entertained their troops,
something like Bob Hope and his girls, the officer quipped.

Back in the World, Maggie urges me to strip and join her.
Clothes now a puddle of denim at her feet.

But buses of police pull up and bull horns blare.
Phalanxes form again in nightsticks and riot helmets.

We are indecent we are told. There are laws against
displaying our bodies in public sunlight
so near Lincoln's ghost.

Not bothering to dress, Maggie screams obscenities
at black plastic visors and Sam Brown belts.

The pool splashes naked except for a frisbee and a dog,
but I see bodies floating downstream in yellow heat.

"Fuckers! Fuckers! Fuckers!" Maggie screams.

I attempt to pull her away but she shakes me off.

They advance, nightsticks in ready position, faceless.
Long-sleeved uniforms in spring heat.

Without thought, my body tells me to kill as many
as I can if they touch her.

"Arrest me! Arrest me! Arrest me!" Maggie yells,
throwing out her arms and huge breasts.

I step in front of her, ready to tear off a visor
and rip out a man's throat, but the line opens
around us and one of the men turns back,
flips open his visor, smiles,
gives us the peace sign,
then becomes another blue back marching in unison
toward the Greek-templed tomb of Lincoln.

After they leave, I tell Maggie I did two tours in the Nam.

"And fuck you, too," she says, gathering her clothes
and stomping away.

I watch her back without a single bullet wound in it.

"Walk on Trooper," I tell myself again, "Walk on."

Elliot Richman, 159 Oak St., Plattsburgh, NY 12901. This is the title poem of Elliot Richman's volume of collected Viet Nam war poems, published by Viet Nam Generation, Inc. in 1994.



Woodcut by Cedar Nordby, ©1994. Printed in *Viet Nam Generation* 6:1-2, 1994.

POETRY by PETE LEE

PROCESSING THE MAIL

the joker from
Tecopa answers
the race question,
"Other: Human"
and I laugh
days later,
inputting his
application,
wondering who this
joker thinks he is
as I hit 6
for "race unknown"

McWARNING

when they knew 5
weeks earlier what
the outcome of the
interview would be
still they held my
check till just yes
terday in the mean
time another state
employee comes to
our trailer park &
tells me I have to
move my 30 year
old mobile home 6
inches away
from the fence with
in 30 days or I
go to jail my only
choice is to saw
4 inches off the
end of it I guess
I could sell my
guns you guys are
lucky someone
hasn't walked in
& mowed you all
down like McDonalds
not that I'd do it
not that I'd
even wish it on
you

MEAL, READY-TO-EAT

I take GI food with
me to the mountains
lightweight, plus I
remember from my basic
training days they put
something in it to keep
you from shitting "when
you should be shooting"
(or putting miles of mountain
behind you) boy, tho
I don't remember all these
little extras I guess
the average soldier is
getting younger:

pkg of cocoa: makes 1 qt.
tabasco, in toy bottle
"cookie bar, chocolate covered"
two chiclets
two tootsie rolls...

why not a bib for 'em you
fucking bastards

STARR

When I was twenty I fell in love with a tall, well-groomed transvestite my own age. I fell so hard and fast that he seemed obliged to remind me often that he was, like myself, a man. I suppose, now (just now), that these reminders were borne of a well-founded fear that he was serving as little more than a way station in my journey toward the discovery of my essentially conventional sexual orientation, and that I would make this discovery too late for him to be glad of it for me. On the day I left him, I hung a necklace he'd given me around the inside knob of his apartment door. That was my goodbye. Later that day he showed up, dressed to the nines, at my workplace, and slapped me hard across the face. "My name's Danny," Starr said, and strode away beautifully.

Pete Lee, 721 S. Allen St., Ridgecrest, CA 93555. Lee is a former U.S. Army sergeant/counterintelligence agent who later served in a civilian capacity as an intelligence operations specialist with the Department of the Army. He subsequently worked as a private investigator in Hawaii and is now working in an unemployment office in California. He's an avid bird-watcher, and has hiked just about every trail in the southeastern Sierra Nevada range. He's had a couple hundred poems published in literary journals in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain.

CAITLIN JONES

Richard Welin, 10582 Barnett Valley Rd., Sebastopol, CA 95472.

Just home from school, six-year-old Caitlin Jones stood in the kitchen holding open the door to the backyard. She looked out at the hammock strung between the trunk of the young sycamore and a branch reaching over the yard from the neighbor's big oak. The bulging hammock hung low, bending the young tree. The occupant himself she couldn't see, only the shape he made. He was her father, William Jones. Her mother had said she'd be bringing him home in the morning, and here he was. Caitlin saw him last when she was four, according to her mother. Normally now in the afternoon it would be Caitlin lying in the hammock reading a comic book and eating an apple. The little sycamore never bent for her. It surprised Caitlin that it could bend from the weight of a person in the hammock. This man must be much heavier than her mother. The way the sycamore leaned toward the oak branch worried her.

The wind was rising as it usually did in the afternoon and her father would probably want to go into the house. Caitlin was used to lying in the hammock when the wind blew. She took a bite of her apple; it was a Gravenstein, green with red and yellow streaks. She and her mother had bought a box of Gravensteins from a roadside stand when they drove to the beach where the Russian River flowed into the ocean. Her mother made a pie when they got home. She didn't often make pie, or cake, either. Caitlin had a cake for her last birthday, when she was six. But it dried up before they ate it all, even though her two friends, Terri and Barbara, had come for her party. Though the pie was good, Caitlin preferred to eat the apples one at a time—one every afternoon after school. But the hammock was occupied. She would have to find another place.

Caitlin thought of the bamboo in front of the house. She went up the driveway, past the rose bushes beside the house—all that was left of her mother's efforts to garden. They had harvested only a few tiny ears of corn. "Great weather for drying clothes," her mother said, and, "We just don't have enough water from our well." That was last summer.

The bamboo grew by the steps to the porch. It grew as high as the roof gutter and it rustled like paper in the wind that came around the house. Caitlin crawled under it and found a hollow place next to the porch. Sitting with her back against the porch and her knees drawn up, she took a bite of her apple and settled in to read.

Then her mother was right above her, yelling, "Caitlin!"

"What?" she answered. She felt grouchy. Her behind hurt and all she could see were thick stalks in front of her face.

"Caity! What are you doing down there? There could be spiders." Her mother came down the steps and reached to her under the bamboo. Caitlin came out

clutching her comic book. "What a funny place to read. Come in now. You can help me start supper."

Her father sat opposite Caitlin at the brown kitchen table with the rose decals and grooved legs. She had seen the table and chairs in the auction yard and made her mother bid on them.

"It was a bargain," she said aloud, repeating the word her mother used when they first set it up in the kitchen with two of the four chairs. Last night her mother had brought in a third chair from the garage.

"What was the bargain, honey?" her mother said.

"This table."

"She was talking to you, Bill."

"Uh huh. You know about this table, do you?" He looked at Caitlin over the soup spoon he held raised to his mouth. He had thick black eyebrows and red-looking eyes, maybe brown. His hair was brown, and very short.

"I picked it out," Caitlin said.

"That's right, she did."

Caitlin watched her father eat the soup from his spoon and then put the spoon on the table.

"Well it's a fine table, Shorty. What is it you liked about it?"

"I'm tall for my age. I'm taller than most of the girls in my class."

"What grade are you in, Caitlin?"

"I'm still in first grade, of course. You don't change grades until after the summer vacation. It's not summer vacation yet. I like school. I like my teacher. Mrs. Sitkowsky. She says I read very well. I do, too. I read a lot. I read all kinds of things. I can read this milk carton. It says *milk. Ho mo gen ized...*"

"Thanks, honey. I can read it too."

"I'll read to you after supper. I almost finished my Daffy Duck this afternoon before I fell asleep. I could start all over for you. I don't mind at all."

"That would be real nice, Caitlin." He looked at her mother. "Sara, is there any coffee, or beer maybe?"

"I tasted beer once," Caitlin said.

After supper Caitlin sat on the couch beside her father and read to him. But he was asleep before she got halfway through. Late that night she was awakened by a sudden wailing cry. Terrified, she huddled down under her sheet and blanket until they covered her head. Then she cried out herself when something touched her shoulder.

"Shhh, Caity. It's me. Bill had a nightmare. Everything's okay. Nothing to be afraid of." Caitlin struggled out from under the covers and wrapped her arms around her mother's neck.

"It's all right, honey. Just a bad dream."

"I don't remember it, Mommy."

"It wasn't *your* dream, Caity. It doesn't matter. Go to sleep now."

The next night she was again awakened by her father's wailing cry. She was less frightened this time, and listened. Through the wall she heard her mother's soothing voice. "Bill, stop. Bill. Wake up now. You're

home. Bill." After a while Caitlin's bedroom door cracked open but she pretended to be asleep.

Her father's cries in the night continued and became part of Caitlin's new life. Like the kitchen table, the specialness wore off so she hardly noticed any more. She had a father now, which she hadn't had before, or could barely remember having had before. He was at the table for breakfast and supper, and in the backyard she had to take turns with him for the hammock. Eventually her mother bought an aluminum chaise lounge with plastic webbing and her father enjoyed that as well as the hammock, so after school Caitlin got the hammock again. Every morning she made sure, before she left to meet the bus, that the chaise lounge stood near the hammock.

Shortly after Caitlin's summer vacation began, her father's leave ended. He went on duty with the Army's Air Defense Command at Travis Air Force Base, which Caitlin already knew was just to the east of their house. And their town, Fairfield, was just to the west. The first day he was gone, Caitlin and her mother had a talk at lunch time. Without her father at home, Caitlin would be home alone all day every weekday, except for the hour when her mother came home for lunch. Caitlin had felt only a little lonely that morning, but her mother didn't think it was such a good idea. She telephoned the mother of Caitlin's friend Terri and arranged to bring Caitlin to Terri's house early the next morning.

Terri had tons of Barbie stuff and they ran through all Barbie's outfits, giggling and making up stories. Soon they were mixing the outfits: a combination of high heels, jodhpurs and bikini top had then shrieking, which got them too rambunctious for Barbies and they played hide-and-seek all over the big house until lunch time. They ate chicken noodle soup and peanut butter sandwiches at a counter in the kitchen, sitting side by side on high stools that swiveled and they leaned their elbows on the counter.

"You like your dad?" Terri said.

"Uh huh. He's picking me up. Then we're picking my mom up at work."

"My dad retired because of his leg. He's a colonel. Is your dad a colonel?"

"He's a Warrant Officer."

"What's that?"

"A Warrant Officer, that's all."

"Colonel's a higher rank."

"How do you know? I'll bet it isn't!"

"Bet it is."

"Bet it isn't."

The afternoon dragged. Terri had only Golden Books and no comics. She liked to watch television in the afternoon, but Caitlin got bored. She lay on the living room floor and flipped through the stupid baby books. Finally she asked Terri's mother for crayons and paper. She sat on the kitchen counter and scribbled a picture of the clump of bamboo in front of her house. Next she drew a cat—and decided she would ask for a cat when her father came at four. Then she drew a picture of her father, but it didn't look like him except for the eyebrows. She tried one of her mother, with a little more success, as it was mostly a long green dress and lots of hair. To get the

hair color right she used a white crayon first and then a yellow one. Her own hair was brown, like her father's. She was working on the sycamore and the oak tree, with a deeply sagged hammock between them, when her father arrived. In the car Caitlin asked him if he flew helicopters at Travis.

"Helicopters make me nervous, Cait. What I do, honey, is hold down a gray metal desk." She thought about that and forgot to ask about a cat until the next morning at breakfast.

"We'll see," her mother said. Then Caitlin asked her to bring home paper and a new box of crayons. The next time she went to Terri's, she brought her own crayons, some comic books and two apples.

By the end of the summer Caitlin's father was on medical leave—"I couldn't hold down that desk, Cait. It kept jumping around. Even tried once to jump out the window." She was glad to have him home in her backyard again.

"Dad, Richie Rich has a swimming pool full of money." Her father pushed up the visor of his feed cap. "See?" Caitlin leaned an elbow on his stomach and held the comic open in front of him.

"Yeah. You'd think he'd get dirty and sick swimming in all that money."

"I wouldn't want to swim in money. Do you think we could dig a swimming pool here in the yard?"

"Hell yes! You bet, Cait! If Richie Rich can swim in filthy lucre, at least my daughter can splash around in a mud hole. Let's dig us a hole, Caitlin. Your mother got any gardening tools around here?"

Caitlin ran into the garage and her father came after. In the dim light they managed to find a leaf rake and a pointed shovel without a handle.

"Can't dig adobe with a leaf rake," her father said. Then he saw the handle of something in a corner behind a bald tire. He pushed the tire aside and discovered a mattock. "All right!" he exclaimed. But the head was loose. He gripped his prize with one hand and ran the other blindly along the mostly empty shelves lining the rear wall.

"Caitlin," he said, "I'm looking for nails or something to fix this damn mattock with. Can you push open one of those big doors and let some light in here?"

She ran to the door, turned the handle and pushed with all her might. The door scraped out over the gravel drive and then stuck. But there was light. Her father found various nails scattered among the paint cans and junk on the shelves and along the mudsill. But no hammer. He kicked cans and slammed things around—broken screens, scrap lumber, a steel medicine cabinet.

"Ouch! God damn it!" He shook his hand then pressed it between his thighs; he'd ripped it on a bent nail stuck in a scrap of siding. Caitlin saw the blood.

"Daddy, I'll get a band-aid."

"You do that, Cait," he said, and kept banging around with the mattock along the side wall.

Caitlin ran to the house. She wrestled a kitchen chair into the bathroom and climbed onto it to get at the medicine cabinet. When she returned with the box of

band-aids her father was down on one knee driving a spike into the end of the mattock with a small pipe wrench.

He sang out when he saw her, "A wedge, Caitlin!" She saw blood everywhere—on the mattock, the rusty pipe wrench, her father's face, hands, shirt. She pulled a band-aid from the box and grabbed at the flying hand still beating at the spike. She held on and tried to press the band-aid to it, but the hand wouldn't stop. Soon there was blood on her own hands and she felt her grip slipping.

"Daddy, stop," she said softly—like her mother, the way her mother spoke at night in their bedroom and Caitlin would hear through the wall. "Daddy, stop."

"What?" she shouted. The arm hesitated, rigid. "What is it?" He looked at her. "Caitlin?... Oh." His breath came in short little chuffs. Then she felt his arm relax. The pipe wrench thudded into the dirt just missing her foot. He sighed, rocked backward and sat on the floor, pulling Caitlin with him; she still clung to his hand. Her fingers were tired, and she sank down against his shoulder. She could smell him: sweat, tobacco, his own smell.

"Cait," he said. Gently he lifted her hand from his and they saw the band-aid stuck to her palm in drying blood.

"The wrapping. You've got to take the wrapping off first." He paused to breathe. "You've got some grip, though. See, the bleeding has almost stopped."

She pressed against his side and felt him trembling.

"Look," he said. "We'll go to the hose spigot..." A tremor cut him off. When it passed, he continued, "We'll wash off... Okay? We'll get your hands clean."

Caitlin tried to stand; her legs were shaky but she got up and waited. Her father turned onto his knees, pushed with his good hand against the floor and stood up. They went out by the door Caitlin had pushed open and then over to the side of the house. A hose lay curled up under a spigot between her mother's rose bushes. Caitlin turned the handle. Her father found the end of the hose and opened the nozzle, letting a fine spray soak his shoes and trousers until Caitlin poked him.

"Right," he said, and started cleaning his hands, shifting the nozzle from one hand to the other and rubbing them on his trousers to loosen the dried blood. Then he knelt on the ground and rinsed and rubbed Caitlin's hands. "We're feeling better now, aren't we?" he said. She didn't answer. He turned off the spigot and stood up. "You go back in the garage now and get those band-aids. I'll meet you in the kitchen."

Caitlin didn't move. She sobbed when he put his good hand on her shoulder and pressed her to his thigh.

"Okay," he said. "You wait here."

He came back with the band-aids, then they walked together into the kitchen. Her father sat down on a chair and Caitlin stood beside him. Then he got up, yanked a paper towel from the roll under the cupboard, and sat back down. With his good hand he pressed the towel to his cut, which was still oozing blood.

"I'm going to need more than band-aids, Caitlin. Does Mother have any clean rags anywhere?" Caitlin nodded and pointed to the cabinet under the sink. Her father opened it and got out a grocery bag full of rags. He

selected a piece of sheet then sat back on his chair. With his teeth and his good hand he managed to tear off a long strip. Caitlin moved to the other chair and watched him. He stood up again and got a fresh paper towel to press against the cut. Then he sat down and wound the cloth strip around his hand several times. Finally he tucked in the free end under a couple of turns.

"That should do it," he said, and closed his eyes. "You did well, Caitlin. I'm going to lie down now."

She followed him into the backyard where he lay down on his chaise lounge and rested his arm with the bandaged hand over his eyes. Caitlin stood close to him, pressing against his shoulder and the cool aluminum frame. She bumped the frame with her knee.

"Caitlin," he said. "Now you know how to treat a wound. You clean it. Press on it to stop the bleeding. Make a tight bandage."

"Were you wounded in the war, Daddy?"

"No, I wasn't wounded."

"Terri's father was wounded. He got his leg shot off, Terri said."

"That's too bad."

"She says he's in a wheelchair."

"Uh huh."

"I'm glad you're not in a wheelchair."

"Me too. Chaise lounge beats a wheelchair any day."

"Did you fly a helicopter?"

"Time for a nap, honey. Let's have a little nap."

After school the next day, Caitlin had the backyard to herself. When her mother came home she explained to Caitlin that her father would be at the base hospital for a couple of days.

"Is his wound still bleeding?"

"Well, no, that's not it. The cut is healing fine. Your father has other problems... from the war." She paused. "He has some internal wounds that aren't healing well."

"What did he do in the war, Mommy?"

"Flew helicopters. That's about all I know. He won't talk to me about it either, Caity."

Over the next several years Caitlin's father was in and out of hospitals and rehabilitation centers. Often her mother couldn't tell Caitlin where he was. He never telephoned. Sometimes he came to visit on special days—birthdays, a couple of Christmases. For her eighth grade graduation Caitlin sent an invitation to his last address, a place in Sacramento.

She picked out a floral print dress to wear for the ceremony. Her mother bought a new dress, too. She had a boyfriend now, a friendly man with sandy hair. His polo shirts bulged above the belt. He had big teeth and smiled a lot and would make Caitlin's mother laugh in the kitchen while she prepared supper for the three of them. His name, Rudy, sounded like a dog's name to Caitlin, and she told him so at breakfast the morning after he stayed over the first time. He gave her a serious look, then barked a couple of times, lolled out his tongue, panted, and wagged his behind. Caitlin thought he was silly but it was hard to dislike him. He also had nice blue eyes that wrinkled in the corners when he smiled.

Caitlin had heard nothing from her father since the Christmas before last, when he sent her a flat little box of comic books—*Archie*, and *Archie's* friends—which she had gotten too old for. She didn't read them and put the box away under her bed. While the vacuum roared she took out the comics and looked at them again: they were in mint condition—he must have bought them off the shelves—nine comics in all. Why nine? Why not ten, or five? Had he miscounted? Had he lost one? Maybe he read the tenth one himself and misplaced it. She checked the dates of issue: they were all published the same year, different issues featuring different ones of the same group of characters: some *Archie*, some *Veronica and Betty*, a *Jughead*. She noticed a wiggly blue line drawn by a ball point under the *Jughead* title. Did he mean to call her a jughead? For reading comic books? Well, he's the jughead. Then she realized he might have meant that. She sat on her heels on the bare linoleum floor and studied the other covers, then paged carefully through all nine issues, but found no other messages. She shuffled the comics together into a neat stack and held them with both hands on her lap. But she still didn't want to read them.

They went back into the box and the box went back under the bed. Then she decided she didn't want it where she had put it near the foot and moved it higher up. "I can stuff some other things under the foot," she said aloud.

When she walked onto the stage with her classmates, Caitlin saw her mother and Rudy smiling at her from their seats near the front. Her mother wore a corsage on her blue dress. Rudy was always buying her flowers. Then Caitlin sucked in her breath: it was her father in the far back row, next to the aisle. He had a scraggly dark beard and his brown hair hung down almost to his shoulders. He wore a tie and a brown jacket.

Caitlin looked for him after the ceremony. She found him on the steps outside smoking a cigarette.

"Caitlin," he said. "You're growing up." He looked thin. He wore levis and sneakers, and he had loosened the tie. She hugged him. Her head came up to his chin.

"Jughead," she said.

"Is Sara here?"

"Yes. She's with her boyfriend."

"What the hell," he said. He put the cigarette in his mouth and put his arms around her. Then he coughed and stepped back, dropped the cigarette and ground it into the concrete step with his shoe. With his arm around her shoulders he led her onto the lawn away from the other people—some were leaving, others crowding outside the entrance and on the steps. Caitlin stood with her father on the lawn. She saw him looking up and down the dark street, over her head, all around.

"I know the way back to the Greyhound," he said. "It's downtown, just a few blocks. My ticket's in my coat pocket. I wanted to see you, honey. Got your invitation. It's right here in my shirt, my shirt pocket. Or my breast pocket... Maybe I put it with my wallet..." He backed away as he fumbled through all his pockets. "Here's my ticket; can't lose that." He held it out to her, then put it back in

his coat pocket. "It's really dark out here. Why'd you graduate at night, Cait?"

"Dad, can you wait right here? I'll find Mom, and tell her, and then I'll come right back and we'll walk to the Greyhound together. Just stay here, okay? And don't worry."

He had found his cigarettes and was lighting up. "Sure. You tell your mother."

"I'll be right back."

He was gone when she returned. She took off her shoes and ran in the direction of the business district, carrying a shoe in each hand. After the second cross street she saw him far ahead under a streetlight. He was walking fast. Finally she got close enough to call to him. He stopped and turned. She came up to him, panting and breathless.

"Why didn't you wait?"

He smiled at her, a broad quiet smile, as though she were a very little girl. "No need, Caitlin. You see? I can find the bus."

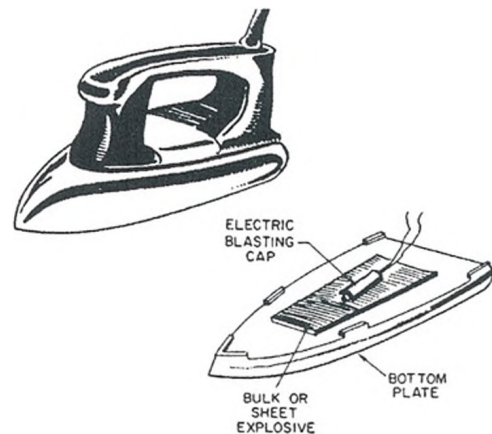
Caitlin took his arm, fiercely, and they moved on. She was trying not to cry.

"Hey you little hippie," he said. "You're barefoot."

"No, I'm not. I'm wearing tights." They stopped walking and she leaned on his arm while she slipped on her white pumps.

There was a bus ready to go when they arrived, and her father inspected his pockets again, making sure of his wallet, cigarettes, ticket. The driver stood by the door. Her father handed him the ticket. He kissed Caitlin on the forehead then jumped up the steps. The lights were on in the bus and Caitlin could see him take a seat in the far back, in a corner. She knew he couldn't see out, but when the bus started up she waved to him anyway. She watched the back of his head in the rear window until the lights went out. Then she watched the taillights diminishing, until the bus turned the corner on Texas Street.

Richard Welin's more recent work includes a story in Suisun Valley Review and poems in Ascent and Pegasus. In the 1970s he was co-editor of Loon: A Journal of Poetry. He is the author of a book of poems, The Ride Back (White Bear Books), and has taught English at Santa Rosa Junior College in northern California since 1971.



The Spoils of War

Brian Skinner, 1656 W. Farragut Ave., Chicago, IL 60640-2010.

*What tale shall serve me here among
Mine angry and defrauded young?*

—Rudyard Kipling,
"Epitaphs of the War"

Richie Wilcox thought he understood the dismay which must have overcome Dr. Frankenstein when confronted by the creature he had brought into being. Richie felt the same way about his wife, Evelyn. He'd somehow turned her into a creature he now barely recognized. Her transformation was born of Richie's good intentions and began innocently enough, just as the work of the young Victor Frankenstein had.

Richie was tinkering in his basement workshop, trying to fill up the long days of his unemployment in some useful enterprise. He glanced at the racks of rusting tools—most of them from his father, but some left from his grandfather—and realized he'd never used half of them. He didn't even know what many of them were. They belonged in a museum collection where the curator might be able to identify them, affixing neatly-lettered placards to explain what they were used for. Better yet, Richie thought, they belonged in the basement of someone who would keep them polished and sharpened with use. That's when the notion first occurred to him to have Evelyn organize a garage sale. It was also the beginning of her transformation into the strange creature with whom he now found himself sharing his bed.

Evelyn didn't have to be reminded that they needed whatever spare change they could get their hands on, especially since Richie's unemployment checks had stopped coming the month before. She knew the basement was cluttered with a lot of junk, but she never would have suggested he sell all those old tools. They were part of his inheritance. So, to help ease the pain she imagined he must feel in parting with the dull, rusting heirlooms, Evelyn rummaged through the backs of her closets and sorted things on the topmost shelves in the kitchen. She realized it wasn't such a tremendous sacrifice on her part. She couldn't imagine herself wearing any of the outdated dresses even if they still fit. And the old kitchen gadgets, fuzzy with grease and dust, belonged in the Smithsonian—with placards attached, asking, "Do you know what these were used for?" Evelyn knew she wasn't making any great sacrifice, but she hoped the gesture would count for something.

But then, as with everything she undertook, Evelyn got so carried away that she nearly lost sight of her original purpose. The garage sale spilled over into the backyard and onto the driveway, while Richie's tools still hung in the basement because now she felt there wasn't enough space to display them properly. And the one-time sale spilled over into the following weekends.

They made some money—found money, Evelyn called it—and that's part of what went to her head. But the greater incentive for her was the challenge of actually selling items a lesser woman would've tossed into the garbage. She got hooked on it. And, as with any true addiction, it fed on itself until the victim derived gratification simply from the act of indulgence. But unlike a normal addiction, into which one would've had to pour the last pennies of his dwindling resources, the disease of *prurigo mercatoris*, "merchant's itch," actually made money for the sufferer. And so, it became a habit impossible to break. Richie felt the glow of his shame because he had infected her with it—as a carrier. He was the pusher who had given Evelyn her first taste. His own wife! It was unspeakable. He'd created a monster.

Soon after those early garage sales, Evelyn ran out of things to sell. The cupboards and cabinets and closets echoed. Richie was without any old clothes to wear for his endless fix-up chores. The neighbors began to worry about a family so down on their luck that they'd been forced to sell everything in their house except the absolute necessities. And yet the husband, unemployed for nearly a year, painted the gutters and dug in the garden while wearing a white shirt and dress slacks. The fact that Richie was a veteran of Viet Nam only added to their unease.

The Wilcox house was now without any of the useless gewgaws and odds-and-ends and knickknacks that made a place a home. It became so austere that a monastery would have appeared cluttered in extravagance by comparison. The Wilcox's just wasn't a normal American household, where even in poverty there should've been at least one useless doodad, some heirloom ornament. But there were none, not so far as any of the neighbors noticed. Maybe the Wilcoxes were survivalists. Or revivalists. In either case, they were waiting for the end of something. The neighbors didn't sleep well, having Richie and Evelyn Wilcox on their block.

For the first time in years all their bills were paid, yet Richie and Evelyn were never more miserable, and Evelyn more so than Richie. She needed her fix desperately. If she didn't get it soon, she was convinced she'd die without it. It had come to that. It was buy or die.

And Richie, who had seldom swallowed the gung-ho rhetoric of his sergeant and lieutenant, nevertheless found himself apologizing for Evelyn, even to himself. It came to sound very much like "My wife, right or wrong," and "Evelyn: Love her or leave her." Yet in spite of his problems with her never-ending garage sales, leaving Evelyn was as unimaginable to him now as skipping across the border to Canada was then. He was no quitter.

The Wilcox household, however, didn't remain for very long in this austere, uncluttered state: the dream of any husband who aspires to travel light in this world. Evelyn was soon scouting the alleys and garbage bins for blocks around for "new" merchandise. By dawn she'd hauled home enough discarded, but salvageable junk to keep Richie busy repairing it for the rest of the day.

The talk of his continuing to look for work soon became a cast-off, too. They were making decent money

with their garage sales. Evelyn knew that was a much more acceptable way for Richie to earn a living. She knew he wasn't very good at taking orders, ever since Viet Nam.

Richie no longer took somebody's word for something just because the guy was the boss. In fact, there was hardly a boss of his in recent years he hadn't either flattened or stormed out on in the middle of the day. She thought Richie was simply much better off working for himself. He seemed much happier. His headaches were less frequent, and far less debilitating when they did strike. There was simply no time to brood, because the junk Evelyn left him to fix up didn't allow him even a moment for aimless tinkering.

In a matter of weeks, though, Richie found himself getting behind in his work. Evelyn had discovered resale shops and estate sales. People didn't often realize what they had, and Evelyn was only too pleased to relieve them of things for a fraction of their true value. She found it difficult not to fall all over herself in her eagerness. She practiced dead-panning and swallowing her smirks before an old, cloudy mirror till she got it exactly right and would have been able to lie in the face of the Almighty Himself. "May lightning strike me dead" became one of her favorite expressions, and Richie worried that it might be overheard by an angelic stool-pigeon eager to earn himself a gold star. But she continued to latch on to incredible bargains, spending her evenings doing research at the library in order to be better prepared for the next day's mission.

The basement became a true workshop again, and it seemed to Richie that he was fast running out of space. The dust from the cotton batting for the upholstery projects began floating onto the freshly-varnished tabletops and desks and old wooden refrigerators. Woodworking, especially the rough sanding, had to be moved to the garage. The paint-stripping operation was relegated to the driveway alongside the house, and the unkempt lawn became a dead shade of brown at the edges of the blacktop where the harsh chemicals and residues had saturated the soil. The neighbors talked among themselves about anonymously calling up the Department of Housing inspector, but no one was actually willing to risk it, for now they all through of mild, quiet Richie as a dormant berserker. They walked only straight lines, fearing to tread even along the edges of the dead lawn.

Richie found this very amusing because, while the adults may have been afraid to say anything, their children hadn't yet learned how to be discreet about anything—especially not about something as interesting as "the crazy people on the corner." The kids even devised a game in which they took turns being Richie Wilcox on a rampage. Too much television, Richie thought.

As far as he knew, Richie had never killed anybody. Never face-to-face, anyway. His twelve-month tour in Viet Nam began in the summer of 1967. He remained stationed in and around Saigon until he received a near-fatal wound during the chaos and carnage of the infamous Tet holiday offensive. He was sent stateside again in early February of 1968, over a year before Nixon's announcement of "phased troop withdrawal" and the "Vietnamization" of the war.

Richie had been assigned to a platoon guarding one of three munitions depots on the outskirts of Saigon, where the heavily sandbagged, corrugated steel buildings nestled among tiny suburban-style houses, as though these might provide some camouflage. When the depot was attacked in late January, 1968, during an inspection, Richie earned his medals by throwing himself on one of the visiting Vietnamese colonels and taking shrapnel in his neck and backside. Richie hadn't intended to do anything heroic. The colonel had, in fact, irritated him. But the impulse to get those around him out of harm's way ran deep. It hadn't looked too good for Richie at first because a shell fragment lodged at the base of his skull. But now he had only infrequent headaches to remind him of the episode. That and the letter of commendation Colonel Thu sent to his American counterparts—though he had never actually thanked Richie for saving his hide anywhere in the brief letter.

As angry as he got sometimes, Richie had no plans to start hurting people now. Still, he didn't care for the neighbors' attitude. On the other hand, he didn't really mind their uncertainty because it kept them at a comfortable distance. In three weeks the kids had grown as tired of playing "Richie on a Rampage" as they did—eventually—of anything else they'd seen on television. Richie Wilcox became a rerun.

The new game the neighborhood kids invented was more upsetting to Richie. In this one Evelyn was made the main opponent the others tried to out-maneuver and conquer. They began playing "Flea Market" and "Garage Sale." These kids—like children everywhere—had a terrifying ability to distill the essence of any grown-up activity or enterprise and reduce it to its inherent absurdity. They'd set up cardboard boxes as their booths and stalls, displaying a collection of junk that would've rivaled any true flea market. Their "merchandise" was retrieved from the alleys and trash dumpsters, probably as they had seen Evelyn do in the beginning. The kids marked these items with prices as outrageous as anything Evelyn had commanded for similar junk. Of course, in their childish fashion, they took this to a preposterous extreme, adding as many zeroes as could be squeezed onto the little tags. They haggled and barked at one another as adeptly as any adult who tried to get something for nothing. When it came time to tally their scores, the merchant with the most Monopoly money won. Then it all went back in the trash, everything but the Monopoly money and any little half-smashed toy or tangled trinket one of them might want to keep. What they eventually did with these keepsakes Richie didn't know. The kids were only visible to him when they played in their back yards or the alley.

After watching this flea market game a couple of times, Richie began to wonder what the adults really did with their finds and bargains. Did anybody really keep that stuff? Or, more incredible still, did anyone actually collect it? Was there an end-of-the-line someplace where a collectible piece found a home? Or was the item traded endlessly—as in the kids' game—never finding a final buyer? Was it traded back and forth, always increasing in price until the line between free enterprise and high-

way robbery was erased by the goods traveling across that line so many times.

These issues became important to Richie, and he finally asked Evelyn about this "mercantile masturbation." She didn't care for his choice of words, but she admitted there was probably some truth to the observation. She said there were actual collectors out there. But the imagination couldn't take in all the things considered collectible by some: bottle caps, beer cans, cereal boxes, buttons, postcards, matchbooks, medals...

"Medals?" Richie asked, interrupting her litany.

"Sure," she said. "Some of them fetch big bucks, too."

"Military medals?"

"Sure. All kinds."

"But you can't *buy* a military medal," Richie said. "You've got to earn it—sometimes with your goddamn life. But you can't *buy* it. It's not legal. Otherwise everybody would have 'em, whether they deserved it or not. I'm sure it's illegal."

"Where have you been, Richie?" Evelyn asked. "On the far side of the moon? Wake up, will you? This is a free country. You can buy and sell anything you want. Of course some things are illegal, but not military memorabilia, that's for sure. If it were, every second antique dealer would be behind bars."

"Maybe they should be!" Richie said, and went bounding up the stairs to their bedroom.

By the time Evelyn got there, Richie had half the drawers of his refinished dresser pulled out, their contents scattered across the bed, and the empty drawers flung onto the floor.

"Where're my medals, Evelyn?" he bellowed. "You'd sell your mother, you know that? Now where are my goddamn medals, huh?"

"How should I know what you do with your stuff?" she asked, ready to return his belligerence measure for measure. "Look, Richie, I wouldn't sell your medals. I know what they mean to you. I've kept a record of everything we've bought or sold this year, and there were no medals. Nothing of your stuff, in fact, except whatever you put out for me to sell—not even those old tools of yours that started this whole business. Just get ahold of yourself and try to remember. You're the one who cleaned out that old chest-of-drawers before we hauled it out and stripped it. Meanwhile, you had your stuff in boxes, remember? Did you do anything with those boxes?"

Richie stopped his frantic searching and stood still. He squinted his eyes and tried to recall. He could see the boxes piled up against the wall. And then, suddenly, there were several fewer boxes. He could get at the outlet again.

"Oh, hell," he said. "Damn it! We donated a lot of my old stuff to the Salvation Army. Brought it there myself instead of waiting for a pick-up day. My medals were in there, I'll bet. Sure. In the pockets of that bulky sweater your mother got me for Christmas. So they wouldn't get scratched."

"You got rid of that sweater?" Evelyn asked, trying to keep her voice calm. "That was an expensive cardigan, Richie. Don't you ever tell Mom what you did."

"I never wore it," he explained. "Seemed a waste to be just sitting in a drawer. I got a little carried away, I guess. Now my medals are gone, too, probably pawned by some old wino in a wool cardigan."

Richie sat down, heavily, on the edge of the bed and dropped his head into his cupped hands. Evelyn stroked the back of his neck and smoothed his hair.

"Listen," she said, "we'll get your medals back. Next weekend is the big Jefferson County flea market. Come along with me for a change. There are at least four dealers in military memorabilia that I know of, and I've never gotten more than halfway through all of it. It's huge, simply huge."

"Yeah, but it just wouldn't be the same," Richie said, looking up at Evelyn. "The Bronze Star's got my name engraved on it. I'd be getting somebody else's medal."

She was at a temporary loss for words, and thought of the expression on Richie's face and his tone of voice as those of a little boy whose favorite Tonka truck had just been flattened in the street. She wanted to smile at him because of the comparison, but didn't. Instead, she asked him, "Where's the medal engraved?"

"On the back," he replied.

"So we take it to a jeweler and have *your* name put on it."

"Like some chump who never accomplished anything, so he's got to *buy* his medals? No. I just won't feel right about it, okay? Maybe I can write to the VA. I mean, they replace 'em if they get lost in a fire or something."

"But it still won't be the same medal, Richie, even if they replace it, will it?"

"No, I guess not," he admitted.

"Then do yourself a favor. Save some postage and a couple of migraines, and replace them yourself. I don't like seeing you worked up into a froth every time you talk to the VA. Do *me* a favor, Richie, and forget it," she said. "I'd like to have you come along with me to the flea market, all right?"

"At four in the morning?" he asked, but it was more a complaint than a question.

"The early bird catches the worm and all that," she told him.

"But I don't much care for worms."

They laughed, continuing their banter while they put Richie's things back in the empty drawers and found out where the drawers fit back into the old chest.

True to her word, on the next Saturday Evelyn woke Richie at two-thirty in the morning, resorting finally to a little ice-water in his navel. She watched him stumble about like a wind-up toy with a bent axle and wobbly wheels. She thought he looked a little better after some coffee.

While Richie crawled into his uncooperative clothes—too many sleeves and legs, he complained—Evelyn packed them a breakfast and lunch of sandwiches. Then she gathered together her shopping bags: large canvas sacks with shoulder straps that newspaper carriers used. She hated to take time out to return to the car with her purchases. When Richie came down, she handed him a flashlight and told him to check the batteries.

"You're really serious, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes, I am. I finally found a job where I can put all my skills as a shopper to good use," she said, smiling broadly.

"I mean about the flashlights," Richie said.

"Sure. It'll be dark for the first couple of hours. I've got to see what I'm buying," she explained.

Richie merely shook his head and followed her out the door. Since she was used to such early rising, Evelyn took the wheel. Before they even reached the interstate, Richie was slumped against the passenger door, dreaming about a woodworking project from the sound of it.

"We're here, Richie. Come on. Time's a-wasting."

Richie groaned and slipped down further in the seat. Evelyn opened the dented thermos and poured out a cupful of coffee. The windows steamed up with the delicious vapors. She held the cup under Richie's nose and wafted the steam with her hand. He awoke so abruptly and with such a start that Evelyn spilled some of the coffee in his lap. She was afraid she'd awakened him from one of his bad dreams.

"Hey! What are you trying to do? Boil my balls?"

She laughed. "It's not that hot," she said. "I'm sorry. Here. Drink up. It won't stay warm long, now that it's been opened. It's seventy-five cents a cup at the concessions."

Evelyn wondered how Richie had managed to get up as early as he had when he worked for the sawmill. The mill was closed now, but she remembered the first time he came into the office looking for work. It was right after his discharge, and Evelyn noticed his slight limp. She tried not to look at him because she thought pitying somebody was a poor way to fall in love. But then his boyish smile and sense of humor and broad shoulders got to her and won her over, though not necessarily in that order.

Richie seemed to come the rest of the way awake after he drank some of the black coffee. No doubt, too, the frosty air of early morning out in the country did its part. Evelyn dragged Richie along from stall to stall, their flashlights illuminating shafts of the foggy air like kids' space weapons. And they were not alone. Beams flashed and crossed every which way from out of the thick fog. Richie said it looked like fire-flies trying to find their mates.

He was familiar with his wife's tendency to exaggerate. He discounted the number of bargain-hunters he actually expected to encounter that morning. To his surprise, he discovered that her estimate was on the low side. He felt crowded. At every other stall was a group of rumped, shivering flea-marketers in their hooded ponchos, trudging through the ankle-deep mud of tire ruts. The whole atmosphere had a steamy, claustrophobic quality about it that dredged up many undesirable associations for him. He began shivering violently.

"You'd better get some hot coffee in you," Evelyn told him. "It makes me colder just listening to your bones rattle like that. I'll be in this aisle somewhere. Here's a dollar."

The concessions were already doing a brisk business—lots of hot, fragrant coffee—but also plenty of bratwurst, steamed corn-on-the-cob, sauerkraut and

baked potatoes. Richie's stomach cringed at the thought of any of that for breakfast. Here was a whole different world, he thought. A different culture anyway: all of them searching for something Richie couldn't see. It was all junk to him. He felt like a heathen dragged along in the tumult of the Crusades. These early-morning faithful had all the determination and dedication of searchers for the elusive Holy Grail.

Richie's attitude wasn't so very different from how he had felt during the war. Everybody else seemed to know why they were there. They had some sense of purpose, even if it was only to survive. But there was something Richie just didn't get about the whole thing. He came to the conclusion he'd gone to Viet Nam only because he didn't want his father to be ashamed of him. It was always to please someone else. Now there were still a lot of things he didn't get, and he wondered if he was only going along with them to please Evelyn. What had he turned her into, anyway?

Richie found her in the next aisle, dickering with some old man wearing a winter jacket over his pajamas. She was so enthusiastic. That's what was missing. He just couldn't get excited about anything. The old man brought something else from the back of his camper, but Evelyn shook her head.

"You feeling better?" she asked Richie, just noticing him.

"I guess so," he said. He offered her some of his tepid coffee, but she said she didn't want to be running to the smelly port-a-potties every five minutes.

"Here. Hold this while I look for my wallet," she told Richie, handing him the first of her newspaper sacks. He came close to dropping it in a mud-puddle; he wasn't expecting it to be so heavy. He hadn't been out of her sight longer than ten minutes; the sack was empty when he left her. But now it bulged with odd-shaped things wrapped in musty-smelling newspapers.

"Maybe you wouldn't mind hanging on to that for awhile, huh?" she asked him. "I can see you're not much of a spender."

"What with?" Richie asked. "My charm?"

"I'm sorry. I forgot," she said. "I'm in my own little world sometimes. Here's thirty bucks and a check. But if you're not really sure about something, then ask the guy to hold it for you. I can check it out later. And if I don't know, there's always somebody we can ask around here for a second opinion. Now don't get lost on me. Ten o'clock back at the car."

"Wait a minute," Richie said, holding Evelyn by the elbow before she disappeared into the fog. "Where will I find this guy with the medals?"

"I don't know," she told him. "The dealers don't always get the same spaces. Depends on when they get here. There are usually about four or five of these guys around. But the one who seems to have the most stuff and seems to know what he's talking about is an old black man with whiskers. He's usually wearing an old army coat, not a jacket, even when it's ninety degrees. The guy doesn't sweat, I guess. But you're on your own with the medals, Richie. The only military stuff I know anything

about are old helmets, bayonets, and shell casings. Adios."

Richie watched her blend into the light-swallowing fog. He stood there with his mouth hanging open like the village idiot. Where in hell did Evelyn get to be the expert on shell casings? Her recent transformation had made the movie *Frankenstein* seem hardly incredible at all. If she started collecting those things—never mind where she'd find the space—the neighbors would be in a real uproar, whether those casings were spent or not. Richie looked at the wavering shafts of illumined fog and suddenly pictured their neighbors bearing torches, storming the Wilcox castle and clamoring for the monster's blood.

The gray bowl of the sky grew lighter near one edge of its rim; the fog became less soupy. Richie could see beyond the next several stalls. He had peered here and there at strange-looking items beneath the dew-splattered plastic sheeting, but nothing interested him strongly enough to importune the shivering merchant to lift the clouded plastic. A closer look with his probing flashlight invariably revealed the intriguing item to be an everyday object—usually in less-than-serviceable condition—that had merely acquired an aura of mystery from the fog, the dim light, and the plastic shrouding it like a layer of cobwebs. Nothing to get excited about, he told himself: row after row of the same kind of junk he had seen merchants trying to peddle to soldiers in the street-markets of Saigon. Junk was a universal artifact. The planet was ready to tip out of its orbit under the load of cigarette lighters, sunglasses, and cheap pens.

Richie came across two Vietnamese merchants at the Jefferson County flea market. They seemed very comfortable among their fellow Americans, but the quality and kinds of their merchandise had not changed in the slightest. It was all cheap watches, transistor radios, and wall clocks set into scenes of dilapidated barns or cuddling kittens. The Vietnamese merchants had their entire families engaged in the enterprise. One nearly-toothless old woman in her conical straw hat grabbed Richie's elbow and asked him to make her an offer on an Elvis clock that she just couldn't refuse. He forced a smile and pulled away from her.

Owing to his aimless wandering, it was not until nearly eight-thirty that Richie found the old merchant who sold military memorabilia. Evelyn had been right. This old black guy had quite an array of things, but they were mostly small, pocketable items. Richie watched from across the muddy aisle. Suddenly, he spotted a guy who was bent over to rummage through the unsorted junk in boxed beneath the folding tables. The guy had an Order of the Purple Heart pinned to the rear pocket of his tight, ripped-up jeans. Richie felt a surge of blood gushing into his head—into his ears mostly. He thought it might be the very medal he'd lost that the guy had pinned on his butt. Richie became deaf for a moment and could no longer hear the voice of his own reason.

He dashed into the stall and grabbed hold of the man's shoulders, heaving him up and spinning him around. The man's long blonde hair whipped into his face; the golden braids of the epaulets on his well-scuffed leather jacket lashed across his chest.

"Christ," Richie moaned. "You're just a kid."

"Got a problem with that, mister?" the young man said.

The old merchant wasted no time in intervening. He didn't relish the thought of having to finger through the mud in search of medals and medallions if the table tipped over.

"What're you bothering my customers for?" he snarled at Richie.

"I d-didn't," Richie stammered. "I mean, it was a mistake."

The kid was sneering at him, but Richie could tell it was a bluff because he felt the young man trembling in his hands. He released him and offered a weak, stuttering apology. The old merchant stepped back and repositioned the wobbly table in its muddy grooves.

The medal-spangled youth put the items he'd been holding back in the box beneath the table and told the old man, "Catch you later, Remus. I'm flat busted anyway." Then he went off, in no particular hurry, down the boggy aisle.

Richie watched the sun glinting off the array of metallic ribbons and medals festooning the kid's beat-up jacket.

"That's quite a collection he's got there," Richie said to the old black man.

"The name's Ralston," he said, extending his hand. "It's just the kids that call me Remus—old Uncle Remus," he chuckled. "Something got to you, huh?"

"Well, yeah," Richie said. "I guess it was the sight of the medal on that punk's rear end. I didn't mean to lose it like that. I'm sorry."

"No cause to be," the old man said. "That boy's a good kid, though. He pays his college tuition by banging out some God-awful noise in a rock band. The medals are just for showing off. You know, it's their gimmick, their hook. Every band's gotta have one. I wasn't too crazy about his having those medals plastered all over his ass at first, either. I'm a vet, too. In a different war than yours, but, hell, it was even a different country back then. Don't let it get to you. They don't mean any harm by it. Shit, that boy wasn't even wearing half the ones he's got."

The old man shook with a deep, rumbling belly-laugh, but it was more visible than audible. He seemed to be enjoying a good joke, a private one. It was just one more thing Richie hadn't been let in on. Then the old man pulled Richie on the side and spoke into his ear, till the bristly whiskers tickled it.

"That kid's girlfriend got him a real choice medal last Christmas. She got him a Distinguished Service Cross. Bought it from me. She pinned it on the fly of his jeans. When I saw that I couldn't laugh any more for a week. These damn kids," the old man said, slapping his thigh. "You just gotta love 'em. So you be cool now, do you hear me?"

Richie nodded. "Mind if I look around a little?" he asked.

"Much obliged if you do," Ralston said. "I suppose you lost all your medals in a fire or some burglar took 'em, huh?"

"Yeah. How'd you know?" Richie asked, clearly startled.

"It happens ever day of the week and twice on Sundays," the old man said, smiling slyly. "Except it usually turns out that this burglar's got the same name as the poor guy's old lady, you know what I mean? She starts cleaning house and gets a little carried away. He's lucky if she doesn't throw him out, too."

"Something like that," Richie said, a little unnerved by the old man's twinkling glance and wry smile.

The assortment of medals that Richie found displayed was, to him, incredible. There seemed to be no logical order to their placement in the glass cases. They were put wherever they'd fit or where they'd brighten up a cluster of tarnished ones with frayed ribbons. He never would have guessed the origins of most of them if not for the small scraps of index cards beneath them on which an unsteady hand had scrawled something to identify them. There was a Bronze Star, another Distinguished Service Cross, and another Purple Heart: the medals Richie had lost. There were oddities like an Imperial Russian Blameless Service, a British Burma Star, and two Third Reich Schlesien Eagles made out of cheap-looking gray metal. In fact, they all looked cheap; none was valuable for its metal content. Their shine was only a thin plating, easily damaged, that became pitted and discolored in attics and damp basements and the backs of junk drawers. They looked like the old five-and-dime sheriff's badges Richie had worn as a kid. But, as he'd learned from Evelyn, the kids' badges were worth considerably more. There wasn't a single medal in the display case, except for the Blameless Service, that old Ralston had marked higher than seven bucks, even the Purple Heart Posthumous, which had been purchased with a life. Richie began to wonder more about those who'd given these medals up for a few dollars than he did about the soldiers who had earned them.

"It's kinda strange seeing them all together like that, isn't it?" Ralston asked, gently nudging Richie. "Here we've got this shabby thing a Kraut's widow got in exchange for her old man, and next to it what the GI's widow got to keep her warm at night. I hope God can sort 'em out because I sure can't. How about you, soldier?"

"I guess I don't get it either," Richie admitted. "I'm gonna take these three for now," he said, putting the medals on the lid of the display case.

"Those the ones you lost?"

Richie nodded, and dug into his pocket.

"That's twelve-fifty, soldier. If you tell me you're from out of state, I don't have to charge you sales tax," the old man advised, grinning.

"I'm sure not from around here, Uncle," Richie said.

"So, where are you from?" the old man asked. He carefully wrapped the medals in tissue paper that looked like it had been crumpled and straightened a hundred times.

"From Mars," Richie told him.

"I know just what you mean, soldier," Ralston said, his dry laugh crackling like the brown paper sack he was unfolding. "I'm from the back side of the moon, myself.

Well, you take better care of those medals this time around, okay?"

"I sure will, Uncle. You take care of yourself, too."

"I make it a point to," the old man said. "Nobody else is going to, that's for sure. Maybe I'll catch you out your way some day. I imagine the catfish are pretty big in those nice wide canals you folks got on Mars."

"Monsters," Richie said. He smiled at the old man and waved the paper bag at him as he made his way up and down the muddy aisles looking for Evelyn.

When Richie got back to their car it was baking in the sun, so he opened all the windows and finished up his nap. Evelyn returned at ten, burdened with still more sacks full of things. She added these to the one Richie had put in the trunk, but it wouldn't all fit. Richie awoke after she slammed the trunk lid and the rear doors a half-dozen times, trying to squeeze all her latest acquisitions in.

