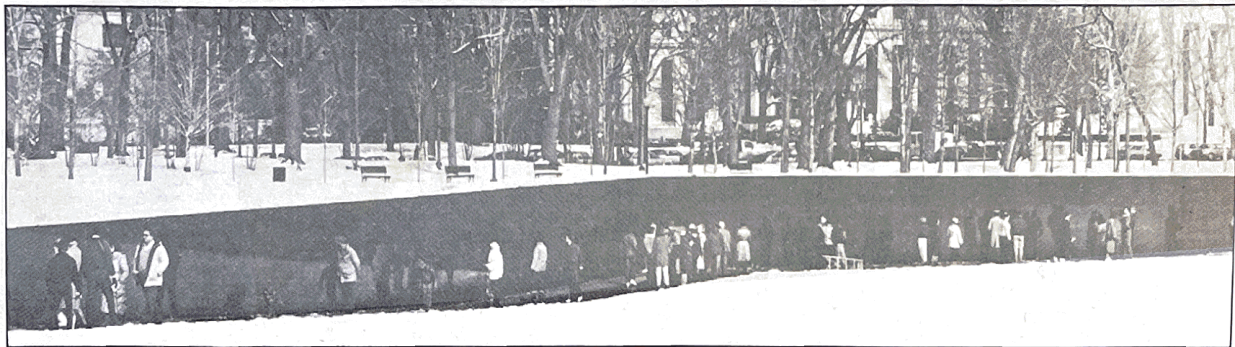


A Pilgrimage To

# THE WALL



Visitors file past Vietnam Veterans Memorial on which 58,022 names were inscribed.

## Vietnam War Memorial: a National Center of Healing

1959 — In honor of the men and women of the armed forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam War. The names of those who gave their lives and of those who remain missing are inscribed in the order they were taken from us.

Dale R. Buis, Chester Ovnard, Maurice W. Flournoy and Alfons A. Bankowski — these are the first four of 58,014 men and eight women whose names are inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

We were a diverse group who had gathered at the memorial early Feb. 15. Although none of us knew all of the 50 or so people huddled before the wall and some of us knew none, we were bonded through our common goal of paying respect to those who served in the Vietnam War and prevailing hope of coming to a better understanding of that event's meaning in our lives.

We had, for the most part, come together on a pilgrimage out of UCSB — a sort of second annual event which germinated from Walter Capps' class, Religion and Impact of the Vietnam War.

When we arrived that morning in groups of two, three, and four, we were students, instructors, veterans, family and friends who had come to share an experience of a magnitude that had not yet been revealed to us. When we left two hours later, we were a girlfriend and wife of a veteran, a son, a daughter, a green beret, a conscientious objector — survivors who had shared our thoughts and our silence and felt the healing of the memorial.

The memorial was dedicated Nov. 13, 1982, over three years after the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund was incorporated and two years after congressional approval was awarded for the site. Jan Scruggs, himself a Vietnam veteran, conceptualized the fund and served as its president while fellow veteran and Washington attorney John Wheeler chaired the organization.

They and a small group of veterans joined forces out of anger at the lack of recognition those who served in the conflict received from both the American government and the public. They were determined to establish a memorial honoring these veterans.

A joint resolution was signed by President Jimmy Carter on July 1, 1980, giving final approval to the memorial's site in Constitution Gardens on the Mall. Fund raising and a design competition followed and the end result is a memorial which has been visited by hundreds of thousands of Americans in its two-and-a-half-year existence and is looked on as a center of healing for the nation.

Designed by a 21-year-old Yale University architecture student, Maya Ying Lin, the memorial is cut into the earth, framing a park within a park, and hidden from street view. It exists as a gash in the ground, like a wound that is to be healed over by the earth. Black granite panels bear the names of those killed or listed as missing in action; five on a single line at either end increasing to a height of 10 feet at the vertex. Reading the wall takes one in a full circle, from the center to the extreme right edge to the extreme left edge to the center, symbolic of coming full circle in a lifetime.

We knew all this when we set out from Santa Barbara, but we didn't know what it would mean to us, how these details would fit into our personal experience.

Perhaps 100 yards in front of the memorial, John Wheeler aligned us so we stood as a human representation of the wall. He and Sandie Fauriole — who head the Project on the Vietnam Generation, a Washington-based group exploring educational programs on the years leading up to, during and following the Vietnam War — came to speak to us on the struggle to build the memorial and the effect it has had since then.

