

Unexpected visit surprises soldier

Veterans on Harleys change attitude

by Robert A. Hibberd
Co-Editor-In-Chief

Memorial Day is, to some of us, more than just a three-day weekend; more than just extra time to go to the beach or to watch the Portland Trailblazer basketball team.

To some, Memorial Day is a time to realize the price of freedom; to remember those who served in the Armed Forces and those who paid the ultimate price, death.

Personally, I see Memorial Day as a time to reflect upon the time I spent serving my country. Monday, I took time to remember one of the more vivid highlights in my Army career.

When I was 17 years old, I had limited options as to what I should do with myself so I joined the army. It was a very simple thing to do; I went to my neighborhood recruiter and told him I wanted to join. Within a week, I had my airborne infantry assignment in hand.

I started my Army career just two short months after I

graduated from high school. In the heat of August 17, 1987, I arrived at Harmony Church, Fort Benning, Georgia, for 12 weeks of basic and advanced individual training. Upon completing the training at the "Church," I was sent across post to airborne school. In four weeks I trained for and received the silver wings and red beret of the U.S. paratrooper. Then it was off to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where I received a set of air assault wings while serving with the 101st Airborne, Air Assault Division.

In retrospect, all this training seems like a lot of Hell, but at the time it didn't seem all that bad. I actually enjoyed it; to a 17 year old ex-high-school-athlete, the training was rather fun. At 17, the idea of running around proving your manhood is rather appealing.

Generally, I was liking being in the Army. I was a teenager and I was savoring the prestige of being a highly trained soldier, serving with one of the most decorated military divisions in

the United States. I was having a good time. I felt important.

Then a Memorial Day weekend changed my entire attitude towards the military and the government.

My battalion was having a ceremony to dedicate a monument to honor the soldiers who had died serving my unit in Vietnam. My unit prepared several days for this ceremony; inspections, dress greens, the works.

I was excited because I had heard that several Vietnam veterans were going to be on hand for the ceremony. I thought it would be a motivating experience to speak to the veterans.

On the day of the ceremony, I was standing in formation anxiously searching, of the corner of my eye, for what I thought these veterans would look like; a crowd of fit men proudly displaying their medals and ribbons. To my disappointment, I saw none.

Then, suddenly in the distance, I heard the distinct sound of a group of Harley Davidson motorcycles. I wanted to look but I couldn't because I was in formation, but I could tell by the sound that the bikes were pulling right up to our ceremony. "How disrespectful," I thought.

As it would turn out, the Harleys were bikes belonging to Vietnam veterans of my unit. I would meet them later, at a bar, and marvel at their old jungle

fatigue blouses with the sleeves cut off. These men were harried individuals with very little respect for authority.

I learned a lot from these men. They were kind enough to express their feelings of betrayal held from their country. They told stories of regret and remorse regarding some of the acts they were forced to take place in while unwillingly serving their America in Vietnam.

But the point that struck me most about these men was their ability to love their country and hate it at the same time. These men explained that, even in a democracy, things can go wrong when individuals in high places abuse their authority.

They explained the dangers of blind faith; it is important to know the difference between right from wrong. These men told me that I should question my leaders so as to ensure self-preservation.

I went back to my unit with a sense of enlightenment. I would continue to excel in the Army, but with the knowledge I gained from veteran friends, meaning that I always stood for righteousness.

To me, Memorial Day is time to spend defining freedom. Discerning what freedom is and what freedom is worth, who has freedom and who doesn't and just who it is trying to take freedom from you.

Letter to the Editor
Government robs middle class

To the editor:

In response to Robert Hibberd's article in May 6 Clackamas Print.

What happens to a dream deferred? This I ask of the readers of The Print.

With the dream of equality and justice being shattered in the Rodney King verdict, the time is not for more false promises, but action! Blatant injustice demands response to keep America Free.

The injustice is not new, nor is the inequality. The ruling class seems to be getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. The middle class, you and I, is disappearing. The new reality is two classes of people, the rich and the large majority of poor.

The fact is that our government is corrupt and must change. The riots were not just because of the verdict, they were because of the inequality in America. As middle class citizens it is our right and duty to fight inequality. Hibberd does literary justice in giving a revolutionary point of view in using his freedom of expression. To quote from Henry David Thoreau, "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison." Let's not conform to our corrupt government, let's get it back to the people!

Greg Benner

Public should have high regard for veterans of U.S. military

by Frank Jordan
Copy Editor

After spending two days of a nice three-day weekend relaxing and enjoying the sun, I had an opportunity to participate in a Memorial Day service at Willamette National Cemetery, to honor those who have fought and died for their country.

I have a problem with that cliché that is used over and over again. "Fought and died for your country" has a strange and twisted meaning to a few people. I find the phrase stranger and more twisted as I get older.

Being a patriotic American who serves in the U.S. Army, I am sometimes torn between what I do as a soldier and how I feel as a citizen. The government is messing around with how it treats veterans and yet we take care of our veterans better than any other civilized country on the planet.

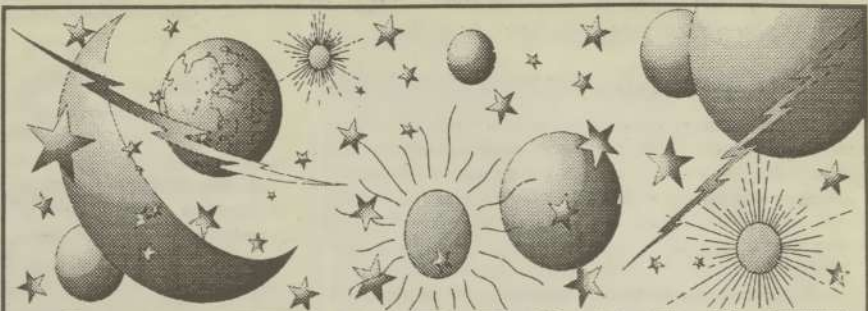
Memorial Day is a time for reflection on those who have served and died as members of the Armed Forces of the United States. From the Revolutionary War to Operation Desert Storm, American fighting forces have shown the determination and spirit that comes with being an American soldier, sailor, airman, Ma-

rine and Coast Guardsman.

But dying for one's country, especially in a country that is not as great as one might think, takes on some sort of double meaning. The United States treats its military as good or better than any other country in the world, yet we as citizens don't seem to hold our military in as high of a regard as we do entertainers, athletes, politicians, or scholars.

The women and men that comprise our Armed Forces should be held in the highest regard by Americans because of the personal sacrifices that they have made to hold the kinds of positions that they do. Whether they be on active duty all over the world, or in the Reserves and the National Guard, the sometimes forgotten "weekend warrior," who also makes sacrifices that the general public seems to forget about.

As we forge ahead into the future, let us remember all those who have risked and given their lives while wearing the uniforms of the United States Army, the United States Navy, the United States Air Force, the United States Marine Corps, and the United States Coast Guard. And if you know a veteran, say Hi! and let them know that, despite your differences and beliefs about the military, they serve on your behalf to defend the country. They just might appreciate it.



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