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# Is U.S. Forgetting Vietnam?

## Rutland Veterans Claim Elimination of Most VA Agent Orange Poisoning Hospitals Close Reality

By YVONNE DALEY

Agent Orange, an herbicide that can enter the body through the lungs, digestion, skin or open wounds, was not researched by the United States for human side-effects before being used in Vietnam. "It did the job, that's all they (the U.S. armed forces) were looking for," Veteran's Administration representative Michael Corcoran told the veterans. The lives of Rutland Vietnam veterans — some with symptoms that they believe are caused by Agent Orange contamination — have been greatly effected by this, and other bi-products of the war. Michael Moran, 31, a Vietnam Veteran's of America member, had a minor stroke Friday night. He was exposed to Agent Orange at least once in Vietnam. Moran believes his heart problems could be attributed to Agent Orange poisoning. He has had troubles with his back, "terrific headaches," nerves, and ulcers since he got out of the service in 1975. He said that his examinations at the VA hospital have been unsatisfactory. "All they give me is pain killers," he said.



Michael Moran, a veteran pictured with his son Bill.

VVA founder Donald Bodette agreed, saying that the examination for Agent Orange poisoning given at the VA hospital in White River Junction is "a farce. I could've done the same thing — other than the chest x-ray — at home."

Moran, his neck in a brace, his left side weakened, doesn't know when he can return to work.

For him, and others, fear is the worst part — fear of worse after-effects, fear for the children.

Moran's children have developed allergies that doctor's don't understand.

Mary and Albert Trombley, VVA members, would like to have their own child, but have not. Trombley fears his exposure to Agent Orange may mean they will never have children. Trombley said he may be better off not to have a child, knowing that birth defects have been attributed to Agent Orange poisoning.

"The wives and the children are the innocent victims, the children maybe for generations to come," Trombley said.

Meeting at the College of St. Joseph the Provider, Mayor John Daley kicked off VVA week saying the veterans have done a lot "to help out their buddies," but might have to do more.

"I like your spirit," Daley said. "We here in Rutland feel very proud to have the first organized group (VVA) in the U.S. We know how much you gave and we value what you did."

But veterans learned that the federal government has done little in return to understand the multi-faceted Agent Orange and its effect on humans. VA's representative, Timothy Sullivan, told veterans the government has still

A Veteran's Administration representative Sunday predicted the elimination of all VA hospitals in this country in three to five years.

Michael Corcoran, speaking to the Vietnam Veterans of America in Rutland, said that VA benefits are being phased out so rapidly that "a grateful nation" is showing not only no gratitude, but the Vietnam era veterans will receive "no where near the benefits other Americans received." Corcoran said, "It is no longer a grateful Congress. Uncle Sam said, 'I need you,' but right now he's saying, 'I don't need you.'" The VA "just lost the biggest fight in American history when \$300 million was cut out of our budget ... cut over a joint resolution to restore the programs cut, resoundly defeated," he said.

Corcoran was referring to the Office of Management and Budget's severe reductions (\$219 million in fiscal year, 1981, and \$744 million in fiscal year 1982). Corcoran said that the OMB made the cuts without input from the Veteran's Administration, Congressional committees or any veterans' service organizations.

The result of the cuts is that less than 2 cents of every tax dollar will go into any VA related program. Fifty seven cents of each tax dollar, Corcoran said, goes to defense. That budget is \$500 billion.

In 1970, the VA budget was 10 percent of the national budget. Corcoran said the VA has had constant decreases in its budgets, but since 1978 when congress turned all spending over to OMB, the VA budget has been most severely cut.

Corcoran said, "When the last Vietnam veteran is dead and buried, we won't have spent on veterans' benefits what Vietnam cost."

The only approach, he thought was for veterans and everyone else to appeal to Congress to restore the cut programs. "It was the public who stopped the war and it will be the public to restore the veterans' rights," Corcoran said.

He said that people will end up paying for the benefits, but in a less productive manner. He predicted that local money will go up to 50 cents per dollar for social welfare, rehabilitation, and, unfortunately, more serious problems such as criminal offenses, resulting from veterans who need help not getting it.

The OMB cut or changed the following programs from the VA budget:

- Decentralized Claims Processing and Loan Guaranty Centers will be eliminated, replaced with a center in Baltimore. The de-centralization of claims offices in 1947, Corcoran said, was done to give the veteran a closer contact to the VA. Corcoran said services to veterans, their dependents and survivors would be minimal and almost totally ineffective.

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VA

- Termination of the Readjustment Counseling Program for Vietnam Era combat veterans. Corcoran said that psychological problems from the Vietnam war surpass all others and new cases are reported daily.
- Elimination of the Office of Manpower (ten employees working on improvement in management procedures that are cost-effective).
- Reduction of 933 nurses, 297 doctors and more than 4,000 medical support personnel.
- Closing 1,800 beds and 60 hospital wards.
- A decrease of 1,583,000 outpatient visits, and 3,628 nursing care patients.
- Decrease in planned expansion of Geriatric research, education, and Clinical Centers.
- Reduction of VA doctors' bonus pay.
- Decrease in rehabilitative and medical research, including research into atomic, Agent Orange, White, and other contamination.
- Reduction of vocational rehabilitation counseling.

### Agent Orange

done little research, before or after the spraying, on the effects and treatment of Agent Orange poisoning.

Sullivan admitted the VA was "in a sticky position" over Agent Orange. There is no legislation providing benefits for members of the armed forces poisoned by Agent Orange, or for defects in veteran's offspring.

