

Memoir provides intriguing picture of Sierra Leone

■ CALLEY LATHROP

Staff Reporter

WARNING: This is a BOOK review of a story that needed to be told and is definitely worth reading—it is about a boy who became a soldier at the age of 13. If, after reading the first few sentences you decide to flip to another, more "interesting" article, DON'T. This story deserves your time, as it will truly change your perspective on genocide, and on life.

No story compares to that told by Ishmael Beah in "Long Way Gone: Memoirs of A Boy Soldier." Although there are many soldiers throughout the world, Beah picked up his first AK-47 at age 13.

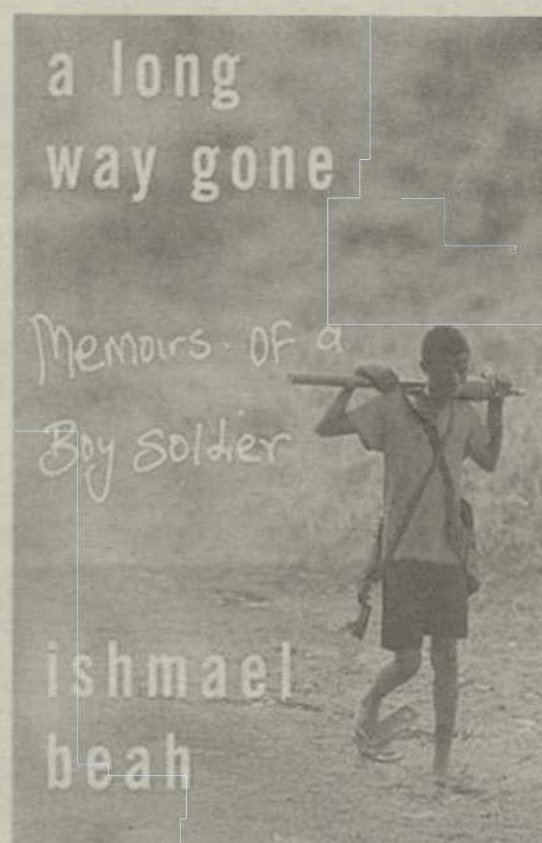
In the book, Beah weaves a tale that I found myself trying to dismiss as fiction after every page. At age ten, Beah's country broke into civil war when a group of organized rebels (nicknamed the RUF,) attempted a coup that threw the small, but prosperous, Sierra Leone

headfirst into bloody rebellion that eventually broke all unwritten laws of decency.

Significant details about the author's life are revealed, but not so many facts that it becomes onerous. Beah describes how, for the first year or so, the war was something far away; there was news about it, but it did not actually affect him or his fellow villagers. That changed after he, his older brother Junior, and several friends traveled to a talent show in the nearby village of Mattru Jong, where the rebels attacked.

This is where I stop telling you the plot, in order to make you want to pick up the book and find out what happens yourself. I will tell you that when Beah becomes a soldier, he does not fight for the rebels, but the GOVERNMENT army.

Don't let the fact that it



This story deserves your time, as it will truly change your perspective on genocide, and on life

is a small African country fool you; they are organized, at times comparable to the U.S. army. However, there are several major differences in the way this army is run. They force children into becoming soldiers, with some so small they cannot hold up their weapons. The youths are given drugs to aid in the desensitization that is necessary to make children capable of murder.

Even the author becomes a drug addict and a violent killer, participating not just in killing, but also in torture.

"The Lieutenant pointed at the prisoners. I am not sure if one of the captives was the shooter, but any captive would do at the time. So they were all lined up, six of them, with their hands tied. I shot them on their feet and watched them suffer for an entire day before finally shooting them in the head so that they would stop crying."

This quote caused me pain in places I didn't know a book could reach! It was one of many descriptions of the violence Beah and other children were forced to carry out. For three plus years, Beah lived a life that included little happiness. After losing his family, it was easier to snort the most popular drug, "brown brown," a mixture of cocaine and heroin, than to come to terms with the losses. He let out his anger and frustration on the rebels he and his

comrades hunted.

The writing in this story was amazing. Beah was able to paint vivid pictures, while at the same time keeping it very simple and easy to understand. I also learned about African culture and the people of Sierra Leone. Images and events he described haunted me that night when I closed the book for the last time. There are things he said that I will never forget. There are horrors that were beyond my comprehension.

It is truly an amazing story, and an equally amazing book. During the holidays, we often focus on being thankful for our many blessings. Are you feeling like Charlie Brown, unable to grasp the real meaning of the holidays? Taking a few hours to read "A Long Way Gone" may expand your horizons and give you a glimpse of the real hell that people in Sierra Leone have endured, as well as help you appreciate what you have. Yes, it is harsh, gruesome, and at many times disturbing, but it describes a story that needs to be told, and READ.

("A Long Way Gone" can be found at libraries and bookstores for as low as \$15.)

Sandoval's delivers quality Mexican cuisine to downtown Willamette

■ KELSEY SCHRADER

Staff Reporter

Mexican cuisine holds a special place in my heart, especially on those nights when I just don't want to rely on the old staple, Hamburger Helper, for dinner. But sometimes, Taco Bell just doesn't cut it. For those times, Sandoval's, a new Mexican restaurant and bar in Old Willamette, has really hit the spot.

The food is refreshing and prices are relatively cheap. Prices fluctuate depending on whether you go for lunch or dinner, but you can get a huge plate of food for around \$12. The atmosphere isn't what you would call "authentic Mexican," but is both refined and modern. The service is fast. I was seated immediately, and the servers were friendly and extremely funny. Sandoval's would be a good place for kids or groups.

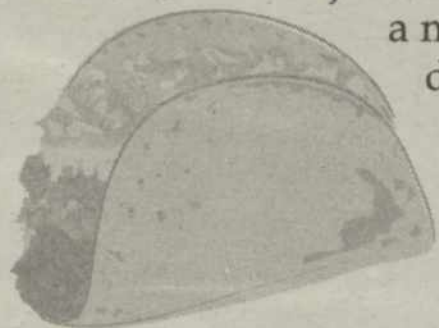
Sandoval's fish tacos (\$11.95) use salmon instead of tilapia, along with crisp veggies, homemade tortillas, and a "special sauce." The fish tasted very fresh, and however they made their "special sauce," they did it right. Something that Mexican restaurants are famous for, and Sandoval's

is no exception, are giant portions of food, so it's no surprise that you will have to take home a doggie bag like I did. The good news is, these fish tacos tasted just as good heated up in a microwave the next day for lunch. And that, my friends, is a miracle for any Mexican dish.

Another one of Sandoval's specials is the Taco Plato (\$11.95). Although the food was drowning in a sea of purple cabbage and onions, the dish was still appetizing after some minor modifications. The chicken was grilled nicely, and the cilantro and seasoning complimented the overall dish without overpowering (rookie mistake for many Mexican restaurants).

The best part of my experience thus far at Sandoval's is the desserts. Their fried ice cream (\$4.95) is pure comfort food. No, really. I don't know how it is accomplished, but it's deep-fried vanilla ice cream covered in strawberry sauce. It tastes like ice cream inside a churro. Not very healthy, but the best dessert I've had in a long time.

Sandoval's is new to the Old Willamette strip, and it is a great restaurant to meet friends, family, or just to find a meal that tastes homemade in a cozy environment.



Regal Hilltop 9 presents...



Join us for all the MAGIC!

Plus...

Donate to Toys for Tots & enter to win a Night Out on the Hilltop 9!

See management for details.