Coming from Southern California, we quickly broke our ranks in deference to the 29-degree weather after a 6-inch snowfall. Forming a tight cluster around our "experts," both for warmth and solidarity, we listened solemnly as each spoke in turn.

"The trip to the memorial is both a field trip and a pilgrimage. It's a field trip because it is part of what we need to know about in order to come to terms with the Vietnam War. It is a pilgrimage, because this is the monument, the memorial, which more than anything else in our country can teach us how to respond to the war," Capps said.

Elaborating on the idea that the wall can teach, John Wheeler told us that our human mime of the wall made it "as if each one of you is a page in a book."

(See WALL, p.2A)

## Veterans Learn to Cope with Painful Memories of the War

Those who served in the military during the Vietnam War are a diverse group of individuals. Their stories have been a long time coming, but now they are beginning to heal and to share their experiences. It has been said that in a sense, we all are Vietnam veterans; these are profiles of four people who participated in a journey to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. with a group from UCSB.

Dan Gisel

Although Dan Gisel would caution anyone to learn the facts before engaging in any sort of armed conflict, almost 20 years after he returned from the Vietnam War he believes his reasons for fighting remain important and justifiable.

Gisel enlisted in March 1964 as a private and was soon accepted into a class of 250 in the special forces program of the U.S. Army. The following December, he graduated as one of 18 green berets. 12 of whom became an A-detachment and volunteered for service as advisors in Vietnam.

"The career people volunteered to go to Vietnam simply because that's where the action was," Gisel said. "Some of us — myself included — went to Vietnam because we felt it was very important that in a sense we had an opportunity to, and I know this is something that has been used again and again, but an opportunity to stem the tide of the communist invasion in Asia."

Believing that if Vietnam were to come under Communist rule, the whole of Southeast Asia would be threatened, Gisel said he "felt for a long time while I was over there that what we were doing was important and I still feel that the reasons I wanted to go to Vietnam were important."

Committed to these ideals, Gisel said the war's outcome represented a failure of that purpose and in a sense, made the names of those listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial meaningless.

"Had we won, we might at least have given the nation a sense of purpose," he said. "I know in my heart that the parents of the people who died would feel a lot differently now.... I know for a fact that I would feel differently."

"We're going to have the stigma of being the first United States armed forces personnel to have ever lost a war."

It was 18 years before Gisel was able to share his experiences and feelings about the war with anyone but his wife, who received only bits and pieces herself. His recital began last June after taking Walter Capps' Religion and Politics class at UCSB. And only this quarter, in Religious Studies 155, has he told certain

stories to fellow students.

He said that "dress rehearsals" are going on now in Latin America for another Vietnam and this is "one of the reasons that I came to the realization that it was time for not just me but for all of us really to stand up and say what it was like.... To try to get across to people that war is not the glamorized thing that Hollywood has made of it."

After returning from the pilgrimage to the war memorial, Gisel told the class of an experience which he said was not the worst he encountered during his 22-month tour of duty. Gisel was the sole survivor of an attack. He spoke of the battle and of having to watch as a 14-year-old Viet Cong boy, whom he had shot in defense, first realized his fate then died. Gisel received a Distinguished Service Cross after this action. It was the second time he had ever related the incident.

Although he was frightened about what the class's response might be and how they would later view him, he felt it must be told because "nobody had talked about the blood and guts. Had the class gone away and not received that, I felt it would have been an injustice."

"I told it to give a bird's eye view of what war is about — when it comes right down to it, it's killing more of them than they can get of you," he said.

Receiving not only intensive combat training, but also instruction on things such as how to build schools and churches, Gisel said he "went over there probably one of the best-trained individuals who any country has ever sent to war."

"I went to Vietnam fully prepared to shoot, but didn't expect to be shooting at women and

(See VETERANS, p.3A)



Dan Gisel, Vietnam vet from Santa Barbara and member of RS155, spends a private moment before the bronze statue of three GIs.



# VETERANS

(Continued from p.3A)

Wherever he went, he was met with hostility. "There were people who wore the American flag on their butt and called me baby-killer," he said. "How did that help the war out? I wonder how many of my buddies died over there because of war resisters."

Time passed, however, and he began to talk to friends about the war. De La Vega served as an officer for the Los Angeles Police Department for a time, survived a failed marriage, and received a master's degree in counseling.