Within the government's beaucroatic machinations, there is little recognition that Agent Orange poisoning even exists.

To make matters worse, another VA representative, Michael Corcoran said VA funding for medical research on Agent Orange and other projects will be greatly reduced.

Only one symptom of Agent Orange poisoning is presently recognized.

There is little information on the ratios of poison used or levels of toxicity.

Government researchers don't know how the chemicals in Agent Orange react in the body, how long the chemicals stay in the body, how they react with other chemicals, what treatments will work or how long it takes before symptoms show up.

Bodette said veterans have receive little help from the government when they try to find out if they were exposed to Agent Orange. In many cases, particularly with Army records, files are unavailable. Many have been lost or were left behind.

Bodette and another veteran, Clark Howland, have created a method for helping Vietnam veterans, not just those in Vermont, determine if they were exposed to the chemical.

They enlarged flight plans and, using charts that plot each official Agent Orange dropping — but not those that were accidents or the result of plane trouble — and a computer, they can determine if a veteran was exposed, the type of exposure and how much.

Symptoms of Agent Orange poisoning are nausea, fatigue, chloracne, headaches, chest, heart and stomach problems, gas, ulcers and edema. Some officials say that Agent Orange causes multiple sclerosis. Birth defects have been linked to the chemical and there may be effects of the chemical in future generations, Bodette said.

At the meeting, veterans learned areas of Vietnam they spent considerable time in were sprayed with the chemical.

"The government has been irresponsible," one said.

That veteran said he has not been able to hold down a job, drive a car, or support himself. He said he received exposure to Agent Orange and has wondered about its effect on his nervous system.

Agent Orange, contains two chemicals, 24D and 245T. Theoretically it is not dangerous, but when heated to 300 degrees, as these chemicals are in production, the deadly dioxyn TCDD is produced.

Bodette said the federal government first denied that veterans had been exposed to the chemical. In 1978, federal spokesmen said no Americans went into an exposed area for four to six weeks after spraying.

In 1979, they admitted there was some exposure, but said it was minimal and to only a few troops. Then, more ground troops were mentioned in reports.

But neither the armed services nor other branches of the government have taken steps to determine who was exposed or to notify men and women of the dangers to exposure.

No one knows if the deadly dioxyn accumulates in the body and leaves on a half-life cycle or if it just remains in the body forever. Bodette said he likes to believe the first is what happens.

Unfortunately, as the body attempts to detoxify, it is constantly being recontaminated — DDT, herbicides, household chemicals, flea collars, phisohex soap contain dioxins — the results of which scientists don't know.

Chloracne, the severe and unpleasant skin eruptions that many veterans have suffered for more than ten years, is the only recognized disease caused by Agent Orange.

Once treatment begins, chloracne can be cured in three to five years.

And of the other sicknesses — nausea, heart problems, fatigue, ulcers — government research has been so scant that, despite the growing numbers of veterans complaining of or dying from physical problems not expected at their age, Agent Orange is not recognized as the cause.

Indeed, the founder of the Agent Orange Victims International, died in 1976 of cancer.

Agent Orange is one of several toxic chemicals used in Vietnam. The term orange comes from the color stripe used on the outside of the barrel. There was also Agent Purple, Blue, Green and White. Orange is the most deadly, but according to Corcoran, White is nothing you'd like to have around the house.

Agent White contains piccalenic acid, a chemical that may affect growth, keeps the body from using iron and can destroy or slow-down the production of red blood cells. Poisoning also causes the liver to secrete an enzyme that alters the personality. Drastic character changes result.

Bodette encouraged veterans to get their name on the Agent Orange Registry. The registry would be used to contact people when more definitive information is available.

March 29 was picked as the first day of VVA week because that day in 1973 was the day the last troops left Vietnam, VVA president Roy "Jake" Jacobsen said.



**U. S. Air Force Lt. Col. Arthur W. Griffin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Victor J. Brewer of Castleton, receives the Air Medal at Pleiku Air Base, Vietnam, for air action in Southeast Asia. Col. Griffin was decorated for meritorious achievement as a C-118 Liftmaster aircraft commander at Pleiku. He was cited for his airmanship and courage on successful and important missions under hazardous conditions. The colonel, a member of the Pacific Air Forces, served during World War II and the Korean War. He was commissioned by direct appointment.**

# A Soldier/Scholar Looks At College And Killing In The Vietnam Era

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By JACK CROWTHER

The infantry lieutenant stood before Company A, which waited in ranks between unoccupied barracks at Fort Devens, Mass. It was 1964 or '65, a time of racial tension in the country. We in the army green were learning riot control, mostly how to move in tight phalanxes with bayonets fixed to disperse unruly crowds.

Before releasing us to our platoon leaders for practice, the lieutenant directed his subordinates: "Platoon sergeants, instruct your men on the proper safety procedures in the use of the bayonet."

At that, our sergeant, a weary and overweight career soldier, wheeled around and growled in his best pedagogical style: "Don't stick nobody with these bayonets." End of lecture.

The scene came to mind in the wake of a cheating scandal involving would-be armed forces recruits who were tested in Vermont.

The military never did strike me as a place of high academic refinement, not that cheating doesn't occur in a lot of other places.

Having dropped out of Wesleyan University only a few months before my mid-'60s summons from Uncle Sam, I was in a good position to compare the climate of learning in the two institutions. I found a definite gulf between differential equations and the dimensions of a foxhole, between the Dialogues of Plato and Character Guidance in

the post theater.

