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PUBLIC INTEREST

“Brigadista”/journalist parallels U.S. policies in Vietnam, Nicaragua

Jeff Jones, son of local musician Mildred O'Donnell and violin maker Roger O'Donnell, will be presenting slides and speaking on his recent experiences in Vietnam and Nicaragua at 7:30 pm on Monday, August 10, at Friends Meeting House, 2274 Onyx. Free and sponsored by the Committee in Solidarity with the Central American People (CISCAP) and the Friends Meeting, Jeff's presentation will examine, through photos, anecdotes, and analysis, the parallels and differences between Vietnam and Nicaragua, and the history of U.S. involvement in the two countries.

Jeff is uniquely suited for such a presentation, having spent time as a journalist in Vietnam in the 1960's and 1980's, and as a volunteer agricultural worker (“brigadista”) in Nicaragua in the mid 1980's.

In the '60s, Jeff was organizational secretary of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), one of the groups working to end the Vietnam war. He traveled to Vietnam, much like people traveling to Nicaragua today, to bring first-hand information and understanding back to the American public. Anti-war work became increasingly frustrating to Jeff, as U.S. involvement increased, and he joined the more radical Weather Underground (which advocated tactics of violence against property—but not against people).

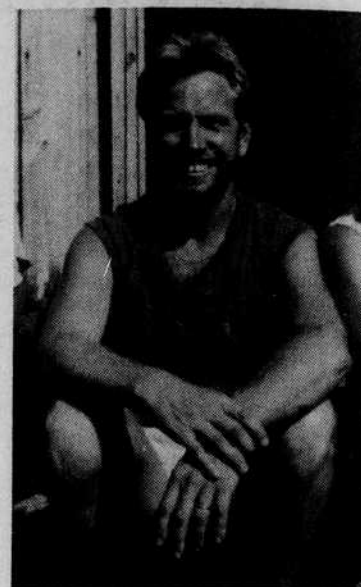
The Vietnam war ended, but many

members of the Weather Underground remained fugitives, sought by law enforcement agencies. Six years after the formal end to the Vietnam war, Jeff was in the process of “surfacing” when the FBI (in a period of brisk activity pursuing anti-war activists who remained fugitives) arrested Jeff, acting on information gathered at a New York “safehouse,” following the robbery of an armored cash car.

The car was believed to have been robbed by American political revolutionaries, and much law enforcement focus was concentrated on former activists and fugitives. It was consequently established that Jeff had been in contact with the New York District Attorney, and his ultimate sentence was lighter than Eugene resident Terry Jackson's, who was recently arrested, tried, and sentenced to two years in prison. Jeff served 18 months community service in a Harlem emergency room, paid a \$3,000 fine, and was on probation for three years.

One of the reasons that Jeff had wanted to surface was his desire to alter this country's foreign policy towards Central American countries. After completing his sentence, Jeff became a brigadista, traveling in Nicaragua and contributing to the Nicaraguan economy by working in the fields harvesting cotton and coffee.

While working, Jeff collected the articles, journal entries, interviews,



Jeff Jones.

poems, photos and drawings of fellow brigadistas who ranged in age from 16 to 70 and came from widely divergent social and professional backgrounds. Jeff's book, *Brigadista*, was published by Praeger Publishers, and is available at the U of O Library, the Eugene Public Library, and the Springfield Library.

In addition to his writings from Nicaragua, Jeff recently re-visited Vietnam as a writer for the *Guardian* newspaper to chronicle the evolution of the Vietnamese revolution. His presentation on Vietnam and Nicaragua has been sponsored across the country by religious and political groups, and is a chance for the Eugene/Springfield community to learn from a person who has been involved with the important political and social events of the past 20 years.

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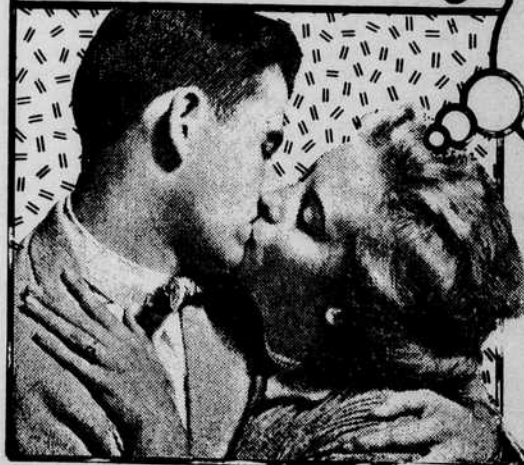
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