"Need a shoe-horn?" Richie asked her. "I saw three guys selling those today."

"Well, I might have, if you'd bought something too," she said. "We would've had to leave something, or someone, behind."

"I bought something, too," Richie confessed.

"I didn't notice any bags back there. What?" she asked. "Or do I still have to buy one of those shoe-horns to pry it out of you?"

"Here," Richie said, tossing her the small paper bag he'd put on the dashboard.

Evelyn peered cautiously inside and rustled the tissue paper. "Your medals?" she asked, looking up. Richie nodded to her. She unwrapped each one carefully, as though they were made of glass, and held them up to the bright sunlight.

"I hope you didn't get fleeced," Evelyn said, packing the medals back in their rumpled tissue paper.

"Not at all. The old guy was pretty nice," Richie said.

"See? I told you. How much?" she asked.

"Twelve-fifty, no tax."

"Didn't you try to chew him down a little?"

"Naw. They seemed pretty cheap already. And besides, like I said, he seemed like a pretty nice old guy."

"I see I have to take you out in the real world a little more often," Evelyn told him. "Well, I hope you take a little better care of them this time. No more stashing things at the back of your drawers."

"No," Richie said. "I decided I'm going to send them somewhere this time."

"Send them?" she asked, surprised. "Where?"

"To the VA," he replied. "With a little note attached."

"A note?" What are you talking about, Richie?"

"I want to put a little note with them. 'Kiss my ass,' or something like that," he said.

"What's gotten into you, Richie?" Evelyn asked. "You get positively weird when you don't get enough sleep."

"I don't know. I've just been thinking about a lot of things, that's all." He started the engine and pulled out of the crowded gravel parking lot.

Evelyn stayed awake for the entire trip home, but she and Richie didn't talk much. Even though it was her turn to get a little shut-eye, she couldn't quite manage falling

asleep. She was doing some thinking of her own. Her conscience was itchy and uncomfortable. She told herself, "I'm the one who started this whole mess. I made those stupid remarks about the VA, and how he should replace those damn medals on his own. Twelve-fifty! No wonder he thinks they're next to worthless. It's my own stupid fault, too. I should've just kept my mouth shut."

Evelyn turned to Richie and said out loud, "You know what?"

"What?" he asked.

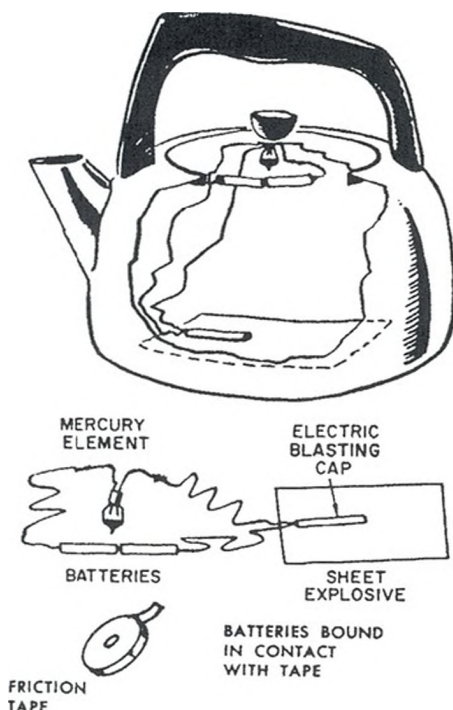
"I'm sorry I pushed you into getting your medals back. I should've let you do it your own way. Now you're feeling down."

"You didn't push me, Evelyn. And I don't feel down. I feel great; I learned something; what a fool I've been, mostly."

"Still, if I'm responsible for your disillusionment, I apologize. I feel like a regular Dr. Frankenstein, like I've created a monster. Do you forgive me?"

"Yeah, sure," Richie said, staring straight ahead at the long, treeless stretch of interstate. "It's time for a little forgiveness, don't you think?"

Brian Skinner began to write about the time he learned to read. He attributes the appearance of his fiction in more than ninety small and commercial press publications to a supportive wife, two close friends, and his colleagues around the country with whom he shares work and ideas.



OREY AND TWEE

Toni La Ree Bennett,

Orey was a tomcat, a gray tomcat. I came home from work one day and Darryl was on the bed, trying to hide something behind his back. He had a goofy, mischievous look on his face. The noise behind him betrayed his secret so he showed me what it was... a little gray kitten.

Darryl was pretty mean to Orey which took the pleasure out of having a cat. For some reason, that cat seemed to be some sort of symbol to Darryl. A symbol, maybe, of what he wanted to be. Not that he would ever have admitted it. It was as if Orey was a tiny tiger or something and Darryl wanted to lift the cat's personality out of its body and transfer it to his own. I remember him hitting Orey and pushing him around. He told me this would toughen Orey up so he'd be able to make it out on the street. I think Darryl was talking to himself.

One time, he threatened to put Orey in the freezer as a punishment. For what, I don't remember. Orey was only being a cat. Darryl felt he needed punishment, though, as if you could punish a cat. And then, putting a cat in the freezer is a little out of line with whatever Orey might have done. I burst into tears. I think the torture was mainly meant for me. Darryl didn't put Orey in the freezer, but he did end up putting him in the refrigerator for a few minutes.

I should have learned something by it. But then, Darryl had great periods of tenderness for Orey, as he did for me. I think he always loved Orey, even when he was being mean to him. He respected and admired him, but resented his power. Orey had a pure, instinctive power that Darryl couldn't possess no matter what he did to the cat. He could kill him, cut out his heart and eat it, but he still wouldn't have what Orey had.

Darryl acted pretty much the same way towards me. He criticized me incessantly. And yes, he tried to kill me once. Just to possess what I had, I guess. Or what he thought I had... a seventeen-year-old's naiveté, an innocence, a raw courage born from stupidity... things he lost in Viet Nam. But most of all, a spirit so strong I could survive even him.

A little later on, we got a black female kitten that he named Twee, which had something to do with Viet Nam. I assumed it was probably the name of an old girlfriend. We got Twee when we lived in a rat-hole of an apartment not too far from Los Angeles City College.

Darryl had wanted to get a wife for Orey. Of course, I knew you couldn't get a wife for a cat, but Orey and Twee did seem to fall in love. They spent all their time together. They would take naps together, one curled up inside the other. They played, they fought, they wrestled. We imagined they were in love. I loved Twee too; she was a real buddy. She used to sit on my shoulder if I sat still for any amount of time, kind of like a parrot on a pirate's shoulder.

We let them go outside all the time so all the cats in the neighborhood knew when Twee became a woman.

Before this, Orey had tried to cement their relationship, but had failed. Twee was fed up with Orey's abortive attempts. Even Darryl had made fun of him. Orey thought he was such a big, tough tomcat and yet tiny Twee was fed up with him because he couldn't manage to her satisfaction.

Then, one night when she was out roaming around, I happened to be looking out the bathroom window. I saw her out in the courtyard. All the other male cats in the neighborhood were out there; Orey was out there, too. One by one he fought off all the other cats. Whether it's true or not, or just me daydreaming, I'm not sure. But it seemed to me that he finally did what he'd been trying to do, right there in the moonlight. Then they came home together. We figured they'd live happily ever after because now they were really married.

Of course, I probably didn't see all the other cats that got to Twee before Orey got there, but I like to think it happened just that way. She did get pregnant and we thought it was wonderful. Now they would be a family. But I did think she was awfully young to have children.

I don't really know what happened, what went wrong. The cats always slept with us. One morning I woke up to find Twee had had the kittens on our bed. But she had them too early; they weren't fully formed. There were six tiny fetuses in six tiny bags. It was sickening. Twee looked to me for help but I had to throw them away. Darryl wouldn't touch them. I felt so terrible after that; I felt as if something had gone terribly wrong.

Nothing was going right, anyway. I had just had the twins and Darryl wouldn't stop bringing dope in the house. I felt sick when I realized I had brought my children into a house full of dope, poverty, and insanity. When Twee lost her children, everything changed. In fact, I didn't even want the cats around after that. It had never been an immaculate house but when I started to find fleas jumping around on my babies' scalps, I decided I'd had enough.

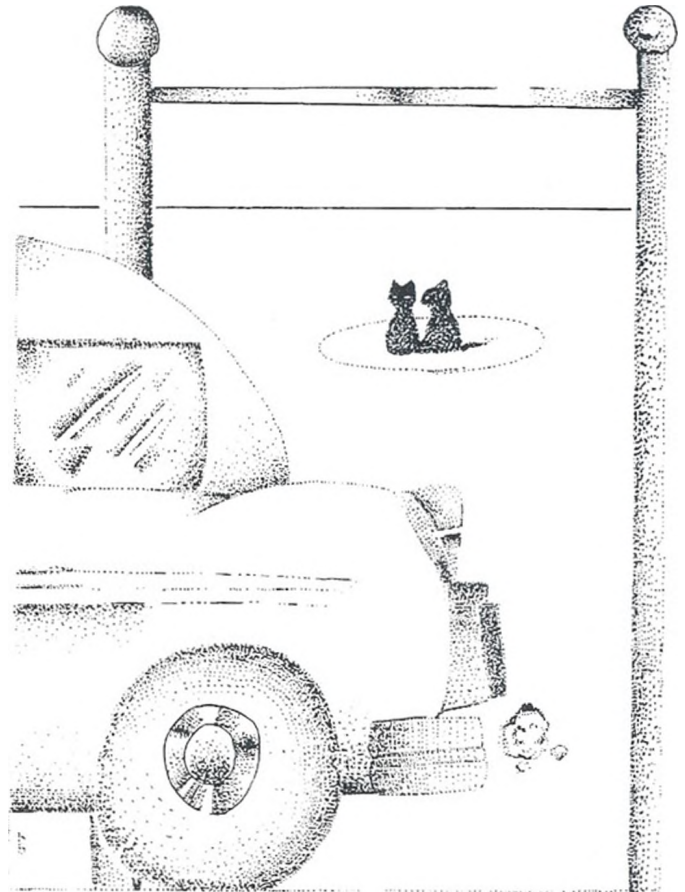
Besides, Orey had started spraying his male scent all over the house. Just lifted his leg and sprayed it on the walls and furniture. It stunk really bad; you couldn't get the smell out and it made me sick. I also got sick of his snotty, smug attitude, acting like he was king of the jungle. After surviving the early months of his life with Darryl, he really had a big ego. Why he stayed, I'll never know. He should have left.

I felt sick about what had happened with the kittens and the fleas were driving me crazy. I took Orey and Twee out to a baseball field in Inglewood and left them. That's one of the saddest things I've ever done and one of the few I regret because I went back and couldn't find them. I could have put flea collars on them. I didn't have to get rid of them.

I made myself believe they survived. Maybe Orey did, but I don't know about Twee. Maybe someone took her in, but then maybe it was someone who was mean. I don't know if I could stand to have a cat again. But then I'm allergic to them now so I don't have to think about it.

Toni La Ree Bennett was born in Nebraska in 1951 and spent the Viet Nam war years married to a veteran and living in the Los Angeles area. She received her B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Washington in Seattle and is now teaching English classes part-time. She has been writing seriously since 1975, publishing a range of magazine articles, newspaper stories, fiction, and poetry.

OREY AND TWEE



Brett Bennett, who not only illustrated the story "Orey and Twee," but also appears as one of the twin babies in the story, was born in Inglewood, California in 1970.

POETRY by ANTHONY DE GREGORIO

LEAVING

It is a late October sky.
The clouds curl in
and out of light, swirl
quickly into a cool darkness
beyond the hidden sun.
The dull gray rocks
are smooth and bare, leafless.

North and south of the interstate,
the buildings and houses
distance themselves with lights,
warm for hours with activity.

In the A-frame beyond the stream,
the son prepares to leave for the service.
Over the mind's shoulder it is 1968 again.
The thick Vermont maple syrup is
silently absorbed into the toasted frozen waffles.
The father begins his withdrawal,
like warmth from winter.
He is untouchable now.
He works alone, the quiet hands
thick around the tool,
melting into one object. He is alone
with his office equipment and phone
that connects with nowhere
from which he wants to hear.

He cannot consider time or the thirteen months to come
the way his wife can. The moments or weeks
do not accumulate like weights
balancing and then tipping the scale
in anyone's favor.

The younger brother and sister
become anxious and fight over nothing.
The father does not concern himself with them,
nor does he attempt to stop their bickering.

On his way to work each day it is always
a late October sky—neither deeply into
autumn, nor close enough to glimpse
the summer's retreat.

TO A VETERAN

for BORIS LEONTOVICH

Shopping bags and beat-up luggage
Return the heroes
to a sanitized battleground.

Just the smell
of losing battles
and wars already over.

Weapons deserted,
save the ever-present clouds
of nicotine smoke
and coffee steam.

The smiles are toothless—
bravado sitting twisted, unconvinced
of some vague notion.
Conviction escapes—
a collective breath sighed
in the solitude of decay.

And always the humming
of unoiled wheels,
motorized and not,
o'er the same paths
of glory dusted death.

SHOPPING IN THE RIVER

The shopping cart hangs, suspended precariously as the city's mouth opens to the waters of a darkened olive river. Its nose slapped and slapped by the haphazard waves, angered with neglect, abuse. In the shopping cart a bald and torn tire, some soaked bags, a bottle. It hangs from the rust of bent and downward pointing steel.

And fishing
off the pier, the ragged men of ruin. The drab of government olive fatigues hang loosely round their shoulders like a torn and battered flag. The waves do not slap them as much as mock their poles, their lives cast senselessly into the empty filth of the current crashing. The hooks retrieved and lifeless, untouched save by wear.

Back to the east, the city's stomach churns with poisons, acidic airs that break down the day and burn it into the river.

Anthony DeGregorio, Rockwood Rd., RD #4, Lake Carmel, NY 10512.

POETRY by ROBERT FLANAGAN

STREET OF HONDAS

In the Paris of the Orient trades were zoned in lots: one city block marketed only bread, another blue flowering china of questionable origin, the next footwear—sandals, black-market-nylon-webbed-created-GI jungle boots, and Parisian pumps for cheongsamed young girls delicately called Co.

The Renault taxi
by its own will
slowed along the ranks of bargain bicycles and threatened to stop at the display of Hondas in ice-cream colors as if it sought an Asian cousin. We drove on to the Rue Catinat but the driver and I,
each with his own visions,
called the eccentric street after the motorbikes.

The streets narrowed through ash,
forges glowing under bamboo sheds.
In the block after
labored the coffin makers, honored in their sweat and forethought and the frail, fawn colored boxes were displayed in a range of sizes.

The wall lockers crafted by these artisans all sprang apart from the heat of the drying lights against the green mahogany that summer.
They collapsed at night

when souls were most susceptible to influences, prophetic as teas leaves and animal entrails.

The craftsman, pressed for his wares, made no guarantees. As with the coffins who would know the uncured state of the box when it was settled finally, quickly, in the earth. On that drive the passenger urged the cabman on, a driver who was Chinese, born in Cholon.

But I keep seeing coffins explode beneath the soil,
dried and thrown apart
surprising as the fiery deaths
in khaki or tiger suit fatigues,
the cheap black cotton.

SLEIGHT of HAND

I stood beside Lesco
the Gypsy (his family had
always dabbled in magic)
and listened as he droned
his cabalistic incantations
into the hand
 set to a distant
and willing helpmate.

When the veil of smoke
was drawn, I was astonished
to see he
had made the entire village
vanish. Lesco's confidence
in his own art always
 amazed me.

ANOTHER KIND of UNDERSTANDING

In the Land of the Morning Calm
in another time
they used to say.
 He's gone Asiatic!

—a ten-thousand meter stare
 in a ten foot bunker—

It was the same
 though
in the elephant grass
and beneath the jungle canopy
where the horizon could be touched
with either hand.



RESIDUE I

All that is left ... after
macabre fishing voyages in warm waters
where the catch does not come
flopping onto the decks
in schools,
 spilling
from nets, silvery-sided and glistening with fight
but scramble aboard in desperation, snared
finally from a death of indifference.

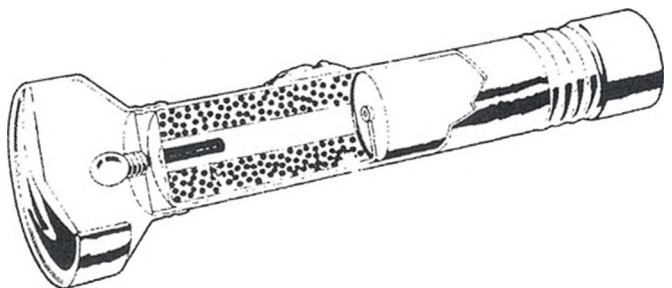
Tiled subway wall canvases where domestic Van Goghs
have blazoned their fear, their mutilation
and confusion across the gaze
of trapped commuters
in two-for-one-sale colors.

 Grime of passing
has not covered bridges and landmarks:
cries on scapes appear incessant in change.

Bitter comedy
in the sightless paraplegic, wheeling
rat-frenziedly through the maze
corridors in a five-sided building,
untouched by those he would touch
 with his plea.

Saturday night
VFW smirks when the latest generation bellies up:
angry old men who have forgotten
their fears, angry young
who forget their condemnation,
accept their sentencing in places discarded
in tattered newsprint. Rhetoric marks
the fading warriors who never vacationed
 in the Ia Drang Valley
and cannot comprehend the endless commonplaceness
 of Tet.

Robert Flanagan, PO Box 100, Yellow Spring, WV 26865-0100.



POETRY by CHRISTOPHER BUTTERS

The Family

When the five o'clock whistle blew
Dad didn't scream at the horror of another day
as we would come to wish he would.
He slyly cracked maybe a Polack joke or two
to the other fathers, and then, packing up
his things, took it home with him.

All day long my mother did the housework,
looking forward to that evening
when the fabled Butters family was gathered
around her in all its wonderful,
terrible togetherness.
The dishes were washed. The floors were scrubbed.
The curtains were cleaned. The laundry was done.

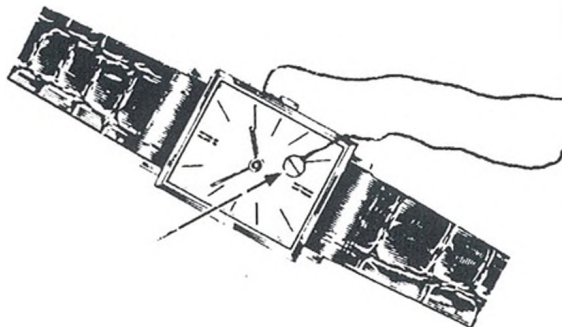
At six o'clock my father trooped in
and put his lunch box away.
It was only a matter of time before
they would argue about politics
or housework or sports or sex
instead of the job that was killing them.

The next day, regular as clockwork,
she would take it out on us kids.

I don't care how many presents
Jon and I got from his paycheck.
I don't care how many Cape Canaveral sets.
I don't care how many toy soldiers.

No matter how we tried to slice it,
we could not help but feel it:
driving our tricycles in vicious semi-circles
on the lawn,
watching the spooky monster movies for hours
on end in the den.

That is the beauty of the nuclear family,
though.
Everyone feels exploited.



SEPTEMBER EVENING

I remember walking home from
the local wasteland energy baseball game,
tree silhouettes, dogs barking,
sun going down behind the suburban hills,
the aroma of the tuna fish casserole
Mom was kindly cooking for us
in her slavery,

and sitting down with my old standbys,
a *TV Guide* and a bag of pretzels,
my father would smile to me
from his great armchair, newspaper
in one hand, coffee in the other,

with his off-duty smile—
all week he taught kids
he didn't always like that much
how to read, and now
this was his free, holy time.

As the *Munsters* came on,
I remember wondering, as if out of nowhere,
what the fathers of this world did
on beautiful autumn afternoons
like this one, having grown up
and stopped playing baseball forever.

Was there some secret game that existed
behind closed doors, like dominoes?
Was there some hobby
that us kids just didn't get yet,
no matter how valiantly we tried,
more electric than bicycles,
more sizzling than catch?

Somehow I couldn't imagine Dad
playing giant steps or shooting toy soldiers
or splaying pick-up sticks. Somehow I couldn't
imagine him collecting baseball cards
or foreign postage stamps.

All day he taught kids
he didn't always like that much how to read
and when he came home, he was as quiet
as the September evening.

He never complained or raged
or let it all hang out.
Then again, he never looked
exactly ecstatic either.

All he would do, all I could ever
imagine him doing, is ask us kids
how the eternal homework was coming
and then sit back in his great
isolate armchair.

-&-

Us little kids, already flipping out
from the pressure cooker of the grind,
at least had baseball and football
and firecrackers and fist fights.
Even Mom had her sewing club girlfriends
in the midst of her domestic nightmare.

But my father, my poor father,
whom all of us looked up to and worshipped,
the fountain from whom all things flowed,
the pillar of our pretty little
lower middle-class community,
all he would ever do was
sit there.

BRIGADISTA

for Ben Linder

That hot summer of the Freedom Riders
I was 13 and all I did was whack
the baseball against the side of the house
although the headlines about the bodies being found
must have had their impact even then upon my brain.
During the Venceremos Brigades to Cuba
I was older, younger. Old myths were unraveling.
Amid the howls and execrations, Castro
told off United Fruit Company,
which no one knew you could do yet.
Newspapers called them traitors, those
who explored the forbidden border
to help the sugar workers cut the cane.
I was in college, listening
to the first delicate whisperings
of a personal life, and though
I wanted to go to Cuba I didn't.
When they announced the work brigades
to Nicaragua, I called and clipped
and gathered all I could about the trip.
I thought of the murderous contras.
Back home I thought of my measly vacation days.
I thought of the hard time doing
cotton in the scorching fields.
Then I thought of the Freedom Riders
and the Venceremos Brigades.
I went down to the passport office,
packed up my suitcase, and went.

INDIANS

What you say about the death squads
may be true,
what you say about Duarte
may be truer,
but the fact remains,
this is the only choice we have:

if we let them take San Salvador,
Mexico City will be that much easier,
and Los Angeles and New York City—

how would you like the Red Army
taking over the Statue of Liberty,
your standard of living ransacked,
your wife and daughter raped?

In the silence that follows,
I find my edge, staring
at him; blankness,
the utter blankness of it.

Then he goes back to what
he was doing, confident
whatever disagreement I have
no white boy would desert
the wagon train.

But what do you say
to someone trapped
in the movies and legends
and ruins of his time?

Something sharp?
Something soothing?
Facts culled from the *Daily News*?
A speech pointing the finger
at the real international terrorist conspiracy?

He would stop and stare, haul
out the one about Dien Bien Phu.
He would just lump me together
with the other people in his nightmare.

Guys like Gary wail and flail
and pin upon the scapegoat
the forces somehow
they can't abide within themselves.

Guys like Gary are just scared
the commies will do to us
what we did to the Indians.

BASEBALL IN NICARAGUA

On the last evening we played baseball
with the Nicaraguans, the cotton fields we had worked all week
at our backs, the iguanas running through the grasses,
the wind in the trees.

So this was Nicaragua, I thought, as the game plunged on.
Where was the big flaming thing?
The clouds were just clouds. The sun was just sun.
The baseball game could have been anywhere. The score
was 4 to 3.

We brigadistas had come to pick the cotton and the coffee,
to stand against the Pentagon and Wall Street,
whatever that may mean. Others photographed
the grand heroic images. I was struck most of all
by the contradictions: the American Express ad
sandwiched next to the socialist exhortations,
the nationalized factory in a sea
of private property.

So this was Nicaragua, I thought.
If the boss in the shop could see me now, walking
the barrios, talking with the campesinos.
After the land reform Borge spoke and it was
as if the whole world was watching.
Not 20 miles from here the contras must have lurked
out there somewhere in the trees.

So this was Nicaragua, I thought,
epicenter of the new dawn,
archenemy of the whole stinking system.
We had walked the streets and picked the cotton.
Now we played baseball.

Where was the big flaming thing?
The people were just like us
except they spoke Spanish.
The women baked tortillas in between contra massacres.
The hand that picked up the gun to fight the monster tilled the
fields and worked the factories.

"The triumph," they called it: the festival
of the oppressed, 500,000 people
pouring into the Plaza de la Revolucion
that wonderful day. No Pasaran. No More Somoza.
Jobs For All. Justice For All.
They spoke of it as one would a tornado
or a birth in the family.

How were they to know what would come next?
That it was not the end, but just the beginning?
That one thing would lead to another?
That they would have to become socialists
if they were to ever win their measliest
democratic dreams?

-&-

VIET NAM GENERATION

So this was Nicaragua, I thought.
A bee buzzed somewhere off in the distance.
Talked out and wondering,
I stood around in right field and dreamed.
Where was the big, flaming thing?
We had walked the streets and picked the
cotton. Now we played baseball.
In a crazy way it seemed fitting.

"No batter!" cried our infield
in Spanish.
Ever so quietly
the Nicaraguans smashed us.
(Later I found out they learned to play so well
in 1927 from the invading U.S. marines.)

So this was Nicaragua, I thought,
from the angle of my right field position.
The sun went down and a wisp of moon rose.
A strange bird twittered in the eucalyptus trees.

In between catcalls and laughter
I looked at my watch:
that's funny.

Back in the U.S.
the factories just getting out,
the lies on the big business news,
Tuesday evening, 6:15.

It could have been New Jersey, I thought,
if not for the bulletholes in the barn,
it could have been the South Bronx, I thought,
if not for the lushness of the palm trees.

It could have been anywhere—
but it was not—

it was Nicaragua, where we brigadistas played baseball,
and the spy planes took photographs,
and the sun plunged into the ocean like an orange,
where the U.S. warships waited offshore
to blow us all to smithereens.

It was eery.

*Christopher Butters, 488 12th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215. "Baseball in
Nicaragua" first appeared in **Hammers**.*



ON EARTH

Woodcut by Cedar Nordby, ©1994. Printed in *Viet Nam Generation* 6:1-2, 1994.

THE LAST DAYS OF GOD ON EARTH

Sean Connolly, XYZ Productions, 2727 Saint Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

DAY ONE

"Sweet liberals suck. Sweet liberals who wrestle with their souls suck. How could you read this dreck, Sammy? You're a scumbag, that's why. Sammy the scumbag sucks up the benevolence dripping from the pen of Specialist McManus, the soft classical voice of the Armed Forces Radio Network mooing over the mushy speeches he makes about his sensitive soul to his kraut dumpling because he's not man enough to get down on his knees and put his face into her pubic patch and gorge himself on the great clit until she chokes on her own bliss and creams, *agggrrhhrrrrrrr*," and I toss McManus' dispatch book across the room onto Sammy's bunk. Laugh, laugh, laugh, life's a riot.

"Murder by cunnilingus, hunh?"

"That's right, Sammy the scumbag, you half-breed Jew, tomorrow we'll be sending you north to Dachau to turn your ugly beak into a lampshade."

"Yeah? You hayseeds from the midwest can't spend enough time in the pubic patch because you can't stand to be more than a whiff away from the source of the manure pile."

"Sammy and his Jew beak can't wait to get back to the U.S. of A. and take a big whiff of the millions of dog turds lining the streets of his foul Philadelphia."

"Yeah? You know why they don't allow dogs in Minneapolis? Because as soon as the animals with two legs see a dog, they get down on all fours and start humping each other on the curbs. They don't know any better. They get run over in traffic. Pussy hounds like you run out into the streets and scarf up all the blood and guts. You think it's afterbirth. You can't eat enough of it," and Sammy the scumbag smiles like a sick, sad puppy and tilts his head back and drains a bottle of Tölzerie lager. He flips open another, burps, and bids, "Diamonds."

"Disgusting," and I can't stop laughing. I jump up and point down at his watery lumpy face swimming around in my tears. "You can't bid diamonds, scumbag. I've got the left bower," and he's buying my bluff, scratching his temple, scribbling on the score pad. "No Eucher for you, scumbag," and I sit, my face in his face. "Give me another beer. Burn his speeches."

"I don't burn your twisted drivel," he says paging nonchalantly through the score pad. "Besides, what do you care, motor mouth. Afraid of a little sweet talk?" He eyes me like I'm sentimental trash. Then he mumbles to himself, scratching his temple with the pencil again.

"You've got my plot written on the score pad?" I have to see that! I snatch up one of his cigarettes and light it.

"Yeah, what of it?" and I'm staring into the flame where I can see what was and what will be, watching the cats run across the mantle. The old man is laughing,

drunk in his wheelchair, tossing ice cubes at the cats. "They love terror," he snickers, "they love it. They dream it and chase it sideways through a time we can only sniff like a fart and then it dissipates, gone forever. She knows. Sweet innocent terror, she knows it and we can only sniff at her there in her coffin, dying not from death but innocence, her blessed willful innocence." And the cats leap from the mantle and scratch across the old lady's closed coffin set in front of the fireplace in the library, the old man reaching out and grabbing me, pulling me down on my knees, the stinking breath of God seeping out from her gaudy coffin, the old man slapping me across the face... "Ouch, fuck this stupid match. Gimme that," and I grab for the score pad but he snatches it away. "You scumbag, you could forget my plot is in there, spill beer all over the pages..."

"Diamonds. Play your cards, pug face."

"Give me a beer, scumbag," but he keeps a close eye on the score pad, just like a Jew watching over his shekels and tribe.

"Get your own beer, leg."

"Leg?" and I fall off my chair at the presumption of the puppy snarling at its master. "Sammy the great paratrooper," I say stepping across the room, "schlepping like the dumb clerk that he is through the Special Forces in his shiny green beret calling me a leg. Okay, I'm a leg, scumbag, but by the time me and all the rest of the legs all across Europe are finished with jump training here in Bad Tölz and in Schungau, we'll have more jumps, more sophisticated jumps, more night jumps, higher jumps. Godfuckingdamn it, Sammy, even McManus, worse, even that absolute coward, PC, will have more jumps than you ever got back in the states or will ever have."

"Get your own beer, leg," barks the sad puppy through his last pathetic whimper.

DAY TWO

Michael Steward is a juke box. His broad and chalky face apes the tune and his thick thumbs rap out the beat on our table in the cafeteria. Bebop a lula, waiting on the righteous Israelis, they think they own God, he and his people stinking up the desert with their hot holy war. Eat me, God; you and your holy people eat me, eat me, eat me. I spit in your eye! I spit in your thousands of guttural names! I spit in your holy war: all passes, all leaves canceled while you carve up the desert and we have to sit and wait to jump out of your bloody sky any minute who knows when and spit in the face of your blood brother cursed by the womb of your own mother. We're on a red alert. Dressed in full combat gear since yesterday afternoon and sitting around in the cafeteria for the word to set up a command post somewhere in the desert where the A Teams, Special Forces, 10th Group, have already established a secret observation post. In the beginning was the word; give us the word, LBJ! Sammy has a short wave radio and he's cheering on his tribe.

"We're wiping them out. I told you we're gonna get them this time. We're showing the world."

"Eat the world," I say cursing them all. Eat Veronica, eat her in bed out of bed across the floor and up the wall—no way! The green weenie up the dung hole and out the wind pipe says all passes, all leaves canceled, no women, no beers, wait and eat the desert! Two days straight! The kitchen Krauts sent home and we're walled up here in Flint Kaserne. Even had Veronica fix up PC with a sure thing, an easy lay for the big yellow rat. He's sitting across from Stew the juke box sweating it out. A pack rat beaten down by all his packs, chutes, rifle, ammunition, entrenching tool, canteens full of water. He asked First Sergeant Hanson this morning if he'd have to jump even though he wasn't airborne qualified yet: "One jump is all it takes," said Hanson. The huge yellow rate twitched his long nose and cheeks and swallowed his own vomit.

"Anyone for bridge?" says McManus sliding in from around the corner and slipping into a chair at our table, slouching down low between me and PC. Bridge? I roll my eyeballs, I laugh out loud, he's a hopeless limousine liberal. Looks like he's right out of the sack, a real mess, no gear but a canteen on his belt. His soft face holds forth with one of his grand depressions. Last night he and his Kraut dumpling tried to drive out through the back gate. They made him get out of her car. Now he's got love sickness. The poor benevolent sap should have punched out the guards. But he'd rather suck up shame than know any pain. He lifts a silent finger to his lips and slips me his canteen.

"Hey man, don't sit next to me," accuses PC. "Where's all your gear, McManus?" It's bourbon and ice cubes in his canteen, those tiny ones they make in the enlisted men's club. That's where his gear is—sly. I take a healthy swig and pass the canteen to Sammy across the table.

"How's it going, Sammy?" asks McManus.

"We're mopping them up," and Sammy takes a mouthful of surprise and coughs. He's delighted. His eyes light up with a secret smile and he passes the canteen to Stew the juke box.

"Think it'll last much longer?"

"Nah, this is our *Blitzkrieg*. We're showing everybody we ain't chicken." Stew the juke box takes a couple of swigs and turns a bitter face. He goes back to mimicking the bebop a lula piped in over the public address system. "But you know that was only a rumor that we chickened out in the Warsaw ghetto," and Sammy's a sad puppy grown ever watchful as his cold gaze looks to us for confirmation.

"There's a greater vengeance against rumor than fact," says McManus. The rumor he won't make it through jump training because he's too soft to endure all the physical punishment? PC sniffs, declines the canteen. "Where's your rifle?" exclaims PC. He moves his chair away from McManus like maybe he has a contagious disease.

"I lost it, I guess," and his sweet despair could give a damn.

"You lost it!" PC's horrified. "You better stay away from me, man. They'll think I'm in on it with you."

"In on what?" McManus asks incredulously, pausing, holding the canteen in mid air. A little testy for our lapsed classical music announcer.

"Gimme that," and I swipe the canteen from McManus. Another long shot, a cold sweet burn going down. Besides, who'd want to fight a war sober. Okay, I'll fight for the Israelis, but not for their stinking god. And not for the gooks either. What does the peasant gook know, anyway, standing around in his rice paddy all day long. At least the Jews know how to handle money. The old man taught me that much, the bastard. Wouldn't teach me to kill but to take the coward's way out.

DAY THREE

Suck a lizard! I went and pissed my bed again. I can't believe it. I'll never heal. Cursed for life, one of the walking wounded, but I showed the bastards, stuffed it in their face. No membership privileges for the surviving son of their only crippled president, too wild and reckless for the liberals at the Field Club. Showed them my gratitude one foggy Sunday morning by totaling my first car into the skeet range and plunging down into the gravel parking lot. Too bad it was deserted, could have taken out a dozen limousines as I rolled it into the stone wall. The very next night we did a little cakewalk. Brand new convertible. Spun her wheels across the green on the ninth hole after Wilson and I had tossed all the silverware from the linen room into the back seat. He chickened out, bailed out, and I drove her blind drunk down the footpath behind the club house and wedged her between the steel girders of the foot bridge across Squaw Run Creek. Hey, congratulations, they barred me for life. That late Friday afternoon I delivered a thank you note on wheels, but I missed the faggot, missed Skipper Scheutte serving set point on the far court, swerved into the empty swimming pool. Now, that hurt. Bones broken, a rib crushed and melded together with all the internal damage the fire had already boiled down into a mass of senseless protoplasm. Suck on the protopiss, you faggots of the Field Club membership committee. Suck on the protopiss, Judge. Stick the green weenie up the dung hole and out... Hey, this isn't Bad Tölz, we're in Schungau.

Smell like a pig, who cares, we'll all be screaming like pigs in the open door of the jump tower this morning... morning, where is everyone? I'm late! I bound out of my top bunk still in my stinking fatigues and roll up my sheets and pitch them out the window. A little fragrance for the Kraut manure fields. I dash down the hall and into the shower room, hobbling on one leg, shucking my fatigue trousers into the steam. Just one guy here, Parker, the new guy, reminds me of the old man, a cripple, only this one possesses the crippled mind of the tennis set, all ducky white and clean and oblivious to the incredible slime he came from, a real golden boy, not a speck of fat on him. Not God, maybe a godlette. He has CI, congressional influence, typed on his personnel file. What would he be doing in the army unless he's from a military family. Nah, he's prep school, not military academy, probably conjugates Latin verbs while sitting on the pot: *amo, amas, amat*, to shit is such lovely rot. Or, like the judge told me, maybe he ordered him out of civvies and into drab green to keep the peace.

"Hey Parker," I say while we're toweling off, "what are you doing in the army. Why aren't you on a safari in Africa?"

"That's on safari, Massey."

"On this, Parker," I say pointing to my protopisser.

"I had expected something far superior out of your mouth, Massey. Perhaps it's the false expectations... it must be a matter of... yes, of course, you're absolutely correct when you... I'll say this much," he says wrapping himself from chest to knees in a great white towel. He zips up his toiletry bag and steps to the door and points his finger at me as if I were a kid under his charge. "This is a very serious matter. You cannot simply abandon your class. They say class doesn't exist but it does and you of all people know this. You're slumming Massey and don't..." and he nods to himself with the same conviction the old lady had when she talked to God.

"Eat it," and I walk by him out the door and his smile relishes it.

"Madness," he shouts, "it's all madness."

"Move it!"

Bellows the jump sergeant at the end of the hall. I jam myself into my soaking wet fatigues. Hustle, hustle, fatigue jacket, socks, boots, lacing up my boots and there's Parker standing fully dressed in the door way.

"It's jump tower today, Mister Massey," he doffs his cap and grins. "Thirty feet up and out you go."

"Eat it," and I'm running past him out the door, bounding out of the barracks and racing up the hill to the formation at the opposite side of the field from the tower.

"Any time, buster, any time," and he's running backwards next to me, whispering into my ear. We jog to the rear of the formation, the sky above a steel blue and gray, the top of the tower cloaked in the same soft red light she kept about her in her coffin. "Today's the day for the big boys, Mister Massey, and big boys don't piss their pants anymore."

DAY FOUR

"Pain," shouts fat boy. He shunts his head away from the oval mirror on the table and tosses the straw at Wilson.

"Mama, oh Mama," he whines and picks up the straw and snorts up a long thin line of cocaine. The drug's a riot: you throw your money away to turn your face needles and numb. Fat boy brought it back from Miami. He sells something, everything, himself, laps up Wilson's dung hole. It's Wilson's bar downstairs, saw him on the street twenty minutes ago, haven't seen him since the night he bailed out, fat boy telling me on the way up here to the office that it's the hippest bar on the West Bank. No, in all of Minneapolis, whew, fat boy almost sold himself short. Likes his fat. Hey, maybe I'll get fat while on leave here and torch the judge's house on my way to the 101st Airborne Division in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Won't catch me, I'll hide in my fat. And now this: in walks the hippie from the office john. He's all hair and glad rags. He snaps his fingers to the jazz on the sound system coming up from downstairs. He sits in an upholstered chair and his Siamese cat sashays into the room and jumps up onto

the back of his chair and curls up in the hippie's hair. Nasty, nasty feline. The hippie takes the mirror from Wilson and whiffs up two white trails. He lives across the way, he said. He hands me the mirror.

"Have some freeze dried holy communion there, Dennis," says the hippie. Fat boy lights some reefer.

"God's a faggot and you can't wait to suck his flesh and blood."

"Aren't you lucky that God's an American," says the hippie, "and that he especially watches over drunks, prostitutes, and paratroopers," and I laugh all over the stupid drug.

"Let's have a little respect for the merchandise, all right, Dennis," says fat boy.

"Why don't you slice off a slab of your fat, grill it up and eat it, right fat boy," and Wilson cracks up and shakes his head. The hippie is amused and watches fat boy rearrange himself in his chair.

"Now, I don't know you, Dennis, but you're an iconoclast, aren't you; a maverick, can't wait to tear people down?" says fat boy with half a brain. His eyeballs have opened wide and made a pronouncement.

"Can't wait to lick the rim of Wilson's dung hole," and his head rolls around, his tongue lolls out, and he lets out a whoop: *kkkkkkiiiiissssssssd* They all shout and hiss it, laugh, slap each other's palms.

"The man's a war looking for a battle," says the hippie.

"What do you know?" I accuse, but they're all laughing at me. I scarf up the coke, lick the mirror clean, shove it across the table to fat boy.

"I know you're going to the big PX in the sky," he says taking up the reefer from Wilson.

"That's right, hippie, does that bother some of your principles?"

"No, sorry about that, principles never seem to satisfy a driven man," he says and passes me the joint. "That's potent stuff. My brother sent it to me from where you're going. He calls it Vietnam vicious."

"Yeah," and I suck it into my lungs. "Has he killed himself a gook yet?"

"He never writes, just sends packages home," and they all laugh. The reefer comes and goes and the laughter collects in a corner near the ceiling, no, where the ceiling meets the walls, the right wall first to get there, no, second, the left wall got to the corner first. There, down there, there in the flame eating up a new joint I catch a glimpse of an oriental girl in the soft red mud, not her, who's she, her blood, not mine, wow, this grass strips me naked, all naked and they're all staring. Fat boy shines up the mirror and Wilson dumps a spoon of cocaine on the crystal lunacy of the glass.

"I don't know what to say, except to be careful over there," says Wilson and I forget what he said.

"Do I know who I am?"

"Yeah, who are you?"

"Am, who, am I am."

"A man who am!"

"Am the reefer man."

They're all laughing.

"What are you looking at?" and the Siamese cat yawns in my face. I jump up and seize it and it doesn't even tense up. The hippie leans forward and I throw the cat up into the air and it falls back into my hands, a soft and pliant ball of fur. I drop it on the floor and it rolls over on its back. "What's wrong with this cat?" I'm standing there shaking the cat hairs from my hands. But there aren't any, just their soft remembrance.

"Miz is real gentle."

"I hate gentle cats. I hate..." and I forget what I said, what I will say. In the flame, see more, snatch the joint out of who's hand, exterminate it, it me. "I need a beer," and I'm out in the hallway and down the stairs and run naked up to the bar, bartender gouging the seeds out of a wedge of lemon, gouging out the seeds, pack of matches on the bar, light one, watch the cats in the flame catch fire and scream like fiery rockets bouncing from wall to wall in the library... "Ouch, fuck this stupid match," and I reach across the bar, grab the knife out of the bartender's hand, tell him to get me a beer, doesn't move, stands there gaping, watching the blood ooze out around the knife in my hand, no, not my hand, his eyes staring into the terror and the slime.

DAY FIVE

Suck a lizard, stinking in my own piss again. Cold piss between the sheets and the chilly October air rustles in through the bank of windows all along the entire bay. Glass and concrete block and plumbing is what there is for the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. It's the newest thing in death camps: a place to piss and shit and vomit before they send us to Vietnam for a free ride home in a body bag. I'll get me a gook, though, Rip off his ear in my teeth and save it for the likes of Veronica. Bad 'n' beaten, the old whore of Europe, spit the gook's ear into her mouth the moment she's begging me to stop. please stop, please stop, nothing but slime and terror roaring up through her chest and throat, eat your own stink and blood, spit it in, lick it out, eat her agony and death rattle, eat it, eat it, eat it, nip the spark of life in the bud. I piss what's left of my hot, bruised bladder into the soggy mattress and laugh and laugh and laugh until I fall out of my bunk. Nobody here but the desolate bay, my day off, too quiet. I strip the mattress and tear the sheets into long rags and flush them down the toilets. I swap mattresses with an empty bunk at the far end of the bay. Who cares, GI. Today you stink, tomorrow you die! No stink allowed off base, every piss pore restricted to Fort Campbell! Fuck you, 101st Airborne Division! Fuck the army, fuck God, what are you going to do: shoot me, kill me, send me to Vietnam? I'm leaving. Not a deserter, just over the hill and into the pubic patch for a couple of days. Let the benevolent saps of the world spurt into their sweaty palms.

I shit, shower, and shave and dress in the civvies I'd hidden, taped to the bottom of an empty wall locker. I light up a joint and there's the old man in the flame sitting in his wheelchair raging, giving me his advice. "Exploit the exploiters. Don't worry about the exploited. You can get

anything you want out of the average slave to debt and work. They're too easy. They expect to be exploited. The challenge is to exploit the exploiters. The exploiters are too vain, too stupid to think they could ever be exploited. Exploit the exploiters and watch them grovel." He grabs a bottle of bourbon from the sideboard and we polish it off. Then he slaps me for getting drunk. "Kneel son. Kneel down next to my wheelchair," and I'd take it, backhand and the flat of his palm, back and forth. "I'm only going to teach you three things and that's all you'll need to know in the world. Three things: money, sex, booze." The cats are watching us from the lid of her coffin. He makes me light his cigarette lighter, forces my hand under...

"Dennis?"

"Ouch, fuck this stupid match."

"Dennis, old buddy," and Sammy comes bobbing into the bay. "What are you doing in civvies?"

"I'm going into Clarksville to find me a Saturday night whore on her week off and feast on her crabs for a couple of days."

"Don't get caught, old buddy, or they'll put your ass..."

"I'm already dead, Sammy," I say handing him the joint as I struggle into my dress greens, a little disguise to get me up to the main PX. "You know it and I know it. But cover for me, will ya?"

Sammy's a sadder trooper. Ever since I told him about the oriental girl I saw in the soft red light he's grown weary with the weight of what he knows. He nods and I'm out under the bright, blue sky. I hitch a ride to the main PX and hang around for about an hour until I see them: mom and pop dropping by for a short visit. They're as chunky as cows and as stiff as storks. Their pastel clothes are right out of color television and their son's a private in drab green. They get sodas to go. Outside they give him kisses and take some snapshots. I walk by and read his name tag and head for the men's room, soldier in, civilian out. He's gone and they're walking toward the parking lot. I run up to them.

"Mister and Misses Chambers?" I say a little out of breath and I give them a big angelic smile.

"Why, yes," she says. He nods.

"Hi, I'm Dennis Massey. Your son told me that if I caught up with you, you might be able to give me a ride."

"You know Robert?" he asks. I stick out my hand taking his and we shake.

"Sure," I say, "Robert's in my old company. Best one in the 101st, they're getting all the safe and easy assignments."

"Oh, is that right," he says looking at her.

"Oh, yeah. I can tell you all about it now that I'm officially out of the army."

"Do you think Robert will be all right, I mean, out of danger... We're just not very sure about this war over there. It all seems so vague and immoral. Oh, we just don't know."

"He'll be all right. He'll be assigned to one of the noncombative zones."

"Come along, then, Dennis," he says, "and you can fill us in."

"I'd like to talk to one of those Communist Viet Cong and see what kind of morals he has," I say and he nods the nod of clearing things up, maybe, don't you know. She's wearing the perfume that smells like the perfume they put in toilet paper.

Day Six

"Everybody was getting married," says Michael Steward. He's telling us about his stupid leave. "Five of my friends from high school got married in one month." It's an epidemic. He drinks his beer and gives us a studious burp. We all drink and look away, turning away from the enormous silence sitting among us. Nobody wants this silence. It's a big trap. It's setting us up to listen. So Sammy says something equally stupid about some girl who wouldn't marry him. And PC makes scratching noises and we all look over at the Korean barmaids, ugly, ugly, ugly, the turds of the human race slobbered over by the dung beetles wearing sergeant stripes in the fields of human excrement outside of Seoul, South Korea and made into army wives to work over here in toilets like this piss palace in Clarksville, Tennessee where even the juke box can't shout down the silence. It mocks everything we have to say and forces us to listen, to remember. Never listen! Never, never, I never listened, not even to the old man or the milksop priest Aunt Betty made me visit after the fire. I made up all kinds of nefarious nasties and poured them into his cheery and desolate soul. His sweet smile loved me the more brutal the tale I told. She had him over for cocktails and I told him out on the porch on his way to his car that if he ever came back I'd take a sledge hammer to the parish station wagon. Because the moment you listen you have to drop your guard.

But they're listening, remembering, squirming under the memory of that guy's story. They've been listening to it all day, retelling it in their dumb stares, tasting the terror gone sweet. I heard it. I was there in the cafeteria this morning but I didn't stick around like they did to listen over and over. His name was unimportant. All he had were eyes. As blue as the sky forever and the promise of knowing everything. Dead and gone and resurrected like some cheap imitation of Jesus Christ too dumb to know what happened to him but all eyes for the terror of the miraculous. Fresh out of Nam. There he had been on some hill, blown apart and tripping over his own intestines, lying there moaning in his own slime as the medics ran by. How, when one medic knelt down and stuffed his guts back in, his captain said, "Leave him. He'll be dead in a few minutes anyway." Lucky for him. The medic jumped up into the line of fire and fell dying, dead, bleeding across the guy's stomach, pushing his guts down, keeping them sealed and warm and bloody until they lifted the two of them out, dead, they thought. And even now they're listening, haunted by the terror of dying in their own slime. No, forget him. Forget his eyes. Forget his serene face. Forget how he turned into a sweet sop the moment he came face to face with the terror and the slime.

I throw a twenty on the table.

"Nobody wants to listen to your drivel, Stew. Who cares about your married friends. The only thing we care about is how much pussy we're going to get in Nam." Leaning across the table and looking PC in the eye I whisper, "Do you know you can rent a gook for a week for as little as ten dollars? I'm going to have the sorest cock in Vietnam."

"Yeah," says Sammy on the sly. "I hear they come begging for it at the gate."

"How much do they charge for sucking it?" asks Stew.

"I'm going to find a woman," envisions PC, holding her before his face, "one that works on the base. A little cutie, always there. I'll be able to see her every night and drop in for a little feast at noon," and he buries his face in his hands and bumbles.

"They have a cult over there," I'm telling them. "These women, they call themselves Maya and they worship this goddess from India named Kali. The surgeons, our own army surgeons, they operate on them, slice them open and take everything out but their clitorises. They bleed if they don't get enough."

"My God, they must be trying to make a new breed or something."

So who's listening now, GI?

Day Seven

"Gook kill!"

Shout it out! Shout down the incessant roar! No silence in Nam. Can hear the night speaking, hear the bush rioting, hear the rot frying every breath of heavy air, the sweat boiling out of my face. Hear us running after the gook bait, can't see, too stoned on Maya's Vietnam vicious to find my hands, not my hand, saw the hand holding the boy's head back, taking a bead, stabbing the bayonet through his teeth, my hand, no, not my hand, the bartender gouging out the seeds from a lemon wedge, gouging out the boy's tongue, chunk of flesh as black as the bloody night, tongue gouged out, his screams bubbling out, pain gargling out...

"Gook kill!"

Shout it out! The incessant sigh of night speaking in soft tongues—shout it down! Shouting after him, McManus, gone, hidden, chickened out, bailed out, running after the gook bait, Sergeant West ahead, Major Mike and the others behind, McManus bailed out, eaten up by the bush, lapped up by the soft tongues, soft tongues licking me in the face, slapping me in the face, there through the vines in a sudden red light, there in the soft red light see the hand, not my hand, yes my hand, not the hand of God, fuck him, my hand, can't stop staring at my hand...

"Gook kill!"

Shout it out! Shout it out! Clutching at the tongues, the leaves swiping at my face, the soft red light, there, there in the soft red light see the boy's hands clamped behind him, wire running from the clamp, long pole in his back, pull wire, push pole, push and pull the gook bait

out into the boiling red mud, all red light steaming up from the boiling mud, the light...

"Gook kill!"