I remember a rather far-out class at Wesleyan taught by Professor Brown in which we considered the idea that the procreative urge comes from a secret desire for individuals to return to the womb. When soldiers discussed the drive to propagate the race, theory took a back seat to practice.

Of course, the Army was not teaching the Wesleyan student body, which was made up by and large of academically bright, motivated young people. We infantry grunts were from all backgrounds and educational levels, and many didn't want to be there. For motivation, instructors had to rely on our wish for self-preservation in a war that was not as far off as we thought, or the threat of having to repeat the training. For the openly rebellious, there were always pushups, KP duty or a dishonorable discharge.

The Army of those days relied on memorization and repeated learning-by-doing to insure that a soldier knew what he needed to know in combat.

If recollection serves, the code word for firing the old M-14 rifle was BRASS: Breathe, Relax, Aim, Slack, Squeeze. How to kill in five easy steps. "What is the spirit of the bayonet?" a drill instructor would yell from a platform at the bayonet training course. "To kill!" a company of voices would yell back. And if the response wasn't loud enough, the instructor would ask it again.

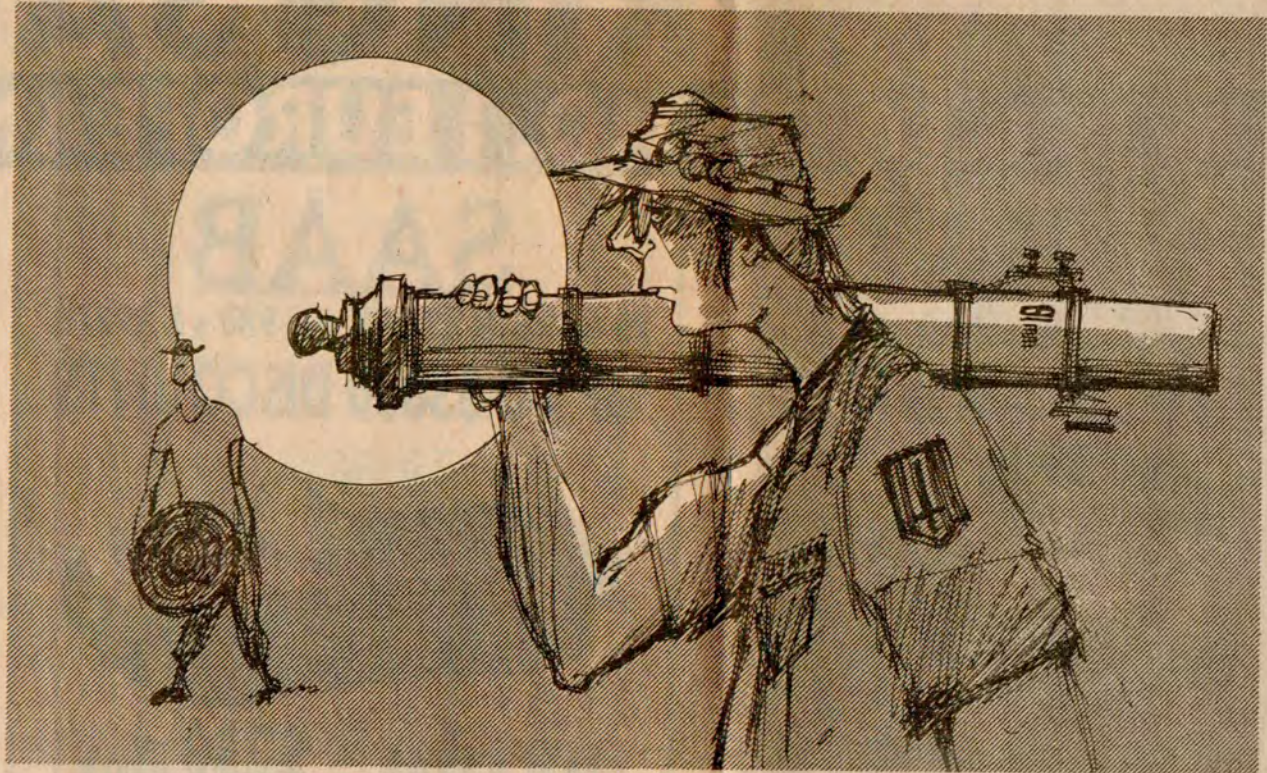
In college, moral and ethical issues were offered as a challenging search. In the army, a code of conduct was more clearly prescribed.

"I am an American fighting man. I serve in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense." You had to memorize it.

"To quit my post only when properly relieved." A trooper guarding the motor pool had better know that and his other General Orders or he was in trouble with the inspecting officer.

When the men of the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Infantry began turning in their winter overcoats and dyeing their underwear green, the training took on a different aspect. We were going to Vietnam, the battalion commander told a massed formation, "to kill gooks." Oh, yes, there would be references along the way to winning hearts and minds, protecting the lawful government of South Vietnam and that sort of thing. But that is the phrase I remember from the colonel's pep talk, the more so because our commander was one of relatively few black officers of that rank. If a racial epithet would help motivate the troops, he'd use it. The fact that the same ostensibly lower class of humans were also the ones we were supposed to be helping may tell something about what was wrong with the whole effort.

Despite the Army's schedules for schooling men for combat, events



in the fall of 1965 outran preparations. As the 2nd of the 2nd prepared for shipment to Vietnam, the unit found its ranks depleted as men who had finished their service returned to civilian life. The mortar platoon felt the departures. Its ranks were filled with a pick-up collection of soldiers from other specialties.

