

UNIVERSITY

Spanish Civil War veteran lectures Freshmen learn war is not black or white

By April Brinkman
Emerald Contributor

A visiting Spanish Civil War veteran on Thursday brought home the reality of war during his lecture to a freshman seminar class.

Bob Reed, now 75, fought in the war from 1937 to '38 when he was only 22. He said he was inspired to help stop the spread of fascism over Europe.

The Spanish Civil War started when conservative elements in the country joined under Gen. Francisco Franco in a revolt against the elected Republican government. Franco and his insurgents, with help from Nazi Germany and Italy, eventually succeeded in taking over Spain in 1938.

Reed was one of 40,000 volunteers who fought as part of the International Brigades on the side of the Republican Army. He served in combat as a sergeant.

"In Spain, we were fighting for a democracy," he said. "We were volunteers with clearly defined objectives. We felt that we had to win for the people."

Though Reed said he still believes he was morally right in his position in the war, he can now see that neither side was absolutely good or evil.

"War is never black and white," he said.

The veteran compared this feeling to the conflict in the Middle East today, in which "the soldiers are there by force, to defend one dictatorship against another, and the population, including Congress, is divided as to whether or not we should be there."

Reed said he believes that today, war is a different, more dangerous ballgame, and "now the United Nations is a better way to handle conflicts, rather than direct warfare."

Reed personalized the war by relating his own experiences. On his last day of combat in



Bob Reed

Spain, around Christmas of 1938, "bombers came over. We were in the open, so we lay down and hoped for the best. One of my friends from Spain who was lying right next to me was hit by a piece of shrapnel and died.

"I still remember that kid. When we were getting off the train, there was his mother, looking for people with familiar names. I still remember that."

The reality of war hit Reed before he had even stepped foot on Spanish soil, when his ship was torpedoed by an Italian submarine in the Atlantic on his way over to Europe.

"In the year and a half I spent in Spain, I saw the change from fairly prosperous communities to people who were always hungry," he said. "The biggest tragedy was to the Spanish people themselves. Refugees were put in camps with bare facilities and lousy food. Many died. War is pretty terrible."

However, Reed said he believes that sometimes it is necessary to fight for what one believes in.

"I would have felt guilty if I had not gone over to Europe and done my part in the fight

against fascism," he said. "I have no regrets for the life I've had as an activist. Sometimes somebody has to stick his neck out, even if it means getting shot at."

After Reed returned from the war, he continued his political activism, inspired further by his experiences in the war. However, his social involvement started before he even left for the war, when he was almost lynched for trying to help the sharecroppers in the American South organize a union.

Today, Reed is an activist involved in the Committee in Solidarity of El Salvador, which opposes the monetary support the United States gives to the Central American government.

In addition, the veteran recently appeared on a radio show in Seattle, in which he publicly opposed U.S. involvement in the Middle East.

Reed is also concerned with the state of the world environment and of America's economy. He said he would like to see money spent on domestic, social programs, rather than "being eaten up in the sands of Saudi Arabia."

Reed held the attention of the Spanish Civil War freshman seminar class during his hour and a half lecture.

Sophomore R. Michael Lovelady, a member of the class, said Reed strengthened his anti-war views.

"He was about the same age as I am now when he went over," Lovelady said. "He brought to life the human factor of war."

Professor Elizabeth Davis, who teaches the course, said she felt it was important for the class to listen to Reed in order to obtain a personalized, eye-witness account of the war, something that cannot be found in a text book.

Roberts worried about nerve gas storage

PORTLAND (AP) — Gov.-elect Barbara Roberts says she is worried about the chance of an explosion at the U.S. Army nerve gas storage site in Eastern Oregon.

More than 100,000 aging nerve gas rockets are stored in concrete bunkers at the Army Depot Activity Umatilla, one of eight U.S. nerve gas repositories.

The Army is planning to destroy the weapons in specially designed incinerators but the project may take until the end of the decade.

About 5,200 tons of nerve-gas weapons have been stored at the repository near Hermiston since 1962.

"I don't think until recently we've paid enough attention to what's there and what it might mean to citizens in this state," Roberts said.

She said her concerns about the Umatilla depot rank with her concerns about the Hanford nuclear reservation in southeastern Washington and the Trojan nuclear plant in Rainier. Roberts had favored a ballot measure to close Trojan but it

was defeated by voters on Nov. 6.

When asked whether she believed the public is adequately protected from the danger of a nerve gas leak at the Umatilla depot, Roberts said, "I think the problem we have is that we don't know."


Roberts was responding to questions from KPTV, which televised a special report on the Umatilla depot last week. The Portland TV station said that chemical stabilizers in the nerve gas rockets are nearly 30 years old and are deteriorating to the point where they could explode spontaneously.

"We have those reports that clearly say there's the potential of an explosion," Roberts said. "I think the truth is none of us can say everyone is totally protected and safe."

The Army has said it hopes to destroy the weapons stockpile at the depot within 10 years. A prototype weapons incinerator already is operating on Johnston Island near Hawaii that may become the model for incinerators at Umatilla and the

other seven repositories.

Roberts says a new task force will study safety issues at the Umatilla base.



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