Shout it out into the soft red night. Crushed from the back, soft red muck in my face, man fallen across my back, face in the boiling muck and slimy roots, can't breathe, man crushing me, squirming through the muck root slime, can't breathe, eat out through the slime and muck, her slime and blood, not hers, can't breathe, can't eat out through the muck, kick squirm pull along a fat root, chin inching up along the fat root, man across my back, mouth free, gasping through a face of boiling muck, bright light rising from the forest floor, see the gook bait, see the long flat shredded tongues lolling in the steamy white light, two gook peasants in black pajamas with machetes raised going after the gook bait, screams gargled out, see but don't bite, see it's a boy, see their panic in the light frozen white, see Sergeant West emptying his M-16 at the gook peasants, see the tongues made from banana leaves, the bright frozen phosphorescent light of God, fuck him and his endless tongues....

"Incoming!"

Light torn into sound, can't see, all a bright blind frozen flash, sound crushes out the light, face torn, me and man atop shoveled up by the sound, thrown by the explosion into the trees, all vines and roots, buried in a mesh of sound, ear and face a liquid ringing, a ringing rung over and over, the liquid ringing pouring out from my face and ear, falling through the mesh of sticky sound licking my face, ground, on the ground, running...

"Friendly fire!"

Can't shout through the liquid ringing pouring out from my face and ear, nothing but pure night muck, drowning in a sea of muck, crying out, sobbing out, breathing my own sobs and cries, breathing my own drowning, running through my own drowning, hands everywhere coming from the muck, all soft gentle hands, soft gentle hands touching my face and ear, little flames beyond the bunker, helicopter dipping down into the flames, see her soft gentle hand fall on my face, loves her death, loves her stinking God, turn all soft on the inside ringing out, see the ceiling beam fall across my head, face in her blood and slime, the warm soft muck, eat myself out through the muck, head ringing...

"Hands up!"

Hands down grabbing mine, no, not my hand, her hand on my face in the soft red light of her coffin, yes, my hand clutching the down hands, McManus's hands, his hands pull me up into the helicopter, won't fall, pulls me into the soft red light of the cockpit, his hand on my muck, shows me my ear in his hand, shout it out, chickened out, bailed out, pushes me back onto the deck of the helicopter, lights me a cigarette, puts it in my mouth, soft gentle hands bandage my muck, see my hand, not my hand, forced my hand to light his cigarette lighter, held my hand under the drapery...

Day Eight

"... freedom and rid our country of foreign domination. This time, you Americans. Then, who knows, maybe the Chinese again whose culture and blood have been a curse on our nation for centuries." A cockroach the size of a candy bar falls from the low ceiling fan and strikes his ear. The gook doesn't flinch. It skitters down the side of his neck and pauses in the folds of his camouflage fatigues at the elbow. "But what do you know of the struggle for freedom?" He seizes the cockroach and shoves a pin through its abdomen into the worn wooden table. Maya comes into the room and sets a lighted candle on the table. She never speaks but to inch me closer to the terror and the slime. She's set up this meeting with this North Vietnamese Regular in a narrow room on the second floor of her mansion and promised me Cam Binh after the surgeons have emptied her out. They are drinking gin and laughing outside in the gazebo beyond the garden. She takes the kerosene lamp from the room and leaves us with the flame and the long shadow of the cockroach cast across the table. The shadow dances as the giant bug squirms and tears its abdomen under the pin. He takes up my hand. "You have never been in the fields. You have the soft hands of a bureaucrat. How can you understand the struggle of the peasants against the greedy landlords. You've never known their hunger. Your face is thick with beef. Your belly is always full and your teeth are filled with silver and gold."

"You can't shame me. I don't feel sorry for you or your stupid peasants. Let's get on with it. Let's hear..."

"You Americans say get on with it. Get on with what?" He gives me a cruel smile and nods at the cockroach. I stare into the flame and see Cam Binh bubbling in the soft red mud. Her thighs, vagina, and abdomen are cut wide open. She reaches out to touch me and my face and head ring with pain. I place my hand over the flame. "Get on with the revolution, perhaps?" I withdraw my hand and watch his eyes. "Yes, when we had nothing but a few sticks and pistols you Americans gave us machine guns to help throw out the Japanese. But ever since the Geneva Agreement of 1954 you have divided our country and given us nothing: no political voice, no elections, no... Ha! Now you give us your bullets and bombs. Maybe, someday, you'll give us your atomic bombs? Your fancy bombs have made you into egomaniacs. You cannot be your own gods. You cannot abandon the world to destruction. You cannot leave us..."

"I have done nothing to you. But according to the Geneva Agreement you are not supposed to be here. No North Vietnamese troops south of..."

"I am from Hue. But how convenient! You do not sign the agreement, and yet you invoke it according to your whim!" His black eyes flash. A pedant, he would smash the peasants to insure his status in his polite society of commie literature and French poetry. The cockroach has torn a narrow slit through its abdomen. Smash it and stop his propaganda. Smash it and stop his commie liberalism from turning the world into the soft embrace of some sweet heavenly life. I watch as her hand reaches out toward me from the soft red light and I place my hand over

the flame. "You know nothing about our country. You are slaves to your televisions and the propaganda in your newspapers. I am here to tell you that we are seizing history as we did when we called ourselves the Viet Minh and crushed the French. Vietnam is a history of many revolutions. This is our seventh revolution since the Youth Revolution of 1925. This is the revolution against the imperialist dogs of..."

"We have a free press in America."

"What?" He's dumbfounded. I take my hand away from the flame, not my hand. "Oh yes, it is free to print any lie it pleases." The cockroach is eating itself free and it amuses him.

"But you don't want a free Vietnam. You're a communist from the north and communism doesn't believe in freedom."

"Yes," and he shrugs. "I am a communist. There is no other choice. You and your Vietnamese lackeys sucking up all your money in Saigon have eliminated all political parties. But, now, the peasants would rather be with us than suffer your bombs and your helicopter gunships in the sky. Thanks to you there is no more need to rape and murder their daughters before their own eyes. Thanks to you there is no longer any need to indoctrinate them." His smug smile loves the irony and then he whispers to me his little truth. "It has become inevitable. Communism is the political party of the world. It is not nationalistic, although communism is going through a nationalistic phase here in Vietnam. Do not frown. Listen to me. This is not propaganda. This is the truth. This is the way the world is and shall be. Communism is a rational system," and he moves the pin in the cockroach to secure it. I stare into the flame and see her hand reaching out from the soft red light. It falls across my face and she stares into the face of God and sees forever her sweet heavenly life and I place my hand over the flame. "It is a profound system of laws and history. It flows from the economic forces..."

"Bullshit. Communism is just for the elite, just like liberalism is," and my hand comes down and smashes the cockroach. "You commies and liberals think you're better than everybody else."

"What a sentimentalist you are," and he shakes his head in disbelief. "Some day, perhaps after you have spent all your billions on destroying us, you will not have the economic privilege to entertain such notions."

"Eat it," I say, scraping off the slimy brittle of the cockroach from my hand onto the edge of the table. "Eat your country. Eat your communism. Eat your Buddha."

Maya comes to the door. We had been shouting. She disappears and returns with her finger bowls and spices she brought with her from India. She sets them on the table.

"You must eat what you have killed, GI."

DAY NINE

The cats are burning, screaming. The old man sits there, mute, upright, he too burning inside his stupid wheelchair, his chest steaming inside out before it explodes into clumps of smoldering sod which tumble from his lap and slowly ooze down around the sizzling chrome and plastic, dripping from the rubber boiling around the fiery wheels. The cats flail at their fur afire and leap like orange comets from the walls, the mantel, the coffin, the old man. I beat them off the coffin and they let loose with the wail of an everlasting agony. The gazebo I just torched tumbles down around me and I crawl out of reach of the flames and across the garden toward Maya's mansion in the absolute night. Can barely move, the pain too much. I look back into the flames and I can see the burning eyes of the cats. A ceiling beam falls across the mantel spinning out spokes of embers across the wastes of the library. I open her coffin, clubbing away the cats, smashing them, choking the fire wailing from their mouths. I reach in and try to lift her out, but, no, she's a reckless pity in my arms, her electric sanctuary candle bathing her in a soft red light. Her gentle hand falls across my face and she stares into the face of God and sees forever her sweet heavenly life. I look away into the absolute night and crawl through the garden until the pain becomes a clanging liquid light.

Where am I? The light is a liquid gray fog and I can not make it tell me where I am. I can not remember if my eyes are open or closed or if there is a light of day or dark of night.

Someone's flesh. It smells of soap and blood. Can see little more than inches away and beyond there's a liquid fog. Hair and shaven hair and a sloping mound of pores. It's a woman's abdomen, a long ragged scar—whose? Cam Binh's? Her bloody thighs and long ragged scar given to me by Maya? Her hand caresses my face, gently touching a gash along my left shoulder. My left forearm all stitched up and as ugly as purple and yellow vomit. Remember torching the gazebo and stepping back into the flames where it all collapsed in on me. She touches the wound on my scalp and I fall into a liquid clanging...

Her scar bleeds and I lick up the warm blood. She moves in a slow circular motion filling my face with her blood. My face sticks to her thighs then peels away. I gnaw her stitches apart with my front teeth and her scar slowly parts into rents and rips ending at a small clamp below her belly button. I lick her blood and slime into a pasty mucus and burrow into her wound, eating, throwing up, never chewing or swallowing, suffocating, gnashing at her soft, lumpy flesh until I fall into the liquid clanging...

A distant flame.

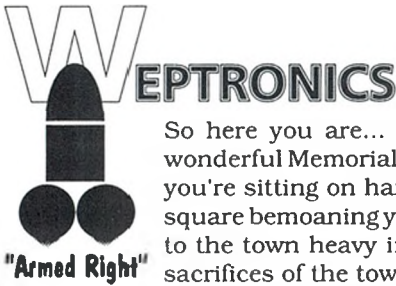
"You must rest, GI."

In the flame I can see the old man making me light his cigarette lighter and hold my hand under the drapery in the library. "The little flame of eternal life," says the old lady reaching out to touch her stinking God. The library collapses in on us, a beam smashing down on us, gouging out her thighs and abdomen, pinning my head and face in her bloody slime. Can't breathe, suffocating, I eat and

gnash through her lumpy slime, gasping, drowning, throwing up, tearing through her bloody flesh until I can breathe the stinking, burning air.

"Rest in peace, GI."

Suddenly the light is gone and the flame is but a sour sting at the tip of my tongue. Darkness, there is nothing but darkness. It stinks of the wet tropical rot. A growing fungus slowly fills my mouth and lungs. I chase after the flame, gnawing, gnashing, tearing....



So here you are... Another one of those wonderful Memorial Day celebrations, and you're sitting on hard seats in some town square bemoaning your roids and listening to the town heavy intone the magnificent sacrifices of the town dead. All under the watchful gaze of the seated statue of General Magrotz, USMC, killed in his bunker by a falling air conditioner. So sad.

You slip into mental cruise control and conjure up the dead. The dead—who float, crawl, roll, and stump by. Sometimes it's just pieces of the dead. You know that words are not enough. The folks around you just can't get a real understanding of the price paid. They think death in war is glamorous.

Weptronics remembers, and wants to help.

And you remember. You remember when Wentworth bought his, and how the leg seemed to hang in the air of that heavy morning Call Weptronics and put in your order for our **COGNIPLAST** replica. *That Willie Peter Owen stepped on—the fire just burned and crackled and burned.* Call Weptronics. *Remember how your buddy was shot between the running lights?* Call. We have replicas for these wounds and many more that you can't imagine. Well, maybe you can....

Next year when the Mayor intones the warriors' sacrifice, heave over the bleeding **COGNIPLAST** leg, the head, the writhing partial body, and soon the growing pile of virtual gore will make everyone look and look and look, and *think* about the real cost.

Maybe Weptronics can help change Memorial Day so that we celebrate life and not death. We've most surely had enough of that...

SPECIAL TRAINING

William Fietzer, 8410 Gidleigh Ct., Charlotte, NC 28216.

Some soldiers consider KP pots and pans duty the ultimate death trip—more so than a tour in Viet Nam. A matter of opinion, I suppose. But the army always gets the right man for the right job. If cooks and KPs are noncombatants, this may be my permanent duty and nobody's bothered to tell me.

Ahh! That hot water feels good. Let the suds get good and high.

Through the window above the sink I see the rifle squad filing down the cement front steps of the basic training barracks, a cement block building like this one. If you can't handle the physical training in a regular line company, the Army ships you there during your eight weeks of basic. If you can't read at a third grade level, it sends you to the remedial reading squad before you start basic. And if you can't pass the rifle test during basic, it places you in the rifle squad after you finish basic. Special Training Company gets all the fuck-ups.

Hank Wismer once said there was a ninety-nine percent chance of becoming a medic if you became a conscientious objector. He said that in the bush medics are third in line to get shot after the radio operator and the squad leader—if the land mines or punji traps don't get you first. And you don't carry a weapon. But do punji traps care if you're armed or not?

Henry "Fats" Wismer—he wanted to finish basic so badly. I finished boot camp with him here after I broke my foot during a pick-up game of basketball. Sixty pounds over the maximum for five-foot-nine, he'd entered the Army as a three-year volunteer. Sergeant Piersall, our drill instructor, tried to get him to lose twenty pounds all through basic. "He's a disgrace," Piersall remarked more than once. "Wouldn't last a second in combat." Piersall offered him a discharge, but Hank refused it and passed his physical training on a waiver.

"What difference does it make what I weigh," he asked me with a shake of his head that sent his jowls wagging, "if I do the job?"

The job was going to be a book-keeping position, guaranteed stateside. All he needed was to hit twenty-four of forty targets on the rifle range. Then he'd marry his fiancée from Milwaukee. At twenty-seven he said it was his last chance to make himself respectable.

The first Monday morning after my reassignment, I opened the grimy window of the airless office Capt. Goodman had assigned me. Outside, Hank was filing down the barracks steps with the twenty or so members of the Rifle Squad. The torpid, mid-May air carried the shrill exhortations of the little cook, Corporal Benson, to the KPs unloading the supply truck behind the mess hall.

In the quadrangle several hundred Remedial Reading Squad members stood in various approximations of parade rest, each of them carrying a brown paperback in his right hand. Off to the side, one of their squad leaders, a wiry black youth named Harris, executed several

pretend combat thrusts with a pugil stick one of the basic training squads had neglected to pick up. His fatigue hat fell off with his last maneuver. His head glistened in the sun from the jar of hairwax he used every night to plaster his afro to his scalp.

Piersall ordered Harris to knock it off and get his hat back on, then turned his attention to the Rifle Squad. Harris tossed the stick into the bushes, picked up his hat, and swaggered to the front of his squad wearing a sly grin.

He wouldn't have dared a smirk if Piersall had been looking. At six-four and two-thirty, Piersall exhibited as much frivolity as your average prison warden. He'd assumed the top sergeant's duties after his predecessor retired because of a bad heart. His no-nonsense attitude during training forced everyone to perform better. Whether out of admiration or fear of him I increased my number of situps to pass the Physical Training Test. It came as a shock when he asked me about applying to Officers Candidate School. Having been drafted right out of college, I wasn't too crazy about the extra year of service such a commitment entailed. I wasn't too happy over the prospect of fighting in a rice paddy, either.

Piersall glanced at his watch. The bus to pick up the rifle squad was late again. He ordered the rifle squad to check their M-16s while he went to the orderly room to phone the motor pool.

Hank waddled up to my office window as soon as Piersall left, his shapeless fatigue shirt flopping over his belt like an unmoored flap of a tent.

"Top of the mornin', Paul," he exclaimed in his rusty voice as he unshouldered his rifle. He removed his wire-rim glasses and mopped his forehead with a handkerchief. Huge circles stained his armpits and shoulder blades. "It goin' better this morning?"

"I just can't see why Piersall transferred me to the office. It's not because of my leg—I didn't move that much on laundry detail. And my typing's so bad I had to pay someone to type my term papers."

Hank removed his cracked helmet liner, set it on the ground, and sat on it. The fissure extending halfway up the plastic crown seemed ready to split the helmet in two at any moment. He extended his hands to his knees and looked at me with the quizzical smile of a Buddha.

"You could be in Nam right now," he admonished. "If you're lucky, Captain Goodman'll make this your permanent duty. You wouldn't want to second guess your boss on that now, would ya?"

Harris started up a falsetto chant of "Sound Off" as the Reading squad marched out of the area. Hank watched them disappear around the corner of the barracks. He reiterated how Harris last week sparked a riot in their barracks after lights out by saying how the rest of them were too dumb to ever get out of basic.

"He got halfway through basic before they found out he couldn't read," he added with a sober shake of his head. "Yet they made him a squad leader. Not even a colonel would dick off the way he does."

Hank's jaw hardened. Benson ordered one of the KPs to open the steel-plated cover to the grease-trap set in the sidewalk. It was the worst job on KP after the day-long pots and pans detail. The unfortunate private lowered

himself into the pit carrying the long handled scoop used to empty the trap. Benson retired to the base of the steps and folded his arms across his chest, watching the KP like a hawk to insure he didn't miss a drop. Nineteen years old, with both sleeves of his food-stained tee shirt rolled to the shoulders to show off his biceps, he looked what some fathers would call "all boy" with his blond curly hair and apple-cheeked grin.

Hank detested him. That same Saturday night after the bars had closed, the MPs caught Benson setting fire to lint placed between the toes of some sleeping trainees. Hank had been one of them.

"Hey, Fats," Benson drawled as he lit a cigarette produced from the package rolled up in his shirt sleeve. "I shoulda had you clean out the trap. You're just gonna bolo that rifle test again anyway."

Hank gave him the middle finger salute in response.

"I can ask Piersall to make the trap detail your permanent duty if you want."

Benson turned his attention to the greasetrap. Hank whirled toward me, his jowls jiggling like the wattles of an angry turkey.

"If that dickhead's muscles were brains, he'd still need someone to show him how to use the latrine," Hank spluttered. "You know why he has to sleep in the barracks with us trainees? Because his wife ran him out of their apartment."

"If you're going to be here, Hank, you're just going to have to put up with those kinds of jibes."

Hank fumbled for his helmet and got to his feet with a grunt.

"Did you know that if Benson gets court-martialed for those hot foots he set, he won't be eligible for the personnel levee? One of the drill sergeants told me that by the time Benson got out of the stockade he'd be too short time-wise for the twelve month commitment. What d'ya think of that?"

Hank shoved his glasses back on his nose for emphasis and reached for his rifle leaning against the side of the steps. A pair of spit-polished, size-sixteen combat boots stood at his eye level. Piersall gazed down at Hank with the warmth of twin rifle barrels.

"Formation!" Hank hollered at the top of his lungs. He flung his rifle strap across his shoulders and wheeled around. The rest of the squad stood at attention on the sidewalk.

"Would you care to join us?" Piersall asked.

Benson chuckled and disappeared inside the mess hall. An olive drab army bus squealed to a halt outside the main entrance as Hank hustled into line. Piersall bounded down the steps, ordered the squad into rows of two, double-timed them through the iron gate and returned up the walk.

I began to type a batch of disciplinary reports Piersall wanted in triplicate and ASAP, as-soon-as-possible. The second report in my stack substantiated what Hank said. Captain Goodman recommended Benson be court-martialed and Headquarters had approved it. Piersall confirmed my impression when I laid the finished copies on his desk.

"How the hell can any NCO maintain discipline when guys like Benson get away with murder?" he wondered out loud. "Basic's tough enough without some dickhead showing them how to get out of things."

Captain Goodman burst into the room clutching a fistful of photocopied orders. A compact, barrel-chested ex-sergeant whose florid face registered his emotions like a thermometer, he charged up to Piersall's desk in two piston-quick steps.

"Your CQ's going to be a helluva lot easier tonight, Top—HQ's shipping out half the reading squad to regular line companies," he crowed as he shook the orders in front of Piersall's face. "After a month of bitching they finally seen it my way. Now maybe we can do something with the men we got left."

Goodman started for his office, then asked if the company truck had returned from the motor pool. Piersall replied it had not, the driver was still in sick bay. The lower half of Goodman's face turned crimson. He glared wildly around the room and fixed his gaze on me.

"Kovacs can drive, can't he?" he asked with a side-long glance at my cast. "He can pick up some additional reports while I'm there. Have the truck out front by quarter of one."

He slammed his office door behind him. Slowly, the knuckles of Piersall's rough-hewn hands regained their ruddy color. He glanced at me, then at the door to Goodman's office, and rolled his eyes. Rumor had it that Goodman's job was reward for his coming home from Nam with a metal plate in his head. He epitomized the shortcomings of the Army's policy of commissioning men in the field.

Airbrakes squealed outside as I crossed the hallway to my office. The rifle squad marched past my window and halted on the other side of the steps. The others fell out of formation, but Hank sat on top of his helmet with his chin cupped in his hands. Gigantic haloes of sweat caked the underarms of his shirt. I called him to the window to ask how he'd done.

"Twenty-one," he mumbled, dragging his M-16 behind him by the barrel.

"That's still three better than you ever shot before."

"What the hell difference does that make?"

"All right! Formation!"

Piersall descended the steps. Hank did not move.

"The army ain't no place for prima donnas," Piersall warned. "Or dickheads. You shot pretty good for once, Fats. Don't spoil it."

Hank returned to the formation. Piersall read off the afternoon details and the trainees assigned to them. Glancing at his watch, he reminded them that they all had to have their weapons checked and returned to the armory before chow. Several sections murmured their disapproval. Piersall ordered them to attention.

"None of you *has* to go to chow at all."

He shot a glance toward the back.

"You got something to say, Wismer?"

Hank recited the army regulation that all men must receive three meals a day, even while out on maneuvers or bivouac.

"If any of us end up late for our details, it'll be because we spent the time checking into the armory when we could have been eating."

Piersall ordered the squad to be quiet.

"I suppose you have a solution for this problem."

"If we assigned someone to watch our guns while the rest of us got into line—"

"What was that you said, trainee?"

Piersall strode to the back of the formation.

"Nobody uses that word in my formation."

He ordered Hank out of line and led him to the center of the quadrangle like a parent with a recalcitrant child. His head bent, Hank extended his rifle in front of him with his left hand and cupped his right by his groin. Alternately raising and lowering his arms like pump handles, he recited the infamous army training jingle.

"This is my weapon and this is my gun. This one's for shooting, this one's for fun."

Piersall cocked his head toward the reading squad barracks as Hank began a third time. The chant of a marching platoon grew louder. My watch showed several minutes past noon as Benson unlocked the outer screen doors to the mess hall. If I wanted to eat before driving Goodman to Headquarters, I had to beat it to the mess hall before the reading squad arrived.

I lumbered outside while the rifle squad stacked their M-16s in tripods on the grass. Piersall spoke nose to nose into Hank's inert sweating face. Leaning on the top bar of the railing, a grinning Benson lit a cigarette as he watched them. Piersall marched Hank back to the steps and ordered him to guard the rifles.

Hank stood at ease with his eyes riveted on the cement in front of him. He'd been in the army long enough to know not to dispute a top sergeant's judgment, but Piersall had no right to humiliate him like that. Hank disappeared behind the surge and backwash of the reading squad when it broke formation and entered the chow line. He was gone by the time I finished eating.

I had other things to worry about that afternoon—like keeping my leg cast on the clutch pedal of the company pickup truck. Goodman observed my clumsy efforts glumly.

"I must be the only commanding officer who has to come to these meetings in a pickup truck with an invalid driver," he muttered.

During the one-hour conference at headquarters I exchanged the completed stack of disciplinary reports for another pile. The senior typing clerk glanced at my cast.

"Broke it playing basketball," I told him.

He continued typing, apparently uninterested. I leafed through the reports. One of them recommended Harris be fined fifty dollars a month for three months for inciting the barracks riot. I knew one person who would be cheered by this news—Hank.

He did not appear at evening chow. Nor was he in his bunk. Out in the hallway connecting the mess hall to our barracks, a black assistant CQ runner buffed the floor, muttering to himself. Dust clouds roiled and scattered down the fading shafts of sunlight slanting across the corridor. He thought he'd seen Hank at the PX across the street.

Outside, the shadow from the Special Training barracks extended across the quad. Fireflies danced in the shrubbery under my office window. Radios blared at both ends of the building before one of them went silent. If Piersall was in charge of quarters, the other wouldn't last long either.

"Kovacs."

A figure in work whites was sprawled across the bottom steps of the mess hall. Benson. One of the black trainees sat on the steps above him. Harris. The last thing I wanted was to talk with them. I angled across the lawn toward the gate, pretending not to have heard.

Harris intercepted me. His huge afro now surrounded his head like a lion's mane. He motioned toward the steps with some kind of stick or pruned tree limb and slapped it on his palm for emphasis. As he escorted me to the base of the steps, I saw it was not wood at all, but a two-foot length of three-quarter inch lead pipe.

The air smelled like toothpaste. Benson put his fatigue hat on backwards like an umpire's and examined me up and down. Eyes red, face flushed, he grinned and reached for the colorless pint bottle beside his knee. Rubbing the palm of his hand over the bottle opening, he extended it toward me. I reached out. Benson snickered, raised the bottle to his lips, tilted his head back and swallowed.

"This here's a special bottle," he announced and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Part of our goin' away celebration. We invited you because we like you. Right, Harris?"

Harris rested his chin on his knee and stared past my shoulder toward the barracks.

"Harris cares about you," Benson assured me as he scratched his chin with the bottle lip. "You a friend of Wismer's?"

"Yeah."

Benson spat on the sidewalk, just missing my boots.

"That faggot! You know why he don't like me? Because I'm not a lifer like him. I don't care for this war and I'm honest enough to admit it."

I edged to the side of the steps to keep them both in my sight.

"That must be the reason you set fire to Hank's toes."

"Why the hell not?" he laughed. "Everybody else takes advantage of him. Shit, when a dog goes crazy, you shoot it. That damn Fats almost queered everything tellin' Piersall what I was trying to do. I didn't ask to fight any gooks. Neither did Harris. Did you?"

I shook my head. Benson looked out into the yard and took another drink.

"The only difference between you and Harris and me is that we decided to do something about it. Everything was jake-okay until Piersall and Goodman caught on."

Benson wasted several choice expletives on them, then asked whether I knew that Piersall had a bad heart. I shook my head. Benson smiled meanly.

"All the drill instructors are that way—all losers. That includes Goodman, who has to make major this time or get out." He giggled and drank from the bottle. "With sixteen years in. That's just like this man's army, ain't it, Harris."

Harris spat over the side of the steps.

"You have to excuse Harris' manners," Benson apologized. "He sorta lost his sense of humor since he found out he was gonna hafta go back to a line company and take basic again."

I couldn't repress a smile. At least some good would come from Goodman's actions. Benson held out the bottle. Two or three swallows sloshed around the bottom.

"G'wan, take it."

The schnapps tasted like warm window cleaner. Benson got to his feet, grabbed the bottle and drained it.

"No pussy-assed clerk's going to do that with my buddy and get away with it!"

Benson tapped the bottle against the palm of his hand. My legs felt hollow, jittery.

"Kovacs."

Harris' lighter revealed the drunken malice on his face. He lit his cigarette and stood up slowly. His voice was soft, caressing.

"Benson and me didn't get drafted because we were nice college boys like you—suckin' off the top sergeant. It was two years here or three-to-five on the outside. Know what I mean, motherfucker?"

I backed slowly up against the wall, turned, and dashed for the gate. Harris stifled a giggle. Piersall stood on the landing of the steps, surveyed the quad, and returned inside. Imaginary bugs pricked and crawled across my skin. Harris and Benson's laughter followed me all the way to the PX door.

Hank sat by himself at a tipsy plastic table in the eating area beside the closed soda fountain. The world was on a binge tonight—a half-full 32-ounce paper cup lay beside his elbow with an empty one beside it. I bought a beer half that size and sat across from him. My hands shook as I related what had happened.

"What makes you think they were playing around?" Hank asked.

He removed his helmet liner and set it on the table. It was so cracked the halves remained split apart.

"Do you know what Piersall told me in the yard this noon? He said he's going to keep his eye on me. I've got one more chance to pass or else I go to a regular line company to take basic again."

He pulled a soiled handkerchief from his rear pocket and daubed his rheumy eyes, his voice quavering with repressed rage.

"Do you know why Piersall did that to me this noon? Do you know why we never march to the range? Or pull bivouac or weekend curfew like other companies? It's not because everyone's hurt or can't physically. They're scared we'll run away before they can train us. That's why dickheads like Harris and Benson wind up here—it's their last chance before the stockade."

Hank assumed his Buddha-like pose.

"Think about it. Why are we stuck off in this corner of the post? Because the other line companies might get the wrong ideas if they saw or knew about us."

Hank drained the rest of his beer in one swallow.

"You're the only GI in this man's army who calls me by my first name. It's meant a lot to me."

He stared at his empty cup.

"You know why I can't hit those targets? They remind me of the men they represent. Hell, I vomited my guts out the first time I ever shot a squirrel."

He produced a brown vial from his shirt pocket and frowned at it.

"Last week after I got these back pills I went to the chaplain's office. It took an hour and a half before he finally saw me. I told him I wanted to apply for a discharge as a conscientious objector and he told me I should wait a few weeks to see if things got better. After twelve weeks of service you'd think I'd know by now."

Hank seized my wrist.

"What the hell was I thinking? He's paid to keep us in, not get us out."

Hank relapsed into his brooding state. I removed his hand. Part of me wanted to put my arm around his shoulders, but I fought the impulse off. Who needed this involvement? My beer tasted and smelled like stale urine when I swallowed it. Hank's tirade was just beer talk. Other guys talked like this, but only about getting back home.

"What would your girl say about a CO discharge?"

Hank stared blankly at me, picked up his helmet liner and started for the door. By the time I caught up with him he had crossed the street, heading toward the unlit and little-used front entrance of our barracks. He slumped against the wall halfway up the steps.

"Gotta do the right thing," he mumbled.

I slung his arm around my shoulder, got him to his feet, and lugged him the rest of the way up the stairs. From the smell of him it seemed even money he'd forget everything by tomorrow.

The blare from a dozen radios assaulted us when we entered the bay. The day before everyone had his choice of top or bottom bunk, tonight every cot was jammed. Men in boxer underwear slammed their wall lockers, made their beds, hurried to the bathroom to get that shower that would grant them five minutes extra sleep next morning. Hank removed his arm from my shoulder and leaned against the doorway. A member of the rifle squad surveyed the scene.

"Moved them in before evening chow. Goodman's orders," he remarked in disgust. "The whole damn reading squad."

Hank lurched to his feet and followed his squad member into the latrine. He reappeared a moment later, stumbling on the doorsill, headed down the hall, and tried the locked doors on each side.

"Piersall's CQ tonight," I called after him. "He won't let you sleep in an empty room."

Hank ignored me. It was another petty rule that made logistic sense, but played hell with your head. Let him sleep it off. If Piersall let this much mayhem occur, Hank might get by this once.

It was a half hour to bedcheck. I descended the stairs and sat on the back steps. The noise from the bay fell like the roar of Niagara upon my head. The evening star shone above the basic training barracks across the quad. To its right the dark square outline of the empty reading squad barracks stood out against the bronze afterglow.

Goodman's orders—he moved us around as if we were sacks of wheat in a granary. The congestion upstairs was his idea of doing something with the reading squad. He'd ship out a hundred men like Harris to regular line companies today to close their barracks down. Tomorrow he'd have to reopen it when the new men arrived.

I glanced toward the mess hall steps. Harris and Benson were gone. I shoved the scene with them out of mind—it always could be worse, I could be in Nam. If what Hank said about Special Training Company were true, it was no wonder the clerk at HQ gave me such a deprecating smile.

I had to speak to Piersall about OCS that minute, tomorrow would be too late. My watch read ten of nine. The CQ runner in the orderly room said Piersall already was making his rounds. I left a message that I had to see Piersall and hobbled up the stairs. My boot and cast seemed light as winged heels now that I'd come to a decision.

Piersall was not in the bay at this end of the building. Two cones of light cast flickering, elongated shadows halfway down the hallway. Piersall and the other CQ runner were checking the locks on the unused rooms. Inside one of the unlocked rooms a light exploded like a photographic flash.

Their neon afterimages floated before me like specters. The CQ runner scurried past me and clambered down the stairs. Piersall stood spread-legged inside the doorway holding his automatic revolver with both hands, trained toward the other end of the cubicle. The air inside reeked of peppermint. Benson sat on the edge of an unmade bed, his pants unbuckled halfway down his legs. Harris stood against the window with his hands pinioned behind his back. Hank lay on his side on the floor between them.

Piersall ordered me to stay in the hall. Benson stood up. Piersall ordered him to sit on the bed. Benson began to pull up his pants. Piersall commanded him to leave them alone. Benson let his hands drop. Harris groaned and leaned against the window sill. The scrape of metal echoed in the tiny room. The grooved end of his lead pipe protruded behind his back.

Hank did not move, did not appear to breathe.

"Is he all right?"

"The MPs will be here in a minute," Piersall replied. "Just stay out in the hallway."

"We didn't even touch him!" Benson cried.

"Shut up," Harris said.

He grinned knowingly at Piersall. A red light flashed on the ceiling as a siren droned to a stop outside. Heavy boots pounded up the stairs. Two MPs pushed past me through the doorway, a third shoved me into the growing crowd out in the hall. He blocked the doorway with his body, holding his nightstick across his chest in an initial hand-to-hand combat position.

One of the MPs behind him nudged Hank with his boot. Both MPs rolled Hank on his back and listened to his chest. The second MP knelt down and reached under the cot. As they handcuffed Harris and Benson, Piersall stepped into the hallway and ordered everyone back into their bunks.

"There'll be double Article 15s for those men who aren't in their bays in the next five minutes."

The MP in the doorway herded us toward the bay with his nightstick. When I turned around, he un-snapped his holster cover. Piersall flicked off the lights before anyone had time to ask what happened. He stood in the doorway for five minutes, left, and reappeared. He repeated this routine for over an hour.

Was Hank dead? My fingers sweated every time I thought of him lying on the floor. Benson and Harris. I slammed the typewriter carriage to the next line the following morning. I should've stopped him. He was fat and sloppy drunk, but I shouldn't have let him go like that. The only unlocked room belonged to Benson.

A halo of reflected light swept across the ceiling. I got to the window in time to see two MPs escort someone up the steps. I dashed into the hall. The MPs marched Hank into the orderly room.

He was alive.

I waited, desperately composing myself. Military formalities always took time. Hank stumbled as they emerged from the orderly room. The MPs tightened their grip and held him erect while he readjusted his broken liner. The rings under his eyes showed he'd been up all night. He marched by me, to the upstairs steps without a word or glance of recognition.

When they reappeared ten minutes later, Hank carried his bulging duffel bag, sweating heavily as they descended the steps outside. His bag fell to the ground when they reached the sidewalk. He keeled forward. One MP scooped him up by the armpit, the other hoisted Hank's bag over his shoulder, and they continued down the walk.

Piersall stood beside me as we watched the MPs march Hank to their squad car outside the barracks gate.

"Is he all right?" I asked.

Piersall examined me with haggard eyes.

"My runner said you'd come to some kind of decision."

What was he talking about? I started to relate how I felt last night when I saw the pipe behind Harris' back and Hank on the floor at his feet.

"They're in the stockade where they belong," Piersall declared. "You can't have that in a barracks."

"Are Benson and Harris going to get court-martialed?"

"What the hell do you think we nailed them for?" Goodman bellowed. His temporal artery pulsed visibly as he entered the room. He winked at Piersall.

"Those guys were so cute that they're going to be court-martialed right out of the army as undesirables."

Wasn't that just what they wanted? Goodman turned toward Piersall.

"Ain't it just like the army to take all the misfits and expect us to make soldiers out of 'em? At least we've gotten rid of the three worst."

"Three?"

"Benson, Harris, and Wismer—who else?"

"Wismer! For what?"

"For what—Sir!" Goodman demanded.

"For what—Sir?"

"Sodomy."

I felt nauseated. And a little afraid. I wasn't quite sure what it meant. Goodman supplied the definition.

"That can't be," I objected. "Hank was lying on the floor."

"He passed out from pills taken apparently from the bottle found under the bed."

Hank—a homosexual? Impossible.

"What's going to happen to him?"

Goodman gazed out the window, the color still bobbing in his neck.

"He'll get a dishonorable discharge, same as the others."

"He was upset."

"We have three times as many AWOLs here as in any other company. Twice as many desertions," Goodman exclaimed. "What is it, Top, seventy-five or eighty percent of the men in this company have legal action pending against them?"

"I don't care about that. This is more than just taking part of some guy's paycheck for going home without permission."

"You'd better not say another word. Not if you want to get into OCS."

"I don't think about that as often as some people do about getting to major—Sir."

Goodman stiffened, glared at Piersall and strode out of the room. Piersall shook his head.

"How is it that a smart college boy like you don't know how to keep his mouth shut?"

"I'm not so callous as some are toward a friend. Especially one I thought was dead."

In the sun-filled quad one of the basic training squads filed out of their barracks into formation.

"What the hell difference is that going to make stuck off in a rice paddy somewhere?" Piersall asked.

"Sometimes you have to stand up to people like—"

"What the fuck do you know about bein' in command?" he demanded. He stood up and moved toward the window. "You try to do your job and maybe get something out of it, then you get a couple of dickheads like Benson and Harris. With all the boys coming through here trying to do the right thing, you think we should let them get away with that court-martial bullshit?"

Doing the right thing? Maybe Piersall was right about Goodman. Benson would argue any way out was the right way. I wasn't one of them. Neither was Hank. I recalled everything Hank said last night about Special Training Company, all the injustice and hypocrisy he couldn't resolve. His actions made no sense.

"Do you suppose Hank was trying to get caught?"

"Why the hell should I care?" Piersall retorted. He started toward the door. "He's lower than whale shit to me."

"But you caught him so easy. He wasn't that stupid. Why would anyone do such a thing unless they were driven to it?"

Piersall paused in the doorway. His eyes riddled mine like bullets.

"There's something you better learn, Private. It's called covering your ass."

I never saw Hank again. Or Harris or Benson. I ran into a stone wall trying to learn when or if they went to trial. I still lay awake nights wondering if I tried hard enough. Perhaps Hank had to do what he did, to admit to himself who he was. Perhaps he had renounced the final hypocrisy—in himself.

That takes care of the pie tins—so clean you can see your face in them. One thing I've learned, if you volunteer for the right dirty work, you get to handle it your way. That KP schedule tacked on the wall must be a month out of date—the same people are on it every weekend. I'll straighten that out after formation Monday. How long since my CO application went in? A month? Six weeks? I hope I made them understand how I feel.

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Figure 34. Using a stick to crack a coconut.

Napalm Night

J.B. Hogan, 7014 E. Golf Links #327, Tucson, AZ 85730.

"Gimme a hit of that, man," Zapper said, a light breeze finally bringing some respite from the day's heat and humidity. Ofay reached the joint across after taking another huge drag. "You mother," Zapper complained, "rip off, dude. You got the end of it all wet, brother."

"Up yours, white boy," Ofay laughed, "don't lay no jive bullshit on me." Zapper chuckled and inhaled deeply from the thick, potent reefer. He took another couple of shallow puffs and passed the joint on.

Ofay had gotten his nickname while serving in his first platoon which, except for him, was all white. Another brother had seen Ofay and his group back in the rear on stand down and given him the ironic sobriquet, to Ofay's initial annoyance. But the name had stuck and now Marvin T. Johnson was Ofay, to himself and to everybody else.

There were five of them in the group, sitting off away from the rest of the platoon—they were short-timers, dopers—when they had anything even vaguely resembling a stand down at the firebase. They didn't hang out with the FNGs or the straights. They were considered screwups, but they'd all been in-country at least nine months and they were all still alive. No one argued against success.

Besides Zapper and Ofay, there was Bertoni, erst-while radio operator, Muddy Freddy, an Okie from Arkansas, and "Professor" Calvin, so named because he'd actually spent most of one academic year at the University of Minnesota.

"My turn, Mud," the Professor prompted Freddy, who tended to Bogart joints to the extreme. "Cough it up."

Freddy grunted, but surrendered the joint. Ofay started another one around.

"What a beautiful country this is, huh, dudes?" the Professor added, smoke boiling around his head. He swung an arm out before him, its sweep intended to encompass the shadowy valley that lay before them, with its occasional village, fields of rice, and winding muddy river.

"Practically a tourists' delight," Zapper said sardonically. Ofay laughed and lit a third joint. The weed went round and round the group.

"I'm really zoned," Bertoni wheezed after a couple of successive hits. "Anybody got anything to drink?"

Zapper pulled a beer out of a rucksack at his feet and pitched it to Bertoni. "Share it man," Zapper said.

Bertoni popped the top, took a swig and handed the beer to Freddy.

"Ugh, warm Black Label," Freddy mumbled, "lousy crap."

"Try to think of it as the grunt's Michelob, Mud," the Professor said. Zapper thought that was funny.

"Good one, Prof," he said.

"Thank you, my good man," the Professor replied formally. The Professor was planning to write a book

when he got out of this hell hole, if he did, and he liked adopting a pompous attitude from time to time. It amused him and his buddies.

For a few minutes, the group smoked in silence, finishing off the joints and lying back, each lost in the initial stage of reverie produced by Ofay's potent weed.

After awhile, the Professor stirred and dug into his pack. He pulled out a small plastic packet containing several tiny pieces of rectangular off-white paper.

"All right," Muddy Freddy exclaimed, seeing what the Professor was up to, "let's do it, Prof."

"Huh," Zapper muttered.

"You been holdin' out on us, Prof?" Ofay asked.

"No way," the Professor said. "These are just the rest of those hits I got last time in Da Nang. Them Air Force boys at least do one thing right.

"I don't want to do no acid out here," Bertoni said. "I'm too short."

"We're all too short, asshole," Ofay said.

"Sometimes I don't know about you, Bertoni," Zapper said.

"Fuck you," Bertoni countered.

"It's mild shit," the Professor said. "Windowpane. Very smooth."

"Smooth my ass," Bertoni said.

The Professor took one of the squares of paper, swallowed it and made a face.

"Ugh," he said. "Lousy taste. Who's got the beer?"

Zapper handed him the beer; the Professor took a long pull on it and sighed.

"Me, now," Freddy said, holding out his hand, "me." The Professor carefully put a piece of paper in Freddy's palm.

"Be cool, Mud," he said, "this is big league stuff." He then gave Ofay and Zapper a square each. Bertoni still didn't want one.

"Chickenshit," Zapper ragged on him.

"You goin' straight?" Ofay asked.

"Weed's okay," Bertoni shrugged, "but that shit'll fuck you up into the night. I want to see tomorrow."

"This that same shit we did at the rear?" Zapper asked.

"That is correct," the Professor answered.

"Whew," Freddy whistled. He seemed to be considering Bertoni's objections before swallowing the acid.

"Well?" the Professor asked.

"Okay," Freddy laughed crazily. He gulped down the square. Bertoni sneered at him. Freddy flipped Bertoni off.

It took about a half hour for the acid to kick in good, but when it did it was a real rush. A quarter moon had risen above the distant tree line and it hung in the sky, transmitting a clear if weak light. Freddy had decided it was jumping all over the sky. From time to time he would reach out his arm as if to catch it. He giggled a lot at his failure. Bertoni, watching the rest of the platoon, tried to calm him down. Ofay, Zapper, and the Professor were each in their own worlds, wrestling perhaps with personal demons, reliving old days with new thoughts, feeling the subtle nuances of the air on the vibrating tactility of their exposed skin. It was a quietly powerful

time. Bertoni watched over his friends, content to just be loaded, aware that at any moment the calm about them could suddenly be transformed into a hellish nightmare of war.

About an hour into the windowpane, the Professor leaned over towards Bertoni and whispered something. Bertoni waved his hands.

"No way," he said, "they'll bust me. No way."

"No way, what?" Zapper asked, not sure the voice he'd heard wasn't in his own mind. "What do you want?"

"Call it in," the Professor said out loud.

"Do it," Ofay said, not knowing what "it" was, "do it, white boy." Muddy Freddy giggled and rolled around on the ground.

"I can't do it, Prof, Jesus," Bertoni argued.

"You do the LT's voice perfect," the Professor said. "You've done it before; do it again."

"Not an air strike, good God. I never did nothing like that."

"Make it sound good."

"Good God, yes," Zapper exclaimed. "Yes. Fire. Napalm. Oh, God, do it." Freddy and Ofay laughed.

"You mothers would owe me forever," Bertoni said. "Forever."

"We will," the Professor said. "Anything you want in Da Nang. Pussy. Whatever. On us."

"Forever," Bertoni reiterated, not believing his own words.

"Forever," Ofay agreed.

"Forever," Freddy said.

"Yeah," Zapper belched.

"Money, anything I want?" Bertoni demanded.

"Yeah, yeah," everyone assented.

"The lieutenant..." Bertoni began.

"We'll dust him," Zapper grumbled, "he's an FNG, gonna get us killed probably."

"What about Davis?" Bertoni asked.

"We dust him, too," Ofay said. "He ain't worth a plug nickel as platoon leader anyway."

"Grease 'em," Freddy laughed.

"Call it in," the Professor said.

Bertoni called it in. Then they waited. Bertoni looked around a couple of times to see if Davis had heard the radio squawking, but apparently he hadn't. So they settled in and waited. It wasn't too long of a wait. Two of the last F-105s in Nam came screaming in low, the blast of their engines reaching the stoned out group just seconds before the first blast of napalm rent the dying light of day and lit it up with rolling mountains of flame produced by the jellied gas. It was an awesome sight.

"Jesus H. Christ," Zapper marveled.

"Whoah," Ofay laughed, "do it mother."

Freddy and the Professor watched the fiery display in reverent silence. Bertoni saw Davis come clambering across the hill towards them.

"What's going on down there?" he demanded sharply. "What is happening?"

"Must be some gooks down by those trees by the river," Bertoni answered, trying really hard to be straight. "Flyboys are cookin' 'em good."

"Who called it in?" Davis wanted to know. "There's no reports of enemy activity around here. There's nothing but villagers down there."

"VC," Zapper said, "fuckin' VC."

"Sappers," Ofay said. Muddy Freddy giggled. The napalm had nearly burnt itself out now. The tree line was black and gray, only scattered fires were still going. The Professor had never taken his eyes off the inferno below.

"You call this damn strike in, Bertoni, you stupid dope head?" Davis growled.

"Now way," Bertoni shot back. "How could I? I ain't authorized." Zapper laughed.

"Gimme that," Davis snapped, grabbing the radio from beside Bertoni.

"I'm the radio man," Bertoni objected.

"You ain't shit from here on in, troop," Davis said.

"Oooh," Zapper acted scared.

"Goddamn it, Davis," Bertoni tried to object again.

"You sonsabitches better not be responsible for this," Davis growled without looking at Bertoni. "You're all busted down if you were. You'll do time if it's up to me. You hear me?"

"Ten-Hut," Ofay guffawed, saluting Davis in the fading light.

"You're a bunch of animals," Davis said. "Nothin' but animals." He took the radio and stalked off.

"Eat it, man," Zapper said under his breath. He picked up his M-16 and aimed it at Davis' back.

"Do it," Ofay said.

"Fuck it," Zapper said.

"What if they did hit a village down there?" Bertoni asked, suddenly feeling very straight. "Or maybe a lurp?"

"Whoa," the Professor said, sitting bolt upright.

"So we fry a few Zips," Zapper said, "who gives a shit?"

"Ain't gonna be no lurps down in there," Ofay said.

"How do you know?" Bertoni asked.

"Shit," Ofay said. "Lurps is always way the hell away from us, man."

"It's bad karma, man," the Professor said. Bertoni looked at the Professor. He felt disgusted with himself and especially with the Professor, who should have known better.

"Fuck karma," Zapper said, "whatever the hell that is."

"It's like whatever you do comes back...." the Professor began.

"Here they come again," Freddy interrupted, squealing as the 105s roared across the valley for a final drop.

"Shit," Bertoni said, climbing away from the others. "Why did we... I...."

Because so little of the sun's light remained, the second drop was even more impressive than the first. The roiling, boiling fire extended high into the air and far across the valley. The entire plain was lit up in gold, yellow and red flames. The tumbling, burning gel made shapes, then changed, formed others, over and over and over until the fire had consumed every combustible particle in its path.

"Wow, man," Zapper said, "far out."

"Yeah," Freddy echoed, "far out."

Ofay and the Professor were silent, awestruck. Bertoni kept his back to the second drop.

At the outer edges of the drop, secondary fires burned sporadically, creating odd sparkling shapes in the failing light. By the time they had all burned out, night had fallen. The moon was fully risen but put out only a weak light.

Bertoni walked further away from the others then, toward the middle of the firebase. He felt lightheaded and nauseated, afraid to look back into the enclosing darkness. He had never felt less high in his life.

J.B. Hogan is a native of Arkansas and served in the U.S. Air Force from 1964-1968. He spent two years in the Air Force Security Service in Northern Japan and five months in Korea during the Pueblo crisis. From 1969 through most of the 70s, he lived what used to be called a counterculture lifestyle and simultaneously completed BA, MA, and Ph.D. degrees in English. During the 80s he was involved in the Central American peace movement, twice traveling to and writing about Nicaragua. Though he minored in print journalism as an undergraduate, he never pursued that field, opting instead to produce a considerable volume of as-yet-unpublished novels and short stories, and unproduced screenplays. Currently he works as a contract technical writer, living in Tucson Arizona or Boulder, Colorado when he's not traveling through Mexico.



THE WISEST KNOW NOTHING

Stephen T. Banko III, *Office of the Mayor, Room 201 City Hall, Buffalo, NY 14202.*

"Sorrow makes us all children again -
destroys all differences of intellect.
The wisest know nothing."
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Duffy had long ago realized that if indeed Vietnam was the asshole of the world, leeches were its hemorrhoids.

He dribbled the sticky slop of the insect repellent down his pale calf and watched satisfied as the rheumy, bloated bag of shimmering blood fell from his skin. It no sooner hit the ground when Duffy smashed it into a smear of blood and slime with the heel of his hand.

There was a lot to hate about Vietnam but Duffy hated nothing more than the leeches. Not only were they supremely ugly, but the greedy bastards were sneaky too. They struck swiftly and silently, sinking their suckers into your tired flesh and sucked out your life without even so much as the basic decency to inflict pain. Even when you felt like you might be intact, these shapeless suckers were draining your blood. He shuddered to think how much blood he'd lost to these disgusting parasites during his eight months in Vietnam. At least he wouldn't have to worry about this bastard again.

With the immediate problem of the leech taken care of, Duffy settled in behind the thick teak tree. He was still wet from the stinking swamp water where he picked up the leech. But the dampness gave him a little break from the dead, hot air trapped in the darkness of the jungle. He pulled the canteen from his belt and drank from the warm, stale water. Behind him were the three FNGs who were spending their first day in the bush. In front of him was the baddest ass in Vietnam, that mean, green killing machine, Sergeant Holmes. And while Duffy could hear the too-loud whispers and endless fidgeting of the new guys, he'd never have known where Holmes was if he hadn't watched him burrow under the huge bamboo bush less than twenty meters away.

Duffy put the canteen away and checked his area. A foot in front of him were two hand grenades with their pins straightened and ready to be pulled. They lay next to an extra magazine for Duffy's M-16. He learned the lessons Holmes had taught and learned them well. When he'd first arrived in-country, he never thought he'd survive the first week. So much to do, so much to remember, so much to look out for. But then Sergeant Holmes took him under his wing and simplified things for him.

"This ain't very hard, Duffy. All you got is friends and enemies. You cultivate the friends and you zap the shit outta the enemies. Ain't nothin' to it. To win, all you gotta do is survive."