As a result, when the mortar platoon landed on the beach at Vung Tau, it was not fully prepared for combat. So we learned on the job in Vietnam, firing at real

people, or — as more often the case — at places where someone speculated the enemy might be.

Obviously, the nation's colleges and its military were two very different kinds of schools. But they shared a common base. Both grew up with the nation, proud of their traditions. One championed the search for truth and the freedom of the mind; the other paid homage to obedience, patriotism and physical courage.

These institutions, both fundamental to the American way,

came to symbolize the divisions in the country during what is grimly referred to as the Vietnam Era. Neither escaped from the times un tarnished. Both brought some measure of honor upon themselves.

The soldiers and students of the time and the nation around them learned many things from the two schools during that period — and paid a price for the lessons.

Jack Crowther is a Rutland Herald editor.

# A Final Rest for This Vietnam Veteran

By YVONNE DALEY

The Vermont Vietnam Veterans Memorial will be dedicated Saturday in Sharon. Vietnam veteran John Smith Reno had planned to attend the ceremony. But Reno will not be at the dedication of the memorial that meant so much to him.

Reno was buried in Greenwich, Conn., Thursday, dead at 33. He drowned in a boating accident Oct. 24.

His absence at the dedication services is particularly sad to those who knew the Fair Haven artist during the last years of his life, as Reno struggled with his post-Vietnam depression and alcoholism.

"He had his problems," said Don Bodette, special projects director of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 1, and chairman of the Veteran's Association Program.

Reno had been trying for the last few years to put together the scrambled pieces his life had become after his tour of duty in Vietnam.

Some of his problems could be attributed to Reno's experiences in Vietnam. Others were caused by other incidents in his life, Bodette said.

But, problems aside, said Bodette, Reno was a wonderful friend, a talented man with a big heart and an ability to turn even the most

ordinary objects into works of art.

"A lot of times he would be walking along the side of road and find a stone and see something in it and go home and carve it," Bodette said.

One of the projects he had been working on for some time was a life-sized sculpture of a Vietnam veteran. He wanted it displayed in the Rutland Depot Park where Veteran's Day and Memorial Day celebrations are held. Bodette had been his model.

Psychiatrists said Reno suffered from what has been called Post-Vietnam Stress Disorder. He had reoccurring nightmares, or "flashbacks" in which he thought his wife, gas station attendants and police were Viet Cong. He also suffered from psychotic and life-threatening reactions to alcohol and a fear of Agent Orange poisoning, he said a year and a half ago while working on the sculpture.

Reno hoped completion of the statue would put some of his nightmares to rest. It was something he wanted to do for the Rutland chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America whom, he said, "had saved his life."

"I'm alive because of the VVA," he told a reporter, attributing his "coming out" of 14-year depression and anger, withdrawal and apathy two years ago to Bodette and other

members of the VVA.

"I felt really badly about his death, but I was very happy to have known him. He was a very good friend," said Bodette.

"When I first met him, he was in very bad shape. He used to say the VVA saved his life. It wasn't the VVA that saved his life; it was him. He just never realized it," said Bodette.

Reno had felt very positive about the memorial because it signified recognition of the service of Vietnam-era veterans to their country. It was the actualization of the dream he hadn't completed, the statue that remains something perpetually undone now that he had died.

State Police at Fishkill, N.Y., said Reno drowned in the Hudson River near Wappinger, N.Y., Oct. 24 when he fell off a boat and a friend were sailing from Vermont to Connecticut.

Police said an autopsy showed the cause of death was drowning. No foul play was suspected. His body was found eight days after the incident.

Mr. Reno, was born in Greenwich, Conn., May 24, 1949. He lived most of his life in Golden's Bridge, N.Y. He has one daughter, Veronica Joni Smith of Golden's Bridge.

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# Post Vietnam Syndrome: Many Veterans Affected



Dartmouth College's fall term artist-in-residence Tom Blackwell puts the finishing touches on one of his paintings in his studio at the Hopkins Center. An exhibition of Blackwell's paintings will be on view in the Jaffe-Friede and Strauss Galleries at the Hopkins Center through Dec. 28. Gallery hours are from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday; noon to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; and 7 to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission is free.

By SUSAN SMALLHEER  
Windsor County Bureau  
WEST LEBANON, N.H.

— Dan, a teacher in New England, had been home from the jungles of Vietnam for 10 years when he became chronically depressed.

A soldier who had seen action in the Korean War as well, Dan took to drinking with a vengeance in an attempt to forget that half his battalion died during the Tet Offensive in 1968 under an incompetent lieutenant colonel.

For 10 years he kept the painful memories at bay, but after a decade he had to seek help.

There is no time limit to the affects of post Vietnam syndrome stress disorders. It can affect Vietnam-era veterans within a year of discharge, within 10 years, within 20 years, or never, several leading psychiatrists and social workers said here Friday during a conference on Post Vietnam Syndrome.

And not every Vietnam veteran is a walking time bomb waiting to go off, Dr. Chaim Shatan, professor of psychiatry at New York University said.

Almost 20 percent, 500,000

of the 2.5 million Americans who served during the Vietnam era, have received or are receiving psychiatric care, Shatan said.

"And it may take years before the veteran recognizes the symptoms and comes for treatment," Shatan said at the all-day conference sponsored by the Dartmouth Medical School and the Veteran's Administration Hospital in White River Junction.

