

veterans come to terms with their experiences, 11 years after the war has ended and more than 20 years since the first large contingent of troops was first sent to South Vietnam. They see men whose physical scars have healed, but who have unhealed emotional wounds from the war.

"One similarity for people who fight in all wars is that war is traumatic. People fight wars and endure trauma and go through a recovery process from the trauma — Vietnam, World War II, the Civil War," explains Steve Tice, director of the Vet Center. "I think that's important because there's a little too much made of the differences between Vietnam and other wars."

Despite that similarity, and others, Tice is able to isolate some differences that he thinks were significant. The first on his list is the age difference. The average age of the Vietnam soldier was 19, compared to 26 years old for World War II veterans. "When you have teenage warriors at a developmental time in their lives at 19, developing a world view of how they fit in and how the world looks, and to do that in a civil war during guerrilla warfare is pretty damaging to a person," he says.

The length of a veteran's tour of duty also had an ef-

fect. While the Vietnam veteran was required to spend only 12 months in Vietnam, 13 months in the case of the Marines, soldiers in past American wars were usually required to stay until the war was over. Yet, the 12-month tour created a situation in Vietnam where soldiers didn't go to war as a unit, as was the case in the past. Instead, Vietnam veterans went to war alone. They were attached to a unit where some of the men might have 11 months or 6 months of their tour done. There was no way to develop the camaraderie that characterized the unit solidarity of World War II and Korea, and when it was time to go back to the States, Vietnam veterans came home alone as well.

"I had a guy tell me a story about another guy who was sitting next to him when he was going home. The guy had his poncho over his head and he didn't come out from under it the whole trip home. I would say that that guy was feeling something, and it was not joy," Tice says, explaining that there's a real sense of guilt when a person leaves his buddies out in the field while he's safely on his way home.

While talking about differences, "I think it's important to talk about when peo-

ple were wounded," Tice suggests. "Modern technologies and evacs created a situation where we now have a large number of people who lived through the Vietnam War, including myself, who would have never lived through World War II and died in battle before ever getting to a hospital. I had internal wounds and people who had those tended to die in other wars."

Attached to the 101st Airborne Division, Steve Tice was with his platoon on a ridge of Ap Bia Mountain, or what came to be known as "Hamburger Hill," in May of 1969. North Vietnamese soldiers controlled the mountain and battled U.S. and South Vietnamese forces for six days, before finally withdrawing. It was during this skirmish that Tice was wounded.

"We were involved in a blocking maneuver," remembers Tice. "We were in the middle of a perimeter. I was eating spaghetti — nothing heroic — when the North Vietnamese Army gassed us. I got out of the foxhole and went over to the radio to see if other people were being gassed around the perimeter. That's when I got hit with a rocket-propelled grenade.

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