That might have oversimplified things, but not by very much. War was nothing more than good guys and bad guys and definitions.

He thought about returning to the new guys to remind them to check for leeches, but they were starting to piss him off. When they'd started out on their routine observation patrol, the three of them were tiptoeing like they were walking through dog shit. At their pace, it would take an hour to walk a hundred yards. But now they'd been out for half an hour and seen nothing but scummy swamp water and the green cavern of jungle, they were whispering and giggling like bored kids in church. Where the Christ did they think they were?

He was about to go back and ask when a sudden movement in front of him caught his attention. Duffy could barely make out Sergeant Holmes' hand signal but he knew immediately what it meant. Oh man, Duffy thought, this fucking guy really is a divining rod for gooks. Everywhere we go, he finds the little bastards. And the rod was definitely twitching.

Duffy watched his hero slink down to shield his body with the bulk of the bamboo. The stubby barrel of the shotgun was pointing off to the right like some kind of deadly retriever. Duffy looked in that direction and saw the movement heading toward them.

There were three men moving quickly, unaware their war was about to end.

Duffy imitated his boss, bending his body around the thick trunk of the tree. His thumb switched the selector on his M-16 to automatic while his left hand closed around a grenade. Instinctively, he tried to burrow his body deep into the loam, seeking shelter that didn't exist. But the harder he pressed against the earth, the harder his heart beat, until Duffy was sure the Vietnamese would hear it. The adrenaline rush sent his blood shooting through his system and his skin started to tingle as it pimped with a million tiny hard-ons. In those furious, frantic minutes, the narcotic effect of fear and terror and excitement reminded Duffy once more that he was more alive at this second than he'd ever been in his life.

Just when he thought he'd explode from the tension, one of Sergeant Holmes' grenades beat him to it.

A short scream penetrated the blast and Duffy saw Holmes leap to his feet, jerking on the pump action of the 12-gauge. Off to his right, Duffy caught a blur of khaki and ripped a burst into the jungle. After a final shotgun blast, the silence reclaimed the jungle. The bitter smell of cordite, black powder and blood blended into the hot, stagnant air.

Three broken bodies lay bleeding into the spongy earth as Duffy approached to survey the situation. One man was dead. His uniform was blotched with dark, spreading stains. One leg had a huge gouge ripped out by the blast of the grenade. The raw redness of the torn flesh was interrupted by the shiny white bone that was all that was left of his leg.

His two comrades were still alive, albeit barely. One was just a few feet from the dead man. His hands were buried deep in his exposed entrails as he tried desperately to stanch the bleeding that was pooling his life on the jungle floor. Ten meters away, the third man was lying still and calm with bullet holes in his chest and shoulder.

Seven months ago, Duffy would have thrown himself into a frenzied and futile effort to save this man. But since then, his real life had been replaced by the surreal existence of the jungle. The man was dead, he just hadn't stopped breathing yet. He was hurt too bad to make any noise. He just laid there, suffering in silence, waiting for the peace of death. His war was over and there was no need for him to suffer like that. So even before Sergeant Holmes nodded to him, Duffy moved to send the gook on his journey to Buddha with a single shot to the head. Fifty feet away, the shotgun blasted and the tally was made official.

Sergeant Holmes was droning the situation report into the handset of Duffy's radio, translating a mad minute of war into a neat line score as the fucking new guys approached.

"Heavy Bones Six, this is Bones One-One. We just popped an ambush on zero-three November Victor Alpha and capped them all. We have zero — I say again — zero friendly casualties. Over."

The radio crackled the captain's response.

"One-one, this is Six. Confirm three bad guys for body bags. Secure your position until we arrive for a look-see. Out."

Sergeant Holmes tossed the handset to Duffy.

"You know the drill, Duff. Circle up the FNGs for security. We're waitin' on Six." The sergeant pulled a tropical chocolate bar from his grimy pants and peeled away the wrapper. Duffy motioned to the new guys and led them off into the jungle. Sergeant Holmes nibbled on the candy while a hundred thousand flies feasted on the bleeding bodies.

"I don't care if he hears me! I want him to hear me!"

Duffy turned around quickly to see where all the fucking noise was coming from. The one of the new guys was real pissed off about something.

What's up his ass? Duffy wondered. He ain't been here long enough to be mad about anything.

Sergeant Holmes moved to put an end to whatever it was bothering the cherries.

"What the fuck's the problem, assholes? You think you're back on the block or what?"

Two of the men stepped back sheepishly while the angry one took a step in the direction of the sergeant.

"You're the problem. You and your stooge Duffy."

"Yeah? And what exactly is it about me and my radioman that troubles you, young man?"

"Murder," the new guy said. "You and Duffy murdered those wounded men over there and I intend to report your asses."

Duffy heard his name mentioned and started back for the conversation. Then he heard the word "murder" coughed out and he filled with rage. He walked up the new guy and snatched him by the shirt.

"You pansy-assed sonofabitch!" Duffy said. "Who the fuck you accusing of murder?"

The new guy broke Duffy's grasp.

"Both of you," he said. "We all saw what you did. You executed those two men and that's nothing but murder."

"That's war, asshole," Duffy said. "The gooks were gone. They were suffering. We stopped it, that's all. You better watch your ass, sonny. One day it might be you in the mud and the blood with your balls blown off and Luke the Gook just might let you live."

Duffy started to make another move on the new guy but Sergeant Holmes stopped him.

"Hey Duffy, take it easy. Don't be so hard on the new guy. It's his first day and he's seen a lot of shit today."

The new guy wasn't buying any of it.

"Fuck you, Holmes. Don't try to bullshit me. I know what you did and I'm telling the captain as soon as he gets here."

Duffy started after the FNG but the sergeant stopped him again.

"Well, you gotta do what you gotta do," Sergeant Holmes said. "But right now, you gotta pull security. Now saddle your asses up and get out in the bush."

The three new guys moved off slowly while the sergeant held Duffy back.

"We might have a big problem here, amigo," Holmes said.

"What kind of problem? This is bullshit, sarge. Those poor bastards were more dead than alive. Who the fuck is the Six gonna believe — us or some pansy-assed FNG?"

"I don't know, Duffy, who? If these three guys tell the captain we executed those gooks, who knows what'll happen? That fucking new guy's got us by the short hairs."

"Come on, sarge, cut the shit. Anybody who's been in the bush has to pull the plug on these poor fucks once in a while. This ain't no judgment call. Those guys were gone. Who's gonna call us on that?"

"That's the point. I don't know who's gonna call us and I don't want to find out. I only got three months left in the bush and I'm gone. But I ain't like you, Duffy. I don't want to leave the Army. This is my career, man. I get wrapped up in some heavy duty shit like murder and I got a big problem any way you look at it."

For the first time, Duffy saw the whole picture. The sergeant was right. Just being accused of murder caused a big problem for both of them, but especially for Sergeant Holmes. Duffy had a life to go back to in the world. All Holmes had was the army. He'd been in Vietnam for nine months, been wounded twice. He saved a bundle of butts and killed more. He was everything a soldier should be and every man in the company, including the officers, looked up to him. He wanted the army to be his life and the army should have been proud as hell to have him. But now, on the word of three new guys with no time in-country and even less of an idea about what was going on, he could wind up in jail at worst or, at best, disgraced and chased from the army he'd wanted to be his life.

As quick as he recognized the problem, Duffy saw the solution. The sergeant had once made the choices of war starkly simple. Change the names, avoid the faces, don't look in the eyes, forget about the uniforms, forget about everything — except friends and enemies.

Sergeant Holmes started out to check on the FNGs and Duffy went out to stalk the enemy. They both headed in the same direction.

While Holmes went out to check on the man on the left flank, Duffy stalked the loud-mouth. Sneaking up on an FNG would be easy, Duffy knew. Lining him up for a clean shot would be a piece of cake. What he'd couldn't know yet was how hard taking the shot was going to be. Duffy hunkered down next to a fallen tree trunk and lined up his sights.

He stared down the barrel of the M-16 for a long time while his brain screamed "enemy!" and his eyes registered "G.I." His mind was whipped in the storm of the debate.

You gotta take him out! You can't let him get to the sarge. You owe Holmes your life. Waste this FNG and you give Holmes back his own.

You can't kill an American! He's a little fucked up but you can't kill him for that. You did nothing wrong. The captain will see that.

He's the fucking enemy! The uniform don't mean shit. He's just like a gook. He wants to take away your life! You gotta stop him!

Where does the killing stop? He's one of us. You can't kill him for being an asshole! You can't!

The arguments raged, but his aim never wavered. The blade of his front sight underline the new guy's chest. A gentle squeeze on the trigger and the debate — and the danger — would be ended. They'd probably even give the kid a medal and the folks back home in Tippy-Toe, Mississippi would always remember him as a hero. The FNG would be just like a thousand other combat casualties. Or would he? How many of those thousands would have been killed by another GI?

A long-forgotten thought broke the trance and Duffy lowered his rifle. Once upon a time, Duffy thought he could make it through his time in hell without killing anyone. Now he was ready to kill another American. What the hell happened?

Survival, he answered himself. Survival had happened. That was the only thing that mattered — the only measure of success. Just get out of this shit hole alive. Anything that threatened his success was an enemy and enemies had to be destroyed. Simple survival. The choice was between bad and worse. Good couldn't get into Vietnam with a passport.

Up came the rifle. Duffy sighted down the barrel, aiming to bury the bullet under the new guy's chin. One shot, that's all he'd need. One shot —

The bullets snapped and whined through the still jungle. Before Duffy's eyes, the new guy's head exploded in a shower of blood and bone. To his right, the sound of breaking tree branches sent the jungle birds screaming into the air. Duffy froze, stunned by the suddenness of the action. He looked at his rifle and checked to make sure his finger was still glued to the trigger. What the fuck was going on?

"Duffy! Where are you!" Holmes screamed.

"I'm over here — on the right! What's happening?"

"Sniper! I think he got one of the FNGs before I got him. Can you see anything?"

"Yeah, the kid's history and something dropped about twenty meters to my right!"

"What the fuck you doing way over there? You trying to get your ass blown away? Keep your eye on the sniper. I'm on my way."

Duffy heard the rustling of the brush as Holmes approached the downed sniper, nudging the body with his foot. Satisfied the body was dead, he rolled it over with his boot. The dead man's face was peppered with black holes from the buckshot. Behind them, the remaining FNGs were scrambling to reach their buddy. Duffy rose on shaky legs to join Holmes.

"Duffy, what the fuck were you doing way out here, man?"

"Shit, sarge, you don't want to know. I guess I just fucked up."

"Fucking up like that will get you killed, Duffy."

"Or worse, sarge. There's worse things than dying."

Size up the situation

Undue haste makes waste

Remember where you are

Vanquish fear and panic

Improvise

Value living

Act like the natives

Learn basic skills

CANNON CITY

Norman Lanquist, Eastern Arizona College, Thatcher, AZ 85552.

"I want that bore scrubbed till I can see my face in it, soldier!" the sergeant had bawled in his face. Frank had long since learned this was the apparently requisite and typically brainless Army style of speech. He took it for granted.

Frank couldn't imagine why this stupid SOB could want such a thing; he was gawdawful homely. He couldn't imagine how he could even look at his own ugly mug once a day to shave it, but everybody shaved; chins were inspected, no matter what. It seemed to be such a big deal. Frank knew the NCO mentality well enough to know that the idea of being too ugly to look at in the mirror had too much subtlety for the Redneck mind to wrap itself around, and this observation from a grunt would not be welcome whatever. Furthermore, as Frank had clambered up the cannon, bore swab in hand, it didn't take long to realize that since the big gun was parked in the shade of the grove of trees and the netting besides, he could've polished till Christmas, which wasn't all that far off, and it would've never shown. It was dark in there. Just a black hole. A tunnel to nowhere, no light at the end. It was make-work duty anyhow like most of what they had to do, to keep them from thinking too much. Everyone knew this, but no one above the rank of Sp4 ever really said so. Frank was short; he was counting the days till his ETS and his return to the States. He could see the light at the end of his tunnel. He assiduously marked off each day on his FIGMO chart. His Senior Trip had been to what the training NCOs had quaintly termed "an unspecified Southeast Asian locale." Frank was not an Artillery man, but here he was. War was like that, he'd decided. You do what you have to, he told himself, and what you're told to do, he'd learned soon enough, and his buddies had added, as little as you can. And watch your back, too, they said, and your buddy's and try to stay alive. Sometimes that was a full-time job. So he horsed around for a while near the muzzle, but didn't have to be much of a frontier scout to figure out the sun would swing around about lunch time and lower some too. He could hear distant firing, but no one around seemed concerned. He'd learned himself that far-away concussions didn't cause much stir, even in an open-air roof-top bar in Saigon or on the air strip at Da Nang.

The gun crew was nowhere in sight; no one was. Frank had leisure to figure out how the field gun worked. His AIT platoon had enjoyed a long-ago peaceful Alabama morning on Artillery Orientation and the basics came back to him. He knew it was just a machine like any other, like parts of cars he'd worked on in high school, only bigger. He lowered the barrel, swiveled the housing, wiped down the interior. It really looked pretty good. It did shine. He'd worked up a sweat; it was easy. Everyone sweated all the time anyhow, no matter what.

The sergeant came back, sucking a toothpick, glanked down the bore, belched, and told Frank to go to chow.

The declining sun lit up the gloom within the huge shaft, yielding a ribbon of living light that vanished in the shadow somewhere toward the enormous silent firing mechanism. Frank wasn't there to see it, would never see the Howitzer again, had forgotten till now his morning spent in cannon-polishing in the welter of similar menial tasks and pointless hours that filled most of Army life till it was time to go home.

Looking at this older vintage cannon now in this city park, somewhere in the Mountain West, he recalled he'd imagined himself in his boredom -induced fantasy, skinny as he was, snaking himself down the barrel, a human cannonball, magically conniving somehow with the gun crew to touch it off, then sailing free, up and away from the mud and dreariness, across the ocean, landing untouched by the blast and the friction of his flight like a comic book superhero, in his yard at home. He remembered he'd glanced at the lunch-swollen belly of the nameless NCO, figured if anyone deserved to be shot from a cannon it was him, but didn't figure there was one ever made big enough. He knew there was nothing personal in the man's assigning him the job that day; Frank surely bore no lingering resentment. Where could the man be now? Older surely, fatter probably; still bellowing at anyone with less rank? Retired in all likelihood. Retired from a civilian job? Dead, probably, like many better and even lesser men than he'd been and that Frank had known in those years he'd grown up in a succession of barracks till at the end he'd made sergeant himself somehow.

He furtively patted his own gut, his shape at this age he'd reached not much different from that other man's then. But if there was a cannon built big enough to fit a man his size, it was this one. It was titanic. He'd seen a dozen towns with Civil War and World War I cannons in their municipal parks and in front of their city halls, but nothing like this. The enormous tube towered at a slant into the twilight, pointing away from the Victorian county courthouse, nearly as tall as the iron dome. Like the other town guns he'd seen on the road, this one too, was doubtless rusted and painted into immobility. He imagined if the barrel weren't filled with cement as he'd seen in many lesser guns, that it must act as a sort of foolish cistern, collecting water and debris with the years, unless the action was locked open, allowing accumulation to drain uselessly onto the pavement. Did these small town boys, like him he wondered, dream of being human cannonballs, disappearing from their town into the sky to be reborn somewhere else?

He remembered cannon fire was like he'd imagined as a boy himself, but far, far more than he could have ever guessed; louder, yes, much louder, but ferociously, inconceivably so: a thousand thunders, was how he'd thought of it finally. He'd seen and heard the gun crews at work, far more a team than any he'd ever seen in any game. This work rendered the made-up ethics of athletics pitifully trivial, as the men did the impossible, in bottomless mire, loading, firing then to coordinates they'd never

see, rupturing all creation around them to launch a far worse cataclysm to the invisible in an act of faith relying on the too-often hurried messages rasped from distant and unseen places. Only rarely did he hear ground soldiers meet the gun crews and forward observers to whom they'd spoken from some hilltop or jungle ravine, gratitude expressed over sometimes-cold beer. These men never saw the jobs they'd done, and worked at heavy loading only to have their work vanish in an instant's blast, and then the gun was empty again. He'd seen their hands, gloves not enough to shield them from the scorching metal, all for the emptying of it, that the tunnel be voided. A cannon was emptiness.

The elevation raised, the load varied, it was all the same once the firing command had been given, the round vanishing. In its unbelievable hellish fire and smoke and terrible percussion, they'd been taught to yell in the firing to save their ears, but no one could have ever heard.

Frank decided no cannon could be as empty as this—colder, deader. There was a bronze plaque set aslant in a block in front of the carriage that he guessed would have detailed the name, history, and measures of the thing, how the town had gotten it, how they'd moved the monster here. He wasn't curious, and it was dark; the flood lights at the bases of the trees on the lawn were directed only at the gun's grave, indecent fossil shaft. Old gentlemen enjoyed the evening on benches, boys on bicycles and skateboards swooshed or clattered past him in the summer night. He was a stranger in town, had rolled in, parked at the edge of this small town's square, idly turning off the highway an hour before, intrigued by the name. Could they have really named the town after the gun, or in its civic history decided that they somehow mysteriously owed the random traveler and themselves an iron colossus like this *because* of the name? He wondered what this generation thought about it; maybe, he guessed, they didn't notice it much anymore.

Someone, somewhere, sometime, Frank concluded, long before the gun became useless surplus, must've desperately, hopefully, patriotically imagined this would be the ultimate weapon, bigger than anything, irresistible, offering from its maw nothing but surrender, annihilation: nothing.

"And now look," he thought to himself, "just a big empty. Nothing," and wondered if he should find a place to stay for the night. He'd eaten, had then just followed the main street here where it ended at the middle of town. It was a nice town, had a good peaceful feel to it. He expected no surprises. He thought he'd enjoy riding back here to the park in the morning to sit on a bench awhile before going on. He turned his back to the gun to follow the walk away from the courthouse steps, his succeeding shadows swiveling in the row of old-time street lights as he passed each one. He hadn't noticed that the floodlights on the town's apparent pride were wrong, that the entrance to the building was in hopelessly deep shadow, the dark band of the cannon's tower bisecting the careful architecture. If he returned, he'd see if there were a figure of blind justice above the door, a draped angel against the sky at the pinnacle.

He was in Cannon City.

Norman Lanquist has published his poetry, prose and photographs since 1979 in the academic and specialized presses including the *VNG* (Nov '91; Spr '92), *Journal of Popular Culture*, *Goldsmiths Journal*, *Outlaw Biker*, *Iron Horse*, *Supercycle*, *In the Wind*, *Sucarnochee Review*, *Rocky Mountain Review*, and *body art* (Great Britain) A scholarly study on shamanism in biker culture appears in *Continuities in Popular Culture*, (1993) an edited collection from Bowling Green State University. As *Writer on the Road* he's read from his work at colleges, conferences, coffeehouses, bookstores and campgrounds from San Francisco, to San Antonio, from Sturgis to Montreal. In the late '60's he served in the US Army (Eleven Bravo MOS), for Sixth Army Command with courier duty to RVN and as funeral escort. He is a Harley rider, a member of the Brothers of the Third Wheel, the Easyriders Biker Hall 'o Fame, and the faculty of English at Eastern Arizona College. He has written a novel, *Long Roads*.



Figure 10. Climbing close to the trunk.

POETRY by RICHARD K. OLSON

READING SIDDHARTHA BY THE RIVER

(VIETNAM 1969)

This morning we crossed the river
we were looking for someone to kill,
and if not kill, then to capture,
and if not to capture to chase.
This morning we crossed the river
we were looking for someone to chase.

All we found was an old man singing,
drinking tea by himself in his hootch.
His hootch was built over the water
so the ducks could come in from the weather.
From the weather, and yes; from the war.
It seemed such a good way to live.
He smiled and offered us tea.

Later on in the hot afternoon
I sit under a coconut tree.
I am reading the life of Sidhartha
I am trying to find inner peace.
I am trying to balance the war.

Around me the soldiers are talking
they are making our plans for tonight.
"We'll go back to that hootch from this morning,
we'll set up our camp outside.
If we don't find some sort of action
perhaps we can have a good meal.
We can call in artillery fire
and blow up a woodline or two."

I shall sleep tonight by the river.
I shall listen to hear what it says.
I must learn to flow with the flowing.
I must learn to find peace from within.

SOME NIGHTS I PRAYED TO BUDDHA

I wanted to be a Buddhist monk.
before the Beatles came.
I practiced meditation
and bought a small prayer rug.
But when the Beatles came along
I started lusting in my heart
for a girl I wanted to know.

Years later I went to Vietnam.
The perfect opportunity I thought.
I had my buddy shave my head;

I practiced meditation,
and said the Four Great Vows.
In some ways it was easier:
there weren't many girls around
and the Beatles were breaking up.
At night I slept in the paddies
and tried to forget the war.

In the morning the sun would rise
and an old Buddhist monk down the road
would slowly come walking toward us.
I would always go out to meet him.
He carried his black umbrella,
I had my M16; we were both in uniform.
I wanted so much to talk—
but we couldn't understand one another
except when he got to the part
how we shot up his temple at night
and why couldn't we all just stop?
It's a question I've asked myself
so many times over the years,
but nothing in war makes sense.

Some nights I prayed to Buddha.
Some nights to Jesus Christ.
It's all the same for soldiers
whichever side you are on:
Lord see us all through safely
at least for one more night.
Lord let me get the enemy
before he gets me first.

A POEM ABOUT WAR

Our canteens are empty deserts.
Our bodies are empty vessels.
Can we know the taste of water
if we never are able to drink?

What can refresh one more
than to stop along the journey
on the road that life has to offer
even here, in the roadless jungle
under the midday sun
and drink large bowls of water
not a cloud or bird in the sky.

Unlike your mind which watches
the young American gunner,
your cohort, your friend and fellow
as he cuts off the ear of a VC,
and slipping it into his pocket
smiling looks around him.
But an extra ear in the pocket
does not improve anyone's hearing.

for those with ears left to hear
with a burst of machine gun fire.
A celebration, he says
of his twenty-first birthday. His last.

Vietnam is a piece of paper
that someone has torn in two.
To be empty. To be full.
To be at war. To be at peace.
We are all empty vessels
longing to be filled.
Dead men do not need ears, I think
They have heard enough of war.
It's the living who need to listen,
the living who need to hear
that a poem about the war should say peace.

NIGHT PATROL

(FOR WILLIAM ROBERTS)

We must love soldiers who have fought.
—Andre Dubus

Another sort of fall. Twenty years after the war,
and the war is still here sometimes.
It still drags on. Late at night
when my wife and daughters are sleeping
I stumble around the darkened living room
cupping my cigarette from the enemy,
looking for something I can never find.
I think of Hemingway, and how he once observed:
"In the fall the war was always there
but we did not go to it anymore." Truly.
Nor is there any need, the war now comes to us.
Down through the years, across the continents,
it follows us like a smell that we cannot escape;
like a life that we cannot bring back,
into our homes and into our minds
at night when we sit in the dark
in our tastefully appointed living rooms,
smoking our cigarettes, drinking our cans of beer.
We hear the sound of choppers,
the incoming rounds, the screams and the cries
of men and boys and women;
and even the water buffalo moan in the night.
I try not to make out their words,
I have heard them before...
I have made this rendezvous so many times.

And later, as the rain falls on the roof
I remember the monsoons,
that never ending rain of rain,
and the never ending rain of gunfire
pouring into my mind.
—But then a flash of lightning...
or was it some small missile
that opened up the room and night
for one long moment
and sent me back again,
and where the ceiling was:
a wide expanse of sky,
with nipa palm and jungle growth for walls.
And I heard Captain Harding say:
"Spread your people out.
Keep everyone alert; move slow,
and keep your asses down.
Circle up your wagons,
be on the lookout.
Ya'll done a good job out there
so take it easy.
Get all your weapons ready
and scan the woodline constantly..."

Back in my living room
my wife calls from upstairs:
"Is everything all right?"
I can not answer that.

"That war," I wonder, as I lie down on the couch
looking for cover, looking for the covers,
"what was it fought for?"
I close my eyes and try to sleep
before the morning light invades the room.

*Richard K. Olson, 128 Frontenac Ave., Buffalo, NY 14216.
Richard K. Olson lives and writes in Buffalo. In 1969 he
was a Combat Medic with the 9th Division, mostly in the
Mekong Delta, mostly trying to find his way from war to
piece.*



Figure 18. Tying boxes together.

POETRY by **TERESA A. WILLIAMS**

**CAPTAIN AMERICA, ALIVE
AND WELL DURING THE GULF WAR**

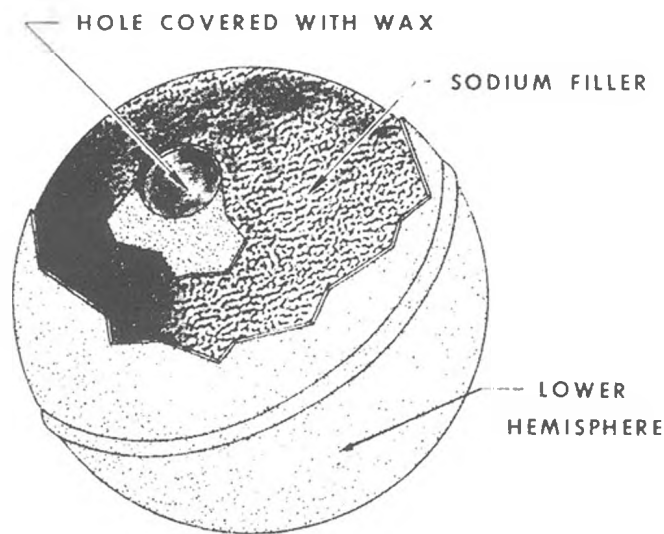
In a classroom on an Ohio campus
not far from Kent State—and no campus
is ever far from Kent State—I dwell on “America.”

Standing before my freshmen in my serviceable clothes
(jeans, white shirt, pink psychedelic
vest bought at the *Salvation*
Army for a dollar),
I watch their amused eyes identify me. “Old hippie
dopehead,” as I ask them to recall the mound of
Old Indian bones on which Fonda’s Captain America sat,
and to understand why he lamented, “We blew it.”

They smirk.

A young woman raises her hand
(she’s wearing a yellow ribbon),
and says she doesn’t “get it.”
“I mean,” she says—her eyes
dark and shiny like a puppet’s—
“do the people in the commune
pay taxes?”

Theresa A. Williams, 202 South Church St., Bowling Green, OH 43402.



SODIUM INCENDIARY DEVICE

POETRY by T. KILGORE SPLAKE

IN COUNTRY OVEN CLEANER

"Instructions"

wear rubber gloves,... do *not* spray
near eyes, nose, or skin, do *not* breath
the spray mist,... wipe hands clean with
wet sponge,... replace safety cap,...
wash hands thoroughly,... DOW CHEMICAL
COMPANY, Midland, Michigan,....

vigorously shaking the can, pushing
down the plastic lever, small beak spraying,

clouds of damp, steamy jungle mists,
howls of old men, cries of women, small
children, odors of burnt roasting flesh,
dark bloody river of crushed and twisted
sperm, bones, eyes, muted roar of incoming
copters, artillery from distant hills,

final cough, stale beer smells, reefer
fumes, black cordite clouds linger,

empty.

HENRY

"well, he never was in combat," ex-wife
whined,

it began like old high school party, trading
fatigue jackets, Jimi Hendrix records from the PX
for "rot-gut" manhood, bartering virginity with
Da Nang, "mamasans,"

soon choppers daily return, weighted down with
body bags, young casualties from far-off hooches
not even on a map, bits of firefight flesh, bones,
already stewing, unctuous, toxic liquor,

clipboard duty collecting dog tags, verifying
names, next of kin addresses,

slowly assembling a squad, platoon, unit, whole
division of pale camouflaged ghosts,

who would visit late nights, floating past the
alcohol vapors, sweet narcotic fumes, chorus of
soft voices, inviting Hank "to come on over."

*t. kilgore splake, Drawer 337, Munising, MI 49862. splake
lives in the Pictured Rocks in Michigan's Upper Peninsula
and recently had work published in the New York Quar-
terly, OnTheBus, Bouillabaisse, and Hammers.*

POETRY by DAVID TANGEMAN

GI NUMBER 10

Clustered,
We sat around
That New Year's Eve
1969

Listening to the radio
Countdown Top 40—
Stateside popular—
Where we were not.

In that Vietnam
Darkening toward midnight:
Thirty-nine; nineteen, fourteen,
Blasted down the charts.

We were Bravo's
Men in the rear (and
Maybe some Echo company grunts)
With neither ambush,
Patrol nor guard
To disturb our listening post.

"And now: Number Ten
On the Stateside Top 40
Countdown..."
Tension mounted
And bets were made
Over Rocky Raccoon:
"Who went to his room
Only to find Gideon's Bible."

A flare popped somewhere
That illuminated the green line
And was followed—one—
Two—followed three—
By artillery: outgoing.
Nothing in.

Coming to the final tune,
Nobody in Bravo's orderly room—
a wire-screened 2x4 hooch really—
Won bets that year
On the Countdown choice
of Stateside's number one...
"Now, *your* Number One
in the Midnight Hour:
"Sugar Shack."

ROUND YON VIRGIN

before the first xmas
green tracer bullets
inside the bamboo horizon
told us vietcong
watched

the platoon pointed east
marveled toward ambush
one click distant
following the compass
star

humped to bethlehem

beside the moonsilvered canal
bullets were born
round-after-round-after-
grunt shepherds
worshipped
round

that thin wisp of sinew
inspired heavens afar
head pushed hard against dirt
swaddled in blood
in death
cradled

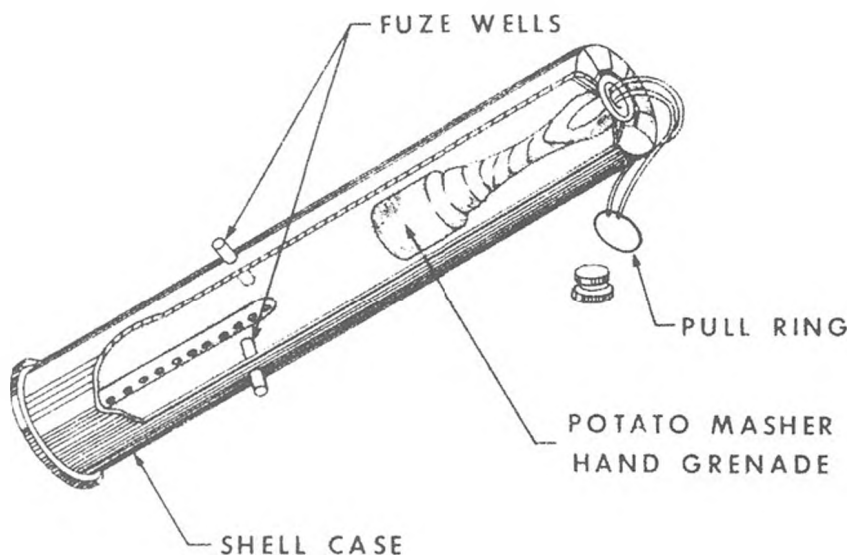
WHEN BRONZE URNS OVERTURN CONTENTS SPILL

Seated there
on a too small throne,
Emperor
within the Citadel
of Imperial City
Hue,
George Armstrong Custer
sat
enthroned like ancient Anamese
inside a Palace, his tent
pierced by red lacquer arrows:
heir by dust
crowned.

Smiling and
smelling of cinnamon-scented hair,
Custer addressed his Cavalry
there
beside the Perfume River
(filled now with bloated bodies)
lunar new year
Tet
1968.

"Boys," he said
from under his flowing
golden locks,
"the Natives don't like us."

*David L. Tangeman, 1229 SW Fillmore, Topeka, KS
66604.*



SHELL CASE MINE

My Life AS A MAN IN AMERICA

Mitch Grabois, 1206 Pine St., Key West, FL 33040.

I never saw my father. My mother took tranquilizers and watched soap operas all day.

I went to Viet Nam and got messed up. When I got back to the World, I walked around my neighborhood late every night looking for dogs to kill. I most liked killing large black dogs who came to their fences and growled and snarled as a way of protecting their homes.

I got my head straight and went to college. My professors were all the guys who didn't go to Viet Nam. I spent nine years in college, a real intellectual. When I got out, I got a job with the National Football League. My job was to count the players on both teams each play. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11. If there were 12, I was to throw a yellow flag. It was a good job, but I got laid off during the recession.

I went hitchhiking down the Information Superhighway. Lorena Bobbitt picked me up. I was already tired of seeing her tearful self on TV, but I needed a ride.

She said, "All men are rapists, all women are victims. The violence of victims is justified."

I agreed and disagreed. I wasn't a rapist, but I'd killed dogs. Sometimes in the middle of the night I'd awake in a cold sweat, having dreamed of Dobermans and blood on my hands. It was nice to know I didn't have to feel guilty any more.

I didn't say anything. Lorena was wearing a Mickey Mouse sweatshirt. I recognized it as the one she'd worn on the cover of *People Magazine*. Lorena was sharpening a knife as she drove, occasionally glaring in my direction. I'd seen that knife on television. The knife was already so sharp, it cut the air and the air bled onto the car's dashboard.

I put my hands over my crotch. I figured I could stand to lose a finger. I counted them, 1-2-3-4-5, 1-2-3-4-5. I felt nostalgic for my job, and thought of going back to college for a second Ph.D.

I got out of Lorena's car as soon as I could and ambled down the exit away from the Info Superhighway, slapping my cowboy hat against my leg to knock off the dust. Just beyond the end of the exit was a lone farmhouse. They were having a yard sale. The merchandise was impressive—half-eaten gingerbread houses made of Nutra-sweet, the eight volume autobiography of Rush Limbaugh (I counted the volumes, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8), a wall plaque reading *Home Sweet Home*, and a Bible translated from the Hebrew by the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. They also had a bicycle—a one speed with a coaster brake. It was rusty but seemed to work.

I set off down a country road. I saw cows, grass, and clouds. I was finding a rhythm when a redneck in a pickup truck drove past and tried to run me off the pavement. I flipped him the bird and he pulled out a large caliber pistol and fired several shots at me through his back window.

I fell off my bike and tumbled into a ditch. I heard the truck speed off. He had missed. I lay in the warm water at the bottom of the ditch listening to the insects, the cows, the rustling of the grass. I thought about the problems of the former Soviet states, and wondered if I could lend them any of the expertise I'd developed in my life as a man in America.

Mitch Grabois has been a green chain puller in a redwood sawmill, a staff member in mental hospitals, a teacher, and a counselor. He's been married for eighteen years and has two sons. He writes short fiction and is a regular columnist for Solares Hill, a Key West, Florida weekly newspaper.



BLEEDING



SCALING



GUTTING



SKINNING

Talking of MICHELANGELO

S. Frederic Liss, PO Box 433, Lexington, MA 02173.

Deeply cuts the knife, deeper and deeper into Malone's finger, until, blocked by bone, it clicks to a stop. Blood pools around the blade, then spreads over Malone's skin, sluicing into the crevices of his knuckles, around the side of his hand into the palm where it follows the lines, the life line, the love line, the money line, like rainwater in shallow gullies. Some blood drips on to the field grass where Malone kneels, adding color to the drab ocher of a hot, dry summer. Malone pulls the knife straight out, careful not to slice open the wound any further; then hands it to Minnie, Merisi Minifie actually, who wipes the blade on the grass and nicks his own finger, Minnie squozzes out a drop of blood and presses it into Malone's. The mixture, mostly Malone's, smears their fingers.

Malone raises his hand above his head to stop the bleeding, pointing a red-stained finger to the heavens in a sacred obscenity while Minnie wraps it in a handkerchief, ties it in a tourniquet. Malone's blood spreads through the white cloth, fiber by fiber, the exact shade depending on how dry or thick or fresh it is, how far from the source. The handkerchief reminds him of rags red from sopping up the blood of Christ in the crucifixion paintings the nuns made them study, blood from the wounds in His side, His hands, His feet, but not His finger, never His finger. Malone hated those paintings, more so now that he knows how difficult it is to recreate human blood on canvas with oils. The color on his palette, always over-mixed, would be too brown, too purple, too pink, or, once, too orange. Minnie, of course, never over-mixes his colors, but, in Malone's mind, a true artist never paints from someone else's palette.

Malone wipes his hands on the grass, staining it as if a wounded rabbit paused to rest before continuing its flight from a pack of dogs. Malone's father won't pay for art school, won't pay for any school where Malone can't study accounting, telling him over and over that people will always need accountants, that Brenda's father will always need an accountant, that you don't have to be too smart to make good money, either. It's my life, Malone wants to say, but how can you argue with a still life.

"Tell 'em tonight," Minnie rises and plows his way through the grass toward the stone wall which protects the field from up the road.

"Up yours." Malone gestures with his tourniquet, then follows in Minnie's furrow.

That evening, Malone tells his parents instead that he slashed his finger on a hubcap helping Minnie change a tire and his mother dresses his wound with gauze, adhesive tape and sympathy. By summer's end, when Malone and Minnie return to school for their senior year of high school, the scar will whiten into a tattoo, but, for now, Malone babies the wound as he readies the prize display at the booth in the amusement park where he works. The wheel of fortune mocks him as it does the players who bet their quarters on numbers, one through

ten, hoping that one of the two white lights or, if their luck were running hot, the single red light, on each wedge would light up a winner. Hit a white, win a can of wax beans, a box of crackers, some food item cheap in price, expensive in food value; hit the red, a case of soda, grape or orange, ginger ale or cola, root beer or cream; another winner at Malone's wheel of fortune if there can be one when the odds of winning a twenty-nine cent can of wax beans on a quarter bet is ten to one in favor of the house. Sometimes, depending on his schedule, Malone works the cigarette booth, the only one more popular than the grocery wheel. Malone prefers it because the prizes, packs or cartons of cigarettes depending on which color lights up, seem a more appropriate reward for gambling. President Kennedy's New Frontier has yet to penetrate Malone's amusement park.

Friday night beckons, always the busiest night of the week because it's payday in the mills and people crowd the booth, waiting for it to open. Summers working factory jobs have taught Malone how few quarters these people earn, these people whose only job skills were nimble fingers or a strong back, these stitchers, these shipping clerks, these punch press operators, these mill dollies his grandmother warned him about when he took his first factory job the summer he turned sixteen. "Did you warn my father, too?" Malone asked at the time, forgetting that his mother still worked in the same mill, at the same machine, as she had when she married his father. Malone wishes his mind had an on/off switch.

"Everyone's a winner tonight." Malone starts shilling the crowd before finishing the display. When he wants, Malone can make it happen; not because the wheel is fixed, but, rather, because the inventory system is too lax to track the prizes. As long as he doesn't give away the store, he can turn losers into winners. That's how he lost his virginity, a night of screwing with a mill dolly for a case of soda, orange. "Next week, grape," she said as he dressed.

About halfway through his shift, Brenda arrives, standing off to the side, occasionally playing the number ten, the only number she can reach because of the crowd. If it were the cigarette booth, Malone would slip her a few packs, Luckies for him, Kents for her, and, later, they'd smoke their amusement park cigarettes, perhaps in the field where he and Minnie merged their fortunes that afternoon, perhaps in the back seat of Brenda's car, a 1955 Chevrolet convertible, a gift from her father that came with her driver's license. Malone sensed the car would become a classic long before he had a son old enough to drive. Brenda wouldn't screw for a case of soda, holding out instead for a diamond. How many artists can afford diamonds?

"Meet you at The Depot," Brenda says, placing her bet right before the red ten lights up. A pizza joint named after its location, The Depot makes up for its lousy pizza by serving beer without discrimination to anyone who orders food.

"Anybody want this?" Brenda asks as she struggles with the case of soda, root beer, lowering it to the ground.

A tall man steps out of the crowd, not much older than Malone and Brenda, as pale as his undershirt, a

pack of Camels rolled up in his sleeve like an epaulet, (maybe James Dean didn't die in that car crash after all, Malone thinks), a wife and baby and stroller by his side, his other son in his wife's arms. He slaps a quarter in Brenda's palm and hoists the soda onto his shoulder.

Malone sees death in the man's eyes, death in the eyes of his two children maybe electronic assembly instead of textiles, but mills nonetheless, two children unlikely ever to see his paintings no matter how many he paints, no matter how famous he becomes, two children unlikely ever to need an accountant. Madonna with *Child in Stroller*, Malone imagines the painting would be called. "Place 'em now," he shouts. "She's spinning winners tonight."

"I thought you liked root beer," Malone asks Brenda later that night. He still tastes the ash of the burned pepperoni pizza from The Depot, a taste so strong three bottles of beer couldn't wash it away. They relax in her car, top down, parked on the dirt road bordering the field where he and Minnie became blood brothers, blowing smoke at the stars, creating their own Milky Ways. Brenda aims her smoke rings at the moon, transforming it into another Saturn. The frosting of her hair, caused by the sun and salt water of the season, flickers in the moonlight. Summer is Brenda's season. Malone taps down another amusement park Lucky on the steering wheel, wondering if Brenda sees any difference between an accountant who carries Luckies in his shirt pocket and a factory worker who rolls Camels in his sleeve.

"Minnie's thinking of going to college now, a hedge in case he doesn't take the world by storm." Brenda's cigarette, like an accent mark over a line of poetry, brightens with every third syllable. "You should too. My father said he'd take you into the business when you graduate."

"Buy me for your twenty-first birthday?" Malone turns on the ignition and the radio blasts forth with Woo Woo Ginsberg, live from Adventure Car Hop in Saugus, playing Joey Dee and the Starlighters' "Peppermint Twist." "Leave it," Malone shouts. "It's what the world expects of high school kids."

The summer rolls toward September measured by cases of soda and cans of wax beans, sex with mill dollies, arguments with Brenda, empty canvases on Malone's easel, an artist without portfolio. By Labor Day, college catalogs accumulate on the dining room table in Malone's house, more arriving with every mail, catalogs Malone never sent for, Babson and Bentley and Bryant, business colleges from all over the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states, business colleges without art departments. Malone lets them accumulate, unopened, unread. "Who's gonna pay?" his father asks, when Malone suggests he'll apply where Minnie applies, go where Minnie goes.

"Paint at night," Brenda says later that night as they smoke their amusement park cigarettes.

"Light's no good at night."

"My dad won't pay," Malone tells Minnie the next day.

Minnie hunches over his sketch pad, studying perspective by drawing pencil sketches of Henry Moore

sculptures, copying them from the photographs in Neumann's study of Moore. A brick holds Neumann's book open to photographs of Moore's 1939 *Reclining Figure* carved from elmwood and Minnie studies it through a dentist's magnifying glass strapped to his head. "The grain adds something you don't get with marble or bronze, don't you think?"

"Wood carving is for Boy Scouts is what I think."

"If you can't stand alone in front of the empty canvas, you might as well design greeting cards." Minnie sharpens his pencil and works close to the paper.

"I'd rather count beans." Malone leans against the work table. The scar on his finger glows in the morning light. He wants to speak, but Moore's *Reclining Figure* silences him, her woman's shape unrecognizable in isolation, but, as a unified whole, clearly a woman, not a wraith that would blow away with a summer breeze, but a woman in whose soft and copious flesh a man could find comfort and support. He imagines the wood coming to life, soft and silky like Brenda, yet hard and smooth and polished in a way that Brenda never was, never would be, a source of comfort and support, a source beyond anger, beyond jealousy, beyond life and death itself. That was Moore's genius, to create his own source of comfort and support, one that didn't depend on a red ten lighting up. The openings in Moore's sculpture beckon Malone and he wishes he could reach into the photograph to caress the wood, to trace the grain with his fingertips, to crawl inside Moore's sculpture and pull the wood over his eyes.

Several years later, in a corner of Minnie's loft, at a work table crowded with coffee cans filled with paint brushes, Malone mixes cerulean blue pigment with oil, stirs it to a stiff past consistency, then spreads it on a thick slab of plate glass. With a glass muller, he begins grinding the mixture into paint, twisting the knob of the muller until his muscles begin to knot up. When the mixture becomes a gruel, he adds a pinch of pigment to thicken it, then begins a second mulling, mixing in linseed oil and aluminum stearate, gathering and mulling, gathering and mulling, attacking the curds of paint individually, until the mixture approaches the smooth consistency of oil paint. His shoulder aches, a soreness that will linger two, three, maybe four days.

"Law school's for cowards," Minnie tells Malone's wife, Dinitia Marbury Madison. Minnie packs two meer-schaums with grass and lights one himself, inhaling the flame from the match head and exhaling a tapered stream of smoke. Viridian pigment streaks Minnie's face and, when he removes the hair net he uses when painting close to the canvas and shakes out his hair, he looks like a lion with tiger stripes.

"Law school'll keep him out of Vietnam."

"Damn it, Dinitia. Malone's got the talent. When will he realize that art offers no choice."

"There's not much demand for artists in Vietnam," Dinitia says.

"Here's to life in the pop-up toaster." When Minnie first saw Columbia Law School he said the building looked like a pop-up toaster and, now, that's his favorite way of riding Malone.

"I'd probably go to law school even if there were no war," Malone says. "It beats counting beans." He collapses into a chair by the window, somebody's discard rescued before the sanitation workers could pick it up, and flexes his shoulder. The soreness which comes from mulling paints makes him feel like a painter again. Maybe that's why he and Minnie have created this elaborate ritual, Minnie's begging him to come to the loft to mix paints, his resisting, pleading too many law cases to read, Minnie's becoming desperate, offering a meerschaum of grass as his fee, his acquiescing because they were college roommates, friends growing up together, blood brothers from childhood. Malone wishes they were back at the studio they shared in college. Below the window seat of that studio, spread out toward the Holyoke range like a thin liquid on the crust of the earth, were the athletic fields of Amherst College; rugby, lacrosse, soccer, and baseball. At this time of year, winter's darkness would be snuggling up to the snow that covers them. There are no playing fields outside Minnie's studio now, just security bars, a fire escape, and a brick wall. Thieves can't break in; Minnie can't break out.

Six years earlier, Minnie applied to Amherst College early admission, Malone in April after the acceptances and rejections had been mailed, submitting only a portfolio of six pieces, three oils, two water colors and a pastel, a copy of his high school transcript, and a letter explaining that his father would not pay for Amherst because it didn't offer accounting courses. A scholarship accompanied Malone's acceptance. Brenda enrolled at the University of Massachusetts, walking distance in nice weather, a walk Malone rarely made since he failed to impress the girls in Brenda's sorority. Malone met Dinitia while taking a course in Oriental Art at Smith College, falling in love with her because she read Flaubert in French, preferred Giotto to Monet, and made love with abandon. Malone's sole regret was that his mother felt like an immigrant at the wedding.

Now, Malone lights the pipe Minnie packed for him and the grass makes the ache in his shoulder three-dimensional. Malone imagines he can see through his shirtsleeve, through his skin, to his muscles which lie flaccid against the bone. Malone knows what his muscles look like. He studied human anatomy, figure drawing. He's also seen the war on television every night, the wounded soldiers being interviewed while waiting to be evacuated to Saigon for medical treatment.

Malone knocks some ash from his pipe and draws in the smoke, evenly so there will be no hot spots in the bowl. Smoke rises from the pipe and, with it, his anger at Minnie and Dinitia for arguing over his future like two cab drivers arguing over a fare. If they didn't argue about him, what would they talk about. Neither gives a damn about the fare.

"I've got a project for us." Minnie siphons the freshly mixed paint into tubes. "A series of oil paintings to illustrate T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.'" Minnie pastes labels on the tubes, then begins cleaning the muller and glass. Ever since Malone can remember, Minnie has used physical activity to occupy his body, liberate his mind. Malone prefers listening to

Bach or Mozart. "I'm going to start with 'I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.' Empty or full? Eliot never said and I haven't decided yet." Minnie puts the muller and plate glass in a dish drain beside the sink. "I've picked a line for your first painting: 'In the room the women come and go/Talking of Michelangelo.'" "They type who won't buy a painting unless their decorator approves?" Dinitia asks.

"Lawyer's wives, no doubt," Minnie replies.

Malone traps some smoke in his mouth so it can permeate his membranes, not exhaling until he's forced to breathe. Giving in to the calming effect of the marijuana, Malone surrenders and Minnie gives him easel space in the loft because there isn't enough natural light in Malone's apartment for painting. "Sunday afternoons," Malone says. "That's all I can spare."

As the talk drifts along, smoke from the two pipes heavy with debate about whether significant form can be conceived *ex nihilo* or merely found in nature and poorly copied packs down on them like blizzard driven snow.

"The insensitive artist becomes model-bound," Minnie argues.

"I think..."

"... it's time for supper," Dinitia interrupts.

"Marmalade and tea?" Minnie suggests.

"I'd rather truckburgers at Joe's." Malone falls out of the chair and stumbles to his feet, then steadies himself against the wall. Come on, Din-Din. Time for din-din."

Together, Minnie and Malone and Dinitia walk down New York's December streets, Dinitia between Malone and Minnie, their arms around her shoulders, hers around their waists. The wind off the river, channeled down the crosstown streets by the buildings, traps their voices in their throats. The air smells of snow, not the country snow of Amherst which overlays the campus like mulch on a garden, but city snow, snow which blackens as it falls, snow which is dirty before it hits the ground, snow which tastes like ashes. Winter is not a city season.

Two paintings, *Life with Coffee Spoons* and *Talking of Michelangelos* sit on their easels, their oils setting, awaiting a coating of damar varnish.

"My draft notice came today. Four weeks."

"Go to Canada," Malone says.

"I agree," Dinitia adds.

Minnie pushes his hair behind his ears. He still wears it styled like the mane of a lion. "There's nothing worth painting in Canada."

"You'll change your mind when they start shaving your head," Dinitia says.

"I'll carry my hair into combat." Minnie shrugs and his hair bounces. "I want you to babysit *Life with Coffee Spoons* for me."

"Damn it, Minnie." Malone's voice shakes. "Be rational."

"I can't go to Canada any more than you can't go to law school."

"It's not the same," Malone says.

Minnie hands Malone his parka, Dinitia her jacket. "I've got to start my next painting, *Etherised Night*."

Riding uptown on the Broadway local, Malone studies the graffiti which surrounds him, wondering about the biographies of the anonymous street artists who roam the subway yards with cans of spray paint, wondering how many of them could create *Life with Coffee Spoons* how many of them will go to Vietnam, how many will return. We all want to leave our graffiti on the canvas of time, he thinks, as he takes a marker from his pocket and scrawls 'Kilroy was here' on the wall beside the subway map.

"Minnie submitted *Coffee Spoons* and *Talking* to a juried exhibition without telling me," Malone announces one evening two weeks later. The new semester has just begun. "*Talking* took a Bronze and Minnie got an Honorable Mention. A collector offered me a thousand dollars."

"Don't take it."

"We need the money."

"If the right museum hangs you..."

"Are those my grades?" Malone opens the envelope with the University post mark. "An invitation to join Law Review. That's worth big bucks on Wall Street." He tosses the envelope on the desk.

"If you don't paint now, you won't until you're doing watercolors in Florida."

"Lawyering's no different than teaching art, except lawyers live better than art teachers."

With the waning of winter come letters from Minnie, the first from basic training with a lock of his hair and photographs from his haircut, side, back and top; then, letters from Vietnam, painter's letters full of descriptive detail about light that glows with humidity and color so intense it can be tasted.