But Shatan said he "didn't buy the time bomb theory" that most Vietnam veterans are on the edge of exploding into rages of violence and despair, brought on by the stresses of combat in Vietnam.

"It's self-fulfilling," the author of several widely-read studies on Vietnam veterans said. He predicted that between 1.25 and 1.5 million Vietnam-era veterans would eventually seek help.

"The incubation period? We don't know the outer limit," he said.

"It's more likely to show up as nightmares, marital problems, family problems, employment problems," Shatan said.

"But we will see more

(Vietnam veterans)," he predicted.

"Several million of Vietnam-era veterans will require some kind of treatment," adding that the families of the distraught GI's would also need help.

"We must not forget the families of veterans," he warned.

(In Vermont, where there are an estimated 20,000 Vietnam-era veterans, 35 percent of those served in Vietnam, and 20 percent of that number actually saw combat duty in the jungle.)

He attributed the high degree of alienation and distress suffered by the Vietnam veterans on the Army's abandonment of the unit system and the military's counter-guerrilla training, which emphasized repression of all emotion.

During World War II and the Korean War soldiers went through basic training together as a unit and stayed throughout their enlistment as a unit to en-

courage a sense of community.

"In Vietnam, especially after 1965, they used a computer for an individualized rotation system," Shatan said.

After his basic training was completed, each soldier was sent over as the computer dictated, he said.

"On the plane on which he was sent over, he probably didn't know a single man," the psychiatrist said. "He came over as an individual. Usually he had

to get his own transportation (to his assignment) once he got there. And then he'd have to break into the unit," Shatan said.

After 12 months in Vietnam it was "back on the plane back home, and it would be amazing if he knew one person," he said.

"This atomized, computerized and robbed men of the support they ordinarily came to expect from their combat unit," he explained.

# Vermont's Viet Vets Find Helping Each Other Is Not An Easy Task

By TOM SLAYTON

ST. JOHNSBURY — Snow gusts across U.S. Route 2, occasionally whiting out the road as the car skids its way toward St. Johnsbury and a meeting. Ernest "Rusty" Sachs, New England coordinator for the year-old Vietnam Veterans of America, stares intently at the highway ahead, and talks.

"People just don't have any real understanding of what it means to be a Vietnam veteran," Sachs says. "Only those people who have actually been Vietnam veterans can really understand them."

The veterans of other wars came home to an America that idolized them, he says. Bad memories were eased in a triumph of parades and congratulations. For Sachs and other veterans of Vietnam, it was different.

"When I got home, I wanted to go to college, so I went to see the dean," he remembers. "When I walked through the school cafeteria, I got spit at and had food thrown at me. That was my welcome home parade."

Sachs, a combat Marine helicopter pilot during the war, started questioning his country's rationale for fighting in Vietnam during his years there. When he returned to the U.S., he flung his decorations for bravery on the steps of the Pentagon and helped found the anti-war Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

After the war ended, a new organization was formed. It was called the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) and aimed at helping Vietnam-era veterans adjust to a society that seemed to want to forget them. High rates of emotional problems, joblessness, drug and alcohol addiction, and suicides afflicted those who fought America's most tragic war. Traditional sources of help often seemed closed to Vietnam veterans, so they began to create their own system of support.

Sachs, a state legislator and attorney as well as regional coordinator for VVA, is on his way this Tuesday night to help organize a St. Johnsbury chapter of the organization. He pulls his car to a stop in front of the St. Johnsbury House, and goes looking for Roland Hall of Lyndonville, the man who asked him to come.

Hall, a partially disabled Vietnam veteran, waits in one of the old hotel's nondescript meeting rooms. Ranks of empty chairs fill the room, and a blackboard bearing the hot-lunch menu for a local group of elderly people stands in a corner.

Hall has felt for some time that someone should start a VVA chapter in northeastern Vermont. Finally, last week, he decided to do it himself. He rented a room in the St. Johnsbury House, called Sachs and other leaders of the veterans movement, set the time and date of the meeting and called all the Vietnam-era veterans he knew.

As 8 p.m. approaches, other vets wander in. They are wearing checkered flannel shirts, jeans, sweaters and bright-colored caps with visors. Some bring female companions. One helps his wife tend a tiny pink-clad baby.

Hall and Sachs are joined at a table in front of the room by Ralph Dennison, a counselor at the Vietnam Veterans Center in Williston. Dennison wears a coat and tie. He is thin and quick, with deep-set, intense eyes. Alfred Thomas of Milton, a great placid bear of a fellow in corduroy shirt and jeans, joins them. He will talk about the effects on veterans of Agent Orange, a poisonous chemical spray used widely in Vietnam.

Sachs opens the meeting, and things go slowly at first. He talks a bit about his bill to provide college tuition funding for Vietnam veterans. At one point he notes:

"When I look around this room, I see the mechanic who tuned my chopper or the corpsman who sewed up my leg when I got shot. But when the average person looks around, he just sees someone who's out of work and down on his luck."

"We got through the war by helping each other out. We can get out of our problems now the same way. No one else is going to help us," he declares. "We've got to do it ourselves."

Dennison, who was a Marine Corpsman and returned to the U.S. to spend five years living on the



Ernest "Rusty" Sachs, New England coordinator for the year-old Vietnam Veterans of America, and state representative from Hartford.

He asks how many men with flimsy less-than-honorable discharges had the military suggest they might like to re-enlist in order to clear their name.

"They're using us again," Dennison declares. "They handed out bad paper like it was candy and now they're using it to blackmail us back in. They can't get the kids. They want to get you guys re-enlisted to go back into wherever they want to go."

