



For some, American spirit survives

Jack Vaughan had the back of his head blown off by a Korean bullet in 1951. Now he sits in the front row of a Veterans of Foreign Wars gathering, nodding approval with a steel-patched skull. His nod is a miracle of modern war and modern medicine.

Seventy-five veterans nod along with him, and clap approval. In the back rows are non-descript Vietnam veterans. As the rows progress, the wars change until, at the front sit the survivors of World War I.

You can tell the number of wars a country's been in by counting the rows at a veterans' meeting.

"I'm here to tell you this," Vaughan says. "I'd go back in a minute if I had to. We've got a great country here... we'd better watch it or we'll be in trouble."

Vaughan sits at the front with the WWI veterans.

He's a few wars ahead of himself, by row. But he looks older than Korea and isn't likely to be bothered. And the back of his head gives him seniority.

"It went in here," he says, "and it came out here." He points to the top of his head.

"Police action they called it, ha, ha. That was the roughest police action I've ever seen,"

Vaughan says.

Vaughan spent 14 months in Korea before losing part of his brain at Heartbreak Ridge. A regiment, several thousand men, went in and 200 came out alive.

He spent months in hospitals from Korea to San Francisco relearning walking and talking. By the time he returned home to Springfield, he looked like a man who had never been to Korea. He still speaks out for the good name of his country.

"My country doesn't owe me a thing," Jack Vaughan says at the veterans meeting. "I'll never be able to repay my country."

creased sex drive and cancer. Several Vietnam vets who were exposed to the chemical have fathered deformed children.

The U. S. Veterans Administration has shown little interest in the possibility reported symptoms could be caused by exposure to Agent Orange. Five claims were filed this year with the VA's Portland office, asking for compensation for problems connected with the defoliation, tagged Operation Ranch Hand. None was granted.

The VA has received over 500 similar claims from veterans nationwide. No service-related disability claims have been awarded yet for exposure to Agent Orange.

During the late 1960's, the state department issued statements asserting the herbicides "are non-toxic and not dangerous to man or animal life." The only government studies that had been done, however, related to Agent Orange's defoliating effects, and not possible health hazards.

Reports that the chemical was drifting onto populated areas in Vietnam, or that crops belonging to friendly Vietnamese were being hit were dismissed as "Communist propaganda."

Rick Cosci of Junction City was in Vietnam in 1968, and remembers being sent through areas recently sprayed.

"I wasn't even aware that 2,4,5-T and Agent Orange were the same thing," he recalls. "We knew it as 'defoliating.' We would go through areas to see if any enemy soldiers were there. The land had been defoliated and napalmed. It looked like a fire had gone through."

Cosci later suffered anxiety and loss of energy, but he didn't connect it to chemical exposure. "I thought I had low blood sugar," he says. "I had tests done and everything was OK. Later I heard about symptoms from Agent Orange and thought my problems could possibly be connected. But it could be caused by other things."

Cosci hesitates to file a disability claim with the VA because he isn't sure he was directly exposed to Agent Orange. However, he says the government should have told the soldiers what was really going on in Vietnam.

"It was so dangerous I thought I was going to die there," he says. "We were just pawns in their game."

Saturday is Veterans Days, and rather than sing the praises of veterans past and present, these stories focus—with the help of local veterans—attention on war and what it does to the people who bring it home.

By KATHY McMANUS
Of the Emerald

"As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will always have its fascination. When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular." *Oscar Wilde*

The long, bitter conflict known as the Vie. War created problems that still touch the lives of many Americans. But the war's impact is still unmeasured—in many ways.

"There is evidence that suggests a significant minority of Vietnam veterans have experienced problems of readjustment which continue even today," Pres. Jimmy Carter said last month in a special message to the U.S. Congress.

A local "rap" group for that "significant minority" has been formed to fill a void left by national Veterans Administration programs.

The University Veterans Association began

sponsoring the rap group in August to help vets deal with delayed reaction to combat stress, as well as the general readjustment problems they consider unique to Vietnam veterans.

The Delayed Stress Response Syndrome describes a vet's emotional reaction to his war experiences that begins anywhere from nine months to several years after he has returned to civilian society, says Russ Linebarger, chief organizer of the rap group.

The response can range from nightmares to outbursts of rage to the use of drugs and alcohol as an

escape from pain, Linebarger says.