With each new letter, Malone grows more envious. While Minnie inventories years of material for his painting, he studies the Parole Evidence Rule and tries to understand the difference between a counteroffer which varies material terms and one which varies immaterial terms. When he confesses his jealousy, Minnie replies that you have to earn the right to paint what you see, drawing a smiley face for a period.

"They're rioting on campus," Malone writes Minnie in late April. "'Close the school/Stop the war.' Wonderful slogan, don't you think. Students occupied most of the classroom buildings until outsiders from uptown calling themselves Harlem Mau Mau and claiming to represent the community evicted them. Mau Mau want to liberate Columbia. It'd all be a big giggle if the bastards weren't armed."

New York City police guard Low Memorial Library, Butler Library, while the faculty ring Havemeyer, Schermerhorn, Avery, Fayerweather, Mathematics, the other academic buildings, druids standing vigil. Inside, chairs and desk piled to the ceilings form barricades. Classrooms become bunkers, munitions dumps, command centers. Under siege, Columbia University shuts down, cowering before each new slogan hurled its way, paralyzed by its image of itself as a guardian of the values of Western civilization. The faculty and student body shatters into schisms, each trumpeting its own version of revealed truth. "It's like *The Battle of Algiers*," Malone writes Minnie.

Malone walks the campus, first with a camera until he's attacked by members of the Strike Coordinating Committee who accuse him of spying for the University, then with his painter's eye, concentrating on faces, cataloguing lips and mouths and cheeks, all twisted in fear, exploding with anger. "I know the faces Rubens knew in *Fall of the Damned*," he writes Minnie. "I stand with Carpeaux as he sculpts his *Ugolina* Have I earned the right to paint what I see?" Minnie doesn't answer.

"They've canceled the semester," Malone says in another letter. "We all get P's for Pass. All that studying down the drain."

"It's a food march," one of Malone's classmates tells him as they stand outside the law school across Amsterdam Avenue from the main campus shortly after midnight on the last Monday of April. Malone has wandered up to campus to gather material for another letter to Minnie.

"Strike Coordinating Committee dreamt it up. Mau Mau's providing security," Joel Westin, a second-year student, says. "They accuse Columbia of trying to starve the protesters out of the buildings."

A long column of marchers shouting "Let them eat!" snakes through the campus, testing for weak spots in the faculty blockades so they can break into the buildings and deliver their supplies. In the courtyard formed by Earl, Lewisohn, Dodge, chanting begets taunting and taunting begets violence, punching and kicking and pulling of hair, sophomoric violence until blood is spilled and bricks are thrown; but the food is turned away.

The Mau Mau divide into small groups, no longer taking direction from the Strike Coordinating Committee and swarm over the campus, picking off students and faculty one by one, all white, all left like so much debris to be swept up by the Sanitation Department in the morning. Malone records the visuals in his memory, mentally cross-referencing them with paintings of mob scenes he had studied in his college art courses. Daumier's *Uprising* comes to mind, but Daumier's mob of workers had a purpose, a sense of quest, which leaped from the reproduction in his text book. Is that what Daumier really saw, Malone wonders, or did he paint from imagination. Were the insurrections which rocked Paris during the nineteenth century really like that? Daumier's mob differs so greatly from the mob now surging back and forth along the Columbia campus, a mob which has no logic, no free will. Only Goya could paint such a mob, Malone now realizes, the later Goya. The Goya of the engravings. Gradually, Malone's envy of Minnie dissolves, chewed up by the random churning of the mob. I've earned the right to paint this, Malone thinks, the right to try and emulate Goya. Suddenly four Mau Mau jump a student and pin him to the Amsterdam Avenue gate across from the law school, beating him, destroying for Malone whatever detachment he had. Without hesitation, Malone races across the street and disables one with a kick to the groin, another with vicious hand slaps to his ears.

"Suck my shit," a third says as he cracks Malone across the side of his head, then the top, with a police nightstick. Collapsed in the gutter, Malone protects his

head and face with his arms, his groin by curling into the fetal position, and as he slips toward unconsciousness, the chanting, the joyous chanting of the Mau Mau while they beat his head, kick his sides, fades in and out of his mind like a recording with dead spots. His rage at the joy in their voices keeps him alive. The pounding stops, but soon begins again. Light blinds him, perhaps the sun. He tries to rise, but hands gently restrain him. "Where?"

"St. Luke's Hospital."

Malone closes, then opens his eyes, squinting. Only then does he realize that his left eye is bandaged. He searches for his head with his fingertips, touching it gently, afraid it will collapse if he presses too hard. Malone blinks again and opens his mouth to speak, but lapses into unconsciousness before any words come out.

The next time he awakens, a nurse, blurred and out of focus, hovers over him. "My eyes."

"Your vision should clear. There's no indication of permanent damage to your eyes."

"The other student?" Malone asks.

"Intensive care. He'd be dead if it weren't for you."

While Malone lies unconscious for a second night, the Tactical Police Force, the elite squad of the New York Police Department, armored in riot gear, mounted on horses, charge College Walk and sweep the campus, herding the students down Broadway beneath Malone's bedroom where Dinitia lies awake, protected from the chaos by venetian blinds and plate glass.

On the third day, Malone awakens to Dinitia hugging herself, weeping into her shoulder. When he stirs, she bends over him, nestling into his shoulder and neck as if they were lying in bed together, her body twisted like an open pretzel.

"Easy girl," Malone whispers, trying to soothe her with his voice. "It'll be all right."

She shakes her head and continues crying. Now her tears are no longer the small, silent tears of unhappiness; but rather the loud, wracking sobs of sorrow, the type of tears which burn into the soul like hot peppers on the tongue. Nothing Malone says can comfort her and his body shakes with the force of her sobbing. As he strokes the side of her neck and cheek, a strange emptiness fills him and he knows that Minnie is dead and that Dinitia's tears are for Minnie, not for him.

"How'd it happen?" Malone's arm tightens about her.

"Killed on patrol. His father called last night." Dinitia soaks him with her tears, crying for both of them as he lapses back into unconsciousness.

Day by day, Malone's vision clears until, during what would have been exam week if the University were open, he is well enough to be released from the hospital. They take a cab to their apartment even though the one-way streets make the ride four times longer than the walk.

"His folks insisted," Dinitia explains when Malone sees Minnie's studio supplies in the living room. The easels sag against the wall.

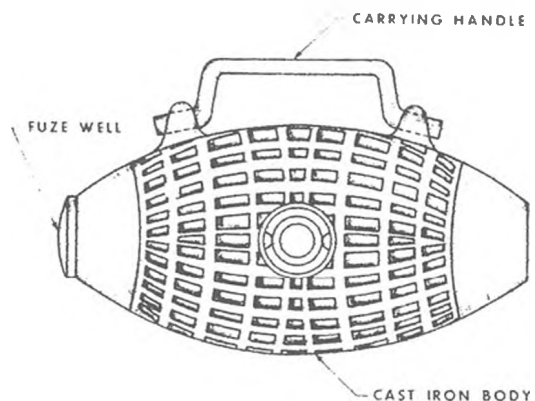
Dinitia brews coffee and, as they sit together on the couch, she tells him that she'll understand if he drops out of law school. Malone lets the steam slide up his cheeks. *Life with Coffee Spoons* leans against the wall opposite him, some empty, some full, some a little of each.

"I really will," Dinitia says, her voice rough around the edges.

Malone rises, shakes off Dinitia's offer of support and takes an umbrella from the closet to lean on. He fills his brief case with paint brushes, his and Minnie's.

"No," he tells Dinitia when she volunteers to accompany him. "I'll be all right." He hobbles toward the door, then rides the Broadway local downtown to South Ferry, not bothering to switch to the Express at 96th Street. The graffiti now offends him, but he can't escape it. Changing cars, changing trains, would do no good. Kilroy is everywhere. At South Ferry, he pays his nickel and boards the Staten Island Ferry. In the stern, a violinist, her case open for contributions, plays some Bach, pausing to untangle her hair when the wind tangles it in her bow and violin strings. The waves are choppy and whitecaps accompany the boat like seagulls hoping for handouts. Malone opens his briefcase and takes the brushes, one by one, the watercolor brushes, the bristle brushes, the oil-painting brushes, the badger brushes which Minnie called "sweeteners," the single-stroke brushes, the fan brushes, the lettering brushes, all the brushes one by one, and breaks them into twos and throws them piece by piece by piece, into the waters of Upper New York Bay where they are greeted by the white caps as if they were returning home after a long absence. In the stern, the violin resumes, a movement from Bach's *Third Orchestral Suite*. Malone glances at the violinist. Her eyes are closed and she is absorbed in music which she so obviously loves. He hobbles over and drops five dollars in her violin case. Musicians have an advantage over artists. Paying them doesn't dispossess them of their art. When Malone returns to the railing, the brushes are gone.

S. Frederic Liss has had several short stories published or accepted for future publication in 'small' magazines such as The Worcester Review and the South Carolina Review. He has attended the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference on two occasions, and has studied creative writing with Pamela Painter at Harvard University Extension School. He tells us that he is at work on a third novel while he searches for a new literary agent to replace the one who abandoned him recently. He graduated Amherst College and Columbia University School of Law and practices law in Lexington, MA. He's married and has three children.



MELT DOWN

Frederick Cardin, 408 N. Rankin St., Appleton, WI 54911.

It was by the spin of a barrel that life was taken, given: in a drawing that he and Kohler watched together on television in December 1969, John Graham's birth date was assigned the number 5 in the first selective service lottery. Kohler's birth date drew the number 303.

In March 1970, Graham, having lost the sweepstakes of destiny, boarded a bus to Milwaukee. "Bend over, spread 'em!" he had shouted when he got the order to report for his preinduction physical. "Not just any sphincter qualifies for the U.S. Army."

Six-foot-two, 205 pounds of solid muscle, Graham, after spreading 'em, was pronounced 1-A prime fodder. In July he urinated on his draft notice and mailed it special delivery to Richard Nixon, The White House, Washington DC. In June, his father had given him a new Mustang as a graduation present. Graham had sold the Mustang and bought an old Ford van, dented and rusted. He packed his two suitcases and hung an American flag upside down inside the van's rear windows. Graham drove alone to Alberta.

The morning he left for Canada, standing with Kohler and Helen in front of the apartment he'd shared with them in Madison for two years, Graham had said, "Nothing ahead, nothing behind."

Helen was Graham's younger sister. She watched the van until it was out of sight.

"Is this really happening?" she said. "Have the last two years been real?"



Kohler was standing in the kitchen. It'd been maybe a half hour since he took the tiny purple tab—purple haze, Graham had called it. Out on the porch roof Helen and John, seated on metal chairs, gazed down at what little there was to see from a second-floor apartment near the campus in Madison. There were no trees, only parking meters, lining this street of sagging wood houses. Rows and rows of these houses, two- and three-story, paint faded and peeling, attics full of bats, formed a ghetto of sorts south and east of the university. Kohler was trying to remember why he'd come into the kitchen—what happened next seemed connected to the energy release of his mental effort: waves began rolling across the floor, lifting the little black squares of linoleum up into his face. Kohler lost his balance, then panicked—he was large enough that what ensued might have been called a stampede.

"Where are the gingersnaps?" Helen asked, her voice betraying concern, as he reappeared suddenly on the porch roof.

"Write that down and I'll try again," Kohler said, feeling at once calmed by Helen's voice.

It was May 1970, not long after the week of rioting that had followed Nixon's invasion of Cambodia and the killing of students by soldiers at Kent State. There had been riots everywhere. The final weeks of classes at the University of Wisconsin had been canceled and the campus occupied by two thousand soldiers of the Wisconsin National Guard. Broken glass and the ash of burnt barricades littered the streets; windows of banks and stores were boarded and spray-painted with slogans; and for days to come the warm spring rains would rinse from the leaves of trees a residue of tear gas that would burn Kohler's cheeks like the pricks of hundreds of fiery needles.

Kohler and Graham were to receive their diplomas in the mail. Kohler, though he'd spent his first two years as a math major, had earned a degree in history, magna cum laude. Graham had been a political science major. Helen was two years from graduation and Kohler intended to stay in Madison with her until she did graduate—he was to start work next week as a driver for the Yellow Cab Company.

Graham had done LSD before, but Kohler and Helen never had, had never even thought about doing it until Graham surprised them that afternoon with the purple tabs, which he'd taken from a small envelope. "My treat," he had said. "Our own private graduation party, and Nixon and Kissinger aren't invited... though I wouldn't mind slipping them some of this."

Kohler sat beside Helen on the porch roof watching blood-red tulips in front of a white house across the street swell and burst to a sound track of pops and hisses. Traffic tumbled by at warp speed, and freaks, some gaudy in rainbow shirts and purple pants, some drab in bib overalls, followed their shadows up the sidewalk. The late-afternoon light grew dazzling white, then deepened and burned like fire as the sun reached rooftops. It was as the cobalt liquid of evening began pouring from between houses that Graham stood up and stretched himself.

"I can fly," he said, and bounded to the edge of the roof.

"No!" Helen shouted.

Graham laughed.

"I suppose you'd rather we used the stairs," he said with mock contempt.

Graham, the veteran tripper, led the way down the dark, narrow staircase at the side of the house. The screen door flopped shut behind them, the old wooden porch rumbled beneath them.

"State Street," Graham said, and set off in that direction as if he had some idea of what he was doing.

Strolling the carnival of State Street, with its pan-handlers, loiterers, babblers and entertainers, smells of incense and marijuana, music from apartment windows above stores, Kohler felt himself no more assailed than usual. State Street lit by a purple haze, he decided was little different than State Street on any other night.

They went into a shop on a corner, its walls, like the intersecting streets, not perpendicular. A girl in blue jeans, wearing a vividly stained apron, fixed them ice cream cones—coming in here, into the buzzing fluores-

cent light, had been Helen's idea. Kohler didn't want an ice cream cone, couldn't remember asking for one, but the girl handed one over the counter to him anyway, two big scoops of mocha-something already beginning to melt.

Later, up on the Square, after circling the flood-lighted dome of the Capitol several times, Graham stepped suddenly in front of Kohler and grasped his shoulders.

"I am you... and you are me..." he said, earnestly, as if he believed he were really onto something.

"Stop it!" Kohler said, jerking away from Graham's grasp and the pale mask of his doomed face.

Some minutes later, on State Street, in front of a tavern with boarded windows, Helen was the first to notice that Graham was missing.

"John?" she said, stopping and turning completely around. "Where did he go?"

Kohler, trying to reply, discovered that his mind was gone.

"Was... a minute ago... must've gone restaurant or something."

"You okay, Tom?"

Kohler shook his head.

"You'll be okay," Helen said, taking his hand in both of hers, leading him on to the library mall. They looked by the fountain. Graham wasn't there. They crossed the street to the Student Union and went out back by the lake. The dark drifted over the water like a mist.

"Let's go home," Helen said.

They did. Graham wasn't there either, though Kohler wasn't sure if they were looking for him anymore.

"We're alone," Helen said tenderly. "Know something?"

Kohler shook his head.

"I didn't take any acid. I spit it out."

"Good!" Kohler said. "Wish... I had too. Fucking stupid."

Moments later they were naked in bed, Helen on top, lowering herself onto Kohler. The bedroom walls were dissolving around them, melting down like hot wax, leaving trails of sparks, only to reappear solidly in all their bleakness. A crack in the ceiling opened to let Kohler see the sky. He could not feel Helen's flesh, only her bones. He longed for her warmth.

Outside again—Helen had helped him dress—they moved past rows of houses that whispered though their windows were black and lifeless. On a wind Kohler could not feel pale blue smoke streamed across a flat glowing sky from the tall smokestack of the university's power plant. Helen led him to a garden on the side of Bascom Hill where they sat in the cool grass necking like teenagers, a small garden thick with the smell of honeysuckle.

When they got back to the apartment, near dawn, Graham was sitting in the living room eating from a plate piled high with scrambled eggs, sausage, and fried potatoes. Something was playing very quietly on the stereo, flute and harpsichord—Bach.

"Where were you?" Helen asked.

"By the lake... watching ducks. They have it so easy, floating around, people come and throw them scraps of bread."

"We looked all over, couldn't find you, John—you just disappeared without a word."

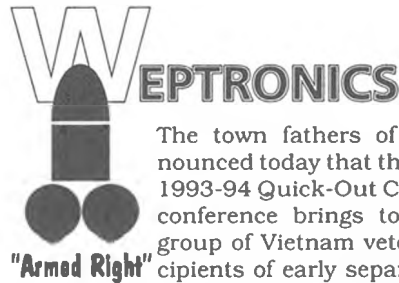
"Another month or two and I'll really be gone."

"Don't say that. Please, don't."

There was something tragic, pathetic, incongruous about Graham, with his pale, rather narrow, womanish face, delicate nose, thin lips, long thick hair, fine and dark; large, sensitive eyes, also dark, looking down from the tall, powerful athlete's body. Graham with his number 5 like a terminal illness.

Kohler kicked off his shoes, went to bed and slept for a while, dreamed he was flying in the brightest blue sky he'd ever seen. He awoke to find Helen asleep beside him, her arm across his chest. He covered her hand with his and then closed his eyes again, for the morning light was dull and yellow, something that smoldered and ached in his head.

Fred Cardin grew up in Wisconsin and graduated from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1970. He worked for the UW physics department until 1975 and then lived in Southern California until 1988. While living in California he wrote a novel. He makes his living driving a city bus.



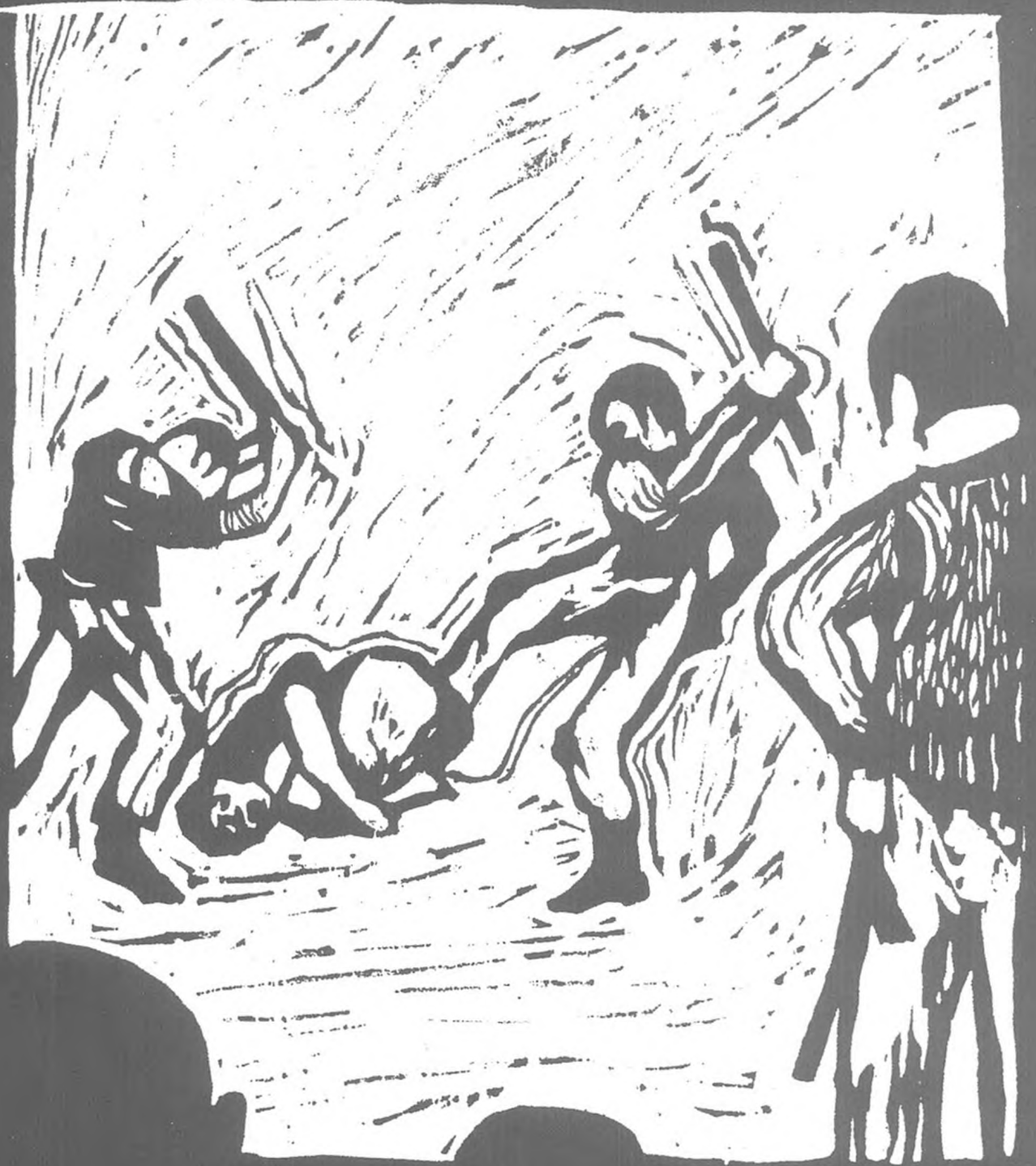
The town fathers of Muscatine, Iowa, announced today that they are proud to host the 1993-94 Quick-Out Conference. This annual conference brings together a multi-service group of Vietnam veterans who were the recipients of early separation from the service after their tour in RVN.

You'll attend workshops like "The 24-Hour Decompression," "Trauma and Tea," or the ever-popular, "Sorry, Mom, I Thought You Were NVA." Watch the parade of proud veterans hit the deck as the Shriner Asram Temple Artillery backfires its way into your heart.

Hear service reps tell all assembled why it was necessary to discharge veterans in such haste. Buy t-shirts emblazoned with the conference logo: FOR THE GOOD OF THE SERVICE. Listen to the VA announce "Not service connected" to all petitions for assistance.

Meet Tommy Ormond, Pvt. USMC and hear his heartwarming story. Tommy was discharged in-country, in a bunker in Ca Lu so that the service could save even more money. Hear how he made his way back to his home. Hear about his wonderful job at the post office.

See if they will let you off at the stamping mill. Plan to attend.



WITH BLACK

POETRY BY JEANNE BRYNER

MRS. O'DONNELL'S JOURNAL ENTRY
OCTOBER 24, 1991

I sometimes wish you'd send me one more letter,
Jimmy. It would begin: "Army meatloaf's too greasy;
nobody makes gravy like you do Mom."
You'd explain how it is that a drill sergeant persuades
you to do a hundred sit ups, run laps in the rain
with a rifle over your head, while I couldn't make you
pick up your underwear.
You'd mention welts on forearms,
your neck, your back from Vietnamese insects
that you're unable to name.

I'd prefer this letter home have cadence, straight
lines, a rhythm I could somehow memorize. Then I'd
chant it while I walk these seven empty rooms
remembering your undecided face, families clustered
at the airport, dressed up, fiddling with farewells.

In one paragraph, I'd like you to tell me your sister,
Sara, can have all six Beatles albums
and your class ring.
I'd request a couple of sentences saying,
"Thanks for the snapshot of you and Aunt Grace;
the paisley scarf's pretty over your red sweater.
Mom, don't look so serious; you'll get wrinkles."

Somewhere in that letter home, I wish you'd say,
"Eastern sunsets move like pink shadow puppets;
over here, people ride bikes everywhere;
this ocean's bath water warm."
I'd need you to lie to me again, tell me,
"Everything's fine; the chocolate chip cookies were swell,
all the guys say thanks."

I'd want you to swear
dying doesn't hurt,
that your left boot
barely grazed the mine,
that exploding's
like floating on a raft,
that there wasn't time
to scream,
or blink my face,
or think your father's.

I'd like you to say heaven's a big blue dog;
boys go there to ride bicycles. Boys who are eighteen,
nineteen, twenty. They race each other every day;
they are shadow puppets in sunsets.

*Jeanne Bryner, 3209 East River Rd., Newton Falls, OH
44444. Jeanne Bryner teaches poetry workshops in
grade and high schools.*

HAND SIGNALS

Scott Goetchius, 12 Bliss Road, Unionville, CT 06085.

You can lose your edge in the suburbs. There's softball,
and barbecues, and convenience stores. There's also
house plants and pets. Time is the rule. Landscaping is
also big. Men get their exercise in gyms and women do
things with their hair. Together they exchange outward
glances, and they do it fashionably. There's television,
that dripping claw of a disconsolate beast. The assassins
are objective there and whoremongers lead the caravans
into the city. Vets stand wailing at The Wall. Fuck that.
I remember when we had it by the balls. Don't you? Good
for you if you went for glory. You couldn't miss it. Besides,
what other reason was there? The dead guys are in god
and god is in the hearts of heroes, all heroes. There are
heroes everywhere. Don't you remember laughing in the
face of the inevitable disaster and spitting in that Cyclops
eye?

What do you do now when your adrenaline kicks in on a
Wednesday morning and needs two days and nights to
burn. Your family lends support when you're in no mood
to borrow. The crosswalk guard doesn't understand, but
the kids eat it up. Those powerslides, and that 'Come on
you sons-a-bitches!' rebel yell. Where do you go when the
radio is silent.

Find yourself in the corner with your back against the
wall holding the automatic and waiting for the world to
rush in. The grocery clerk found me there. She told me
that if I waited a minute she'd mark down the item in my
hand. I asked her to forgive me. I just wanted to hold Mi
Ling by the ass against my body and charge across the
galaxies like a shooting star, tumbling madly through the
universe, a praise of electric rock. Old sun, young sun.
Dying and being born. Another and another, and on and
on and on. The explosions. I just wanted to be a super-
nova. I wanted to be seen and heard, and I wanted to eat
it up.

So we get fast foods and transmission shops and a rent
past forty. We get weekend trips to the beach where the
sea will still be pounding when monuments have
crumbled into sand. Lest we forget that the children won't
remember. Vacation is a wonderful thing, especially the
long exhausted drive home past cornfields and develop-
ments.

People are funny. They want to be led and they like to be
served. They want it done by those who are willing and
they don't give a damn about those who were. They expect
it, actually, without any idea what Johnny can do to them
before he goes marching home again. And, the crowds at
the parade are good. I hand around by the balloons and
warn the clowns. "Don't stay here," I tell them. "Move on."

POETRY by THOMAS A. Gribble

CARPE DIEM: TAN SON NHUT 1972

Wiping Saigon from my face
I wait for the Old Man
To strap a rocket to his ass
Passing peacock laughs
Flashes a peace sign
Climbs tight skin delta winger
Combustion scorches tarmac
Screams him smaller
My thoughts collect
Under black wings
Icarus speed of sound dot
Shot at the Sun
I wonder if he'll burn.

*Thomas A. Gribble, 707 W 6th Ave., #12, Spokane, WA 99204. Thomas Gribble is originally from Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He's lived in Asia, Europe and all over the US. He was recently published in **Coffeehouse Poets' Quarterly** and selected for publication in **The Olympia Review**.*

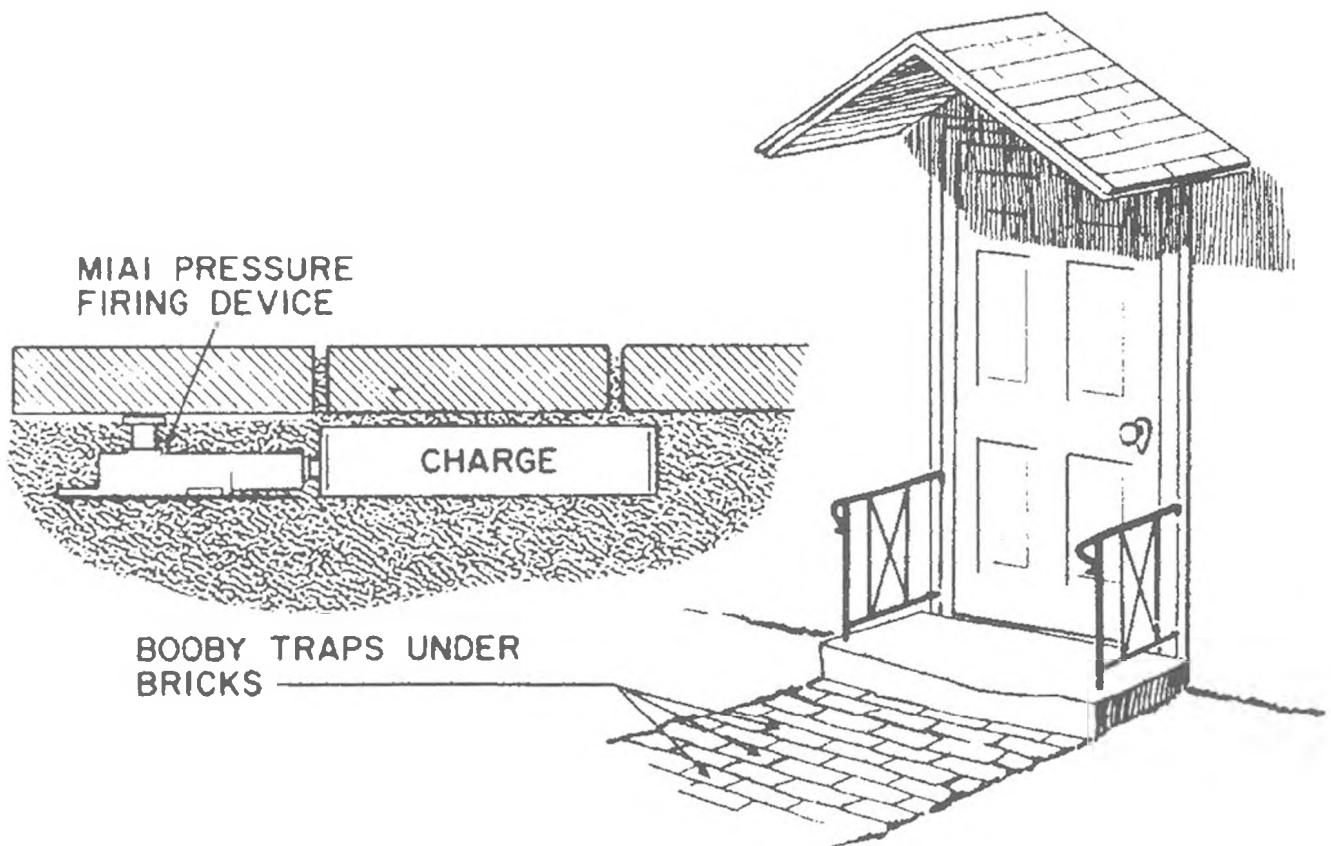
POETRY by DAVID L. ERBEN

My MEMORIES ARE POLLUTED CRATERS IN

My memories are polluted craters in
Sheer sides under sodden fields;
When it is not heat it is wind,
Neither of which will stop at bolted doors:
One will soak clothing and the other rattle
Dreams within sleep it fouls but cannot break.

Braced against the blowing mist
I walk among ridges of ruined stone;
What humbles these fields has raised
An arrogance of blood and bone,
And thrown the fowl upon the wind,
And lit the wolves in the desolate ground.

David L. Erben, English Department, CPR 326, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620.



AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH GRAY

Tony Williams, *Cinema & Photography, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-6601.*

Screened on Kentucky Educational Television during 1992, and featured in the University of Notre Dame's December 1993 conference, Vietnam: In Peace and War, Joseph Gray's Ambush is a modest, but compelling, film deserving wider distribution. Shot on a modest budget by Somerset Kentucky director, Gray, Ambush attempts a serious look at veteran trauma and the deceptive nature of narrative storytelling far more ambitious than most big budget productions.

Serving in Vietnam as a combat medic in an infantry group, Gray has made a low-budget film placing the audience in the position of a traumatically disturbed veteran. This character is never seen but spoken to in flashbacks. By this method, Gray wishes to place the audience in the veteran's perspective aiming to instill both sympathy and responsibility for the effects of a war still continuing. The method resembles one used by another veteran, scenarist-director Patrick Duncan in 84 Charlie Mopic (1989). But what makes it more compelling is Gray's intention to stimulate audience awareness, work towards an active position, and to continue representing Vietnam as a still-relevant political and historical event within American society. Joseph Gray spoke to the author during his guest lecture and presentation at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale during November 1993

Q. When were you in Viet Nam?

A. Three days before Thanksgiving 1968 to five days before Christmas 1969. I went back in January 1970 and spent the next five months as a free-lance civilian "stringer" journalist. I left sometime in June 1970.

Q. What did you originally do in Viet Nam?

A. I was a medical aid man to Bravo Company, First 506 Infantry Regiment, Third Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. We were in I-Corps, the northern part of I-Corps, just west of Hue, near the infamous Ashau Valley. Interestingly enough, when I returned a year later as a reporter, I went back to my original unit to do a news story, and it was exactly the same experience. In the monsoon season, the American troops would go and set up fire bases because it was too wet for the choppers to fly in. They'd start dropping off around January-February, and they'd start pushing back towards the Laotian border.

The interesting feature of the 60-70 period was that 69 saw the presence of many draftees who'd previously had student deferments. So it was as if the educational quota of this company had rises a couple of grade levels. I went back and there were all these guys who had dropped out of graduate school or finished college and got drafted. The year before, my line company was mainly

composed of poor whites from the South, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Blacks and working class whites. There's a book called *The Working Class War* which is a good analysis of the class composition of the American Army in Viet Nam. Of course, wars have always been fought by the poor throughout history.

Q. What gave you the idea of doing *Ambush*?

A. Several years ago—about 1981—I was involved in a documentary at Appalshop on Appalachian Viet Nam veterans. A study revealed that Appalachian vets had a higher casualty rate than other veterans principally because the tests that determined what job you got in the military were biased against several draftees who indicated a preference for being outdoors and using weapons. They're simple questions. But answer honestly and say you enjoy the outdoors, you end up in the infantry. Because the Appalachian vets are so accustomed to hunting, they were put in the position of the greatest danger, walking point and carrying machine guns—doing things that would necessarily draw fire. For similar reasons, there was a higher proportion of black and Hispanic casualties.

So we did this documentary, *War Within*, about Post Traumatic shock and the Vet Centers that were opening up in the early 80's. I went back to look at it four or five years afterwards and the master wouldn't play and the original tapes were lost. It was a very revealing work and its loss triggered my interest in doing another cinematic version. That combined with a disgust with this whole spate of films that came out in the Reagan era—this *revanchist* cinema—that tried to portray Viet Nam as some sort of heroic struggle with the American soldier as liberator or victor. So I wrote *Ambush* to reveal what kind of wars vets were really fighting within their own psyches.

I was also very interested in making a film that dealt with today as opposed to 20 or 30 years ago, a film that deals with the reality of the veteran's ongoing struggle in civilian society as opposed to the danger he encounters in the jungle. There's a great deal of similarity between what veterans carry within them and the experience of combat in Viet Nam. In both cases the enemy is invisible, unknowable, and increases its power because of that dimension. The whole motivation was that, being a vet, I had a great need to communicate my experience. There's this myth that vets don't want to talk about Viet Nam and, therefore, they're quiet and repress their experiences. That's a myth that serves the dominant civilian culture that doesn't want to admit its role and responsibility in that war. The vets do, indeed, want to talk about their experiences, not for the sake of recounting a glorious adventure but to try to understand, exactly, what they did in Viet Nam, their position in history, and their position within a universal moral framework. This particularly concerns their position *vis a vis* "service to their country"—which is why we were all told we went, but turned out to be a pernicious lie, the war was a great disservice to this country as well as Viet Nam.

For the combat veteran their moral quandary is particularly onerous because its more immediate in

terms of fundamental questions of life and death, not simply whether you live or die, but whether you take a life or not. A lot of vets talk about defending themselves. I think that's the code under which everybody operates. But once you get in a combat situation, the heat of battle takes over, and rational thought is driven out. Then its only afterwards in the balance of your life when you've got time to think that you begin to ponder things of long ago. My motivation was to share with the public—not so much the veteran community -what underlies veteran traumas, why we have such "problems." I wanted to demonstrate that this is something not idiosyncratic with Viet Nam veterans. Its common with all veterans.

My brother was in World War II. He never talks about it. Its the same characteristic. But, among the veterans, somebody who shares the experience and knows what he talks about can, probably, unfold himself. Most veterans do. At some critical point of their lives they do understand it and get a frame of reference on it—indeed, a political interpretation of it—that is still being debated -so many Viet Nam veterans are still adrift, psychologically as well as literally. There are a lot of suicides among veterans. Homelessness is rampant. A lot of it has to do with a society unwilling to acknowledge its own evil.

There's no ceremony in American society for the returning warrior as there were in ancient societies. In Phoenician society all the soldiers used to march down to the beach and throw their armor in the sea. Then there would be great celebration because it was a very important act in their society. Native Americans had similar returning ceremonies for their warriors. There have been Viet Nam veterans who've used Native American techniques like sweat lodges to try to work through their trauma. Veterans are trying to deal with it in the way that society allows them forming associations, having reunions, trying to reconstruct the sense of unity that saw them through the war. It is easier for the Vet to acknowledge the reality of the war, of losing the first American adventure abroad than it has been for the civilian public.

Q. What was your overall budget for *Ambush*?

A. We made *Ambush* with about \$150,000. Its a cash budget. We probably had the value of another \$50,000 in terms of accommodation. People in Somerset lodged our cast and crew. Local vendors supplied food and refreshments. We were loaned a warehouse which was used as a studio. So we got a lot of support from the local community and from the actors and crew who worked for less than industry standards. For that I'm very grateful. I think it was a good experience for the community and the crew. I put the crew together from people in Kentucky. The actors were all from Kentucky or had roots from the professional Kentucky theater.

The film was shot in Kentucky. Hopefully, it's set somewhere in the South.

Q. Did you originally shot *Ambush* on film before transferring to video?

A. It's shot on 16mm. I wanted that rich, film look. The first venue for the film was Kentucky Educational Television who initially funded it through a unique program we have in Kentucky where the legislature has set aside a pot of money for independent filmmakers that happens to be administered by the K.E.T. So our production was fortunate enough to get a grant from this independent producer's fund which obliged us to deliver a broadcast tape to K.E.T. So I transferred my rushes to video and edited it on an Avid system.

Q. What gave you the idea of not featuring Newman as a character?

A. For the last fifteen years I've been a documentary filmmaker and there's a style associated with it. When you interviewed people they, more or less, addressed the camera. There's a producer or interviewer standing beside the camera. So you get this look which is a little bit away from the lens. You always feel that they're talking to somebody other than you. I wanted a more direct type of address so the audiences felt that the actors were talking to them, personally. The film would then put the American public, the audience, in the uncomfortable position of thinking about themselves as a veteran and feeling what it was like to listen to your comrades-in-arms talk about their stories, elaborate on them, conceal facts, make light of their experiences, or try to rationalize their experiences within some framework that allows them to go on, and try to make the audience feel that they were participants in that struggle, as opposed to just witnesses. I wanted a film that *involved* the audience, not one that allowed it to passively witness something that they were not involved in. The public was involved in the war and they were involved in the healing of it. So I was trying to find a style that expressed that, a style that at the same time kept the identity of this veteran a mystery and make him truly universal, the composite of all the other veterans' stories. We're so used to genres—the mystery genre, the comedy genre etc, etc—and once you start a genre picture the audience shifts its thinking immediately into that category—clues, if it's a mystery genre, the love interest if it's a romantic comedy—so I wanted something to make it resemble the mystery genre and for the audience to start actually looking for the culprit so they would get more attentive to the dialogue. It's really more of a teleplay than a film. *Ambush* moves on the stories told and by the dialogue, not by the action in the visuals.

Q. There is very much a sense of the audience being put in the active, aware position, rather than the usual film/television passive spectator role. This especially appears when Hazelton (Steve Wise) takes Newman on the golf trip. He's wheeling and dealing doing the very same things he later accuses Newman of. The audience is put in his position, used and abused.

A. Exactly. Exactly. I think it works on people gradually.

In the beginning you're not quite sure why these people are talking to you. Then later on—at least this is what audience members tell me—they finally realize they are Newman. At that point, I think audience members make a decision about when they're going to engage (or disengage) the film. I think that's a very important moment for every viewer because it makes them come a little bit closer to their own perspective on Viet Nam and its veterans. And that's, hopefully, what the film does. It engages the audience. It puts them in the position of having to make certain deliberate choices about a war many people assume that it was not their responsibility. Hopefully, in a dynamic way, this film demonstrates that is an untenable position. We were all in it together.

Q. Did this technique emerge from your own personal experience or from reading any theories of cinema spectatorship?

A. It came out of my experience of being a documentary cameraman, seeing how people relate, and working at the Appalshop. There's a strong tradition of story theater, on narrative tale telling. I found that having done the documentary on Appalachian vets and taping rap sessions with veterans, I could see the same technique at work. The veteran wasn't simply revealing his experiences. He was suddenly a performer. He couldn't just tell what happened. He had to tell a war story and that war story had to have a beginning, a middle, and an end—a moral. All this in the name of therapy. Like everything, this had positive and negative extremes. So I wanted to try to illustrate the spectrum of the therapeutic quality and, also, that the war stories were, in themselves, performances.

I think there was a movie with Ronald Colman, *A Double Life* (1948), where he was an actor whose character took over and he started killing people. I think he was performing *Othello*. It's based on an accurate theory of psychology where the more you perform then you become the role. I wanted to demonstrate in the film how that was true and tried to illustrate what veterans means by "war stories." The general public thinks that a war story is about what someone did in the war. But for a veteran, when somebody tells a "war story" they're lying to you. This is a very important thing for veterans, to appreciate the way we tend to round the edges off a little bit and smooth out the experiences so we can live those memories. The more harrowing the experience, the more difficult it is to do.

Q. This emerges in the scene when Ski (Gregory Etter) tells about making war stories more horrific than the actual incident making the original horror appeal pale and insignificant so in the end you don't trust yourself. It's a really interesting line.

A. We all try to create a positive character for ourselves. The combat veteran is in the most dehumanizing experience possible. He's got the furthest to go to rehumanize himself given this great obstacle in his background. The more you tell about it, the more you try to lessen it, to

name that evil, to try to get a hold of it and control yourself. So the war story in *Ambush* becomes a perpetuation of war, and by emphasizing the fiction you suppress the reality. That's what John Wayne and *Rambo* are all about—gigantic fictions that suppress the horrible reality.

Q. At the end of *WWII*, James Jones speaks about trauma affecting these veterans.

A. The oldest recorded literature is a war story, Homer's *Iliad*. Many of its morals and characters appear in many war films and stories afterwards. I wanted to make something that expressed that tradition but was totally different, totally real. The script is based not so much on my experience but other veterans I've known and talked to. So it's really—to use an over-used phrase—a kind of docudrama.

Q. How long did it take you to shoot?

A. Four weeks. Four six day weeks. We reshot the car sequence two months later. We edited it in two months, post-dubbed music and did final editing in another month. Not surprisingly there was a lot of fund raising between the shooting and the final editing. But all the funds came from agencies and Kentucky businesses and citizens with the exception of a few hundred dollars. A lot of appreciation goes to folks in the Kentucky Humanities Council and the Kentucky Arts Council who contributed major grants.

Q. Why is Newman's grave out in the wilderness?

A. It's an old family burial ground. Kentucky and the South is riddled with old family graveyards, some of which are still actively used mostly by old people who want to be buried next to their parents. Most of the graveyards were set up by people whose families settled near there, a hundred years ago. Many have been lost and become overgrown. But in rural Kentucky, there's a real respect for them, especially in the mountains.

Q. Did you intend any symbolic meaning with the old man in the opening scene?

A. Yes. I had the notion he was Charon who rowed the boat across the river.

Q. There's a really interesting scene when he stops before Lowery (Henry Kevin Haggard) and says, "Not much is it?" He's the first to show suspicion of him.

A. Yes. That's part of the mystery. I thought we'd put it in there and see what people would do with it. Some people recognize it straight away. Others don't. I wanted *Ambush* to unfold like life, you catch on as you go along. It tends to make the experience richer. I like dialogue that is open. People say something and, depending on your experience as an audience member, you bring different interpretations to it. There's other interpretations you

can bring to it based on repeated viewings. I hope the film holds up over multiple viewings, that each time you see it there's a little bit more that's revealed.

Q. You made it on a low budget so naturally there's quite a difference from most Viet Nam cinematic representations. Yours deals with the present rather than the past.

A. Sure. There's a stereotype about the veteran being a mad dog. I blame Paul Schrader who wrote *Taxi Driver* for this. *Taxi Driver* was a great film, particularly DeNiro's character. But to the extent that Schrader perverted the reality of what Viet Nam veterans are all about in the mind of the American public—not so much perverted but *confirmed*—their fears, we had to suffer many poorer remakes of the Travis Bickle story. But when you look at the documentation, the mad gunners in this society are not generally Viet Nam veterans or even people with military experience. They're just crazy. Guns being freely available as they are, anyone can become a mass murderer in this society.

Part of my duty was to make some sort of accurate representation of what the stress of combat does to individuals. It's far more self-destructive. It's not being reported. For Hollywood, it's not very exciting to make a film about a homeless veteran dying in a street on a cold winter's day. There's nothing cinematic or romantic about that. But that's the reality. The trauma has driven so deep and therapy has been so meager. Acknowledgement by the American public for its responsibility for the war must lead to embracing veterans as individuals not as freaks.

But that's not what has happened. We've had to bear the guilt alone, whether in reality or in the cinema. But when Reagan came along we discovered that we were really heroes and won the war! But those of us who went through it had a different understanding of events. So I got more frustrated with one perversion of the truth after another and wanted to make a film that deals with post-traumatic shock in a way that demonstrates not only its realities but also its variations. Viet Nam veterans are still individuals. Their experience of the war is still individualistic and so is their response. To show that complexity was part of the goal. The veteran, his doubt about the war he participated in, its role in American history and his role in the public life of his time, has really been exploited by the political forces of reaction who wanted to use his quandary as a tool for rearming America. It's hard to say which is worse, the victimization of Viet Nam veterans as crazy or the belated crowning of us as unsung heroes. They're both perversions of the truth and essentially serve the interests of one political or cultural elite.

Q. Ski has an interesting line when he says that even if veterans won they war they'd still have problems.

A. To be fair, it's hard to take a specific line and isolate it. Drama unfolds as a dialogue. Ski and Hazelton have this long argument about the meaning of their experience in the war and how each has dealt with his life since. They each befriend the casualty in our film—the unseen

Newman. A lot of veterans will see their own thinking in much of the dialogue. At some point maybe our characters go beyond what they think of their experience. Perhaps, in some cases, they don't go far enough. But, I think for the grunt, the line soldiers, all wars are a losing proposition, because you are the one who bears the horror, the danger, the gruelling discomfort of the experience. You're the one who has his finger on the trigger and has to confront the first commandment every working day of your experience. You're the one who ends up destroying his own humanity. And that's true of all wars. That's something I wanted to get across to the public. The Nam veteran is no different than veterans of any war. To use a cliché, it's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game. War is one game where there are no winners.

We're just finding out now about this great adventure in the Persian Gulf where we had no casualties! Now we find the whole Army has been the victim of a chemical battlefield. It's just like the long battle the vets had to fight to get the dangers of Agent Orange known. Now the Persian Gulf veterans are going to have to fight for who knows many years. The Pentagon reveals that they were, indeed, using chemical weapons on the battlefield. They're going to keep that a secret for as long as possible. You can't have those mass casualties you're seeing now without there being a cause for it.

Q. A recent film, *Chrome Soldiers* (1992), presents its Viet Nam veteran hero as disillusioned with his involvement in the Gulf War.

A. Now we've changed political administrations it's going to be safe for the commercial interests to start looking at other viewpoints. However, the one viewpoint that the Pentagon learned from the Viet Nam war was "Don't let reporters near the battlefield!"

Q. Thatcher also used this strategy in the Falklands Conflict.

A. Yes. The pity of it is that the veterans usually have first-hand knowledge of it. But Congress made no effort to prove what was done on the Persian Gulf battleground. Classic neurological symptoms of chemical weapons appeared among the soldiers. But it's a new era of combat. These are not going to be the first or the last casualties of biochemical war, unfortunately.

Q. What kind of receptions do veterans give *Ambush*?

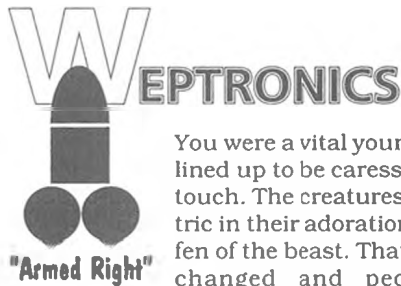
A. Veterans are really gratified that somebody's made a film that's sympathetic to their real experiences. I think it varies, though. It really depends on your experience of the Viet Nam war. Both the war and the film are politically charged. If you were in a command position in Viet Nam and thought we did everything right, I dare say you'd have little sympathy for *Ambush*. It explores many of the tragedies of war. But I've got a lot of good responses from veterans coming out of the audience and a lot of tears. It's unsettling for me because I really didn't make it for

veterans. They know well enough what the situation is. I made it for the general public.

There's been very little made that reflects where veterans are today. They're very gratified that somebody went to the expense and trouble to make a film that doesn't simply try to honor them but tries to reflect the complexity of their predicament and the ongoing nature of P.T.S.D. It's not something that you recover from, instantaneously. It takes you years, a lot of sympathy from loved ones, and, unfortunately, a lot of vets haven't gotten that.

But it's just a film. And, as a film, we as filmmakers tend to invest more in the film emotionally than anyone else. We try to get our film out and believe that people's ideas are going to change by seeing it, that the treatment of a certain class of individuals is going to improve. Films may bring certain things to people's attention but its the public who will have to bring those changes about.

VHS cassettes of **Ambush** are available from Mountain Pictures, PO Box 1212, Somerset, KY 42502. For individual home viewing the price is \$20 (plus \$4.50 shipping and handling); for schools, libraries, and other non-profit organizations showing the video free to the public, the price is \$50 (plus \$4.50 shipping and handling) and for video rental outlets, the price is \$70 (plus \$4.50 shipping and handling).



You were a vital young radical once. Causes lined up to be caressed by your deft political touch. The creatures of the media were electric in their adoration of your sallies into the fen of the beast. That was then. Things have changed and people have forgotten. Weptronics remembers and is here to help.

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Now let's see... you guys with the blue shirts will be the Puppets of American Imperialism and we will be the Avengers of the Will of the Proletariat.

THE IMAGE OF THE MILITARY OFFICER IN FILMS CONCERNING THE VIETNAM WAR

John S. Baky, Director of Library Services, Connelly Library, La Salle University, Philadelphia, PA 19141.

Given in conference 9 March 1990 at the Annual Conference of the Popular Culture & American Culture Associations, Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

In their ironically hopeful, eerily dirged silence pervading the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in November of '82, I stood isolated among 150,000 people, mostly men, who stood staring and scuffling their feet like boys waiting to see if they would be chastised. I am still unsettled by two emotional certainties that imprinted themselves on me that day. The memory of the astounding silence that can emanate from 150,000 people; and the fact that during a day in which I spent nine hours walking among these tens of thousands of men spread out over a square mile of the nation's capitol, I saw fewer than 100 men who could or would identify themselves publicly as commissioned officers. When one considers that if the officer corps were but 10% of the armed forces, one could expect to find—even in the politically schizoid aftermath of Vietnam—at least a few thousand commissioned officers; surely a *thousand* out of a possible 300,000 should have been standing around in remnants of uniforms distinguished by emblems of rank, or adorned by the modest totems of wound and service. Nevertheless, if they *were* present that day, they were concealed on the sidelines of the parade route or otherwise carefully unidentified. That last choice, willful concealment, is certainly not out of the realm of possibility. Officers, after all, are instructed to honor demeanor. Still, the number involved did not feel right. This was a day for display, was it not? The officers simply were *not there*, or, if there, they chose to mask their pride; to relinquish their claim to a redemption that was being offered in ways undreamt of until that day. 300,000; 150,000; 25,000; these are large numbers. Something was suspect. Accounting for this suspicion informs this paper.