"They're getting ready to go again," says a stocky young man in a blue baseball cap.

"Well, us guys from Vermont may be a little slow, but I'm not going to send my son off to fight for Exxon," says another. "It was a game for the politicians to make money."

"The only country I'm sending my son to will be Canada," another declares.

The discussion accelerates, soars and dives through dozens of subjects. Politics, militarism, inflation, jobs, drugs, money; each man's personal struggle filtered through the frustration and anger left by Vietnam.

Are there needles (hard narcotics) in the Northeast Kingdom? Yes, say the vets. They're not obvious but they're around.

Were you exposed to Agent Orange? If so, you may have a greater risk of contracting cancer, may have a child with birth defects. If it could make a jungle look like Vermont in November, someone asks, what could it do to us?

Where did the killing take place after the war? On the streets of New York and Boston, in the drug scene, several say.

Hall's voice fills with emotion as he relates the trip he made to Massachusetts to find and help a friend who found a needle when he returned and was having a hard time.

"I went down there and found him. I found him," Hall says as the tears begin. "He destroyed himself with heroin. What for? A waste."

Tears for a dead friend glisten on Hall's cheeks as the room listens quietly.

"He died on his mother's living room floor of an overdose of smack," he sobs. "We've got to get together. Do something."

**"When I look around this room, I see the mechanic who tuned my chopper or the corpsman who sewed up my leg when I got shot. But when the average person looks around, he just sees someone who's out of work and down on his luck," Rusty Sachs told Vietnam vets in St. Johnsbury.**

**"We got through the war by helping each other out. We can get out of our problems now the same way. No one else is going to help us. We've got to do it ourselves."**

street in several American cities, describes programs at the Vietnam Veterans Center in Williston. The meeting is still proceeding fitfully, with little response from the 25 or 30 veterans gathered in the room. So Sachs and Dennison change tactics. They begin firing questions at the vets in the room.

"There's one thing that all Vietnam-era vets have in common," Dennison declares. "They're all angry and think they got a raw deal. How many people in this room are angry?"

Virtually every hand rises silently.

"How many of you can't find a decent job?"

Most hands go up.

"How many of you have problems with your wife or kids? Getting next to your family?"

Several hands.

"How many know friends who committed suicide after 'Nam?"

Five or six hands are raised.

"How many of you are screwed up with drugs and alcohol?"

Three or four hands.

"How many of you have had flashbacks? (Two hands.) Or get mad waiting in line? That's a flashback too, you know."

Lots of hands go up.

Then Dennison asks the men in the room to tell him what happened to them, and the dam breaks.

"It was probably the biggest waste I've ever seen. Men, people, lives, materials. Everything," says a burly flannel-shirted construction worker. "It was sickening."

"I have dreams where I leave the house," another says. "I get up in the night and wake up washing my hands. Washing blood off."

There are several nods from other men in the room. They talk about seeing atrocities, photographing them, and having the photos destroyed with a reprimand by superiors. About having mail shut off "until morale improves."

About coming home broke and out of work to find other people with jobs and the world they had left behind passing them by.

They talk about seeing friends killed, and of fighting for their own lives.

"When is everyone else going to quit blaming us for doing what we had to do?" one man asks. "I'm getting sick of it."

"Don't take it," Dennison snaps. "We only went there. They voted."

But he also advises the men in the room to find some way of working with their anger.

"You've got to deal with that," Dennison says.

"The whole country got ripped off by Vietnam, and they're not beginning to deal with it."

Sachs notes that there are 20,000 Vietnam veterans in Vermont and suggests that each of them has their own personal cross to bear.

"We need to get together, so we can at last get some of these things out of our system. So we can live," he says.

Attorney Tom Bailey, who runs a veterans' project through the Church Street Center in Burlington, gets up. There were some positive aspects to Vietnam, he says.

"At least we know we got suckered," Bailey says. "Our parents, the rest of society by and large, doesn't know that yet. And we've got to tell them."

The fact is, Bailey says, that Vietnam's veterans weren't crazy or maladjusted. They survived.

"A lot of them realized that this existence thing that we're in now is crazy; meaningless," Bailey says. "Some of us went on from that and realized that it was a game, but it was the only game in town, and got into it."

Sachs suggests that Vietnam veterans might be able to lead the way for a political awakening of the country. The strengths developed by a year or more of survival in Vietnam could be turned to positive uses here at home, if the anger and interior destruction can be done away with, he says.

He asks how many of those in the room know Vietnam vets who aren't at the meeting. Many hands go up.

"We've got to find them, help them," he says.

By this time some of the vets are filling out membership cards, while others talk and sip beers from the hotel bar.

Dennison talks with several about individual problems they face. He makes one point several times in different conversations.

"Until we're organized, until we have some political pull, the politicians aren't going to listen to us," he says. "So we've got to get organized."

Hall confers with Dennison as the last few veterans pull on jackets and begin to search for car keys. He figures the new chapter should be called the Northeast Kingdom Chapter of the VVA. It won't be formally associated with local American Legion or the VFW, although they might want to use the Legion hall for meetings at times. Another meeting has been scheduled.

Thirteen men have signed up, he says.

"Fourteen," says a fellow putting the final touches on a membership card.

Dennison says that's great, and prepares to leave. Sachs turns at the door and waves.

"Hoa Binh," he says. It means "peace" in Vietnamese.

And with that, Sachs and Dennison head for the door, to begin the long snowy drive back to Montpelier and Burlington.