De La Vega moved to Santa Barbara in October and began counseling at the Vet Center. "I had a societal commitment, and I don't know where it came from, to protect and serve," he said.

A heroes' welcome has traditionally validated veterans, he said, but the Vietnam veterans were not hailed in this way. This sort of validation is coming out of UCSB and the courses taught by Walter Capps though, he said. "The applause heals. It makes me feel like I'm not a monster, that I am a human being that someone can love and care about."

The nation will heal as well, "if we could all understand that we have more in common than we think," he said.

"I honestly feel that we weren't wrong getting into it (the Vietnam War), but we couldn't have messed it up more if we had tried.

"If you do not want to have a war ... the way to prevent it is to do it beforehand. The people demonstrating against Central America and South Africa are doing that now," he said. "We need to make positive choices that will have long-term results."

The current generation of youths has not been tested by depression and war as have the past few generations, De La Vega said, explaining that they have the opportunity to prepare for the future. "It is really important that people educate themselves about the big picture" so they will be prepared to intelligently face a test that the current political climate indicates may be severe, he added.

"It's not enough to be one of the cattle — every generation has had it's cattle, he said. "I hope there's enough in (this) generation to lead."

## Wilson Hubbell

After years of hiding away the fact that he was involved in the Vietnam conflict, Wilson Hubbell can now talk about his experiences and find healing in meetings with fellow veterans, Walter Capps' class and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

"It's finally safe after all of these years to say, 'yeah I was a Vietnam vet,' and not worry about someone getting up and walking across the room and wondering if you're going to explode," he said.



"It's finally safe after all of these years to say 'yeah, I was a Vietnam vet.'"

— Wilson Hubbell

At the age of 20, Hubbell enlisted in the army before his draft notice could take effect in 1965 so he could choose his assignment. Pledging three years for the privilege, he entered the field of helicopter repair.

Hubbell went to Vietnam in December 1967. He took pride in his work. "We never had one fall out of the sky because of faulty maintenance, at least not while I was there," he said.

Not directly in the line of combat, he nevertheless came under fire. "At night time it was really bad news," he said. Every fifth machine gun bullet is hollow, he explained, and filled with a red phosphorus that burns when it is fired so that one can trace the path of the bullet. "If you're out in front of the bullet, you can see it coming," he said.

When he returned, Hubbell still had to complete his commitment to the army. Stationed in Oklahoma, he "had to have a bumper sticker to get on and off of the fort. I would take chrome tape to cover up the sticker if I had to go anywhere."

"People just didn't want to associate with you, they left you

alone," he said. "You learn to hide it away, you don't let anyone know (that you are a veteran)."

Hubbell moved back to his home town of San Diego, but nightmares followed him. He suffered from heart palpitations during which his heartbeat went as high as 180. "You think you're going to explode."

It wasn't until he had moved to Santa Barbara and participated in last year's veterans parade on State Street that he met other veterans with whom he could share his experiences. "I thought I really owed it to myself to get a parade out of this deal," Hubbell said. "I couldn't believe that there would be a bunch of guys who would get together and actually admit they were vets."

From that parade, he made contact with people from the Vet Center and found his way to Religious Studies 155. "I learned a lot more about Vietnam from going to the class than from what I learned in Vietnam," he said.

Hubbell made the trip to the wall for the second time this year and looked there for names that are dear to him. He looked up the name of his best friend. "He was a good soldier.... He decided to stay in and they sent him back to Vietnam." Hubbell introduced this friend to a woman who would become his wife. She was pregnant when he returned to the war — he was killed on that tour of duty.

"You look at the names and the names symbolize people you used to know," he said. "But the statue is those of us who came back.... Most people who go to the memorial prep themselves for the wall, but you're never quite ready for the statue. The statue is incredible."

Many people were at the memorial "because they wanted to see what it was all about," he said. "That's a good sign that it has been accepted by the mainstream of society.... People who 20 years ago wouldn't want to get next to you if you were wearing a uniform are going to the wall and dealing with it."

"In 1965, I had the political sensitivity of a gatepost, I didn't know what the hell was happening," he said. "I think the bottom line now is that it's all right to fight for your country."

Hubbell outlined circumstances where an individual could be threatened and the reasoning behind defense in these situations. "If someone walks into your home and threatens you and you fight, it's love of self. If someone walks into your parents' house ... that's love of family. If someone walks into Capps' class ... it's love of community."

"But what do you do when somebody says it's your turn to go and fight and kill and protect the interests of Burger King in Nicaragua. That's when it gets tough."