I posited pure invention trying to fathom why thousands of men stayed away from an event that drew thousands of other men sharing the same elemental experience. Were these officers ashamed of their service, were they afraid of their reception by the enlisted men, were they uninformed of the event itself. I wondered — could they be too modest for public gratitude; not likely. None of these ideas solved the mystery anyway. Their absence seemed to require a more complex society-driven explanation.

The two Proustian moments I experienced while being held thrall to The Wall that day suggested a validation for something Roland Barthes observed. When asked a question about memorials, Barthes replied

that public memorials and cultural myths commemorate the past, but they also disguise it and "erode history, and with it the palpable truths of specific human action and its consequences." The apparent absence of an entire class of participants at this decidedly mythopoeic ceremony forced me to believe that not only was Barthes correct, but that the rapidity of this transformation was in danger of revisioning myths even before they had been recorded in their original forms. Were Vietnam veteran officers literally textualizing themselves as something no one else could read? Had the officer class been scared away! Had it scared itself away? I never got the feeling that these officers were meant to be excluded from the ceremonies—after all, some of the most potent forces behind the very concept of the Wall and its dedication were officers, most of them publicly prideful and all of them present, that day

Was it possible that the notable absence of a class of participants was evidence in *reverse* of outrageous phenomena like the "rehabilitation" of a Custer; a "rehabilitation" intended *only* to preserve the consistent public myth of the American frontier warrior. And subvert, as well, the complex social norms signified by the *miles gloriosus* and the *miles furens*—both of them classical images privileged by western civilization, but now signs, more than anything else, of sad bewilderment. In fact, some may feel that the citizen soldier in his summary role as anointed male leader/military officer has become a consistent metaphor for the failed evil of the Vietnam war itself. The traditional image of the officer as the essence of all that is desirable in a male soldier and, by extension, the society as a whole has, in this war, essentially become a trope for just the opposite. That is a very curious phenomenon indeed.

In the absence of carefully crafted surveys and extensive personal interviews with the officers themselves, I wondered if imagination might succeed where rational analysis had failed. Perhaps once again the precise lies of fiction would offer the truth. Was the perceived image of the military officer so terrible or negative as to be intimidating to the officers themselves? The only way to determine such a thing is to survey the public images that may have created such a threat.

One immediately viable group of war images that would offer a consistent medium in which one could expect to find clear officer images is that of film. If the current view that film mirrors rather than shapes the public consciousness is correct, than filmic images of officers in the war ought to be informative of how we are likely to perceive officers now and, more importantly, as today's children think of them in the future.

To judge the content of groups of visual images, there must be samples that are representative in form and numerous enough to evidence patterns. To accommodate those two criteria, I identified 140 films to serve as stock from which to draw images of military officers. These 140 films all treat the Vietnam war as a central plot element; or have a character acting in a certain manner *because* of the war; or employ clear images of the war as a past event influencing motives in the present or future. The 140 films have images of at least one officer acting as

a character integral to the plot (or in a necessary supporting role) in sixty-three productions (45%). These sixty-three films parent fourteen fully realized officer characters. If you cannot name more than fifteen Vietnam-related films, then I caution you to be prepared for titles of breath-taking obscurity. But, importantly, it is precisely these same obscure commercial efforts that play on cable TV or via satellite virtually every night—somewhere in the world. Personally, I have seen far more than half of them on commercial TV alone. It is exceedingly difficult to know whether to succumb to a comic shtick or stick, Reagan-like, to a posture of deniable plausibility when you view films entitled *Blackenstein*, say, or *Pork Lips Now*, or how about the 1971 effort entitled *To Kill a Clown* made by none other than Alan Alda wherein he plays a Doberman-wielding psychotic crippled major—who, residing happily near Martha's Vineyard, terrorizes pre-nuptial hippies in his off-hours. Let me add that a distinct comic element is quite self-consciously evident in many of the films, and specifically in their officer characters. Whether or not that mode represents a sort of meta-analysis of film, I cannot say. Personally, I suspect not. The humor seems to come *sui generis* from the *faux pas* inherent in carelessly made exploitation films.

The sixty-three "officer" films exhibit distinctive elements of likeness. There are four groups of distinguishing characteristics that apply equally to all later specific image clusters. The four self-limiting categories are:

1. Officer films do not repeat the ritualized thematic cycles that are so evident in films about enlisted veterans. That is to say, the officer images do not appear to follow the by now typical historical progression of psycho-grunt sociopath (made in the early to mid 70's), to the theme of returned grunt as victim (mid to late 70's), to the returned grunt as vigilante (late 70's), to the redemptive grunt (early 80's), and coming to rest finally in the latest avatar of the grunt best characterized as the anti-hero super grunt that has been spawned largely in the late 80's. This "societally crafted 'Killing machine'" appears to be presently entrenched as a metaphor for the survivalist mentality shaped around the American preoccupation with loss and paramilitary culture in the Post-Desert Storm world.
2. The 141 incidental officer characters as a group exhibit a pervasive kind of classlessness. Considering the traditional origin of military officers and their assigned place in society, this seems a significant change;
3. Unlike the numerous traditional sergeant images that appear in most of the sixty-three films, most of the officers are never shown as father-figures or as generic sons. They exist in the plot, therefore, without the sort of cultural power that resides in the sergeant figures. Officers appear as arbitrarily powerful or simply alienated, their characteristic human vitality all but desiccated; officers are not depicted as organic to a social group;

4. The last common trait underpinning the officer films can be located in the officers who collectively serve their parent "society," or simply serve themselves in isolation from the larger society. These two commitments do not seem coterminous as in WWII film.

Gender-related issues, which properly would have formed a 5th category of group features, are perhaps best left to more expert treatment. If Susan Jeffords, Kate Meyers, Claudia Springer and others are correct, then the image of the officer is a powerful repository for gender-driven realities. Imperatively, gender definitions are about power relationships; and the power to define things used to be that of the male and parenthetically the military officer within general society. Suffice it to say that many of the qualities ascribed to the images of ineffective or "weak" officers are often identified by feminist scholars as just those characteristics that ought to be valorized as unselfconsciously feminine. Jeffords cites clear examples of this in the traits of the "will to negotiate" and the "will to compromise."¹

I can now map certain specific image clusters that are embedded schematically in the four larger constellations just named. Importantly, though, the following specific images remain the ones that reveal what the American public is likely to believe has become of its military officer corps.

1. There is a group of a dozen films that offer up the image of the officer in terms so unmercifully negative as to define a sociopath. In some ways this is the most telling category of images. Within it is located all those images that identify the very concept of an officer as being generically—almost genetically—suspect, if not utterly contemptible. They break down into two separate but unequal groups.

The first group portrays the officer as metonymic of all that is wrong and bad about the state of individual authority when it is allowed to exist in corrupt environments: in chronological order the films are: *To Kill a Clown*, *Last Hunter*, *Fatal Vision*, *Tornado*, *Angkor*, *Cambodia Express*, *Steele Justice*, *Above the Law*, *Eye of the Eagle*, and *84 Charlie MoPic*. From this list alone comes a psychopath murderer, a fiendishly professional torturer with the rank of full colonel, three homicidal traitors, an American Major in the stateside Vietnamese "Mafia," and one sadomasochist for hire. And all of these villains are senior Captains through the Field grades. The second but much smaller group of clearly deviant personalities who have legally obtained their high rank includes *Apocalypse Now*, *Off Limits*, and a gem of astonishing mediocrity—though tricked out in handsome production values, *The White Ghost*. In the guise of Colonel Kurtz and Major Kilgore in *Apocalypse*, the sexually perverted maniacal Colonel in *Off Limits*, and a coldly methodical Captain who mass murders Vietnamese civilians in the *White Ghost*, the viewer is given characters that are all dramatically lionized as the best the Army had to offer. No fewer than three of the four are top-of-their-class West Pointers, and all four are shown as well to be headed to the pinnacle of military achieve-

ment at precociously young ages. The characteristics so consistently displayed in these monsters suggest a political agenda. They stand at least metaphorically for the evil of war itself and, more particularly damning, for those who cause war in order to preserve a reactionary *weltanschauung* wherein archaic paternalistic values dominate by sheer dint of physical violence and murderous calculation.

2. The second of the major categories of images is a set having corporate intransigence and vulgar careerism as the fundamental characteristic common to the officer figures.² Ten films in number, these fourteen characters harbor behavioral deficiencies which appear peculiar to the American military structure. If the military analyst Richard Gabriel is to be believed, then among the most important of these was a "military careerism so exaggerated that protection and advancement of an officer's career at all levels seemed to have become the highest value for a substantial number of officers."³ Further, the change resulted in a series of moral and ethical failures represented by officers acquiescing in, initiating, or participating in policies and actions which individually they regarded as unethical, but which were followed nevertheless as the way to career advancement.⁴ It is this category of images alone about which Hollywood seems to get it right. They are representative of the "self-serving corporate management so vehemently assaulted throughout the 1970s and 1980s."⁵ Listen for a minute to this exchange between a salty proletarian black sergeant and a brand new ambitious second lieutenant.

[sergeant says:] "And how do you see the war, LT?"

[LT says:] "Business. Big business. Army's just one big corporation just like Gulf & Western There's room for opportunity. You can be a peon or if you see yourself as executive material advancement potential is enormous."

[sergeant says:] "Do you see yourself as some kind of a junior executive?"

[LT says:] "Exactly. 12 months I can move from second looie to first. If I play it right, I can leave Nam as a Cpt. with major just around the corner....Like they say, it's who you know."

[sergeant says:] "....You're using Nam to punch a ticket."

[LT says:] "Look, wars don't come along very often. Chance of a life time for a career officer. Combat duty is the foundation of a successful career."

This exchange is from a small but significant film released in 1989 called *84 Charlie MoPic*. The quotation is a summary of this entire image cluster. Among the other nine films cited can be found: *The Boys in Company C*, *Twilight's Last Gleaming*, *Go Tell the Spartans*, *Rumor of War*, *Tornado*, *Expendables*, *Siege of Fire Base Gloria*, *Riders on the Storm*, and *Good Morning, Vietnam*.

3. About a third of the 63 films focus on the officer—usually company grade—as being so incompetent, or so blindly innocent, or so fundamentally stupid as to be perilously close to paralysis. In one Hollywood instance,

Purple Hearts, the lieutenant is loudly coached by a sergeant in how to actually walk; and that in full hearing of the enlisted men! A few in this category of incompetent novices are affectionately cultivated so that a classic *bildungsroman* can be constructed. The *bildungsroman*, however, occurs in only ten of the sixty-three officer films, whereas it is a narrative device so repetitive in descriptions of the enlisted men as to be a numbing cliché. But, as likely as not, each developing boy-officer image is countered by another image that simply wants to expose the officer as a worthless vestige of decadent capitalism, or a remnant of ossified socialist dogma, or as right-wing lunatics, depending only, it seems, on the year in which the film was made and what political agenda was the year's fashion. The role models in this image cluster are nicely summarized by the handsome, tanned captain who, stark naked, begins ritual serial masturbation at 5 o'clock sharp every day in his bunker—NVA human wave assault or not (***The Siege of Fire Base Gloria***).

4. 20% of the sixty-three films foster, in the Apollonian mode, the flamboyant image of the officer as either a demented, Hawaiian-shirted, Groucho figure; or, in the Dionysian spirit a crazed, wild-eyed repressed lunatic. Among the more memorable images is Bruce Dern's portrayal of a psychotic Fighter pilot turned Goodyear blimp pilot who plans to kill 80,000 people by sailing his balloon over the Superbowl and detonating a ton of buckshot-laced plastic explosive. Released in the year of the U.S. Bicentennial, the undeniable image is that of the deranged Vietnam veteran as world terrorist. Add to this the combat surfer, Major Kilgore, in ***Apocalypse*** or a West Point-trained mass murderer who now roves the world consulting on exactly that subject, and you get the picture for the Dionysian side. In another film (***Riders on the Storm***), in the words of its video rental box blurb "Step aboard a futuristic B-29 retro-junker as the Captain himself (Dennis Hopper) commands a crazy clique of former Vietnam vets. They're running an illegal broadcast station called S & M TV dedicated to jamming the American public's prime time with the unedited truth about the Vietnam war, patriotism," and anything else you can decipher from a confusing sound track. How about the mad dog Major in ***The Last Hunter*** who, accompanied by circus calliope music, orders his men to race through sniper infested triple canopy jungle with the goal of retrieving a coconut. *Mirabile visu*, the men do it. In ***Siege of Firebase Gloria***, the irrepressible and ubiquitous R. Lee Ermey fights his way into a hopelessly beleaguered outpost through, among other things, VC, NVA, snipers, and ambush—only to be told on his exhausted arrival by a babbling, hashish-crazed company commander: "Put your men to work on repairing the mess generators, Sergeant. We have complete air superiority and we can't even freeze a couple of gallons of fuckin' ice cream."

6. In what is perhaps the most curious of image patterns, eight films isolate the once exalted figure of the Special Forces "Green Beret" officer as the perfect evil twin of the John Wayne prototype. The Green Beret officer, for some

reason usually a captain, is now often portrayed as either a morally corrupt opportunistic criminal or as an alienated, idealistically burned-out mercenary. There is no short explanation for this perfect subversion of such a mythic icon except that the degree of cynicism involved must be considerable, it surely betrays serious cultural confusion. I believe it was Alisdair Spark who somewhere attributed the demise of the cult of the Green Berets to the calculated intentions of a jealous bureaucracy-bound general staff, "frightened by elites not of their manufacture."

7. Officers that bear extra-military occupational specialties such as doctors, lawyers, nurses, and pilots are depicted almost universally as either a radically anti-authoritarian gadfly, or as an insensitive martinet always willing to subvert his or her occupational morality to that of the worst kind of hierarchical military bureaucracy. Thirteen films use this dominant approach to officer images. Stark variations of this compromised officer often exhibit female officers as persons who are ever willing to place the requirements and gender imperatives of the military over their own existence as women.

8. Last—and given Hollywood's usual racist compulsions—a surprisingly high number of films (6) portray black officers; again, for some reason usually captains. They seem designed to act as a counter force to the array of aberrant white officers exemplified by many of the same negative traits as ascribed to the rogue Green Beret officer. Ironically perhaps, these black officers represent almost platonic models of "The Officer." They are portrayed as having all the ideal characteristics with which WWII vintage white officers *used* to be born .

Broad surveys of this length and depth can hope only to provide raw data for future systematic inquiries. Conclusions therefore are modest, brief, and in a way—puzzling. Statistically, the data extracted from the films is curious and not conducive to subtle conclusions. For example, of the sixty-three officer films viewed, 68% were generally negative toward the armed forces, whereas a laughable 8% cast the armed forces in a positive or admirable light. Startlingly different is the discrepancy that exists when the total 140 individual officer characters is subjected to the same standards. The 140 individual characters divide into sixty "negative-traited," wholly unadmirable officers, and fifty-seven "positive-traited," admirable officers. The startling discrepancy, of course, is how an entire military organization can appear only negatively, even when its officers are shown to be good and bad in about *equal* numbers? This disparity of effect is an important conundrum.

What appears to happen is that the wholly negative officer images are so dramatically inauthentic, unqualified, and exaggerated that they leave a lingering, totally negative impression far in excess of the actual number of images they represent. That is, a few very negative images counteracts a much larger number of generally positive images. Bad news drives out good. Such an explanation would satisfy the skewed results of the data.

However, what allows the cause of the skewing to become normative, and therefore dangerous, is the equally Hollywood-generated ignorance of what an officer is trained (expected) to do in combat circumstances. Effective officers are neither intended nor trained to participate in physical labor or routine garrison duties on a par with enlisted men. Hollywood almost always misinterprets that fact, or exploits it to the point of political distortion. Likewise, in combat, officers are to lead aggressively and coordinate the activities of their fighting men; the officer actually fights himself only when his immediate existence is threatened. Moreover, officer images in these films make no concessions to the fact that officers—particularly junior ones in a lethal environment—are prey to the same human frailties possessed by enlisted men. Where an enlisted man is shown to be justifiably confounded by close combat, the *officer* is shown to be an incipient coward; if the enlisted man is privileged as simply naive, the officer is villainized as either genetically incompetent or just flat stupid; and finally, the officer at *all* levels seems to be shown with the expectation of being inherently experienced in his military duties instead of having to learn them through trial and error as the enlisted men do. The ever-present hard-bitten sergeant is always valorized as being sprung, experience and all, from the forehead of Mars.

What this essay concludes, then, is that Hollywood, in its inimical reductive zeal to villainize the military, has hopelessly confused symptoms with diseases. Serious and copious socio-historical evidence compels us to believe that the armed forces indeed evolved into a very inefficient and vicious bureaucratic beast. The same evidence soundly indicts the crass, self-serving careerism fostered in individual professional officers at all levels of command by the disastrous notion that formal MBA principles can be substituted for the leadership imperatives of idealism, fortitude, and loyalty; you cannot “manage men to their deaths.”⁶

Although correctly identifying the systemic failures of the institutional military, the various filmmakers compromise their credibility by attempting to prove the truth of that concept using the distortions of *only* exaggerated paradigms. In the final analysis, General Sir John Hackett wisely observes of officer corps in general that to see how really “*bad bad* men can be in any profession is to learn little worth knowing.”⁷ If filmic visions replace or displace real images then the distorted images will create false reality. If one wishes to observe the public consequences of distorted images transmuted into false reality simply re-watch the TV/press coverage of the Gulf of Tonkin “Incident.”

NOTES

- ¹ Susan Jeffords, *Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press) 1989).
- ² Gabriel, Richard A. and Paul L. Savage. *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army*. (NY: Hill & Wang) 1978.
- ³ Gabriel, Richard A. *Military Incompetence: Why the American Military Doesn't Win*. (NY: Hill & Wang) 1985.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, *passim*.
- ⁵ See Richard Gabriel, Charles Moskos, John Keegan, and General Sir John Hackett, *passim*.
- ⁶ Such a systematic societal failure is in fact reported by Richard Gabriel in the works I have cited, as well as those words quoted here. The preposterous failures of applying “MBA principles” to combat leadership are further prophesied in title after title of reputable work, including David H. Hackworth, Neil Sheehan, Charles Moskos, et al.
- ⁷ Hackett, General Sir John. *The Profession of Arms*. (New York: Macmillan) 1983.



Figure 219. Leeches.

GENERATING X

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"THESE KIDS TODAY"

The news-flashiness of *Newsweek's* recent cover story (6 June 94) on the "Myth of Generation X" is patently behind the times. The cover photo shows an all-too-appropriately multi-culti foursome of teen beauties, a glowering black guy with bandanna, a wifty white guy with longish hair, a young Asian guy with brush cut and glasses, a white girl with cleavage and red lips. Denoting political-cultural differences by body-types, this image implies that there's no specificity or, more precisely, homogeneity, to this "generation." The concept is indeed a myth. Good, we can go home now.

But you know it's not that simple (myths have causes and effects; people believe in them for reasons). *Newsweek's* visual shorthand for intra-generational incongruities is bolstered inside by interview-bites with young people (none of whom want to own the label "X"). The article goes on to blame the previous generation—that would be the so-called boomers who somehow elevated the sixties to legendary status—for demanding names and rationales. For an odious instance, it quotes *New Republic's* Michael Kinsley: "These kids today. They're soft. They don't know how good they have it. Not only did they never have to fight a war...they never even had to avoid one."

Kinsley's complaint is familiar: the X-ers are about lack. They lack a coherence, an identity, a goal, a war. Remember Tim Hunter's *River's Edge* (released so long ago, in 1987), where a high school history teacher lectures to his apparently indifferent students about the good old days. "And Vietnam," he says, with conviction. "We stopped a war, man! We took to the streets and we made a difference. We turned public sentiment around. And we made people see the truth...as crazy as it all seemed though, there was a meaning in the madness. A clear and a real purpose." But as the students look out windows or doodle on their textbooks, it's clear that this teacher misses that they do, right now, have their own experiences and moral dilemmas.

These experiences remain unarticulated, obscenely visible as a girl's corpse left to decay on a riverbank, her boyfriend-killer's detachment from what he has done, her friends' odd commitment to the killer ("We've gotta test our loyalty against all odds. I feel like Chuck Norris, y'know?"). All of this is incomprehensible to the nostalgic teacher (or, by extension, *Newsweek* writers who refer to "20somethings"—since when is a decade a generation?). And isn't it just a little perverse to use the U.S. war in Vietnam as a metonym for a group "identity" (consider, for example, that this metonym leaves out people who would be in that group, people who didn't march for civil rights or live in communes)?

In this light, it appears that the Myth of the Sixties is at least as pernicious as the Myth of "GenX" (as deemed by Douglas Rushikoff's edited collection, *The GenX*

Reader). But does seeing the outcome (the generation of myths) lead to understanding the process (generating myths)? The *Newsweek* piece would seem to exemplify that there is no way out of this cycle of identity-making: X-ers (whoever they are) can't win for losing in the struggle to name themselves. They're always already X (X-ed?), created by media, educational institutions, marketing conglomerates, whoever. It's a process of production, a system without end. Even when you resist, you're inside this consummately self-perpetuating process. By calling "Generation X" a myth, *Newsweek* and other powers that be secure it as a category and, not incidentally, a target-demographic.

SELF IMPERSONATIONS

It may be ironic that the process makes protest (after a fashion) possible, if not inevitable. Even as they deny being "X," the interviewees are in the loop. Assimilated, you are what you aren't, or you are what you don't have (for instance, cohesion, identity, a war). And let's not forget that in a consumer culture, this "what you are" is also "what you want." Desire is conditioned and overdetermined. For a "generation" inundated by what it's supposed to want (Nikes, MTV, Cindy Crawford, family values), the obvious resistance is denial. Or, as Nirvana put it, "I do not want what I haven't got."

Dick Hebdidge, in his *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, argues that resistance, even when incorporated into the "mainstream," offers possibilities for lasting change. And it's true, the mainstream will never be the same after Public Enemy, "Teen Spirit," and Queen via *Wayne's World*. But how can you assert an alternative identity if MTV has already mapped out an "Alternative Nation"?

This is a problem which, while not specific to X-ers, currently develops at exponentially faster rates than it did a couple of decades ago (Dylan and *Easy Rider* took some time to be assimilated; Courtney Love is already a story in *People Magazine*.) It's a paradox, this X-ness which refuses itself. And it's up for diverse pop-cultural grabs: witness Ben Stiller's *Reality Bites*, MTV's "The Real World" or "Dead at 21," the Hughes Brothers' *Menace II Society*, Wes Craven's *Shocker*, Michael Lehmann's *Airheads*, Ice T's "Body Count," or even James O'Barr and Alex Proyas' *The Crow* (where the superhero is dead, and so quite past caring what anyone calls him, before the picture starts).

"Vietnam"—the war, the era, the issues, the fallout (not the country)—is all over these texts, even (or especially) when it doesn't come up by name. Reality television, violence, desire for romance, betrayal by institutions, distrust of elders: these are the sixties-derived ideas shaping X-texts. Take the Ur-X-text, Richard Linklater's *Slacker* (1991), which follows a series of mostly unconnected characters with a variety of concerns and apathies, ranging from the Warren Commission ("a Shriners' convention without go-carts") to the Smurfs to Uncle Fester to chaos theory. One girl excitedly tells the story of an "old man, forty or fifty years old" who shoots his gun all over the freeway, another guy surmises

that Elvis must be alive (and “if he’s half-assed cool, you know that he’s an Elvis impersonator”), and someone else runs down his mother with a station wagon. Yet another, a television strapped to his back as he encloses himself in a room whose walls are all monitors, says succinctly, “To me a video image is much more powerful and useful than an actual event.” Believe it.

Stuck and unstuck, restless and bored, slackers are born of what they resist, what remains unnamed, the system which is continually reproduced by generational differences that are also, at the same time, similarities. Video images are a kind of reality, a process of identity-production. Elvis, if he’s alive, has to know this; he has to be impersonating himself. Those dubbed X, the slackers, the gangstas, the post-punks, necessarily know this. Ice Cube, for example, repeatedly cites his participation in the process, understands that gangsta violence is a marketing hook, a painfully ironic survival strategy: he gets paid and the story of life in the hood gets out. (But to whom? For whom, exactly, was the Rodney King beating a surprise?)

FROM IN COUNTRY TO N THE HOOD

Ice Cube’s performance as Doughboy in John Singleton’s *Boyz n the Hood* (1991) foregrounds this knowledge: caught in a generational cycle of destruction, Doughboy can only accede to his role, affirming his “manhood” in the only terms allowed by his warzone environment: he’s rude, angry, sexist, aggressive. He’s also loyal, careful, respected and feared. The film delineates his life in the hood as a tragic imprisonment: he knows that his death won’t appear on the evening news, because it’s an everyday occurrence. His non-escape won’t warrant mass-media attention.

This lack of recognition is alarmingly articulated in Kinsley’s notion that young people have no war to avoid. Allen Hughes, co-director of *Menace II Society*, argues (in the *Newsweek* article) that black, urban youth is ignored by the mass media version of X-ness. “Our film had the same demographics as *Reality Bites*,” he says. “but they didn’t call it a Generation X film, they called it a damn gangsta film. Call it racist, or whatever, but we don’t count when it comes to Generation X.”

Boyz n the Hood wasn’t called a “Generation X film” either. But its astute analysis of the black X “demographic” makes clear that ongoing racism and violence links the sixties and the nineties, by connecting Doughboy’s self-knowledge with that of Vietnam veteran Furious (Larry Fishburne). Furious’ military experience helped to make him “furious,” so that he embodies the potential violence that simultaneously threatens and serves a larger cultural dynamic. “Black man’s got no place in the army,” he warns his son Tre (Cuba Gooding, Jr.). The mere mention of his service resonates without further explanation. It’s less important to know how he got there (he enlisted at seventeen to support his pregnant wife), what happened to him or what he did, than to understand—at a glance—that he was an African American who fought “a white man’s war.” His anger represents the war’s function as part of ongoing systemic repression.

In the hood where he lives twenty years later, choppers and guns make perpetual background noise.

The other, less immediately visible, reference incarnated by Fishburne is precisely about media representation of the war. His first film role (at age fourteen) was Clean in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), one of two black Navy crewmen on the boat transporting Willard (Martin Sheen) to Kurtz’s Cambodian compound. Clean could have been Furious, had he not been killed by gunfire (while reading mail from his mother and before he sees the results of Kurtz’s rampant racism). Both Furious and Clean—at the time of the war—lack social and economic options: they’re products of national military, political, and ideological imperatives. Yet *Boyz* remains optimistic, proposing that Furious survives back in the world (L.A.) because he resists the dictates of that world. He argues for black enterprise, self-employment, and property-owning; if he can’t exist outside the dominant ideological system, within it he works to change the power balances.

His hope for a different future, the one he didn’t get by going to Vietnam, is clearest when he lectures Tre and others on the inequities of the real estate industry, while standing in front of a billboard advertising “Seoul to Seoul Realty.” This disturbing visual—the logo looming over and behind Furious—indicates the pervasiveness of systemic racism, which pits one minority group against another. Added to the film’s focus on gang violence and young black male identity formation, the image conveys this system’s reproduction across generations.

X PRESIDENTS

Like *Boyz*, Kathryn Bigelow’s *Point Break* (1991) is about generational conflict and continuity. And it features a Vietnam veteran, Angelo Pappas (Gary Busey), who is overtly assimilated into an established stateside authority system: he’s an FBI special agent, working in LA’s bank robbery division. As per cop-buddy-movie formula (the movie breaks no new generic ground, though it does mess with the given rules), he’s assigned a rookie partner, an ex-football player named Johnny Utah (Keanu Reeves). Together they track down the Ex-Presidents, surfers who finance their “endless summer” by robbing banks, disguised in rubber masks (LBJ, Nixon, Carter, and Reagan): as “Reagan” tells his captive audience during an early robbery, “We are the Ex-Presidents, and we need just a few moments of your time. We’ve been screwin’ you for years so a few more seconds shouldn’t matter.”

The irony of this should be fairly apparent (though it was lost on some reviewers, who faulted the film for its simplistic characters and frankly ludicrous plot; yeah yeah, no news there, such is the business of action pictures). The movie also manages a frank and cagey analysis of socio-economic structures, particularly as they’re acted out in and as rituals of masculinity—that is, these structures have everything to do with Vietnam war cultural fallout.

Point Break appears to make the partners’ generational clash an emotional sidebar. Johnny goads the alienated Angelo to action by saying, “Maybe you oughta

just take some early retirement right now and get some Rent-a-Cop night security job, tell Nam stories." To which Angelo fires back (in the finest I-was-there-and-you-weren't tradition). "Listen, you snot-nosed little shit, I was takin' shrapnel in Khe Sanh when you were crappin' in your hands and rubbin' it on your face." Needless to say, Johnny is not cowed by such derision: he is a snot-nosed X-er, after all. Instead, he inspires Angelo to get moving on the case, to recover his anger and (are you surprised?) his masculinity.

That X-ness has anything to do with masculinity (or blackness, for that matter) is part of the myth-generation that readers like Kinsley overlook, and that *Newsweek*, for all its *Newsweek*-ness, addresses. These whiny "kids," they have a thing or two to say to their whiny elders, at least according to an X-er-pic like *Point Break*, and unlike *Boyz*, which is invested in lessons learned by Furious.

Bigelow's film pushes beyond Angelo's ironic reference to most every Vietnam vet-redemption movie that came before it, in its portrayal of another, subtler clash of cultures. Johnny goes undercover as a surfer and unknowingly falls in with the Ex-Presidents. Their charismatic mighta-been-a-dharma-bum leader is Bodhi (Patrick Swayze). While the other surfers tend to deny the stakes of their campaign, Bodhi assumes an existential greatness for it. "This has never been about money," he says. "This is about us against the system, the system that kills the human spirit. We stand for something to those dead souls inching along the freeway in their metal coffins. We show them that the human spirit is still alive."

Right. Except that there is no "against the system." Robbing banks is, we know, just another form of free enterprise. The film knows this too, and it works the system it portrays. For Bodhi, this "human spirit" has to do with macho performance, rendered through adrenaline-pumping rituals like surfing, bank-robbing, fast-driving, and sky-diving. The conflict between Bodhi and Johnny emulates an ethical one, but it's more densely about varieties of an overdetermined social order: Johnny is a system-defending fed (though a rebellious one, as his run-ins with his self-righteous superior, played by Oliver Stone movie veteran John C. McGinley, suggest). Bodhi is an anti-system surfer (though one with a predisposition for absolute authority). Both are products of the system they resist.

What makes all this interesting is the way that the tensions between the two characters surface, namely, in erotic (read: traditional) terms. Their relentless competition is steeped in male-bonding conventions, which climax in their parallel relationships with tough surfer-babe Tyler (Lori Petty). Early on in the film she calls it. Watching the guys enact their bravado routine at a party, she walks out in disgust, saying, "There's too much testosterone here." Yet, for all her resistance, she must (according to convention) eventually fall for Johnny, mistaking him for a sensitive guy, one who has survived a trauma similar to hers (he tells her his parents died in an accident, like hers did). After some romantic surf and sex sequences, she learns that Johnny is a cop and worse, he has lied to her about his parents. In response, she threatens to shoot him in the middle of the night.

Instead, she leaves him. Well, almost. X-signature responses like apathy, anger, and confusion don't preclude romance (or the illusion of it, which is the same thing: see *Reality Bites*, or better, don't). *Point Break* being hyperconscious of its generic parameters, Tyler becomes the bait that Bodhi uses to get even with Johnny. Bodhi shows him a videotape of the hostage: she's in her slip (vulnerable and eroticized), with a knife to her throat, and yelling at the camera, "Fuck you! Fuck you!" Directed at her viewers—Bodhi, Johnny, and the rest of us—this invective serves as a brief meta-commentary on the interplay between audience and spectacle in the production of cultures and identities.

The conflict between Bodhi and Johnny results in Angelo's murder (he is, finally, relegated to the "history" he represents). Despite Johnny's loyalty to Angelo, he is, like fellow 20something Bodhi, positioned against the father-vet figure's faith in a legal order. But they can only oppose it in the sense that they recognize that no real justice is possible; they remain immersed in the larger myth-system that reproduces pre-nineties ideals of masculinity, individualism, and morality. Still, the film allows that these ideals are outmoded. Johnny does and doesn't "get his man." By the end, after much tussling in water, air, and desert sands (and Johnny's earnest declaration that Bodhi has "got to go down!"), they part, with Bodhi seeking a suicidal wave and Johnny tossing his badge into the surf. Recalling the end of *Dirty Harry*, this last shot also questions the vigilante righteousness of the 1971 film, by confusing which side is which. Unlike ugly, sniveling psycho-killer Scorpio (whom Harry dispatches with a barrage of bullets), Bodhi/Reagan retains his "rebellious" appeal. And Johnny tells us he is still surfing.

"I'M A LOSER BABY, SO WHY DON'T YOU KILL ME?"

The incredible commercial success Beck's song "Loser" (punchline quoted above) suggests that many X-consumers have a lively sense of humor (though those commentators who bemoan the popularity of this "generational anthem" seem not to get this point). To be sure, the relationship between despair and humor is a tough one to appreciate. *True Romance* (1993) negotiates it with stunning shrewdness. A deliriously hybrid film (as indicated by the intriguing combination of its makers, writer Quentin Tarantino [*Reservoir Dogs* and this year's Palme D'Or winner, *Pulp Fiction*] and director Tony Scott [*Top Gun*]), it's a thriller-road movie-romance-comedy that scavenges from all over the U.S. pop-cultural landscape, including references to Elvis (as a ghostly mentor), urban violence, Hollywood glamour, and the Vietnam War. Briefly, the story is this: comic book aficionado Clarence (Christian Slater) meets and marries luscious call girl Alabama (Patricia Arquette). They accidentally come upon some primo cocaine and attempt to sell it to big-deal L.A. producer Lee (Saul Rubinek), thus inviting the extremely violent interventions of the L.A. cops (led by fast-talkers Tom Sizemore and Christopher Penn) and the mob (first Christopher Walken, then some thugs in suits).

True Romance's hyperbolic violence is all about style, indicated in the oxymoron of its title (romance is a myth, which makes it true enough). The movie revels in paradox. Nihilistic and passionate, hilarious and grim, incoherent and nominally linear, it's a perfect X-er-pic. Specifically, it uses the war and its existence as reproductions in insidious and intelligent ways. It's not only the hood that's a warzone; upscale L.A. is here chaotic and dangerous, full of deadly traps, terribly surreal, stupidly self-important and too-rich. The movie targets all aspects of popular representation, banal as well as spectacular. Everyone's an actor (one tells himself, upon being conscripted by the cops to wear a wire during the climactic drug buy, "Your motivation is to stay alive!"). Everyone's a potential killer (including Alabama, who smashes an assailant's head in, after an especially graphic and bloody battle in her motel room). Everyone's media-savvy and self-delusional.

The generational specificity of all this has to do with the movie's understanding of mass-media representations as a cultural framework. This framework, while not definitive (if there's any point to be made about X-ness, it's that nothing about it is definitive), supposes a shape for experience that is temporally and narratively different (or derived) from that of previous generations.

Hollywood producer Lee's claim to fame is an Oscar-winner called *Coming Home in a Bodybag*, called here a "great movie," one "with balls." On meeting the producer, Clarence is moved to call it "my favorite movie of all time. I mean, after *Apocalypse Now*, I think that is the best Vietnam movie ever made." He goes on to give evidence for his judgment: his two uncles, both vets, told him that "this was the most accurate Vietnam film they'd ever seen." Given Coppola's infamous self-assessment at Cannes ("My movie is not about Vietnam, my movie is Vietnam"), Clarence's is an especially astute and multi-layered adulation. The war circulates as pop-image throughout Clarence and Lee's encounter, with dailies from the sequel—tentatively titled *Bodybags 2*—running on a screen behind the characters during the scene. This footage consists only of choppers, that perennial visual shorthand for "Vietnam," rotoring ominously as the tension builds (the scene itself ends in a bloodbath, with cops, gangsters, and Lee's bodyguards shooting each other up with an ecstatic abandon).

The chopper footage is a very good joke; where *Boyz* uses ominously unseen helicopters to depict continuities between experiences in different eras, *True Romance* uses onscreen choppers to show how experience is translated in popular imagery, sequelized and endless. Or more precisely, the movies are experience (remember Spielberg's praise for *Platoon*, which made him feel like he was "in" Vietnam). For Clarence, the war is like Elvis, whose ghost (played by Val Kilmer) inspires him throughout the film. It's a piece of a past that's less than real, that escapes reality, that revises what reality means. It's iconography, far removed from what might have been an original event, but also heavy with ongoing, shifting meaning and effects. It's media, it's culture, it's identity. Believe it.

CULTURE, HISTORY, AND THEIR DISCONTENTS

Tony Williams, *English Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-6601.*

Mark Walker, *Vietnam Veteran Films. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1991.*

Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991.*

Special Edition Director's Cut J.F.K. Warner Home Video. 1993.

Beyond J.F.K.: The Question of Conspiracy. Warner Home Video. 1992.

Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America. New York: Atheneum, 1992.*

The Viet Nam conflict influenced several movements within American society over the course of the last few decades: historical analysis, film, documentary, and other forms of cultural representations including literature and poetry. Several investigations attempt a genuinely honest analysis of the issues, whether basic or complex. But, for others, the war may function as a convenient label to include a diverse number of heterogeneous factors having little to do with the challenging cultural and historical issues emerging from the conflict. Whatever its form—literature, film, documentary, cultural analysis—a direct confrontation with the facts is paramount, a factor determining the validity of any basic or epic analysis.

Mark Walker's *Vietnam Veteran Films* is a modest but useful, work. Structured on his Northwestern University dissertation, the book examines changes within narrative images of Vietnam veterans (termed "Vietvets") over the last thirty years across several genres such as biker, vigilante, caper, police, horror, comedy and melodrama. Encompassing some 226 pages with a useful 48 page filmography and ten page bibliography, Walker employs a relatively unsophisticated genre analysis informed by Joseph Campbell-influenced mythological approaches and systems studies (such as Ervin Laszlo's *The Systems View of the World*).

Although the whole issue of filmic representation is an extremely complex one necessitating many methodologies, much can be said for the basic approach outlined by Walker. We have to begin somewhere and he provides a launching point. Regarding the generic and mythic framework as part of an organizing methodology, he envisions his book as "an examination of several interlocking and overlapping systems" (x) in terms of systems theorists such as Laszlo. Films interconnect and overlap

by means of economic exchange. Walker examines the output of both major and independent studios as well as noting rental factors in both film and video release (12). His methodology here resembles Will Wright's structuralist oriented *Six Guns and Society* (1975), the major difference being Walker's employment of Joseph Campbell's mythological tools (instead of Levi-Strauss), and Thomas Schatz's generic definitions of formula films as those of integration and order. Campbell's archetypal concepts derive from Jung's initial a-historical formulations. While an archetype may usefully typify a particular formulaic approach, its employment may become vague and overgeneralized if the analysis lacks more sophisticated references to historical and cultural issues. (A more complex understanding of an archetype emerges in the initial two volumes of Richard Slotkin's important trilogy, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (1973) and *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (1985), essential works surprisingly absent from the bibliography.)

Although less rigid than Wright, Walker's methodological tools are problematic. They act as initial analytic devices to a genre needing more post-structuralist and close reading examinations to attempt full justice to the field in question. However, Walker does provide a valuable list of initial generic classifications. Beginning with biker films, he notes that "they are the main film vehicle that carried the Vietvet image from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s" (15). Whether functioning as marginal comic figures or major components of the movie (*Satan's Sadists, The Black Six, Born Losers*), the now fairly obscure veteran biker genre presented images of alienated figures that mainstream productions avoided. In this chapter, Walker notes significant films, describes the basic plots, and lays foundations for future analysis. At least we know what is there and can continue more complex examinations. He also notes veterans as characters in other genres such as vigilante (*Vigilante Force, The Annihilators*), caper (*The Pursuit of D.B. Cooper, Firefox*), detective (*Vanishing Point, Suspect*), police (*The Stone Killer, The Choirboys*), war (*Missing in Action, Rambo*), horror (*The Crazies, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*), comedy (*The Wild Life, Riders of the Storm*), melodrama (*Homer, The Deer Hunter*), and art film (*Taxi Driver, Wild At Heart*).

Many of the films mentioned defy exact categorizations. Such are the pitfalls of generic studies. The questions of what to include and not to include are insurmountable. In *Marked for Death*, there is no explicit reference to the Viet Nam war, unlike *Above the Law*. We do see a photograph of Seagal and Keith David together in military fatigues in jungle surroundings. David's appearance as a black veteran in other films such as *Platoon, Men At Work*, and *Off Limits* could support this. However, not all veterans went to Viet Nam and the jungle could be anywhere. But, as in all works attempting to classify Viet Nam war movies, the jury may be out for some time. No less so will it be with Steven Seagal's American-Jamaican Friendship production! However, in *Predator*, explicit mention is made of Dutch's service in

Viet Nam, so it is incorrect to group this among films which "represented American commandos with no mention of service in Vietnam" (70).

Walker's book provides a valuable service in beginning the difficult act of classification, providing a foundation for others to follow, debate, argue, and reformulate their own categories. Even concentrating on a selected group of Viet Nam films is difficult enough. As John Baky observed in "White Cong and Black Clap" (*Nobody Gets Off the Bus: Viet Nam Generation Big Book*, 164), toxic dangers await the unwary in classifying popular representations, a fate faced by non-veterans also!

More ambitious and less taxonomic is Timothy Corrigan's *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam*. Viewing the post-Viet Nam war (and, obviously, the post-Berlin Wall) era as symptomatic of an epistemological change in contemporary culture, Corrigan posits that new aesthetic, technological, and distribution patterns have fundamentally altered cinematic patterns of address and reception. Advertising techniques, corporate take-overs of Hollywood studios, and the growth of video, satellite, and cable technologies result in a shift of the center of movie viewing away from the screen towards a more diffuse audience pattern of reception. This heterogeneous audience supposedly has access to more control (remote or real) than ever before. Diffuse due to its varied age, gender, economic base, and racial identity, it is far more problematic for any single movie to address.

Corrigan attempts describing "certain salient conditions in contemporary film culture, from the socio-historical and industrial to the textual, and then presents a variety of cultural and textual engagements with those conditions" (3). He initially locates this shift amongst the media politics of the Viet Nam war, the conglomerate restructuring of the industry, the effect of news technologies, and the contemporary fascination with nostalgia. Following this, he argues for the existence of a new type of audience disavowing the old secure reading strategies responding both to their "illegibility" and *performing* them "as a kind of cult object that they both appropriate and relinquish themselves to" (4). Believing that contemporary film culture absorbs and redefines features such as auteurism, genre, and narrative in a different manner than before, Corrigan finally examines how an audience controlling these movies "will be socially and politically mobilized" (4). His cinema without walls refers "to the walls of cultural nationalism within an international landscape" (5) universalizing an exile Chilean director such as Raoul Ruiz or extending the reference of *My Beautiful Launderette* beyond its British context.

Corrigan's thesis is a familiar one, owing much to postmodernist tendencies in scholarship championing heterogeneity, diffusion, and the death of the author, as well as heralding a utopian movement within cultural studies concerning viewer reception, one Meaghan Morris soberly questions in her 1985 essay, "The Banality of Cultural Studies." Even if viewers are no longer 70s *Screen Theory* victims of rigid ideological interpolation, it is doubtful whether they hold that libertarian control and defense against corporate-influenced ideological

strategies Corrigan and many scholars believe they do. Throughout the Western and developing Eastern and Third World areas today, the retreat of state funding and development of commercial cable and satellite stations result in media explosion. However, at the present time, very little space is given to alternative stylistic and representational strategies. Contemporary stations still attempt dominant ideological patterns of inoculation. CNN may indeed challenge broadcast news. But its equal use of superstar news cult figures such as Larry King in opposition to the grotesquely overpaid (ex-Nixon employee) Diane Sawyer, Barbara Walters, and Ted Koppel, and frequent "sound-bite" practices can not justify utopian beliefs of academic scholars. While media channels increase and cinemas reopen, the scope of representations become extremely limited and one-dimensional. While a postmodern culture may embrace a multitude of contemporary activities, it is unclear as to how far some of its films lucidly dramatize the possibilities of engagement more than others, especially in a world facing corporate domination of information. The answer may not lie in cinema but in a collective network of radical activists using new information technologies far removed from corporate structures dominating contemporary media such as film and television.

One disturbing aspect of Corrigan's treatment lies in his cavalier attitude towards historical significance. His initial chapter—"Glancing at the Past: From Vietnam to VCRs"—uses *Heaven's Gate* to argue for its reflection of "a contemporary dissipation across images that simply do not seem to make sense anymore" (14) heralding both the problems and eventual failure of the future blockbuster epic. He understands the film as a "mythical [italics mine] story of American origins, of how capitalism and the immigrant masses clashed in the Johnson County War of the 1880s in an effort to establish their separate identities as the image of that land" (14). While the film does undertake a necessary cinematic latitude towards the historical movement of the actual conflict, its major premises are, of course, historical.

But, just as *The Deer Hunter* captures the way the Vietnam War is often understood today only through the exaggerations, distortions, and incoherences that impede any accurate historical representation of that war, this archetypal Western fails as a ritualistic description of a mythical past because it so accurately reflects the contemporary trouble with representing any collective history for an audience that, at least since Vietnam, has only the most temporary sense of itself as a singular historical image among an unprecedented plethora of cultural and historical images. (14-15).

Several problems emerge here. Who is speaking for whom here? Does Corrigan know the audience? Has he engaged in statistical research beyond the musings of postmodernist discourse? Lest accusations of empiricism re-emerge, we must remember that contemporary cultural studies (especially those by Pierre Bourdieu) engage in those once-abused practices if only to justify the validity of their ideological and cultural conclusions. Furthermore, while any representation may fall into a

ritual pattern (inescapable with a genre such as the western), does this impede any sense of historical investigation and representation even though this may not mediate the complex nature of the original?

The distracting nature of *Heaven's Gate* may owe less to its attempt to provide a totalizing ritual but rather to its revealing echoes of those patterns of historical genocide and imperialism initiating the Viet Nam war. Its significance may extend far beyond Corrigan's explanation.

Attracting an audience nostalgic for those public rituals of the cinema but with a cultural identity too fractured to invest in any totalizing ritual, *Heaven's Gate* thus provides, only too clearly, an historical spectacle that instead temporally distracts the diverse audiences it aims to gather as one. It becomes, in short, a public ritual that simply puts into play a collection of private, fragmented glances. (15-16)

One may ask why reactionary conservative films such as *An Officer and A Gentleman*, *Missing in Action*, *Rambo*, and the whole facile detritus of Reaganite entertainment succeeded in ideologically unifying viewers into accepting conservative nostalgic historical visions. He does not sufficiently account for the temporary success of these versions of Reaganite entertainment. Although critics may be reluctant to embrace the close-reading strategies associated with New Criticism and F.R. Leavis, there is a lot to be said for a deeper engagement with the complexities of the text than Corrigan gives. His whole premise is one of a sweeping glance exhibiting a reluctance to engage with the filmic intricacies as opposed to Robin Wood's treatment in *Hollywood: From Vietnam to Reagan* (1986). Does not the final scene denote more than Corrigan's closing description banalizing the political and historical complexity of a film still needing close interrogation?

In fact, if *Heaven's Gate* has become a common allegory for contemporary Hollywood and its passion for blockbusters, it is the allegory that its own story recounts: the pervasive tale of a territorial war between contending, barely dominant, powers and an uncontrollable heterogeneity. In the end, the showdowns of this war, much like those of the Vietnam that drift through *The Deer Hunter*, do not become victories or defeats but dissipate anticlimactically like the final battle scene in *Heaven's Gate*. What remains is primarily a history of fragmentation and images of spectacular excess, codified, in the concluding sequence, in the disaffected narrator Jim Averill, as the wistfully empty reflections of distracted nostalgia. (16)

When was Averill ever the narrator in this film? Also, the closing images finally destroying the ideological claims to validity of the WASP heroic male of the traditional Western deserve more than the "Brave New (Postmodernist) World" burial Corrigan eagerly gives it.

Even if the movie was recovered for a different audience on VCRs we must remember that its whole promotion and publicity apparatus essential today for any mainstream film) was botched, perhaps deliberately, for a film challenging developing Reaganite premises.

Both in Britain and the U.S.A. the film attracted an almost universal chorus of journalistic degradation whose unanimity appeared peculiar, to say the least. *Heaven's Gate* may have failed not just because of its problematic historical representation and representation but really because of its revealing allegorical parallels to a conflict politicians wished the public to forget.

At any rate for Corrigan, later cinematic engagement with the Viet Nam war aspire to the condition of nostalgia songs and operatic spectacles as *Platoon*, *Apocalypse Now*, and *Full Metal Jacket* show. While nostalgia certainly exists in *Platoon*, *Götterdämmerung* in *Apocalypse Now*, it is doubtful whether *Full Metal Jacket* can be really understood without a knowledge of the Swiftian ironic strategies so clearly present in Kubrick's other films.

Whether video and cable provide avenues for postmodernist random and fragmented reception is highly questionable. More audience research is needed to confirm its supposed utopian premises. Minds may switch off, whether fragmented or coherent. Media representations are not enough in themselves to guarantee change.

Corrigan further explores supposed audience refiguration in films such as *Adrift*, *In A Year of Thirteen Moons*, *Blue Velvet*, and cult films such as *Choose Me* and *After Hours*. He then investigates the commodification of auteurism (Coppola, Ruiz, and Kluge), genre changes, and the decline of the character motivated films (*9 1/2 Weeks*) towards celebrating Dennis Potter's postmodernist strategies in *The Singing Detective*. His final chapter examines for a supposed audience reconfiguration in works such as *The King of Comedy*, *The Third Generation*, and *My Beautiful Launderette*. He argues that

each of the films locates itself within the recent history of a particular contemporary culture whose politics have regularly threatened to become its media images. More importantly (for my argument), each addresses an audience as a *localized, emotional, and temporary position* where the fascinating power of ideology lies in its instability and where the politics of a public sphere plays itself out within the distracted arena of private games and personal feelings. (198)

By engaging with the particular dislocating operations within such films, the "viewers now have the option to activate and be activated by what they watch in a variety of ways across those violent and emotional social spaces connecting private and public life, Recognizing the options within those spaces may be all that differentiates a violent fan from a political innovator" (227).

