

## Veteran Talks About War Re-enactment Documentary

By Arashi Young  
Of *The Skanner News*

For one weekend every year Oregon woods are transformed into a war zone as a mix of combat enthusiasts, veterans and a former South Vietnamese Army officer re-enact the Vietnam War.

The movements of the 2/5 1st Cavalry Division are featured in the documentary "In Country," which premieres in Portland at Living

Room Theatres on May 8. We asked him about the movie, what it's like to participate in re-enactments and the taboo surrounding the Vietnam War.

Here are excerpts of the interview, edited for space and clarity.

**The Skanner News:** How did you get involved in military re-enactments?

**Lucien Darensburg:** I met Joel Kinney at his niece's grad party. I had

for me. Joel's passion for the group and collection of military memorabilia convinced me to come out and experience the group for myself.

I came out in the summer of 2012. I was tested mentally and physically and was able to use some of the skills I had learned through the military without leaving the country or truly seeing the death and dying involved with war. I left tired and sore with new



Images from Lucien Darensburg's life from the documentary 'In Country.'

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never thought about re-enacting really, ever. I thought it would be watered down and I figured there wasn't really anything in it

friends and a sense of camaraderie that can only be felt after people go through a stressful experience and come out together.

which is defined to ensure that everyone is wearing period correct uniforms and gear in the right configuration. We do not act as if we are characters from a movie or famous people. In essence we are portraying ourselves in said year. There is no script or pre-determined outcomes. Everyone has a job whether it be rifleman, grenadier, medic, or RTO (radio operator). Other than that we are given wound cards in case you are "wounded or killed;" this allows the person to seamlessly transition from an uninjured soldier to a casualty and know what to do.

**TSN:** Is there a particular battle or operation that is being re-enacted?

**LD:** We re-enact a time period, a specific year, generally between 1967 and 1970. Earlier than that, the gear gets harder and harder to find. Other than the year

traipsing around the woods glorifying war. I know there is no glory in war, but brave men fought and that's what we try emulate in our re-enactment.

**TSN:** Your re-enactments are more private than the staged reenactments of the revolutionary or civil wars. Is there a benefit to that privacy?

**LD:** We work harder than many of those groups. We are mobile. We cover multiple kilometers a day, cutting through thick brush in the heat of the day. Additionally the revolutionary and civil wars were fought in open fields in ranks in which they took turn firing muskets and cannons at each other. Vietnam was fought in many different types of terrain. We cover many types of terrain and if it rains we fight in the rain, if its 102 degrees we fight in the sun. Either way we fight together, we look out for each other.

**TSN:** Is there a taboo surrounding the Vietnam War?

**LD:** Yes. I think that it's common knowledge that the Vietnam War was seen as a bad war and many thought we should not have been there. I do not and we do not have an agenda when it comes to the re-enactment of the war. I re-enact to pay tribute to the soldiers that fought valiantly and courageously in Vietnam. Imitation is the purest form of flattery. I respect the men that fought in Vietnam and we as a group take our re-enactment very serious to ensure that we pay tribute in the right way.

I think there is not only a taboo surrounding the Vietnam War but a taboo surrounding Vietnam War re-enacting. Many believe we are a bunch of idiots

**TSN:** What do you hope people get out of seeing this documentary?

**LD:** I hope people understand that we do this as a tribute to the men and women who served in Vietnam. Many of the soldiers, marines, airmen, and sailors were treated unfairly upon returning home. This is unacceptable! We strive to be the best portrayal we can be of the Vietnam experi-

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ADULTS

**Film screening**

# "The Wake of VANPORT"

"The Wake of Vanport" is so named to honor the death of a city and the viewing of its history. Join us for this screening of multimedia works produced during the 2014 Vanport Multimedia Project, dedicated to collecting and preserving the stories of those who survived the devastating 1948 flood. Community members, local historians, artists, media makers and educators collaborated to turn oral history interviews into short and powerful pieces of digital audio and visual narrative.

**Immediately following the screening, there will be an opportunity for discussion with survivors and producers.**

**Sunday, May 10  
3-4:30 pm**

**North Portland Library**  
512 N Killingsworth St  
503.988.5394

Made possible by The National Endowment for the Humanities Fund of The Library Foundation.

Space at programs is limited. Seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

**V Y Peterson Treads Tough Terrain in New Book**

This extraordinary collection of poetry and fictional prose, chronicles the realities and disparities of divorce, relationships and mental illness, within communities of color.

Portland author V.Y. Peterson hopes, with her work, to acknowledge the adversities that are present in communities of color, that are impacting life everyday such as: AIDS, divorce, incarceration and mental illness. She has written countless plays, poems and short stories, that outline her desires for a greater America.

**Fruits of Our Labor: MY Words, MY Harvest** can be purchased at [authorhouse.com](http://authorhouse.com), Broadway Books in Portland and [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).