Those who served in Vietnam "didn't understand the consequences," he said. "We got educated on the job and the best thing is not to."

Hubbell spoke of a UCSB graduate who had served two years in the Peace Corps and then was drafted into the Vietnam War. The student had become a helicopter pilot and was killed in action. "I think about that guy," he said. "I wonder what he would tell you if he was alive."

## Welcome Home.

### Anywhere But Here

Silhouettes we are allowed  
And cloudy rooms, smoke-filled  
And gloomy alleys, empty  
Of all but footsteps.  
Shadows, we find our way  
To a crowded place where  
Passion grows, in the dark  
And pleasure is rooted in the sin  
Of not being you  
Anywhere, but here.

### GLSU Calendar

#### Tuesdays

7 p.m., Cafe Interim, General business meeting.  
8 p.m., Social night.

#### Thursdays

7 p.m., Women's Center, Gay & Lesbian Support group.

#### Mondays

7 p.m., Women's Center, Lesbian Support group.

#### April 12

Annual Spring Retreat. Call office for more info.

**Confidentiality is respected at all groups, meetings and functions.**

Funds for this newsletter are from A.S. and GLSU.

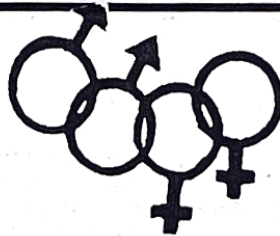
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This newsletter was prepared by Dale.

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# GLSU



## Gay and Lesbian Student Union at UC Santa Barbara Facing the Threat: Gay Rights and the New Right Bigots

It never ceases to amaze me how many of those in our community seem quite oblivious of the crisis facing gay people in this country. This is as true at UCSB as anywhere else. Comments like "Well, you know I've never really been discriminated against," "I'm not really into politics," or "Yeah, I guess I did vote for Reagan, but he looks after our wallets and won't support those welfare bums," are all too typical of people who enjoy their little private paradise.

The AIDS crisis is only the tip of the iceberg. Did you know how much hate mail pours into the offices of congressmen supportive of a gay rights bill, especially of late? Gay people are referred to in this avalanche of bigotry as "perverts," "scum," "disease-carriers" and "child-molesters," amongst other things. The authors at best seek our conversion, "treatment," or quarantining; there are some who seek our death, advocating the death penalty for homosexuals. The advocates are all too often so-called Christians who assuredly would have made the Jesus of the gospels weep; some are neo-Nazis and KKK members. Whatever the case, groups like the "Moral Majority" know they are onto a good thing. As a recent article in *Christopher Street* pointed out, here is the one minority about which it is still acceptable to make ugly jokes — and we should not look to the liberals for support, not only because the Democrats have enough problems of their own already, but because, quite frankly, we are a political embarrassment, especially to those who fear the rightist tide and its tactics of smearing progressive politicians with "anti-family" tags.

Gay people need to understand the nature of the problem and they need to act on it in an intelligent way that understands both what we are up against and in

what kind of system we are operating. We cannot afford to be the new scapegoats for all ills as the Jews were in the thirties. Again and again we have to remind our fellow-citizens that Hitler used perhaps half-a-million gay men for his practice run for the Holocaust. Those who act against us will act against others later. The mentality is just right — how often is not these very anti-gay bigots who are the least concerned about other minorities, about poverty, about peace, and who are most concerned to build more prisons, hang more criminals, tolerate vicious dictatorships around the world in the name of "anti-Communism," and mouth platitudes about the South African government? We need to get the message out to the millions of basically decent folk of all political persuasions that because freedom is indivisible, so is prejudice. Nor can they get off the hook by saying "We don't mind them as long as they keep it out of sight." Bigotry cannot merely be tolerated, minorities cannot merely be ignored. Prejudice has to be acted against and the oppressed have to be actively supported to wipe out the threat not merely to gay rights, but to ALL our rights.

The message has to be loud and clear: "We are not begging you for crumbs from your table. We demand merely to be treated as full citizens who pay the same taxes as everyone else, and who make a contribution to this society far out of proportion to our numbers. It is not merely UN-AMERICAN to deny us the FULL EXERCISE of our civil rights, but it is ultimately a threat to all of you, because bigotry, especially in a crisis situation, is a tide that can all too easily be unstoppable." *Who's next on the New Right's menu?* Let that be your message to your fellow-students, your families and your co-workers.