May 28, 1981

# Veteran's Death Called Suicide

By NANCY CROWE

MORRISTOWN — Tuesday's apparent suicide of a 32-year-old Vietnam veteran was brought on by depression as a result of his war experience, according to authorities.

Walter B. Garland of Johnson, a former Marine, apparently lit a home-made "pipe bomb," possibly with his last cigarette, and placed it next to his chest where it exploded, leaving a four-inch hole. The bomb was found 40 feet from his body.

According to Morristown Police Chief Lawrence LaClair Jr., Garland had been depressed for quite a few years.

"Ironically, he was voted the most likely to succeed when he graduated from Hardwick Academy. Then he went off to war and didn't come back the same," LaClair said.

A suicide note was found at Garland's home which he shared with his parents and sister. It said, "Time is not going to make any difference," and expressed the hopelessness the ex-Marine had been feeling.

Garland had been scheduled for a session with a mental health counselor Tuesday, but officials at the Lamoille County Mental Health Agency said they were prohibited by federal law from confirming whether he was under treatment there.

Garland was first seen by a local fisherman about 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, standing beside his motorcycle. The fisherman, Ashley Madden, was driving up the road on his way to fish in the Sterling Brook-Beaver Meadow area of Morristown.

"I thought he was going fishing or coming back. He didn't wave to me," Madden said.

When the fisherman returned shortly after 2:30, Garland was lying next to his motorcycle, dead. Residents in a nearby cottage said they heard what sounded like a single, low-caliber shot about 2:30. Madden called police at 2:43.

Lamoille County State's Attorney Joseph Wolchik termed the death "preliminarily, an unusual suicide," because of the weapon used. Confirmation of the suicide is expected to be made following an autopsy within the next day or two.

Garland had become totally bald in the past few years, possibly the result of the acute nervous condition the young man believed was the result of his Vietnam days and possibly exposure to Agent Orange, LaClair said. Occasionally, he would leave for two or three weeks for no apparent reason. He also quit a job in White River Junction where he was evidently successful, the chief explained.

LaClair agreed that Garland might well be a belated Vietnam casualty and noted that a close relationship exists between the home-made bomb Garland used and the bombs that killed his fellow-Marines in Vietnam.

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### Outreach Center for Vietnam Veterans to Open

# Recovery from a 'Calculated Failure'

By SUSAN SMALLHEER  
Windsor County Bureau

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION — The Vietnam War was a "calculated failure," and that sense of failure plagues a full 20 percent of Vermont's 22,500 Vietnam era veterans.

That statement came Friday from an outreach counselor with the Vermont Vietnam Veterans Center, which will open an outreach office here after the beginning of the year.

The 500 veterans now seeking help, said John Brock, "are only the tip of the iceberg."

Getting "help without hassles" will be a lot easier for Vietnam veterans living in southern Vermont, when the new outreach office opens, Brock said.

Brock, a Vietnam veteran himself and an ordained Unitarian minister, will head the office in its attempt to reach more Vietnam Veterans.

Brock was 21 when he went to Vietnam in 1968, at the tail end of the Tet Offensive. When he returned to his hometown of Fairlee in June of 1969 after a year in the U.S. Army's Fourth Infantry he spent six months in a fog.

He said he walked five miles a day, but it was pacing back and forth inside his parents' house trying to figure out what happened to himself in Vietnam.

"The anger came later," said Brock, now an outreach counselor for southern Vermont.

Brock credits his parents for the support they gave him when he returned and expressed doubts about his year in Vietnam.

"I wrote them very graphic letters, I guess I made their hair turn grey," he said. "They really did a flip-flop," he recalled.

While his parents' change of heart on the war helped the disillusioned soldier comes to grips with his experience and put it in perspective, Brock said the hostility of strangers against returning Vietnam soldiers started the doubts and self-recriminations.

Brock said the Vietnam War made the American soldiers "feel very important: we had the power to kill somebody." But coming back to America and "having it all stripped away" undermined the state of mind of the veteran.

The counselor runs a rap session at the Veterans Administration Center here in White River on Friday

mornings. There are rap groups at other sites around the state during the week. He said veterans tell of being threatened by knives in the hands of complete strangers as they stepped off the plane from Vietnam.

"I've heard horrible stories," Brock said. "One man this morning said a guy came at him with a switchblade, never talked to him, but he had his uniform on. It was the day he got back."

While the public's attitude has changed since 1975, when the American involvement in the war ended, it hasn't been enough, as many still consider Vietnam veterans as criminals, he acknowledged.

"We've been branded as losers, as being responsible for Vietnam. And if we had been somehow tougher, stronger, more 'American,' it wouldn't have happened," Brock said.

"That's an awful big load to carry around."

Brock, who went to Yale Divinity School after flunking out of several colleges, said the basic goal of the Vietnam Veterans Center is to help veterans "put Vietnam in perspective."

(See Page 8: Brock)



John Brock

## Brock

(Continued from Page 7)

"We don't want to forget it, but to deal with it," he urged. "It was horrible, but it's over now and nothing is going to change the facts of Vietnam."

Recent films like "The Deerhunter," "Apocalypse Now," and "Coming Home," have helped the Vietnam veteran, if only by bringing more public attention to their plight.

"By and large those films have done us a service by putting the Vietnam vet more in the public eye," Brock said.

Brock liked "Coming Home" better than "Apocalypse Now." "It gave both sides of the story, it was an honest effort," he said. The former infantryman has yet to see "The Deerhunter" because his brother, also a Vietnam veteran, told him not to.