Several problems exist within this book. Corrigan isolates a number of films to support his particular postmodernist thesis, films which appeal to an admittedly minority audience who supposedly will become a politically innovative vanguard within viewing situations. A major difficulty involves a particular historical isolation conditioning this work. While it is admittedly difficult to learn from history (leaving aside questions of historical "truth," *A Cinema Without Walls* uses the

Viet Nam conflict as a convenient metaphorical dividing line to champion a utopian cinema whose historical relevance and accessibility is questionable, to say the least. It combines a number of variable films having little, if any, association with the conflict generating them. While interpretative strategies and movements have become particularly complex over the past two decades, there is a particular need for any critical work to engage more deeply with the historical lessons and social disjunctions of the War than Corrigan does.

History is important in any discussion. As I write, Richard Nixon's history is being re-written by corporate media and undiscerning student newspaper editorials throughout the country. His death ironically interrupted NBC's repeat of Raymond Burr's last performance as Perry Mason last Friday. The JFK clone in the White House proclaimed a National Day of Mourning while NBC broadcast unchallenged segments of Tricky Dicky's interviews with his biographers in which the former President justified the Viet Nam war, his incursions into Cambodia, and other historical atrocities. Pushed into limbo are his 40s and 50s activities, his premature pre-McCarthy red-baiting and the dubious strategies leading to Alger Hiss's conviction. No matter how great the difficulties, historical issues must always remain central if only to form an arena of debate. This is particularly so for any critical work in literature and film.

Richard Slotkin's *Gunfighter Nation* has been eagerly awaited over the last seven years, the final part of a trilogy begun with *Regeneration Through Violence*, a core work for any interpretation of the Viet Nam conflict. It does not disappoint the reader. With its mixture of history, literature, and cinema, the book is one of the most challenging works to emerge in this decade.

As well as being a renowned cultural historian, Richard Slotkin is also a novelist. His two neglected works of fiction, *The Crater* (1980) and *The Return of Henry Starr* (1988) attempt his usual lengthy epic blending of politics and history found in his other works. Dealing with a Civil War incident, the long out-of-print *The Crater* is far more relevant than the (currently NPR serialized) *Glory Enough for All* (1993) by Dwayne Schultz. By focusing upon character and the historical and cultural forces determining them, Slotkin provides a far more acute analysis. Based upon a real life outlaw, *The Return of Henry Starr* is another ambitious work dealing with historical change and the developing ideologically motivated cinematic apparatus upon the life of one of the West's last outlaws. Slotkin's detailed descriptions insightfully describe the different forces of culture and cinematic technology overdetermining the attempted individuality of an outlaw wishing to recreate his former exploits on the cinema screen. Both works are over-long, ambitious, flawed, but highly significant. They reveal an historian using fiction to depict cultural concepts within his epic trilogy. They deserve reprinting and access to a wider audience.

Gunfighter Nation has already gained positive reviews. It is a fitting conclusion to his trilogy with its magnificent vision and encompassing pitfalls. Reading carefully the 850 pages is equivalent to engaging in an

epic journey. He presents a fascinating historical, literary, and cultural overview pointing his readers towards key geographical features. In many cases, the vision is revealing. But the limited scope of his book (in terms of acceptable page length) often makes one yearn for a detailed archaeological excavation of particular sites which this particular project can not allow. Thus, although one may criticize the often sweeping overviews concerning figures such as Jack London and the lack of visual description in his predominantly thematic analysis of twentieth century movies, these judgments become secondary in viewing his achievement. He analyzes significant cultural motifs within the American heritage in terms of their literary and cinematic transformations up to the present day. This work takes history, literature, and culture extremely seriously in a project highly relevant to the political and interpretative parameters of the Viet Nam conflict.

Beginning with JFK's invocation of the New Frontier myth in his July 16 1960 Democratic Party Presidential acceptance nomination speech, Slotkin opens his work by introducing the relevance of ideology, genre, and myth within a culture-making process translated through diverse elements of a mass media process including literature, history, and cinema. Noting mythology as a form of "cultural production that addresses most directly the concerns of Americans as citizens of a nation-state" (9), he provides a better definition of myth as an archetypal process than Mark Walker, as well as debating post-structuralist and postmodernist influences more deeply than Corrigan. Myth is related closely to history necessitating a broader understanding and engagement than other theories which involve its supposed redundancy. Slotkin takes history and myth equally seriously in a work detailing the pernicious effects of cultural production. We are still victims of a Frontier Myth, produced within the Puritan era, influencing American politics and foreign policy today. Choosing to focus upon industrial productive factors, Slotkin believes that "we can study more closely the dynamics of "myth-production in the particular cultural site that has acquired the power to address us as if it spoke for an 'American' national culture" (10).

The application to the Viet Nam war as a cultural discourse is not hard to see. Despite attempting to displace unpalatable facts on to other cultures, America has always been "a peculiarly violent nation"(13). This violence became represented in a special manner.

What is distinctly 'American' is not necessarily the amount or kind of violence that characterizes our history but the mythic significance we have assigned to the kinds of violence we have actually experienced, the forms of symbolic violence we imagine or invent, and the political uses to which we put that symbolism" (13)

Noting the development of the Frontier Myth in the nineteenth century as a mythic concept used ideologically for political ends against the "have-nots", both within and outside American society, Slotkin sees the emergence of a familiar rationale whereby "progress depends on the exclusion/ extermination of a congeni-

tally regressive type of humanity and on the aggrandizement of a privileged race or people" (21). The extensions of this myth to include Native Americans, Mexicans, and Vietnamese is the subject of this important work.

Examining the Progressive Mythology in diverse works from Theodore Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West* (1885-1894) to Turner's "Frontier" thesis, he notes the transformations within Fenimore Cooper's original Leatherstocking hunter towards more imperialist extensions and the particular creation of Buffalo Bill Cody whereby American history becomes a mythic landscape during 1880 and 1917. Formed by ideology and dime-novel, Cody became the Westernized commercial military aristocrat in his Wild West shows, winning the Frontier from the savage hordes, forming a mythic figure movies would later develop. With Roosevelt's "Rough Rider" Frontier sanctified imperialism, a militarized imagery developed equating strikers and savage Indians leading to brutal industrial suppression as well as fictionalized celebrations. In Captain Charles King's *Foes in Ambush* (1893), three Apache War Indian fighters wage battle with strikers. It is not hard to see analogies with conservative Viet Nam films such as *Hamburger Hill* and *The Hanoi Hilton* which see internal enemies aiding their savage foes. Frederic Remington's accounts of the intervention of Indian-hating cavalry regiments in the 1894 Pullman Strike also drew analogies between strikers and savages. In his excavations of forgotten narratives, Slotkin shows the relevance of a forgotten past to the present. The myth of the Indian Wars justified the prosecution of the Philippine war leading to a collapse of distinctions in which all wars—whether in the Little Big Horn, Chicago, or the Philippine jungle—were the same war. Only a trained professional military hierarchy could avert another "Last Stand" in American history.

Slotkin next examines the role of outlaws, detectives, and dime-novel populism during 1873-1903. While earlier narratives used the Frontier as a safety-valve for metropolitan social conflicts, post-1875 dime novels focused more on class conflicts between "outlaws" and "detectives," the former often winning the conflict between 1877 and 1883. These works provided the origins of the twentieth century "hard-boiled" school of fiction and the gangster movie. However, despite the early *social bandit* origins of the fictionalized Jesse James, ideological forces soon made him less of a historical figure and more of a mythic hero. Like J. Edgar Hoover, the Pinkerton detective agency fictionalized its dubious activities. In 1877 Allen Pinkerton cashed in on public concern about labor violence with books such as *The Mollie Maguires and the Detectives*, presenting Irish immigrant miners as contemporary incarnations of Captivity Narrative savage Indians and the Pinkerton detective as the new Hunter figure.

Slotkin's meticulous research thus brings to light forgotten narratives which contributed to a pernicious ideological framework still operating today. In many cases his survey approach is valuable. But he often attempts a brief overview of figures needing more complex examination (and more space) which his book can not encompass. Jack London belongs to an Anglo-Saxon

red-blooded school of fiction with particular racial "Manifest Destiny" overtones. But his relationship to this ideological tendency is extremely complicated and contradictory, needing more detailed examination. Susan Nuernberg's 1990 doctoral dissertation, *The Call of Kind: Race in Jack London's Fiction* is one such work noting the complexities which Slotkin's overview fails to examine.

Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) and Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (1904) are recognized by Slotkin as being far more ideologically pernicious, both in their literary and cinematic versions concerning racial and imperialist values. He provides an apt conclusion for his chapter, "Aristocracy of Violence: Virility, Vigilante Politics, and Red-Blooded Fiction, 1895-1910."

It is the nature of mythic symbolism to exaggerate, to read particulars as universals, to treat every conflict as Armageddon in microcosm. The primary social and political function of the extraordinary violence of myth is to sanction the ordinary violence of oppression and injustice, of brutalities casual or systematic, of the segregation, insult, or humiliation of targeted groups. (192-193)

The ideological road to Viet Nam is not far away. It lies deep within American culture.

Slotkin reveals similar motifs existing both in high and low cultural artifacts. In his examination of the Tarzan and John Carter works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, he aptly demonstrates that the cultural historian neglects works of low culture at her/his peril. Slotkin notes that "Burroughs and his publishers were following the practice, common to both dime novels and pulps, of 'adapting' popular works of 'serious' fiction to cheap fiction format and style." (698, n. 10). Equally so, Viet Nam war cinema features Chuck Norris formulaic adaptations of themes present in supposedly "high art" movies such as *The Deer Hunter*.

With the development of cinema, a new form of twentieth century technology supplements and supports continuing mythical cultural tendencies. Slotkin examines both westerns and gangster films showing their relationship to the American cultural tradition. While he never engages in a reductive analysis of direct relationship, he reveals both literature and film as forming a symbiotic nexus to dominant trends in society, employing both past and present motifs in their construction. He notes the strength and decline of genres such as the western in relationship to particular historical forces active within a given period. While his writing often lacks the necessary analytic tools for appropriate visual analysis, his cultural examinations are extremely rewarding. He notes the relationship of *Bataan* (1943) as belonging to the Last Stand Custer ideology, notes the Western's renaissance within the terms of Cold War ideology, and provides an insightful explanation to Kirby York's "noble lie" at the end of *Fort Apache* (1948).

Ford thus visualizes and verbalizes the process by which truth becomes myth and by which myth provides the essential and socially necessary meaning in our images of our history.... We are continue to believe

in our myths despite our knowledge that they are untrue. For the sake of our political and social health we will behave as if we did not know the history whose truth would demystify our beliefs. (342)

The relationship of this statement to the events of April 27, 1994, and the history denial mechanisms of television stations such as NBC (which now has claims to being known as the "Nixon Channel") is clear enough.

Examining the Western's relationship to Cold War mythology, Slotkin notes the complex nature of various films such as Anthony Mann's *Devil's Doorway* (1950) and Ford's *The Searchers*, as well as other works not all of which necessarily supported the dominant ideology. Ford's weary cavalry movie *Rio Grande* (1950) not only reveals the identification of democracy with military values (not entirely convincingly), but the type of covert operation characterizing government policy from the Truman administration onwards. In his examinations of various westerns, Slotkin keenly notes the complexities and contradictions, often providing new incisive readings as in his analysis of Gregory Peck's role in Henry King's *The Gunfighter* (1950).

His career, like that of the gangster-hero in the 1930s, is a darkened mirror-image of progressivism, but now with a distinct postwar emphasis. His fate is not primarily a critique of capitalist excess, but of power and world preeminence. Ringo has striven to rise in the world by the development of his skill; he has become a leader in his profession, the best at what he does and renowned for doing it. Having achieved the pinnacle of success and power, he discovers that the achievement is meaningless, even poisonous. The disciplined self-restraint that is the essence of his professionalism has become an imprisoning shell that cuts him off from human connections. (299-390)

Slotkin also provides valuable insights into 50s Mexican Westerns such as *Viva Zapata* (1952) and *Vera Cruz* (1954) where the historical Mexico becomes transformed into a mythic landscape in an era seeing the Eisenhower doctrine of "counterinsurgency and covert operations that would define future policy toward revolution in the third world." (410)

In chapter 15, "Conquering New Frontiers: John Kennedy, John Wayne, and the Myth of Heroic Leadership, 1960-1968," Slotkin understands Kennedy's significance in a more mature manner than Oliver Stone. He sees the fallen leader as continuing the Cold War tradition and modernizing Turner's thesis within an anti-Communist New Frontier version. Noting parallels between external and domestic oppression, Slotkin describes the dangerous nature of the still omni-present Kennedy cult as being due to the same ideological forces dominating the dark mythological American nightmare his trilogy unveils. Embellishing a heroic cult of masculine toughness within an American tradition cinematically incarnated by John Wayne, the Kennedy leadership was as dangerous and pernicious as its predecessors and successors. Despite the Camelot associations, "War was a primary symbol of political value on the New Frontier." (499). Even Kennedy's academic ideologue, Arthur M.

Schlesinger Jr., admitted the necessity for a false manufactured heroism within modern society in his 1960 article "on Heroic Leadership and the Dilemma of Strong Men and Weak Peoples" (501-502, 741, n.42). The parallels to *Fort Apache's* ending are revealing. Mythical reinterpretations of counterinsurgency and heroic leaders appear in diverse films such as Heston's heroic persona in *El Cid* (1961), *Fifty Five Days at Peking* (1962), *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), and *The Alamo* (1960). As Slotkin notes, "The period of Kennedy's campaign for the presidency coincided with the transformation of John Wayne from a major Hollywood star to a powerful cultural icon." (512) Here, the significance of *The Green Berets* as the culmination of Wayne's movement towards explicit political screen polemics is important. Slotkin reveals the arch-conservative actor's function as providing propaganda for a Democratic war seeing the film "not as a misconceived failure, but as the logical fulfillment of the myth of charismatic leadership and counterinsurgency—of the weak people needing to be rescued by the Strong Man—that was so appealingly voiced in John F. Kennedy's inaugural and so vividly portrayed in the epic cinema of *El Cid*, *Fifty-five Days in Peking*, and *The Alamo*.

JFK: The Director's Cut and *Beyond JFK*—both released by Warner Home Video—are important textual supplements to Slotkin's examination. As he aptly demonstrates, films are also texts. On release, Stone's *JFK* presented an extraordinary cinematic blending of documentary footage, documentary reconstruction, docudrama, and fictional narration blurring boundaries between fact and fiction to argue for a government conspiracy against a President supposedly withdrawing from Viet Nam. Stone's historical evidence is highly debatable. The film is also questionable, resurrecting the now-discredited myth of the fallen hero in a work infected by the director's usual male melodramatic hysterics. Despite its flaws, *JFK: The Director's Cut* is an important work to view. With its blurring of factual and fictional elements, it both illustrates many of the aspects Slotkin investigates in *Gunfighter Nation* as well as having links with New Historical approaches investigating the production of officially sanctioned historical "truth".

This version runs some 206 minutes, restoring only 17 minutes of footage, far shorter than the four-hour director's cut version supposedly envisaged. Many restored scenes supplement those within the released film such as sequences briefly revealing the foreign journalists (including one from Russia) attending Clay Shaw's trial. But others show Shaw, Ferrie, and Oswald traveling to Clinton, Louisiana spying on a Civil Rights voter-registration meeting, Garrison's appearance (with Jacky Gleason) on *The Johnny Carson Show*, his attempted assassination in an airport rest room, and Oswald's relationship to Nazi sympathizer/CIA agent George DeMohrenschildt, a "second" Oswald creating an incident at a car dealership while the real Oswald was elsewhere, and Oswald's involvement with Guy Bannister's anti-Castro Cuban operation.

JFK: The Director's Cut bombards the viewer with a dazzling montage array of fiction and documentary

reconstruction challenging the viewer in many ways to sort out the evidence. At the same time, it is overdetermined by a masculine trajectory, relegating the female to a historical footnote (Jackie Kennedy, Marina Oswald) or a temporary nuisance (Liz Garrison). As in the released version, Kevin Costner's Garrison performs a tedious Hamlet-like funeral oration pleading with the jury to convict an aberrant gay father-figure conspirator who has murdered a democratic America's legitimate "king." A contradictory work. But worth viewing.

Directed by Barbara Kopple and Danny Schechter, *Beyond JFK* is a valuable documentary supplement to Stone's fact-fiction historical epic. Interviewing director, stars, as well as veteran newsmen such as Walter Cronkite and Robert MacNeil (all holding diverse views on the assassination), the documentary contains interviews with still-surviving grassy knoll witnesses as well as footage of the Garrison trial itself. *Beyond JFK* is an ideal companion piece to *JFK*. Lacking Stone's distracting melodramatic histrionics, it presents a convincing case for the grassy knoll thesis as well as the probable involvement of government officials in the assassination. In addition to providing interviews with Garrison in 1989 (in poignant declining physical condition shortly before his death in 1992), it also contains one with Marina Oswald Porter who now believes that her deceased husband could not have acted alone. Both *JFK: The Director's Cut* and *Beyond JFK* with their mixtures of documentary and fictional material are thus important components in any investigation of the confused nature of cultural and historical evidence of this era.

Returning to Slotkin's *Gunfighter Nation* brings one back to a firm confrontation with historical fact, the regeneration through violence/Frontier thesis operating in diverse ways within contemporary Mexican westerns such as Peckinpah's *Moby Dick* influenced *Major Dundee* (1965) and Richard Brooks's *The Professionals* (1966). Both the Tet Offensive and the revelations about the My Lai massacre eventually disrupted the precarious balance between recuperation and crisis tilting the angle firmly towards the latter. In his final two chapters, Slotkin examines the killings at My Lai and Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* as key factors within American historical and cultural demoralization during 1969 to 1972. His analysis of both is masterly, full of pertinent historical and thematic detail interrogating challenging facts which official guardians would prefer to be forgotten or ignored under denigrating terms of sensationalist, gratuitous cinematic violence. However, unlike today, Slotkin sees the manipulative strategies and deceit of the Nixon administration during 1969-1973 in a section appropriately entitled "Lunatic Semiology: The Demoralization of American Culture."

The concluding chapter deals with the resulting crisis of public myth, the Watergate-post Vietnam syndrome, and the bankrupt nature of the temporarily ascendant Reaganite ideology. It was an era also seeing the decline of the Western in cinema, a genre now as bankrupt as its ideological component. But, despite its displacement, the cultural mythic and ideological forces remained, manifest in films such as *The French Connec-*

tion, *Dirty Harry*, and other Frontier-derived vigilante movies, as well as *Star Wars* and other science-fiction TV series. Since 1976, the Viet Nam war has become a major subject of movie revisionism.

Slotkin provides a positive conclusion, arguing for a new all-encompassing myth to take the form of the white exclusionary Hunter Myth—a myth responding to the demographic transformation of the United States, speaking to and for a polyglot nationality. Myth can not be dispensed with: “We require a myth that can help us make sense of the history we have lived and the place we are living in.” (655). This involves us all, actively making and producing creative myths to change the dark heritage of the past.

If we wish to contest or alter the myth/ideology produced for us by mass-culture industries and exploited by corporate and political leadership, the full repertoire of cultural and political responses is still available to us. The culture of media-company board rooms and political bureaucracies are dependent on, and blunderingly responsive to, the shifting moods and preferences of the populations they both exploit and serve. We ourselves can agitate and organize, enlist or resign, and speak, write, or criticize old stories and tell new ones. If the corporate structure of mass culture excludes us, other bases and sites of action remain—the classroom, the congregation, the caucus, the movement, the street corner, the factory gate. (659).

Slotkin argues for mythic discourse as a tool to mediate truth. In a book encompassing some 850 pages, he concludes a long odyssey that began with *Regeneration Through Violence* nearly twenty years before, ending with a call to collective action far more relevant than Corrigan’s call to the informed postmodernist individual viewer. *Gunfighter Nation* is one of the most important works of cultural studies, this decade has seen. It deserves close study and respect for the great achievement it undoubtedly represents.



POETRY by DAVID SCONYERS

Old GRAVES

In Quang Ngai we found
them laid in neat rows.
A short walk from villes,
Nam necropoli.

Low sand tumuli
contain the remains
of generations...
fishers, farmers, smiths.

Curious onlookers
watch us furiously
fire and maneuver
through their history.

How old, I wonder.
Could we exhume dread
traces from Mongol times?
From Michelin slaves?

Do Cham victims sleep
below casualties
of dead emperors?
Are French bones mixed in?

As we push inland,
more cemeteries;
low walled and stonemarked,
slow our tanks and tracs.

Old graves connect
ancient sacrifices
to new liberators.
The Cong know this.

It's too soon for us
to realize those
who embrace past deaths
will be hard to kill.

Arclight

The horizon wavered then crumbled,
seismic sensation confirmed it.
Arclight.

Laos vanished behind fire and dust,
waves of pressure on our eardrums.
Trees vaporized,
real estate vanished,
maps changed.

Three B-52s complete the strike,
returning to Guam as iron rain explodes.
Pilots sip coffee,
their bombs raging invisibly below.

Pinpoint accuracy,
surgical precision,
command controlled,
Pentagon targeted,
Washington approved.
Mechanized mayhem,
a hailstorm from Hell.

NVA ride them out at Khe Sanh,
tens of thousands blown to bits.
This should have been our clue,
technology can't lose or win.

Arclights in Quang Nam,
Arclights in Ashau,
Arclights in Hanoi,
Arclights in Dak To.

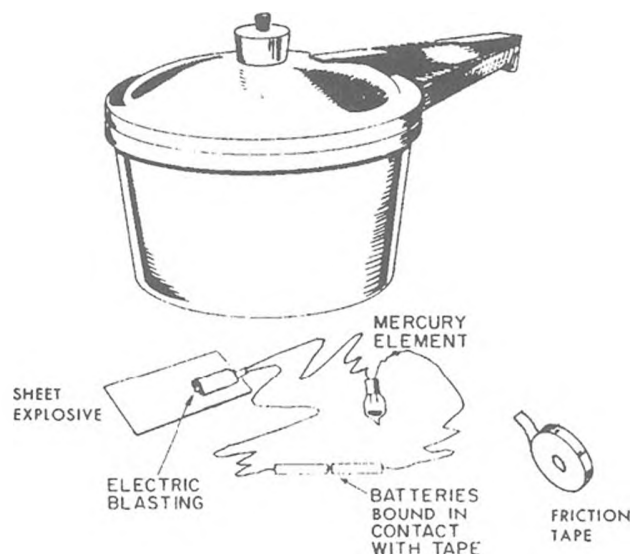
Airborne technowarriors created
moonscapes and left.
War waited them out
then men finished it.

David Sconyers, 4707 Connecticut Ave., NW, #114, Washington, DC 20008. Sconyers is an Army brat 1941-1959 (Germany, Japan, DC, southeastern USA). He graduated the University of Mississippi in 1963. Marine Officer 1963 to 1969: Two tours commanding Marines in combat in I Corps: first tour (1965-1966) was as an Amtrac Platoon Leader with 3rd Amtracs, Chu Lai and south; second tour (1968-1969) was as Company Commander, A Co., 3rd Amtracs, Danang and environs. After resigning his commission in 1969, he did a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern history (Penn 1978) and taught at Bucks County Community College and Villanova (1970-1991). Two Fulbrights, 7 years in the UK and Middle East (Sudan, Egypt, Jordan, Occ. Terrs.). Divorced in 1991 and married his high school sweetheart (Itazuke AF Base, Japan, 1959) on the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. 1991-1993 in Yemen as Country Director of America-Mideast Education and Testing Services, presently training as a Foreign Service Officer at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, Washington, DC.

POETRY by TIMOTHY HODOR

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PINBALL

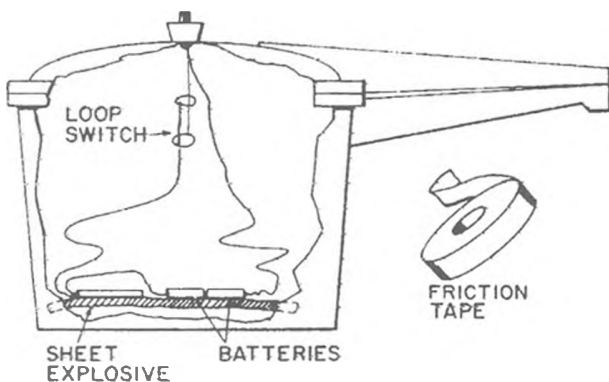
I was shot into space
So high that my coiled body
Had to leave its fetal position.
I tumbled downward,
Bouncing off clouds of childhood.
I landed softly
Then ended my own youth
By projecting myself
Back out into what I thought
Would be the same world.
But the surface of the sky had changed.
Time had tilted itself:
The Woodstock generation had weathered.
I saw how the rust had formed
On the dreams and peace signs
Of people I knew and still know.
I couldn't let my outlook get oxidized.
I found a different mental playground,
Where my mind teeter-tottered
Between now and then.
I managed to put a fulcrum of Utopian hope
Under my future seesaw,
And tried to live a meaningful life,
While knowing at all times
That I was destined to be
An anachronistic man:
A person taken out of his own time—
A man removed from his right reality.



IN THE VIETNAM VET'S SHOES

When the lights went out,
 The darkness smothered twenty years
 Of artificial light and living.
 I sat in the 60s tonight,
 Took a seat that was eye level with Alvin Lee.
 For two hours, I listened to Ten Years After
 Go through blues and rock-and-roll numbers,
 But I lacked the concentration I had as a teenager.
 My mind wandered from the music. Superficially,
 I tried to size up my own years
 Between Woodstock and tonight.
 I looked at other people to see if they were like me,
 Or if I was like them.
 I temporarily snapped out of the trance with "Goin'
 Home."
 After the last encore, the lists came on again.
 In a daze, I walked out of the Kurhalle.
 I looked up at the Viennese sky,
 Looked towards what I thought
 was the direction of the Atlantic,
 Of New York, of Woodstock.
 I looked with teary eyes at the men
 Picking up garbage while Hendrix
 Played "The Star-Spangled Banner."
 Then I looked down at my feet,
 Saw dusted pictures of Vietnam,
 Saw a lot of my own life covered up.
 I wonder if there's also snow on Yasgur's farm today.

Timothy Hodor, Fasangasse 35-37, 1030 Vienna, Austria.
 "In the Vietnam Vet's Shoes" first appeared in *Misnomer*.
 "Autobiographical Pinball" is reprinted from *Philadelphia Poets*.



Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York: Atheneum, 1994. 236 pp. \$20.

Reviewed by W.D. Ehrhart, 6845 Anderson St., Philadelphia, PA 19119.

It's not every day that somebody comes up with something new to say about a poem that's been around for 2700 years. Indeed, more has been written about Homer's *Iliad* than any other work of literature except the Bible, so you'd think that what's to say has already been said. What makes great literature great, however, is its ability to speak not only to its own age but to succeeding ages as well. Jonathan Shay believes the *Iliad* speaks to our own age in ways more contemporary than anyone could have imagined even a few years ago, and *Achilles in Vietnam* offers an unusual perspective both on the ancient epic and on a disturbingly contemporary problem.

Shay first began to consider the *Iliad* in the context of the American war in Vietnam while he was working as a psychiatrist in a Boston-based counseling program for Vietnam veterans suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In his introduction, he explains that he was struck by the similarities between his patients' war experiences and those of Homer's Achilles. Moreover, he says, "Homer has seen things that we in psychiatry and psychology have more or less missed."

Briefly, Shay's reading of the *Iliad* is as follows:

Agamemnon, Achilles commander, betrays "what's right" by wrongfully seizing his prize of honor; indignant rage shrinks social and moral horizon until he cares about no one but a small group of combat proven comrades; his closest friend in that circle, his second-in-command and foster brother, Patroklos, dies in battle; profound grief and suicidal longing take hold of Achilles; he feels that he is already dead; he is tortured by guilt and the conviction that he should have died rather than his friend; he renounces all desire to return home alive; he goes berserk and commits atrocities against the living and the dead.

This is also, Shay suggests, the story of many combat veterans, including those he has worked with, and he offers the stories of those veterans alongside that of Homer's Achilles. His essential contention is that "catastrophic war experiences not only cause lifelong disabling psychiatric symptoms, but can ruin good character." Further, he argues, the two most frequent circumstances which trigger chronic PTSD are betrayal by someone in authority over him of a soldier's sense of "what's right" (*themis*) as defined by the soldier's culture, and a state of berserk rage following the death of a comrade during which the soldier loses all sense of self-restraint.

Shay's purpose is not merely to point out interesting similarities between the Trojan War and the Vietnam war, but to "protect [our] soldiers with every strength we have, and honor and care for them when inevitably they are

injured by their service." To that end, he also discusses differences between the Greek army in Asia Minor and the U.S. military in Southeast Asia, frequently suggesting that the U.S. military could benefit by emulating many of the Greeks' customs and practices. (I use the term "Greek" here, as Shay does, to mean those forces arrayed against King Priam and the city of Troy, variously referred to by Homer as Achaians, Danaans, and Argives.)

He argues, for instance, that the near-instantaneous removal of U.S. corpses from Vietnam battlefields, together with the absence of opportunities to grieve, denied surviving comrades the opportunity to come to terms with the loss of their friends. He also writes that dehumanizing the enemy, reducing them to "gooks," "slopes," "dinks" and the like, caused young soldiers to seriously underestimate their Viet Cong opponents, often resulting in disastrous physical and psychological consequences. He demonstrates, in contrast, that Achilles and his peers frequently engaged in open and prolonged displays of grief, and almost never denigrated their opponents.

He suggests a number of changes in U.S. policies that, in his estimation, would reduce the incidence of PTSD among future soldiers, among them better unit cohesion through reliance on unit rather than individual rotation, recognition of the value of grieving, discouragement of berserking (which he says was frequently mistaken by commanders in Vietnam to be the mark of a good soldier rather than one who was out of control), elimination of intentional injustice as a motivational technique, respect for the humanity of the enemy, and acknowledgment by the military of psychological casualties.

The comparisons he makes between Troy and Vietnam aren't perfect, as Shay recognizes. Achilles and the other named soldiers in the *Iliad* are the equivalent of senior officers, while the veterans Shay works with are enlisted men or very junior officers, men Odysseus describes as "common soldiers... weak sisters, counting for nothing in battle or in council." There are vast cultural differences: for Achilles, for instance, betrayal of what's right means having taken away from him a young woman he himself has recently taken from a town he has sacked, killing her husband and her three brothers in the process. And war itself has changed: imagine, if you can, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, William Westmoreland and Creighton Abrams among the first rank of fighters, going toe-to-toe with Vo Nguyen Giap and Pham Van Dong.

Still, Shay's comparison is compelling, and he makes a good case for the universality of combat trauma. "I could not help my friend in his extremity," Achilles laments. "He needed me to shield him or to parry the death stroke." And here is one of Shay's vets: "If I was there, he wouldn't be dead... When he needed me, I wasn't there." Says Achilles, "For me there's no return to my own country." Says another Vietnam vet: "I didn't see myself going home. No... nope... no, I didn't."

So complex and ambitious a book, however, is bound to be flawed, and the closer one looks, the more disturbing those flaws become. Let me turn first to the *Iliad*.

Agamemnon does violate "what's right" in Book I by taking Achilles' prize of honor (Briseis) from him, and Achilles does go berserk after he learns in Book 18 that Patroklos has been killed. In between, however, in Book 9, Agamemnon recognizes the injustice he has committed against Achilles and tries to make up for it, offering to return Briseis (whom he swears he has not touched or slept with) along with seven new tripods, ten gold bars, twenty cauldrons, twelve thoroughbred horses, and seven additional women. Moreover, what Agamemnon offers Achilles if Troy falls to the Greeks takes Homer another thirty lines to enumerate. Odysseus, Ajax and Phoinix deliver Agamemnon's apology to Achilles and add to it their own pleas for Achilles to accept Agamemnon's offer.

But Achilles refuses. One must ask, then, has Achilles' social and moral horizon shrunk because of Agamemnon's betrayal of what's right, or because he is simply, as Diomedes says, deep into his own "vanity and pride." Is it perhaps Achilles himself, as Ajax points out to him, who betrays what's right by refusing to accept Agamemnon's abject and generous apology? Indeed, Richard Lattimore, in the introduction to his 1951 translation of the *Iliad*, calls the poem "the story of a great man who through a fault in an otherwise noble character... brings disaster upon himself."

Shay might rightly respond that Lattimore and other scholars of the classics haven't considered the *Iliad* in the context of PTSD, which wasn't even identified as such until the latter half of the 1970s. But Shay is obligated to explain the events of Book 9 in the context of his analysis, for if Achilles' behavior is the result of internal flaws in his character rather than the external forces Shay has identified, at best the extrapolations from Achilles to Shay's patients lose much of their force, and at worst one might conclude that the veterans' problems, like Achilles', are also the result of their flawed characters. Yet Shay neither explains nor even mentions Agamemnon's apology or Achilles' refusal to accept it.

A second major problem with Shay's analysis of the *Iliad* is contained in Shay's Chapter 7, "What Homer Left Out." Earlier in the book, Shay praises Greeks and Trojans alike for "honoring the enemy," for refusing to dehumanize each other, and he praises Homer for being so acute an observer and for refusing to take sides in the war he describes, instead portraying both Trojan and Greek as honorable and worthy. Even as Agamemnon prepares to put Troy "to fire and sword," he calls the city "holy Ilium" and describes its king as a "good lance."

But in Chapter 7, Shay explains that "the bard's need to stay in the good graces of hundreds of Ionian nobles who, through intermarriage, traced ancestry to both sides of the Trojan War may account for the astounding absence of villains" in the *Iliad*. This he says just after he has told us: [d]eprivation cannot be shown in the *Iliad*, because we this would stigmatize the ancestor as poor, reflecting dishonor. This also rules out death by fragging [being killed by one's own men], disease, or friendly fire."

We also learn in this chapter that:

Homer censors the suffering of the wounded.... Homer shows us only part of the suffering of civilians.... [Agonies falling] upon women after defeat are either passed over in complete silence or minimized.... Homer is silent on [the] hardship [of famine]... Terror is notably absent from Homer's picture of civilians.

How are we to know when Homer is seeing things that we "have more or less missed," and when he is merely pandering to the egos and biases of his patrons? If Shay's failure to explain the events of Book 9 of the *Iliad* leaves a gaping hole in his argument, his astute and articulate explanation of "What Homer Left Out" raises fundamental questions about the veracity of the poet he is relying upon to carry his argument.

One further point on the *Iliad*: toward the end of *Achilles in Vietnam*, Shay argues that "the *Iliad*'s prevailing message on what is of value in life is not Achilles' *kleos aphthiton*, 'unfailing glory,' but rather the social attachments of the domestic world at peace." As evidence he offers a collage of excerpts totaling 28 lines, yet Agamemnon expended more lines than that just to explain all the goodies Achilles would get if he helped in the destruction of Troy and the killing or enslaving of every inhabitant of the city. In a poem that is 15,693 long, where half those lines are given to descriptions of the fighting, where Homer's glowing description of the armor made for Achilles by Hephaistos takes up 129 lines, and expressions like "the test that brings men honor" are regularly used to describe combat, Shay's argument that the prevailing message is the value of the social attachments of the domestic world at peace is not convincing.

Let me turn now to the other half of Shay's equation: the Vietnam war and its veterans. To begin with, Shay is all too willing to take his patients' words at face value. As a therapist and healer, he may well be obligated to refrain from second-guessing or judging these men. But as an author who is offering a vision of Vietnam veterans and their world, he is obligated to do exactly that. For instance, one veteran describes himself as "just a typical American boy," but he also says of his childhood: "I didn't just go to church Sundays. It was every day of the week. I'd come home from school and go right down to the church and spend an hour in the church." No boy I knew when I was growing up—to my knowledge no boy I have ever met since—went to church for an hour every day after school, yet this man describes himself as "just a typical American boy... nothing unique." What else in his testimony is inaccurate? We have no way of knowing, and thus it all becomes suspect.

In another case, Shay describes a patient who

was the first to enter a civilian hospital in Hue after the North Vietnamese retreated from Tet offensive. The North Vietnamese had systematically hacked from the patients' bodies any limbs they had found bandaged with American bandages or hooked up to American I.V.s.

I suppose it's possible such an incident actually happened, but I fought in Hue during the Tet Offensive and I neither witnessed nor heard any report of it. Moreover,

I have studied this battle and its aftermath at great length over the years since, and I have never encountered such a story in any source, historical or literary, written or oral, until now. What are we to think about the veteran who has told Shay this story, or about the author who reproduces it without question?

This brings up a related problem. Shay repeatedly writes, "My impression is that....," "the prevailing impression I have been given is....," and similar phrases. In most instances where such a phrase appears—as in his "impression" that the majority of U.S. soldiers in World War II went overseas, fought, and returned home with the same unit with which they had trained—the information could have been verified, yet Shay does not offer verification, only his "impression." Who gave him that impression? How accurate is it? Why did he not verify it?

Likewise, he uses phrases such as "Everyone knows that....," and "no one questions....," which any good composition teacher will circle in red pen every time they appear. Is Shay, a doctor of philosophy and a doctor of psychiatry, a highly educated and obviously brilliant man, really susceptible to such fundamental errors of argumentation, or is he trying to pull the wool over our eyes? We don't know, but once again, doubts are raised.

These doubts are deepened as the book progresses and we begin to realize that we are hearing the same few voices over and over again, and even the same words. Though Shay says some 250,000 to 300,000 Vietnam veterans are suffering from full-blown PTSD, and though he speaks of the "many" Vietnam veterans he has worked with, those actually quoted in his book are very few. The testimony of the "typical American boy," for instance, appears three different times in three different contexts, providing "evidence" for a different point each time. If so many veterans are suffering from PTSD, and he has worked with so many of them, why does he have to rely on so few of them to support his arguments? There may well be a good explanation, but Shay offers none.

Let me now turn to a problem of a different sort. Shay pays lip-service to the notion that veterans of other American wars have also had severe difficulties we now understand to have been PTSD, writing in his introduction that Achilles' story is "also the story of many combat veterans, both from Vietnam and from other long wars." But the very title of the book carries an implicit suggestion that Vietnam veterans have had far more difficulty with PTSD than other generations of American soldiers, and at other places he makes the suggestion something more than implicit. At one point he writes:

I am often asked why Vietnam apparently caused such a high rate of long-lasting psychological injuries compared to World War II. We have no data for the Second World War... but I always begin my answer to the question by focusing on the fact that most World War II soldiers trained together, went overseas together, fought together, had R&R together, and came home together. The typical Vietnam soldier went over alone,... went on R&R alone, and came home alone.... He had no chance to "debrief," to talk about what had happened....

Though he acknowledges in passing that no data exist to support the question's premise, he proceeds to answer the question at length instead of challenging its premise.

A few pages later he writes, "In World War II,... that the military services... evacuated [psychiatric casualties] may have been a major factor that reduced the rate of lifelong psychological injuries from that war." If there are no statistics, how can he know there has been a reduced rate of lifelong psychological injuries from that war? And reduced in comparison to what? The context makes clear that the comparison is to the Vietnam war, and Vietnam veterans as a group come out on the short end of it. This was the prevailing perception through much of the 1970s, the image of the troubled and broken Vietnam veteran who had failed to handle the rigors of war with the grace and strength of his father's generation, and while sources as diverse as MacKinlay Cantor's 1945 *Glory for Me* and Paul Fussell's 1989 *Wartime* suggest the emptiness of the perception, and Steve Bentley's January 1991 essay in *Veteran*, "A Short History of PTSD: From Thermopylae to Hue," explicitly refutes it, here it is again, in 1994, and coming from someone who ought to know better.

Finally, I want to raise one more objection. Shay's book is subtitled *Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, and he constantly uses the phrase "combat veteran," but he never defines what a "combat veteran" is. Certainly a rifleman who participated in the battle of the Ia Drang Valley, or a mortarman who withstood the siege of Khe Sanh, is a combat veteran, but what about the artilleryman on a firebase that came under ground assault once in the six months he spent there? What about the truck driver whose convoy received occasional sniper fire while driving between Saigon and Bien Hoa? How about the pay clerk at the huge base at Da Nang who took to the bunkers when the base received enemy rocket fire, though no rocket ever landed within 1000 meters of him?

Moreover, can a soldier who is not a "combat veteran" suffer from PTSD? Can a "combat veteran" who didn't have a commander betray "what's right" or lose a special friend or go berserk suffer from PTSD? Most people reading Shay's book would probably conclude that the answer to all these questions is "no." Yet Patience H.C. Mason, in her 1989 book, *Recovering from the War*, especially "Part One. Vietnam: What it Was," makes a compelling case otherwise, and I am inclined to agree with her.

There are a number of smaller matters I find irritating as well, such as his assertion that black and white soldiers were at risk from each other during the war, though racial tensions did not become a serious problem until after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., midway through the war, and his misuses of the term REMF (rear echelon motherfucker), which did not include, contrary to Shay's definition, "higher officers and civilian political authorities," all of which raise doubts about the depth of knowledge Shay brings to the war about which he is writing.

For all my reservations, however, I find *Achilles in Vietnam* a fascinating and important book worthy of

serious consideration. That is precisely why I have spent so much time explaining the problems I have with it, rather than dismissing it out of hand. Shay is eccentric in the best sense of that word, and his ideas are thought-provoking and frequently insightful. It was indeed strange and disconcerting in Vietnam that the body of one's friend could be gone almost before it got cold, and one was often left with nothing but the eerie feeling that perhaps one's friend had never really been there at all. And I remember being required to attend a memorial service in the Philippines for two officers who had died in a training accident and thinking with great bitterness that no one had held such a service for the many enlisted friends of mine who had died in battle in Vietnam the year before.

Shay's comparison, too, of Homer's *Iliad* with the story of David and Goliath in the Old Testament's I Samuel 17 is illuminating to say the least, as is his explanation of the differing ramifications and consequences of monotheism and polytheism. He is caustic in exposing the pornographic male fantasy that lies behind Homer's depiction of Briseis, and his equation of Zeus with high politicians and generals who see and present themselves as "deeply caring and compassionate" but whose actions suggest otherwise is wickedly delightful.

Indeed, there is much in Shay's book to admire, as readers will discover, and I wish Shay had noticed and tried to correct at least the more obvious problems in order not to detract from the book's strengths. The biggest problem of all, however; the problem that lies at both the heart of the book and the heart of Shay's work, is probably beyond solution.

Twice Shay acknowledges that the only sure way of avoiding "the undoing of character" (i.e., PTSD) is to put an end to war. Rightly observing that an end to war may be a long time in coming, and wishing to minimize the numbers of future veterans who end up like the sad and broken men with whom he's been working, his immediate desire is to foster and support "measures to prevent as much psychological injury as possible." To that end, he offers his suggestions for mitigating the worst effects of war on those who fight.

But wishing does not make it so. Perhaps some of his suggestions might help, but I doubt it. The last time we see Achilles in the *Iliad*, he is peacefully sleeping next to Briseis, "lovely in her youth," but Achilles may well avoid "lifelong disabling psychiatric symptoms" not because he prepared Patroklos' body for cremation with his own hands, or because he did not believe in a righteous God whose very conception defined Achilles' self-worth, or because his Myrmidon company trained and fought and went on R&R together, but simply because he is killed in battle soon after the *Iliad* ends.

Sad as it is, Shay and the rest of us must recognize that perhaps sending young men (and now women) off to war is all the "betrayal of what's right" that's needed to ensure that some of those soldiers will come home permanently damaged in their souls. As unusual and interesting as *Achilles in Vietnam* is, finally, it is likely to be more useful to those who study and teach the classics than to those who try to prevent and heal the wounds of war.

Philip K. Jason, *The Vietnam War in Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism. The Magill Bibliographies*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Salem Press, 1992. 175 pages. ISBN: 0-89356-679-9. \$40.

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When I began to seriously pursue my interest in the literature of the Viet Nam war several years ago, one of the first truly useful resources I discovered was John Newman's annotated bibliography, *Vietnam War Literature*. As someone new to the field who did not have a lot of time, but who needed to do a lot of selective primary readings to bring myself up to date on the diversity of Viet Nam war literature, I was relieved to find a comprehensive and reliable source with accurate and helpful annotations on the nature and relative quality of that literature. I remember thinking to myself at the time, "Now, if I could only find a similar source on criticism, I'd have it made." But, no such luck.

The same thought went through my head again in November of 1993 when Wesleyan University asked me to teach a graduate seminar on Viet Nam war narratives (prose, film, and drama) in their Liberal Studies Program. Graduate students were bound to want me to lead them to a wealth of secondary sources which, due to my lack of extensive critical reading in Viet Nam war literature other than drama, and due to my often—patchy memory, I feared I would never be able to supply. Fortunately, Philip K. Jason has come to my rescue and to the rescue of all scholars and teachers new to, only marginally acquainted with, or occasionally scant of memory about the scholarship of Viet Nam war literature.

Philip K. Jason's *The Vietnam War in Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism* is a much-needed annotated bibliography of full-length studies, journal essays, and critical anthologies addressing the history and the literature of the Viet Nam war. The volume is part of the Magill Bibliography Series, designed to offer "a starting point for the non-specialist researcher"; Jason's organizations scheme and careful selection of bibliographical entries do precisely that, and do it very well. *The Vietnam War in Literature* is divided into two major sections. The first half of the book, roughly seventy-five pages, offer several introductory bibliographies (each increasingly specific in focus) related to the general study of the Vietnam war and the various genres of its literature. The first of these bibliographies, "General Studies—Background," includes nearly one hundred annotated entries of "representative studies from various disciplines" (including history, military and political history, psychology, sociology, etc.) concerning the war, its origins, its aftermath, and those who fought in it. This heading also includes the most noteworthy of the oral and personal histories of the war as well as useful reference tools such as specialized dictionaries and bibliographies. "Criticism—General" lists eighty-seven annotated titles—of book-length studies, critical anthologies, special journal issues, and journal essays—which offer critical overviews of Viet Nam war literature, crossing freely over genre lines. Next comes "Criticism—

Genre," with annotated lists of critical works arranged according to the genres of Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Film. Jason has even included an annotated cataloguing of "Special Collections," which lists several specialized library collections of materials and literature of the Viet Nam war and South East Asian studies, and a list of "Booksellers' Catalogs" to help scholars and collectors hunt down out-of-print or specialized titles.

The second half of the book, roughly another one-hundred pages, is an annotated bibliography of "Authors and Works," with alphabetical listings of over seventy authors of Viet Nam war fiction, memoirs, poetry and drama. Where appropriate, mention of specific titles is made under the individual author's name. Jason is not only meticulous in citing the major essays and prominent book chapters on these authors and their work; he also gives specific page references and citations of extended passages/discussions embedded within books or essays where they may not be immediately apparent to someone reading the title of an essay or flipping through the Table of Contents of a book. Thus, scholars wishing to see a representative cross-section of opinions on and approaches to, for instance, Michael Herr's *Dispatches* are afforded precise page numbers in such oft-quoted full-length studies as Hellman, Jeffords, Beidler, Myers, and Wilson; they will also find references from genre studies placing Herr in relationship to, for example, New Journalism and Rock and Roll Representations of Vietnam.

Jason's annotations are useful, objective, and frank where they need to be. For instance, he gives Sandra Wittman's *Writing about Vietnam* its due when he concludes that the volume's "high degree of inaccuracy" undermines "what otherwise would be an essential reference tool." (49) Where an abundance of sources on a given topic allows him to do so, Jason offers a stimulating cross-section of approaches. He appears to have selected his citations not only on their quality, but on the scholarly and political diversity of their approach to the material. I noticed immediately, to give just one example, that *The Vietnam War in Literature* is particularly sensitive to essays addressing issues of gender and race, misogyny and racism. These are exactly the kind of non-hegemonic approaches to Viet Nam war literature to which I want my students exposed, and which I fear they would be unlikely to uncover on their own. Readers of and contributors to *Viet Nam Generation* will be pleased to see this publication well-represented in Jason's citations. Both individual articles and special issues of *VNG* are generously and intelligently referenced.

As a drama scholar, I was particularly pleased to see the pains Jason took to hunt down the few, but significant articles on the drama of the war. It was no surprise to me to find dramatist David Rabe's name among the list of "Authors and Works," but to also find citations on such usually marginalized work as the Chicano antiwar plays of Luis Valdez and Adrienne Kennedy's obscure dramatic eulogy for a black veteran, *An Evening With Dead Essex*, was a pleasant surprise. In fact, it is interesting as a lesson in canon-formation to see which authors and titles have accumulated enough serious scholarly attention in publication to win a spot in Jason's Authors and Works index. Jason seems very conscious of the potential

of such an index for reinforcing already-canonized texts and authors, and he offsets that potential with several strong overview articles in the "Criticism—Genre" sections.

I was disappointed that individual film titles were not included in the "Authors and Works" index, but then I suppose this is a bibliography of "literature." Being associated with the theater, I am wary of such distinctions between the literary and the performing arts. Or, perhaps I am just upset because Cynthia Fuchs' fine film criticism from *Viet Nam Generation* and elsewhere is thus totally excluded from the bibliography. However, Jason has made the conciliatory gesture of including film as a genre in the "Criticism—Genre" section, thereby allowing him to make mention of important anthologies such as Linda Dittmar's and Gene Michaud's *From Hanoi to Hollywood* and books like Gilbert Adair's *Vietnam on Film*. Even so, Jason's film "genre" listings do not stand up to the rest of the volume. For instance, the one glaring oversight I noticed in the bibliography was that Jason lists Adair's *Vietnam on Film* (1981), which stops after *Apocalypse Now*, and does not seem aware of Adair's revised/expanded reworking of that book into *Hollywood's Vietnam* (1989), which covers the Rambo films as well as *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Hamburger Hill*, and *Gardens of Stone*. All told, his film "genre" bibliography contains only six titles; whereas drama—a field in which far, far less has been written than on the film of the war—contains thirteen titles, some of dubious worth.

This one oversight aside—and it is an oversight that perhaps rings of an author's battle with a conservative publisher—Jason has made a substantial contribution to the field of Viet Nam war literature studies. To my knowledge, no other critical bibliography comes close to Jason for authority, and more importantly, for accessibility. For, even more impressive than Jason's attempt to select a refreshingly diverse cross-section of secondary sources and to write intelligent annotations on them, is his success in making his work exceptionally "user friendly." Jason's alphabetical Authors and Works catalog is an extremely convenient format for access to criticism on individual authors, especially when one compares it, for instance, to Wittman's *Writing About Vietnam*, in which critical writings were *not* organized or indexed by subject, but by the authors of the criticism, making it virtually impossible for scholars to locate titles by subject matter without reading through pages of individual annotations. By contrast, Jason makes it easy to find material by searching under a specific title, an author, or a specific genre, or to broaden one's search to cross-genre studies, or even to support those readings with general studies of the war across a wide field of disciplines.

For anyone needing a handy reference to these resources and secondary materials, *The Vietnam War in Literature* is truly designed for ease of use. The \$40 price tag may keep this volume from becoming a desktop reference for some, but as with Newman's *Vietnam War Literature*, it will assuredly become a standard library reference for serious scholars and teachers of the war and an invaluable resource for nescholars in the field.

WOMEN AND VETERANS AND DRAFT EVADERS

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There is a growing number of novels which center on the relationship between a woman and a man who is affected in one way or another by the war. While they vary greatly in overall quality, they have one curious thing in common: their female authors don't seem to feel the necessity of knowing anything at all about the war (the exceptions to this are the already well-known books in this category—Bobby Ann Mason's *In Country* and Jayne Anne Phillips' *Machine Dreams*). This isn't to say that their portrayals of the war are somehow spiritually inauthentic: rather, these female authors either choose not to portray the war at all, or, when they do, make whopping stupid errors of simple fact. In other words, it seems that these women authors consider themselves separate from war, and not responsible for its representation.