A time lag, called psychic numbing, blocks out these self-destructive numbing emotions for as long as 10 years, after which the vet may begin to have nightmares related to his war experience, he says.

Then flashbacks and nervous rage sometimes occur in response to an innocuous event that suddenly reminds the vet of Vietnam. After that, many turn to drugs and alcohol, which adds to the original problem and makes dealing with it more difficult, Linebarger says.

"The person is diffused mentally and morally," he adds.

Although vets from other wars have experienced the phenomena, those who fought in Vietnam have a unique set of problems, agree Linebarger and John Lawrence, another organizer of the rap group.

"Vietnam was a different kind of war because of the lack of national unity," Lawrence says. "Also it was a war without purpose."

"World War II was fought for a good reason," Linebarger says, adding that vets from that war returned as heroes to ticker tape parades and many GI benefits.

Congress and the American public have been less receptive to Vietnam vets, who came home singularly rather than in units. Like the vet with psychic numbing, "the American public numbed out that the war ever existed or was lost," he says.

Vietnam vets were thrust into the civilian world with no preparation and almost no transition period, the men say. "One minute I was in Vietnam and

taste

my eyes taste sweat
and wince with its bitterness
but its better than the taste
of dying mens lips
begging you to breathe for them.

Poems were submitted by local Vietnam veterans

The veterans' view

Civilian readjustment baffles soldiers

graffiti

steel treads crunching organic bones
chemicals on defoliated children
phantoms lacing napalmed skies
dusty trucks crawling through refugee roads
magic dragons eroding treeless hillsides
tripwires, boobytraps and exploding children
swarms of cobras prowling hills and villes
tons of steel arcing through a bloody sunset
lungshots make a medic's lips pink
cockroaches that sleep on your eyes
legless child begging for a cigarette
helicopters of men flying into ridicule
superfortresses bombing enemy hospitals
politicians masturbating on dow jones
maggots in my eyes can't see the truth
ho chi minh's teaching us a lesson
god don't let me flunk class

Local affiliates plan activities

Several veterans' organizations in Eugene have slated activities ranging from a potluck dinner to a discussion of the Vietnam War's impact on American society for this weekend's Veterans' Day.

The Springfield chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars hosts the national VFW commander-in-chief Eric Sandstrom in a special luncheon at noon today. It will be held in their meeting hall at 5344 Main St. in Springfield.

The Veterans Memorial Building, 1626 Wilamette St., features a potluck dinner Saturday evening. Call 345-3261 for more information.

The University Veterans Association, an ASUO-funded group that provides support and referral services to student-veterans and education, will

three days later I was looking for a job," Linebarger says.

Because many opposed the war and the United States' involvement in it, vets were left in the position of "not being able to talk about their war experiences even to their own peers," he explains.

The rap group was established to give vets an outlet they lacked when they first came home, as well as helping them cope with everyday life.

In addition to the American public's inattention to the Vietnam veteran, the VA and Hollywood have failed to understand the vet's position realistically or to help him adjust to civilian society, Linebarger says.

"The VA has come out and said there are emotional problems and have set up treatment centers in major metropolitan areas," he says.

"But generally, the VA will not recognize that these stress problems are a result of Vietnam. And, of course, they don't want to pay for them (programs to treat DSRS), he says.

Television's image of Vietnam vets has been inaccurate and unfair, Linebarger adds. "In 99 percent of the cases, the vet has been portrayed in Hollywood as some kind of demented ogre," he says.

"Most of what we have seen on TV is overblown. Each veteran has his own separate set of symptoms, and many suffer without being violent," Linebarger says.

Veterans can call the UVA office at 686-4098 for more information.

sponsor a showing of the award-winning documentary "Hearts and Minds" tonight.

The film, which juxtaposes striking images of American and Vietnamese cultures and the Vietnam War, will be shown in 177 Lawrence at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. No admission will be charged.

UVA members will also meet with a political science class today to discuss their perceptions of the war and answer any questions students might have. The class, American Foreign Policy, meets at 10:30 p.m. in 207 Chapman.

Veterans Day is a national public holiday honoring veterans and marking the signing of the 1918 armistice ending World War I. In observance of the holiday, local banks will be closed today, and many public employees will have the day off.