

BOOK DROP

by Marie Struthers

If the evening news hasn't got enough violence, sex, depravity or grief for us these days, we can read a little modern fiction. It has been said that real life is much more frightful than anything an author can dream up. But in the last 20 years or so authors have been narrowing the gap.

Such a book is Peter Straub's new mystery/thriller "Koko". Set in modern time New York and the far-east, Straub's story deals with a group of Vietnam veterans who suspect that one of their original platoon members is responsible for several bazaar murders. The signature at each crime is a regimental playing card signed with the name "Koko". This signature awakens powerful memories in all of the men and forces them to come to terms with what happened in the village of La Thuc, Vietnam, 20 years before.

Through flash backs, memories and amateur detective work, the truth about La Thuc and the identity

of Koko gradually emerges, but, in the process, many ugly side-trips are taken.

In this novel Straub has done a good job of maintaining the momentum of the search for "Koko". The tension (and the mystery) is kept alive throughout the book. It is genuinely hard to put it down until the end.

Although not for the squeemish or sensitive reader, and despite the fact that some of the characters are stereotypical and a bit shallow, there are some very good moments here; some sad ones and a few truly frightening scenes.

This isn't a particularly good study of Vietnam veterans or their inheritance from that confusing and terrible war. It is a pretty good thriller and successfully accomplishes its mission to entertain those who prefer to be entertained by the more grizzly surfaces of life.

For a better look at the Vietnam War and its veterans, there are many very good novels and books of non-fiction available on the subject. Philip Caputo's "Indian Country" deals with the flashback problem suffered by veterans and its effect on their families and communities. It is very effectively done and well worth reading.

A much older book and completely different is "BAT 21" by William C. Anderson. This is a non-fiction account of a pilot who was shot down in enemy territory. The method that is used to get the pilot out is fascinating and true. Best of all, a movie has recently been made of this.

Other books about the Vietnam War and veterans that are available at Heppner Public Library include: "Decent Interval" by Frank Snapp, and "Vietnam: A History" by Stanley Karnow. Two brand new books are W. E. B. Griffin's "The Aviators" and "Final Flight" by Stephen Coonts.

Chief Rathbun's Tips

Safe shopping tips

Even though you are rushed and thinking about a thousand things, stay alert to your surroundings and the people around you; shop before dark if possible; park in well lighted areas; lock your car and close the windows; avoid carrying large amounts of cash and don't carry your cash all in one place.

English Romanticism exhibit to be at museum

"William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism," an exhibit that explores the Romantic Age through the art, literature and history of the period, will be on display at the Morrow County Museum November 1-30. This visually exciting, full color exhibit is the permanent record of a major treasures exhibition on Wordsworth and Romanticism which toured the United States earlier this year.

Co-organized by Rutgers University-Newark and the Wordsworth Trust at Dove Cottage in England, the 24 panel poster exhibit combines written commentaries with high quality reproductions of paintings, portraits, watercolors, manuscripts and rare books of the major artists and poets of the period. Among those represented are John Constable, J.M.W. Turner, William Blake, William and Dorothy Wordsworth, John Keats and Lord Byron.

In conjunction with the exhibit, the museum is also sponsoring a slide/tape presentation which pro-

vides an introduction to the social, industrial and political unrest of the Romantic period. "The Wheels of Eden: Revolution in that Age of Romanticism" is a 15 minute program created by the Oregon Committee for the Humanities to compliment the Wordsworth poster exhibit.

The Wordsworth exhibit and slide/tape program are made possible by the Oregon Committee for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information about the exhibit, contact the Morrow County Museum.

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