The best of the batch of women-and-men-and-the-war novels that I've been reading recently is *Sweet Eyes* by Jonis Agee (HarperPerennial, 1991). This is a novel about a woman, Honey Parrish, who lives in a small town in Iowa and breaks town taboos by becoming the lover of the only black man in town. But Honey's real problem is that she's haunted by the ghost of her earlier lover, Clinton, a vet who killed himself by driving his car into a frozen lake. Honey is literally haunted by him—his ghost speaks to her, and she answers back, sometimes aloud, sometimes in public. Honey's quest in the novel is to free herself of the negative hold that her evil brother and sister and father (who once hit her in the head with a claw hammer) still have over her, and to free herself from Clinton's ghost, so that she can go on with her life, and may be free to fall in love with Jasper Johnson.

The prose in this novel is beautiful. It's Agee's first novel, but she published two previous collections of short stories, and, to some extent, the chapters do read like highly polished short stories. The characterizations are perfectly formed, and the book is full of emotional truth. For the most part, it's one of the best books I've read this year. But it has one huge problem. A problem that comes right in the middle of the book, and is so stupid that it almost ruined the whole book for me. Clinton has a war story, which "explains" why he's so crazy, and it's told to the reader as part of Honey's memory of Clinton. So far, so good, the dark-secret war story is a staple of fiction about veterans. But this one has a U.S. base in South Viet Nam being strafed and bombed by enemy aircraft. I read the section a couple of times, to be sure I wasn't misunderstanding. I tried to be generous and think that she meant that the base was being hit by friendly fire. Nope. No way to mistake it. She means enemy aircraft. This isn't a small error like getting the wrong insignia on somebody's uniform (who really cares about that level of detail?), or a tall tale that stretches credulity. This is like having submarines in WWI, or having the Japanese drop atomic bombs on Pearl Harbor. The cover photo of Agee makes her look like she's at least 35, so she should just know from growing up during the war that the Viet Cong

didn't have aircraft, and the PAVN only used aircraft in defense of North Viet Nam. It's really hard to believe that she could have the emotional truth of relationships between women and veterans so right on, and make such a major error about the conduct of the war itself.

A lesser, but interesting, novel is Susan Dodd's *No Earthly Notion* (Viking 1986), a southern gothic about a woman living in a small town in Kentucky. Murana Bill's whole life revolves around taking care of her brother, Lyman Gene. Their parents die when they're teenagers, and Murana becomes Lyman Gene's sole caretaker. Lyman Gene goes off to the Viet Nam war, and comes back damaged. Not physically damaged, but mentally damaged—he refuses to speak, or to take any action on his own, except to eat, which he does copiously. He eventually eats himself to death. (I told you it was southern gothic). After his death Murana goes to Louisville and gets herself a life, makes and loses a close friend, and finds out that she has a self. Lyman Gene never gets a war story, because he never speaks again after he returns. The odd thing is that Murana doesn't seem to think this is odd. She explains it to her friend Lucille like this:

"He went away a soldier, like lots of other boys. He looked so smart in that uniform, and he truly wanted to go, you know? Only when he got back, something was lost....it was like his heart took sick, and I just couldn't get him well again" (155). In the world view of this novel, it's a given that war is a masculine thing that makes you sick, and no further explanation is necessary. And the novel is really about Murana—everything that happens to Lyman Gene is just plot device to influence Murana's life.

Jessica Auerbach's *Painting on Glass* (Norton 1988) is the opposite of *No Earthly Notion* and *Sweet Eyes* in many ways. It focuses on upper-class people—a woman, Rachel, and her childhood companion, Jake, who's gone to Canada to evade the draft. Again, the war does not appear in this novel, nor does any of Jake's deliberation about what to do about his draft status. But, then, Jake doesn't really seem to deliberate very much—he wants to do whatever will allow him not to go to the war, and to continue to be a painter. The characters in this book are really an incredibly annoying bunch of self-centered bourgeois twits, and I really didn't like the book at all, except for one segment where Rachel goes to Puerto Rico to get an abortion. The novel misses an opportunity to draw a parallel between Jake's endangerment by the draft, and Rachel's endangerment by the country's abortion laws. But, because of her access to money, she never seems to be in real danger. And neither does Jake. He makes it through Canadian immigration in one really easy try, gets a lovely cottage to live in, and a job, and keeps painting. Rachel's life revolves not around her commitment to the antiwar movement, with which she has a peripheral connection, but about her relationships to men. And, like in *No Earthly Notion*, the war only exists in the novel as a plot device to enforce a separation between Rachel and Jake, during which they can realize that they really love each other.

Mary Morris' *The Waiting Room* (Doubleday 1989) is another novel with the gone-to-Canada theme, but it is

a much better-written and more interesting work than *Painting on Glass*. It has more depth and substance, and a more compelling main character, Zoe, whose brother is in a nursing home for mental cases. The novel at first misleads a reader—or allows a reader to jump to too many conclusions—in a clever way, letting you believe that Zoe's brother Badger is actually a disturbed veteran, rather than a disturbed draft evader. But eventually it becomes clear that the war has had little to do with his current mental state—he's blown his mind on too many drugs, which he probably would have done at home, even if he hadn't skipped to Canada. The Coleman family has been deeply scarred by war—Zoe's father, Cal, suffers from a severe case of PTSD from WWII, and Zoe's first lover, Hunt, died in Viet Nam. Zoe herself has been emotionally detached ever since losing him. The effects of war permeate the lives of the characters of this novel, but war itself never makes an appearance. There are no war stories, there is only the persistent destruction of human beings left behind by the wars. Thus, Badger is a second-generation casualty. He avoided his own generation's war, but he was already damaged second-hand by his father's war. (Cal "looked more like a victim than a veteran of the war he'd come from.") Like the characters in the other novels, Badger has no real political stand on the war in Viet Nam. He simply says, "It's not my war." And when challenged by his father, "So whose is it?" Badger simply replies, "I don't know. Somebody else's." Zoe is an engaging character, a woman who has become a doctor, but the novel is odd in that it doesn't address the fact of her career in any realistic way. It's just another fact about her. Perhaps the larger problem is that this novel focuses on women, but makes the biggest influences in their lives the war-damaged men they're involved with.

The oddest in this collection of novels is Sandie Frazier's *I Married Vietnam* (Braziller, 1992). Of course, the title means "I married the Viet Nam War," not the country Viet Nam. This is a novel written by someone who is not the kind of person who usually writes novels—a white working class, uneducated ex-junkie married to a chronically unemployed black veteran. Surviving such a life is usually a compelling enough task that there's no time and energy left over for novel-writing. Frazier's voice is thus unique and valuable. As a whole, though, the novel doesn't work. It abandons realism in favor of an experimental narrative style—it's told like a fable or a fairy tale. The war section has a dream-like quality—no narrative transitions between events, much of it told in disjointed, disembodied dialogue. The first two-thirds of the novel tells the story of Jeremy Freeman, the veteran who Samantha (the "I" of the title), will eventually marry. We see his childhood in the rural south, his military experience, including two tours in Viet Nam, his homecoming, and move to Chicago. In all of this, he emerges as a fully-developed character. But the last third of the book, after Samantha appears with the line "I was nothing when I met Freeman," becomes compressed into summary, rather than story. Samantha is so much nothing, in the first-person narration, that she makes the rest of the novel nothing, too. At one point eleven years pass between paragraphs. The events and narration are

elliptical, and, I think, only someone who shares the experience of living with a veteran could really follow that last third of the novel. (Yet for those who do share that experience, it's uncomfortably evocative, if unsatisfying). Part of the problem is that we don't get as rounded a picture of Samantha as a character as we did of Jeremy. We hear only the bare bones of her story of childhood neglect, drug abuse and delinquency. Unfortunately, the novel also partakes of all the clichés of combat narratives: can't tell who the enemy is...children and women with grenades...a whore in Saigon with a razor...throwing a prisoner out of a helicopter...and the notion that "[w]e have been experiencing war from the beginning of time, but Nam was different." The whole novel is unbelievably drenched in self-pity in this way—in the first paragraph the narrator says that God and the Devil took a look at Jeremy Freeman and decided to give him a real trial. The Devil says, "...the things I did to Job were nothing." Comparing the sufferings of a Viet Nam veteran—even a black Ranger who did two tours and was severely wounded—to the sufferings of Job is simply beyond the bounds of hyperbole. It seems that the situation of women in relation to men in relation to the war is one that is just beginning to be explored. I hope that within that exploration new directions emerge, that include a more direct confrontation of the war by women writers.



BAO-DAI—THE LAST EMPEROR

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A recent book by Bruce McFarland Lockhart (*The End of the Vietnamese Monarchy* [New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, Lac Viet Series, 1993], 243 pp; Preface; Notes; Bibliography, Index) fills a long evident need. Lockhart, a specialist in modern Viet Nam, who received his Ph.D. in 1991 from Cornell, currently teaches English in Laos. In *The End of the Vietnamese Monarchy* he provides us with a good book focusing on the institutional history of the last days of the Vietnamese Nguyen Dynasty, paying due attention both to developments in Viet Nam and in France, and showing the steady deterioration in power of Vietnamese monarchs under the heavy hand of the French colonial system. Lockhart has new things to say about internal Vietnamese politics and about many individuals who bore the brunt of carrying out French policy. Well researched and written, with few typographical glitches, this scholarly work is heavily documented and should be a welcome addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in the history of Viet Nam.

Emperor Bao Dai figures in Lockhart's treatise as the last of the Nguyens, but his appearances are almost incidental. It was not the author's intention to set forth a biography of this man but rather to use events in his life to illustrate the decline of Vietnamese autonomy as a consequence of the rapacious French drive for empire. Lockhart does very well what he set out to do. This means, however, that any real sense of Bao Dai's long years of dedication to reform and his many efforts to achieve it against a myriad of French-imposed obstacles does not occupy as prominent a place in Lockhart's book as they deserve. Thus Bao Dai continues to remain in the limbo to which he has been assigned by most of those who have had occasion to refer to him in their works on Viet Nam.¹

For decades Bao Dai has been a laughingstock, dismissed as a roly poly playboy *habitué* of the French Riviera and other playgrounds of the jet-setting rich and famous. A known *roué*, his interests in gambling and women overshadowed all else for this pathetic man who has lived most of his life in exile, having abandoned a throne and his responsibilities to his own people so as to continue a life of leisurely abandon. Complacent, easily controlled by his appetites and those who catered to them, brow-beaten by his mother, this debauched dilettante relished every opportunity to frolic in wild abandon.

It is more than time for this view to be rejected. It bears no relationship to the truth and is a concoction of those who write without fear and without research, of those who seek the easy answer, the superficial solution. To the contrary, Bao Dai loved his people, sought to enhance their lives when it came his time to rule, endeavored to reform a rotten bureaucracy and to limit untrammled power exercised by a foreign folk within his

homeland. Cultured, sensitive and conscientious, he suffered repeated rebuffs with little complaint and continued to strive to implement his ideas in the face of the most wretched resistance, both from within and above. He demonstrated a willingness to work with any group, any force, that might further his dreams for his country and its people. He was as willing to follow as to lead, if that would help his cause—a most uncommon virtue. Yet every effort, every attempt, and every endeavor brought only failure until history finally passed him by. Even then he did not stand and rail against his fate. With dignity he resigned himself to the sidelines of political life and quietly withdrew into retirement.²

That Bao Dai has flown as a passenger on jets, gambled on horses and at roulette, and sought pleasure from many women is indisputable. To assume that such activities define the man, however, is a serious underestimation of this able individual. Bao Dai's motivations seem to have been lost amidst a tempest of unfounded conjecture. Let some data from past years cast new light on this former emperor.

Once upon a time (all the world's best stories begin in this way), Vietnamese emperors embodied traditional traits and customs as they ruled over their people. For centuries they were the ones to whom those who lived on the land looked as absolute head of both state and religion. Rulers served as counselors and arbitrators, sometimes taking the initiative in solving disputes between villages and families through agents selected from the Corps of Mandarins. They held symbolic title to all rice lands. Through them the Will or Mandate of Heaven (Thien Menh) blessed the earth in times of peace, prosperity and plenty. They were earthly representatives to the Spirit World. Their role thus embodied a combination of the work of the President of the United States, the Roman Catholic Pope, and the U.S. Supreme Court.

French colonial policy, by design, slowly strangled this *imperium*. It seldom missed opportunities either to strike at monarchical prestige or to strengthen French power and regularly achieved both goals simultaneously. The last exhalation of life still left within the office of emperor came in the reign of Bao Dai, but initial tightening of the noose came much earlier, at the birth of the Nguyen dynasty.

Nguyen Anh, founder of that ruling family, barely escaped with his life during a domestic war when Tay Son rebels captured the Nguyen capital of Gia Dinh (Saigon) in 1778. In an effort to protect his interests he called for help from the French Bishop of Adran, Pigneau de Behaine. In 1787 he signed the Treaty of Versailles ceding the port of Tourane (Da Nang) and the island of Con Son (Poulo Condore) to the French Court in return for its armed assistance in domestic struggles. That aid never arrived, but de Behaine himself helped organize a military force in support of Nguyen Anh, who pushed the rebels from the south and, in 1802, seized the northern capital of Thang Long (Ha Noi). Establishing the seat of his government at Hue, he proclaimed himself Emperor and took as his dynastic name Gia Long, after the southern (Gia Dinh) and northern (Thang Long) capitals.

It was he who gave his country its modern name of Viet Nam.

During a pretended affront in 1847, the French navy arrived and sent cannonballs instead of calling cards into the 908-year-old kingdom of Viet Nam. In 1862 the Nguyen Court, in the Treaty of Saigon, ceded three of the six Cochinchinese provinces to Paris after a series of French military victories in the south. Emperor Tu Duc, under threat, additionally agreed to pay a huge indemnity, to open three ports to French commerce and to permit the work of Catholic missionaries. Five years later France claimed the other three provinces of the South.

In 1874 came the Philastre Treaty whereby the Vietnamese Court, fearful of renewed French military activity, gave full sovereignty over Cochinchina to Paris, opened the Red River in the North to French commerce and allowed Gallic consular offices to open in Ha Noi, Hai Phong, and Qui Nhon. France also forced Tu Duc to promise that his foreign policy would conform to their own. Viet Nam was now, officially, a protectorate.

Jules Harmand, a French diplomat, imposed a new treaty in 1883 that formalized this protectorate, but the Paris government did not ratify it. In 1884, a different treaty negotiated by Jules Patenôtre, another French diplomat, received the blessing of France and Viet Nam became its colony. Emperor Tu Duc, who ruled from 1874 to 1883, was an unfortunate man for he presided over all but this final act in the loss of his country to France.

Under the Patenôtre Treaty of 1884, the Emperor's powers were greatly curtailed. France now controlled Tonkin and Cochinchina. Only in An Nam did the Emperor still retain any authority, Court resistance to this growing French presence was impossible in the days following Tu Duc's death. Tu Duc's successor, his nephew Duc Dun, reigned for only three days. After him came Tu Duc's uncle, Hiep Hoa, who died shortly after taking office. Then came Kien Phuc, Tu Duc's cousin, shortly replaced by Phuc's young brother, twelve-year-old Ham Nghi.

Influenced by his Regents, after months of preparation and in protest against the French presence in Viet Nam, Ham Nghi fled into the hills in July 1885. His followers proclaimed the *Can Vuong* (Save the King) movement and thus launched an ineffective anti-French guerrilla movement. Ham Nghi was captured in 1888. In his absence, and only two months after his flight, Ham Nghi's older brother, also a nephew of Tu Duc, became Emperor. He retained his office until 1889 and was so docile France extended its authority and power with his acquiescence. He agreed that henceforth the French *Résident Général* would summon and preside over meetings of the imperial Cabinet (*Co Mat*) and would have final authority over all appointments and dismissals at the highest levels of government. There was now no real possibility that any xenophobic nationalists could achieve a position empowering them to threaten French control.

Paul Doumer served from 1897-1902 as Governor-General of the Indochinese Union (set up by the French government's Ministry of Colonies in 1887) that oversaw the separate activities of governors of Cochinchina and

Résident Supérieurs in An Nam, Tonkin, Laos, and Cambodia. He presided over the transfer in 1898 of complete control of all aspects of the Vietnamese government's finances. He dissolved the Council of Regents and replaced it with a Council of Ministers, to be presided over by the *Résident Supérieur*. Henceforth, approval by that office-holder became necessary for any Council decision to have the force of law. It was nearly the final blow to imperial authority for now French *Résident Supérieurs* had power greater than that of Vietnamese rulers.

Emperor Duy Tan (1907-1916), son and successor to Thanh Thai (1889-1907), bitterly resented control over his government and nation by French officials. Only a child of eight when his father was deposed by decree of the Protector, he complained frequently about his lack of authority and openly criticized his Ministers for their fawning behavior toward those in service to France. In May 1916, when he was seventeen, Duy Tan fled his palace in support of an anti-French revolt. He was captured only two days later, and the French sent both him and his father into exile on the island of Réunion.

Gallic rule continued effectively unchallenged and people throughout Viet Nam gradually came to conclude that surely the Mandate of Heaven had departed from the House of Nguyen. As France took away monarchical authority, prestige of this ruling family fell in equal measure in Vietnamese eyes everywhere. One result was that people, particularly in the South, began directing their loyalties toward a nonexistent "ideal" king rather than to an actual, and inevitably ineffectual ruling monarch.

Emperor Khai Dinh (1916-1925) replaced Duy Tan on the throne. He became one of the most scorned of any of the many men who had ruled Viet Nam. A profligate, he was always at his most pliant when faced with new French demands. He was best known for his poetry. By usurpation and by decree the colonial government accrued additional authority over the Vietnamese government.

Khai Dinh's chief accomplishment came when he announced that his only son, Vinh Thuy (later to be crowned Bao Dai), born in 1913, would be Crown Prince and heir to the throne. At the same time and at the behest of his French keepers, he sent his son to France where, during a long stay, he would receive a "completely modern education"³ and be trained in proper French ways; that is, he would be groomed to serve French concerns in Viet Nam instead of those of his own people. In Paris he lived with a wealthy dignitary and his family. Expensive nannies and tutors saw to it that Thuy was immersed in all things French, studying its history, music, art, and, of course, the Gallic language. Discouraged from reading books about his own country, he learned that Vietnamese culture and tradition were somehow inferior to that of France and the rest of Europe. In his leisure hours, Thuy developed great fondness for tennis.⁴

When Khai Dinh died in early November 1925, French officials allowed Vinh Thuy to return briefly to Hue. Whisked to Asia for his father's funeral, Vinh Thuy also participated in his own coronation as monarch. At official ceremonies on 8 January 1926, Vinh Thuy

adopted the kingly name of Bao Dai (translatable either as "preserver [or keeper] of greatness" or "protector of grandeur"). His stay in his homeland was intentionally brief. The French wished him to have as little exposure as possible to his native country, for he was still young enough to be impressionable and they deemed it too risky to allow him extended contact with his own people. Although now emperor, he returned to France within two weeks, to remain there until 1932.⁵ Despite Bao Dai's eighteenth birthday in late 1930, French officials felt he should stay on in Paris for at least another two years and so, loyally, he informed his Court in Hue he would not return before late 1932.

Bao Dai received every encouragement to become a playboy, to take a greater interest in gambling and chasing women than in governing his country. Although he came to love extravagance in all things, he retained a desire to serve his people. All efforts of the colonial government to turn him into a "puppet" were basically wasted and the French received a rude awakening about the effectiveness of their tactics when Bao Dai finally returned to his homeland.

There was little of worth left in the office of emperor. On 6 November 1925, immediately following Khai Dinh's death, French officials, in the "Agreement of 1925," stripped the Vietnamese Court of nearly all its remaining vestiges of authority and gave France complete control of the Vietnamese government. Nearly all that was left to the ruler was the "right" to promulgate ritual decrees. All other matters would be determined by the *Résident Supérieur*. The vessel the new emperor would pick up on his return would be an empty one.

As 1932 dwindled away, Bao Dai laid plans to return home despite rumors that French communist party members were plotting to assassinate him if he dared to do so. Nothing came of those whispers and he sailed from France without incident. His ship made its landing at Tourane (Da Nang) on 8 September and Bao Dai disembarked amidst a throng of well-wishers and much panoply. Both his heart and his head were filled with zeal for reform.

Only two days after his arrival, on 10 September, he issued his first signed ordinance, announcing his willingness to govern only in the best interests of his own people. He outlined a specific model for his government that would, he said, resemble a constitutional monarchy.⁶ He would also institute other reforms. He intended to revamp Viet Nam's legal system on the basis of French judicial procedure.⁷ He planned to undertake a thorough reorganization of his nation's educational system. About this he was adamant. In 1932 it was virtually impossible for young people to receive a decent education and it was extremely rare for anyone who was not a francophile to enter university study due to many barriers erected by the colonial government.⁸

Finally, idealistically, Bao Dai spoke of forming a "loyal alliance" between the French and his own government, a union that would strengthen Viet Nam for the greater good of all concerned. Such reforms, Bao Dai believed, would bring progress to those who lived on the land and give new evidence to those who had lost hope

that in him they had an emperor who desired to invest his government with new meaning. In a word, he planned to rule. This beginning, this radical departure from past imperial lassitude, bolstered his popularity, particularly among young people. They saw, finally, a new leader who was truly interested in their welfare.⁹

These were the words of a man who did not intend to while away his time in hedonistic pursuits as France had hoped. Bao Dai's "September Ordinance" made this very clear and colonial governors were livid. This newly-returned emperor, however, had additional arrows for his bow. In November 1932 and February 1933, he made formal tours of his domain so as to make his presence felt and to learn more about the conditions in which his subjects lived.

Because new blood was needed to rid the Court of entrenched factions and bureaucratic fiefdoms long encouraged by France as a way of limiting imperial power, it was with great sense of purpose that Bao Dai turned to younger men when he began to overhaul his *Co Mat*, his council of advisers. He planned to break the back of francophile mandarins who formed its membership and who, for generations and for personal gain, had carelessly and relentlessly allowed Viet Nam to languish while foreign *colons* gained ever-greater power. Bao Dai sought to recruit reformers for his council who would support him in his struggle.

Following his tours of An Nam, on 2 May 1933, Bao Dai announced that all those Ministers he had inherited, with one exception, would be relieved of their duties and replaced by younger men. "We have collected the complaints of the population.... We have felt Our love for them grow and also Our firm determination to devote Ourselves entirely to their good. The time has come, then, for us to carry out the reforms which have been promised."¹⁰ Emperor Bao Dai wanted only "men of open minds, having a solid modern education, who could understand and collaborate with him."¹¹

He turned first to thirty-five-year-old Pham Quynh, a renowned scholar, journalist and author and a staunch advocate of the sort of educational reform envisioned by the emperor. Bao Dai summoned him to his court in Hue for an interview and was so impressed he not only appointed him as Minister of Education but made him director of the *Co Mat*. This young man was the first non-mandarin ever to be appointed to that body.¹²

Next, Bao Dai created a Commission of Reform to operate within the Ministry of the Interior. Its main duty was to persuade colonial officials to abide by the terms of their own Patenôtre Treaty of 1884. Violated by Paris from the beginning, misuse had been specially rampant since Khai Dinh's death in 1925. Among other exceptions, Paris-appointed officials usurped the Court's right to control tax collections, leading to abuses of many kinds including imprisonment of those unable to pay exorbitantly high fees.

Bao Dai appointed a young Ngo Dinh Diem to head Interior. Diem, honest and with integrity, was not the man the emperor needed in that post. The French claimed he was unsuited for his new job and events bore out their charge. Involved himself in a web of Court

factions and intrigue, Diem soon tired of efforts at reform. He excused his own lack of action by blaming the French. Their Protectorate had constantly violated the 1884 Treaty and so he would have nothing to do with them. *Of course* they had violated its provision! That was why Bao Dai had asked him to seek redress. Yet Diem, who served in his position only from May to mid-July, turned in his resignation and went willingly into a self-imposed eclipse from which he would not reappear until mid-1954 when Bao Dai once again called on him for government service.

The emperor did change the nature of his five-man Cabinet. It now included portfolios for 1) Labor, Arts and Rites; 2) National Education and chief of the *Co Mat*, 3) Finance and Social Assistance (public works); 4) Justice, and 5) Interior.¹³ Bao Dai's reforms gave pleasure both to royalists who wanted him to exercise more power and to those who were critical of those he had removed from power. He had demonstrated to France that he was far more knowledgeable about the machinery of government and much more dedicated to reform than any had thought possible.

Bao Dai continued his reforms even within the walls of Thai Hoa Palace. Just as he was beginning his reign, he issued a decree symbolic of his desire for change. Prior to his rule, emperors were august, remote and unapproachable by their subjects. Even their shadows were sacred and should not be crossed by those of lesser birth. Commoners came into a ruler's presence not at all and mandarins only while prostrated, approaching him on hands and knees to show respect. In more antiquated times, not doing so would theoretically have resulted in imprisonment or execution. Bao Dai changed all that. Now it would be sufficient, he said, simply to bow three times.¹⁴

A second graphic act occurred when Bao Dai dissolved his official harem. Concubines were a traditional perquisite for a ruler, kept at the palace in order to provide service and sexual diversion. For all intents, they were toys for an emperor. The harem was also a snakepit where palace intrigue played itself out. It was a focal point for Court vices and scandals. Realizing that continuing the harem would provide his enemies a place to plot and scheme, Bao Dai simply abolished it by decree—hardly the decision of a man solely concerned with fleshly pleasures. Dissolving this institution and freeing its concubines broke "the circle of intrigues which bound him."¹⁵

Bao Dai has often been criticized for his self-absorption. It is too easy a characterization. Were he only a conceited egocentric he would not have been so concerned about the plight of his subjects. For years, perhaps for generations, powerful landowners, both Vietnamese and French, had the right to impress men and women into labor service with little or no compensation and treat them like brutes. Overseers on rubber plantations, with impunity, could beat a laborer to death for even minor infractions *pour encourager les autres*. People often suffered more than pack animals as they performed coolie labor on forced projects.

The new emperor recognized this injustice and promptly issued his Labor Charter of 1933. In it, Bao Dai

prohibited requisitioned labor save in time of public emergency or state necessity and even then it could be instituted only with safeguards. He further stated that such service was to be paid for at fixed wages and used only where free labor was unavailable for hire. He was not gullible. He knew this action would be unpopular with many powerful interests, both native and foreign, but Bao Dai knew that simple justice, even for coolies, was an imperative.¹⁶ Bao Dai was frivolous? Self-absorbed? Given wholly to pleasure? Uninterested in his own responsibilities? No. Since Gia Long no emperor had been so bent on exercising his imperial authority. It had been generations since an emperor had worked systematically to benefit his own people even despite open French opposition.

No responsible colonial administrator of the Protectorate was about to allow this raging bull to continue his activities without resistance. Through all its levels, the French civil service, supported by those elements of the Vietnamese population who felt threatened by Bao Dai's reforms, immediately began a fierce opposition to the emperor's programs and policies. It was not long before a shocked and disillusioned Bao Dai found out how little power he actually possessed. French colonial administrators ruthlessly opposed all his activities and had one "fail safe" solution. Although Bao Dai was not prohibited from proposing and even "decreeing" reforms, he was required to receive permission of the Resident Superior in order to actually implement them. In this way nothing happened that might have harmed essential French interests.¹⁷

By March 1934, when he married Marie-Thérèse Nguyen Huu Hao (who thus became Empress Nam Phuong), a French-educated, Roman Catholic daughter of a wealthy Cochinchinese, Bao Dai was already disillusioned. His efforts blocked at every turn, his enthusiasm and initiative gradually began to ebb. He settled into a more sedentary life, often browbeaten by his mother, the dowager Empress (nicknamed "the tiger of An Nam") for his failings and dismissed as unimportant by French officials. He suffered debilitating migraine headaches and neurasthenia, the result of emotional conflicts, characterized by fatigue, depression, worry and localized pains without apparent causes. He made ever more frequent trips to his private villa in Da Lat for hunting expeditions sometimes lasting for several weeks.¹⁸

In late 1933 or early 1934, Bao Dai proclaimed his frustration with French obstinacy and ruthlessness. "I am going to live in my country as a foreign ruler. A ruler in exile—like so many of my predecessors—but in exile in my own country, among my own people [who are] in exile as well. I will no longer participate in any official event organized by the French administration. I will simply carry out the role which no one can take away from me and in which no one can take my place, that of supreme pontiff for my people, to whom I owe everything."¹⁹

French colonial administrators allowed Bao Dai to conduct little business of consequence or significance. In 1935 his Court's main concern was to nominate, promote and transfer mandarins. The years 1936-1937 were no better, taken up as they were with inconsequential. In

January 1936, however, Bao Dai's first-born child, a son, gave him some faint hope for the future. He named his child Bao Long and in March 1939 invested the three-year-old boy as heir to the throne. Subsequently Empress Nam Phuong bore several other children.

While hunting in Da Lat's highlands in December 1938, Bao Dai joined in a game of soccer and broke his leg. Evacuated by airplane to *L'Hôpital Grall* in Saigon, in this way he first entered Cochinchina. The last imperial visit in that part of Viet Nam had been many years earlier. Bao Dai took advantage of his injury and used his time in the South as an opportunity for limited travel in the area outside Saigon. During his recuperation, he hosted an imperial banquet honoring a visiting English dignitary. As the meal ended, English and French diplomats, sitting respectively on his right and left, assisted him to rise from the table. As they were lifting him to his feet, Bao Dai commented, "Well, if Germany could see that I have England at my right and France at my left."²⁰ This reputed "bumbling oaf" knew full well how important were the growing political tensions breaking out in Europe between Germany and the western democracies. Perhaps in that conflict might even be some significance for Viet Nam.

In the summer of 1939 Bao Dai traveled to France, ostensibly for medical treatment but in reality hoping to obtain concessions from France on its long-held policy of administering Tonkin separately from An Nam. He had no luck, complaining later to Georges Catroux, Governor General of Indochina (1939-1940), that Tonkin "is virtually removed from my authority."²¹

Even faced with war and occupation of its homeland, France was unwilling to change the nature of the Protectorate. Its overseas policies continued unabated under General Henri Philippe Pétain's fascist Vichy government, instituted following France's political collapse and surrender to Nazi occupation. That defeat, however, shattered for all time the Vietnamese belief in the invincibility of French power. Many of Bao Dai's subjects welcomed the consequent entrance of Japanese soldiers onto Viet Nam's soil.

Without much else to occupy his time, Bao Dai traveled. Between September 1939 and September 1940, he completed five trips around An Nam, adding several more in both 1942 and 1943. In his memoirs, Catroux wrote that although Bao Dai was dissatisfied, he was resigned to his situation and conformed to the tradition whereby an emperor "reigns but does not govern."²² The ruler also maintained a passionate interest in sports and frequently visited schools, chatting with students about their concerns. He continued to plague French officials by proclaiming that although he had "a mouth he was unable to speak, had feet but was unable to walk."²³

On 9 March 1945, the Japanese government put an end to the polite fiction that all its troops in Viet Nam were there only with Vichy's permission and that France actually continued to rule its colony. To forestall a planned blow by Gaullist sympathizers, the Japanese moved first and stripped the French both of their semi-autonomy and their troops' armaments and weapons. Bao Dai was elated by this coup, particularly when, on

the following day, a Japanese diplomat came to him and announced that Viet Nam was to be granted its freedom. Was Japan prepared to acknowledge him as Emperor of an independent state, Bao Dai asked. Yes.

So assured, on 11 March, as a royal ordinance, Bao Dai promulgated a declaration of independence for the "Empire of Viet Nam." He abolished the Protectorate and affirmed Viet Nam's membership in the Japanese-created Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. On 17 March he pronounced that he would control the government and, using talented men, rebuild it. He then dismissed current serving members of the *Co Mat*. A new council, established a month later on 16 April, consisted of four doctors, four lawyers, and two teachers.²⁴ Tran Trong Kim, a noted Vietnamese historian, served as prime minister. Support for this government was strong among two prominent political parties, the *Viet Nam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi*, known simply as *Phuc Quoc* (League for the National Restoration of Viet Nam), a pro-Japanese party created by Prince Cuong De at the beginning of the war, and *Dang Dai Viet* (Great Viet Nam) party. The latter, formed shortly before World War II by urban middle class patriots of Tonkin, cooperated with the Japanese during their occupation of the land but was plagued with internal factionalism and elitist in its membership.²⁵

Japanese interference was minimal. Tokyo continued to control internal transportation and communication and appointed "advisors" for Tonkin (Pac Bo), An Nam (Trung Bo) and Cochinchina (Nam Bo). Bao Dai repeatedly requested Japan to return Tonkin and Cochinchina to his rule, but on this matter the Sons of Nippon dallied. Nam Bo was handed to Bao Dai only a few days before the Japanese surrender.

Bao Dai acted swiftly. In a ceremony on 8 May he spoke of the Japanese liberation of his country. Proclaiming his joy, he said, "[W]e have seen the realization of the dream which patriots have held for so long." After eighty years of French rule, once again there was an independent Viet Nam. He asked exemplary men of virtue to come forward to help him serve his subjects and bring all Vietnamese together once again. He acknowledged the importance of close contact between his government and his people. It was, he said, his wish "to cultivate a national and patriotic spirit and guide the youth in taking responsibility for opening up the country, raising people's standard of living, and increasing production." He did what he could, with limited resources, to deal with widespread northern famine (two million died by June 1945) and was able to provide partial relief. He made initial progress toward fiscal, educational, and judicial reform. He called for his people to remember heroic figures from Viet Nam's past and to use them as role models. He supported extensive press freedoms.²⁶

Time was not given Bao Dai. His government drew much of its political authority and all its military security from the Japanese presence. Internally he was faced by the growing strength of an opposition faction, the *Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi* (Vietnamese Independence League, or Viet Minh), led by Ho Chi Minh. Fearful of turbulent times and threatened by the Viet Minh, Bao

Dai's Cabinet resigned on 5 August, almost a month prior to the Japanese surrender on 2 September.

Viet Minh cadre were already beginning to take control of the land. Bao Dai resisted, sending telegrams asking for support to de Gaulle, Truman, George VI and Chiang Kai-shek. There were no replies. In a desperate bid for popular support, Bao Dai and his prime minister, Tran Trong Kim organized a rally in Hanoi, scheduled for 17 August, that might shore up the imperial government. Many of the emperor's supporters showed up but his rally was a complete failure, for his small crowd was obliterated by some one hundred thousand enthusiastic Viet Minh members waving flags and banners. Between 19-25 August, Viet Minh members took control in Ha Noi, Tourane, and Saigon. On 17 August, Bao Dai announced he would willingly include Viet Minh leaders in a new Cabinet. If necessary and his people wished it, he was prepared even to turn his power over to that party. It was like shouting into a whirlwind. On 22 August, members of the Viet Minh tore down his imperial flag from its pole in front of the palace in Hue. The next day, he received a telegram from Ha Noi's new authorities asking him to turn his power over to them.²⁷

Too frightened and irresolute to resist this directive, Tran Trong Kim and other Cabinet members fled to safety. Not because he was tired of rule, but due to these desertions, Bao Dai agreed to abdicate. He did so on 30 August in a formal ceremony in front of his palace gates. In a previous formal message, set forth on 25 August, he announced his sorrow that "after twenty years as Emperor We were only close to Our people for a few months and were unable to do anything beneficial for them as We wished...." He willingly surrendered "the power of governing the citizens to a democratic republic." He was, he said, happy to be a free man in "an independent country." He would rather "be a [simple] citizen of a free country than the ruler of an enslaved one." He asked only three things: 1) No one, neither subject nor member of the royal family, should cause trouble to this new government out of loyalty to him; 2) He wanted the Viet Minh to forego reprisals against those who had not supported them; 3) he asked that respect be shown to all tombs and temples of his ancestors.²⁸

Once again the emperor had tasted defeat, his dreams for Viet Nam vanished like phantoms. Now he was no longer even Bao Dai. For the first time since youth, he was only Nguyen Vinh Thuy. Perhaps he was comforted by his feeling that he might truly be able to assist the fledgling government in gaining support in the West, for he believed Ho's faction acted in naive and inexperienced ways. At Ho Chi Minh's behest, the new rulers provided him with a democratic title to replace his imperial one. Now he was First Citizen and Supreme Counselor to the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. For a time *Ong Thuy* received only respect and deference from his new bosses. They knew he lent credence to their claim that the government was neither communist nor communist-dominated, and that could only redound to their good both at home and abroad. Although he was well treated, he was isolated from any participation in important matters and Thuy soon grew frustrated.²⁹

Elected to a seat in the new legislature from his dynasty's ancestral home in Thanh Hoa province, Thuy soon left Viet Nam as part of an official diplomatic delegation to Chungking. He never again set foot in the Democratic Republic, choosing instead unannounced exile at first in China and later (September 1946 through late 1947) in Hong Kong before returning to Europe. And, with alcohol and women, Vinh Thuy chased away failure's demons.

Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, a former Carmelite monk and one of the French postwar High Commissioners (formerly Governors General) of Indochina (August 1945-March 1947), displayed during his term of office an uncompromising determination to restore full French sovereignty in Viet Nam. In June 1946 he consequently established the Autonomous Republic of Cochin China to consolidate complete French power there. France almost immediately gave formal recognition to this entity as a "free republic." For two years it endured a shadowy existence as a pawn for French efforts to overturn Ho's northern government and to restore their authority throughout Indochina.

Vinh Thuy was not enthusiastic about this new French creation, despite the fact that both France and anticommunist groups in Viet Nam tried to persuade him to become its Chief of State. He issued public statements demanding real Vietnamese independence and worked to use his newly important influence to win French agreement to create a united Viet Nam that would include Tonkin, An Nam, and Cochin China. Rumors told how a "deal" might be worked out between Thuy and Ho Chi Minh. French politicians, hard-pressed in their efforts to reclaim Tonkin, were alarmed at all such notions.

Emile Bollaert eventually replaced D'Argenlieu in office (March 1947-October 1948). Bollaert continued efforts, begun by d'Argenlieu, to persuade Vinh Thuy to return to Viet Nam as Chief of State. If he did so, he would reassure all those who were opposed to any extension of Viet Minh control. In December 1947, aboard a ship in Ha Long Bay and with some reluctance, Thuy met with Bollaert and agreed to head such a government. He did not return to Viet Nam, however, until after he signed the Elysée Agreements with President Vincent Auriol on 8 March 1949. That protocol made Viet Nam an Associated State within the French Union. The Accords went into effect with a ceremony in Saigon on 14 June 1949. The United States gave diplomatic recognition to this new nation few days later.

The French National Assembly ratified the Elysée Accords on 29 January 1950, recognizing Viet Nam's status as an Associated State. Bao Dai became its Chief, as he had promised, taking up residence in his state's new capital of Saigon. He kept this position through partitioning of Viet Nam by the Geneva Conference and the first year of existence of the southern Republic of Viet Nam. A factor in Bao Dai's decision to accept this job was that one of two possibilities might occur. The French could either stick by their promises and allow him to rule in a sovereign way, or they could choose to cross him, in which case he would do his best to cause them trouble.

Bao Dai never succeeded in establishing the State of Viet Nam as a real alternative to Ho Chi Minh's northern Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. As in previous decades, France controlled its foreign affairs and national defense, including command of Viet Nam's new National Army. His Associated State of Viet Nam received only limited support both from people within its own borders and from other nations who were loathe to recognize it as representing the legitimate national aspirations of its citizens. Bao Dai was neither a constitutional monarch nor a democratic head of state. It did not take long for him to become painfully aware that he had been installed only as a fixture designed to accrue popular support for continued French machinations. He became obsessed that many viewed him as a turncoat and French stooge and he withdrew to Hong Kong there to pursue a life of leisure. French spin-doctors portrayed his resentment and contempt as a spoiled playboy's "devil may care" attitude and in this way they strengthened his reputation as a self-serving lout with neither dignity nor commitment.³⁰

In 1954, more than four years after Bao Dai's departure from Viet Nam, France finally gave up on the North. Its long bush war with the Viet Minh ended at Dien Bien Phu when, in early May, soldiers of the Vietnamese communist, General Vo Nguyen Giap, overran that outpost after a bitter struggle. Peace talks to settle the "Indochina Problem" were already underway in the Swiss city of Geneva between French, British, Chinese, Russian and American delegates. In consequence, on 20 July, those diplomats temporarily divided Viet Nam along the 17th Parallel. The northern part of the country was to remain under Ho Chi Minh's control. The southern portion, the State of Viet Nam, was to continue with Bao Dai as its head.³¹

It was at this point that Bao Dai began a course of action that made all the stories about him seem true. He was determined to secure enough money to keep his nation afloat. The United States had provided some four million aid dollars annually since 1950, a great part of which Bao Dai always set aside to provide for his own future should he once again find himself without a kingdom. Now he turned to Le Van ("Bay") Vien, leader of the Binh Xuyen. An ex-convict once escaped from Con Son prison island. Vien headed a group of river pirates, the Binh Xuyen, named after a small village formerly used as their headquarters. They preyed on shipping along the Saigon River during the 1930s and 1940s and remained active in those days following World War II's end.

Bao Dai and Bay Vien agreed to a collaboration that institutionalized corruption within the State of Viet Nam. Vien lavishly supplemented the government's budget with his own ill-gotten gains. In return, Bao Dai agreed to condone his illicit activities, including opium trafficking, gold smuggling, racketeering, prostitution and gambling, much of this activity centered in the Chinese suburb of Cholon in Saigon. In a move reminiscent of allowing the wolf to guard a sheepfold, Bay Vien also became Cholon's police chief. Already named an "honorary colonel" of the former Autonomous Republic of Cochin China, Vien, who

possessed a twenty-five thousand man army, now became a general in Bao Dai's army.

Realizing he needed to take steps to furbish his reputation, Bao Dai sought out a man he believed would serve well to improve the image of his government—Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem's squeaky clean reputation would go far toward offsetting recent unfavorable publicity over Bao Dai's deal with Bay Vien. Diem agreed to be named prime minister, but he exacted a price. He insisted that Bao Dai return to France and relinquish full civil and military authority to him. The emperor agreed after Diem, noted for his fidelity to the Roman Catholic faith, swore an oath of loyalty to him on a cross. The last vestiges of Bao Dai's importance disappeared a year later, in 1955, when Diem deposed him in an election called to determine whether his southern country would be ruled by a monarch or by a president.

Diem loosed a flurry of negative propaganda portraying the absent emperor as a morally bankrupt reprobate whose Binh Xuyen ties were unforgivable. He printed his own ballots on red paper, an Asian color of happiness, while Bao Dai's were green, an uninspired shade sometimes explained as the color for cuckolded husbands. Police agents went door-to-door in Saigon explaining the consequences of not voting.

From his chateau in France, Bao Dai tried to regain control of his kingdom. He issued a summons to Diem, proposing talks leading to a political solution. Diem remained unmoved. Bao Dai finally authorized one of his generals to lead a coup against the prime minister. Diem's security police frustrated this attempt before it began.³²

Voting proceeded on schedule, 23 October 1955. The ballot count itself was unsupervised save by Diem's henchmen. Diem controlled the ballots and thus the election with a 98.2 percent approval rating. In Saigon, of 450,000 registered voters, 605,025 cast their ballots for Diem.³³

The Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1955) had been crushed. Following this usurpation of his power, Bao Dai continued to live at his chateau near Cannes and does so still today. It is unlikely he ever forgave himself for his failures. Was he a leader? Yes. Was he effective? No, not ever. Was that his fault? Probably not. Try as he would to institute reform and to gain more freedom for his nation, he was inevitably foiled by intransigent and untrammelled French power and by political games played by western nations caught up in heat generated by Cold War politics. Were his private weaknesses the cause of his public defeats? Again, probably not. More likely they grew and fastened themselves on him indelibly when, out of frustration with his constantly recurring setbacks and lack of success, he turned to fleshly indulgence. It was an understandable reaction. He had run the race and finished the course, but for him there was never a victory.

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NOTES

¹ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), dismisses Bao Dai as "isolated and confused" (p. 146); as "a weak, unpredictable, corruptible playboy" (p. 173) who spent most of his time "eluding responsibilities" (p. 180). William J. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1989), speaks of Bao Dai's "compromises" and tells how "his reputation as a playboy convinced many that he lacked the capacity to lead Vietnam into independence" (p. 20). Zalin Grant, *Facing the Phoenix* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1991), describes Bao Dai as a "puppet" (p. 73) installed by the French "for appearance's sake... from his exile on the Côte d'Azur..." (p. 99). James Olson, ed., *Dictionary of the Vietnam War* (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1987) also calls Bao Dai a "puppet" (p. 37). Thomas D. Boettcher, *Vietnam: The Valor and the Sorrow* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1985) tells how Bao Dai "chose to reside in Cannes, France, surrounded by a covey of concubines" (p. 142); that he "squandered most of his political goodwill living the widely reported degenerate life of a playboy" and that "he had lost most of his zeal" (pp. 114-115). So little is Bao Dai understood that John M. Newman, *JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue and the Struggle for Power* (New York: Warner Books, 1992), describes the forty-one-year-old Bao Dai in 1954 as "the old emperor" (p. 26). Similar attitudes prevail in most references to Bao Dai. I do not suggest he was without faults. I suggest only that he was certainly more than the sum of them.

² Until a few years ago, cartoonist Al Capp drew a comic strip called "Li'l Abner," featured in hundreds of newspapers about a hillbilly and his family in the fictional Appalachian community of Dogpatch. One regularly recurring character was "Joe Btfsplk," the unluckiest man alive. Ever present over his head hung a small black cloud dropping rain on Joe. It signified his misfortune. Others got pleasure, he got pain. Others received happiness, he experienced only sorrow. Others achieved their dreams but all Joe's hopes failed. Bao Dai was monarchy's Joe Btfsplk. To make matters worse, he took office at the very nadir of Viet Nam's long imperial decline, at a time when French power would have negated the efforts of even the best of men.

³ Ellen J. Hammer, *Vietnam: Yesterday and Today* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966): 127.

⁴ Karnow: 172.

⁵ Virginia Thompson, *French Indochina* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1937): 96.

⁶ Bao Dai, *Le Dragon d'An Nam* (Paris: Edition Plon, 1980): 58.

⁷ Thomas E. Ennis, *French Policy and Developments in Indochina* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964): 107.

⁸ LTG Vinh Loc, ARVN (Ret.), now a resident of the U.S. informs me of some of those difficulties. In all of An Nam there was but one testing location, and that in Hue, for all those seeking to take the baccalaureate examination. In Tonkin, Ha Noi was the center. In 1943, for example, at Hue, three thousand took the examination and only sixty-one passed—a two percent success rate. See my Vinh Loc MSS, a collection of correspondence between C.B. Currey and Vinh Loc, hereafter cited as VL MSS.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Lockhart: 69.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 73.

- ¹² Bao Dai: 58. Cf., VL MSS.
¹³ VL MSS and Lockhart: 69-75.
¹⁴ VL MSS and Lockhart: 65.
¹⁵ VL MSS and Lockhart: 88.
¹⁶ Thompson: 163.
¹⁷ Karnow: 180.
¹⁸ VL MSS.
¹⁹ Bao Dai: 71.
²⁰ VL MSS and Lockhart: 93.
²¹ Lockhart: 112.
²² *Ibid.*: 123.
²³ *Ibid.*: 136-138.
²⁴ *Ibid.*: 136-138.
²⁵ Marvin E. Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn Young and H. Bruce Franklin, *Vietnam and America* (New York: Grove Press, 1985): 29-30; Peter M. Dunn, *The First Vietnam War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985): 16; and Hammer: 133.
²⁶ Lockhart: 141-143.
²⁷ James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: American and Vietnam, 1945-1990* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991): 19-20.
²⁸ Bao Dai: 120-121; VL MSS; Bao Dai, "Rescript on His First Abdication, August 24, 1945," in Allan B. Cole, *Conflict in Indochina and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945-1955* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1956): 18-19.
²⁹ Lucien Bodard, *The Quicksand War: Prelude to Vietnam* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1967): 234-235; Roger M. Smith, *Southeast Asia: Documents of Political Development and Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974): 308; Karnow: 147.
³⁰ Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled* (2 vols., New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967), II: 690-691; and Bodard: 234-235.
³¹ Bernard B. Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1967): *passim*.
³² Ellen J. Hammer, *A Death in November: American in Vietnam* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1987): 43.
³³ Olson and Roberts: 61; Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991): 53.

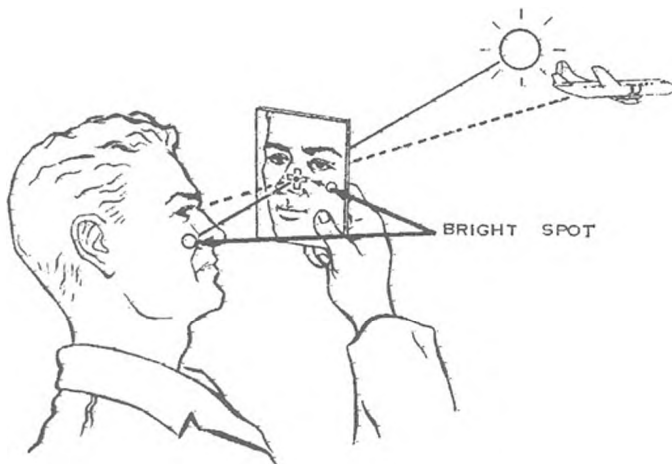


Figure 26. Signaling with a mirror.

AFTERWORDS

I was thinking that you all might want to know something about the person taking your money. It's the usual tale of a mild-mannered Desert Storm-era vet/college student turned chain saw-wielding business manager of a small publishing house and academic journal. You've heard the story before. One minute, a student at a "less well known" university and the next, a publishing executive processing orders and updating mailing lists.

I've got another job too—working for an eccentric tree surgeon, but that's just to cover the bills and Aikido training. Most of the time I'm right here in my office packaging orders, trying to get our books reviewed and talking to people about using **VG** books for their classes—helping to turn this into a real, live business.

I got started by standing in the office not doing a damn thing, while visiting Kali a while back. It was one of those "while you're standing in the office not doing a damn thing..." sort of deals, and the next thing I knew I was mailing out invoices. That was back when it wasn't uncommon to find a half dozen uncashed checks stuck under a monitor or a drawerful of purchase orders—some filled and some not. I finished the stuff I was asked to do and then I put some papers in a file drawer and made a call or two asking some folks to kindly pay up. That was the beginning of the beginning, and the start of efforts to provide an internal structure for **VG**. I mean, we still have tall stacks of papers in the office, but at least now we all agree on what's in which stack.

You know, running a publishing house like this one, with so much to be done and so few people to do it, is a matter of what's physically possible in a specified amount of time. One of my jobs is to set up ways to get more work done in the same amount of time—and that means figuring out new ways to get our books distributed and trying to set up readings for our writers and poets, and giving Kali and Dan more time to do the stuff that they do best.

Other than that, there really ain't much to tell. I've been trying to get some writing done. Got notes for a manuscript that I've been meaning to do *something* with for a while. I've also got a couple ideas for upcoming issues of **VG**; including the world's first comic strip about PTSD and Secondary Stress (we've got a "particular" sense of humor around here, you may have noticed). Well, I better get back to work...

Steven Gomes

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