"Those movies are part of a catharsis for vets," he said, noting that many of the men he deals with liked "The Deerhunter," which is a more stereotypical treatment of Vietnam.

He called "Apocalypse Now" "a very extraordinary occurrence in Vietnam," but he admitted that for every scene he termed "Hollywoodish," a veteran told him it had happened.

"Even the waterskiing," Brock said of the scene in the film where soldiers on the trip up the river in the middle of enemy territory take time out for recreation.

"But it did capture the hysteria, the dream-like quality," he said.

The new funding for the southern office is guaranteed through 1983, and Brock is looking for volunteers to help in the center, especially other Vietnam veterans. He can be reached at 878-3371.

"There are six-eight of us dealing with 22,500 Vietnam vets. We need volunteers, we're trying to get people helping each other," he said.

He hopes to set up a rap group at the Rutland Community Correctional Center in the beginning of the year, as many Vietnam veterans have turned to crime since coming back to America.

Nationwide, a large percentage of people serving time in prison also spent time in Vietnam.

Support or rap groups for family and spouses are also being considered, he said.

MENTS TO GIVE



May 28, 1981

## Veterans' Head Wounds

### Windsor County Bureau

SPRINGFIELD — Many Vietnam veterans are suffering from "internal head wounds" that are the result of the isolation of their experience from the mainstream of American thinking.

This was the message brought by John Brock of the Veterans Administration in a speech at the Unitarian Universalist Church here Sunday.

Brock pointed out that the Vietnam veteran returned to this country with a need to find to find meaning in his experience.

Faced with the need to talk about his experiences, he usually found a line of thinking that said, "Let's get the war behind us — put it out of our minds."

Because of this, Brock explained, the veteran found himself isolated and became bitter.

The speaker, himself a Vietnam veteran and an outreach worker for the Veterans Administration, said the bitterness results in a distrust of government and institutions.

Brock said his own work is aimed at "building bridges" and re-establishing communication between veterans and those from whom they have become estranged.

During his talk, he explained that Memorial Day originated as an aid in the healing of wounds sustained through the American Civil War. It started with southern women decorating the graves of Union soldiers as well as those of their own dead.

In his Memorial Day speech, Brock noted there were similar "wounds" to be healed following Vietnam.

He noted young American men were drafted and sent to the southeast Asian nation.

"There, in a foreign land, a stranger to customs and climate, he faced horrors, dangers and death of comrades.

"Somewhat surprised to have survived, the veteran returned home with a need to find meaning in his experiences — to talk about them."

The gist of Brock's message was that the nation still owes the veteran a chance to find meaning to his efforts.

The appearance of Brock was arranged by the Rev. Henry Cooper, minister of the church.

## For Veterans Exposed to Drugs, Alcohol

# Vietnam War Won't Go Away

By YVONNE DALEY

The Vietnamese War has been called the war that won't go away.

For Steve Peterson, presently held at the Rutland Correctional Center, and other veterans, drug and alcohol dependencies — problems that began in Vietnam — have made the post-war years a nightmare.

Peterson's nightmare has just begun to diminish.

Heroin and alcohol use in Vietnam was "something that worked ... (It gave me) relief from the stress I was going through there." It also gave him an addiction, Petersen said.

Peterson, coordinator of Vietnam veterans at the Rutland jail, said he is trying to get his life together after years of reliance on drugs and alcohol, during which time he lived "in a shell" and got into trouble with the law.

He has been "detoxed" — drug and alcohol free — for six months.

Correctional institute officials allowed Peterson to attend the seminars, he said, because the conferences will benefit him and because some of his experiences might benefit others.

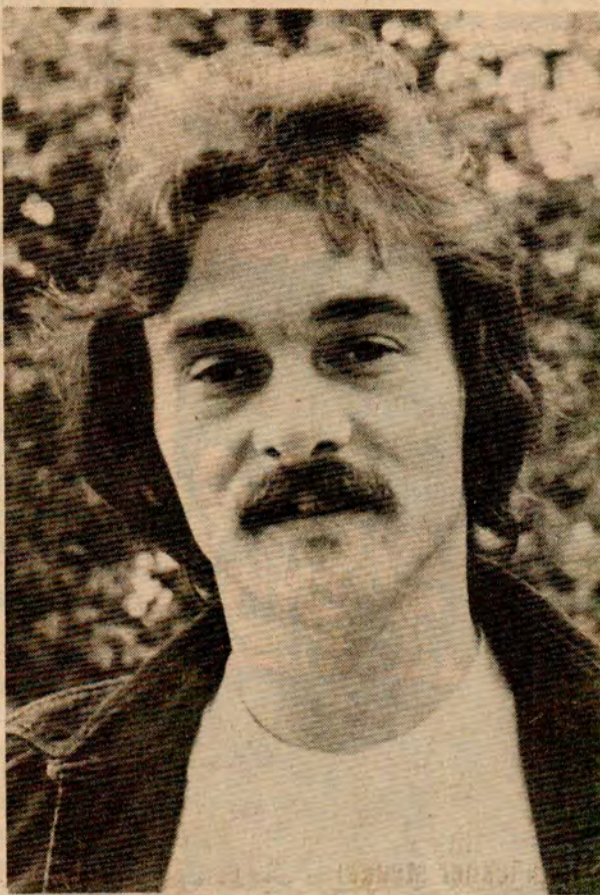
Peterson arrived back from Vietnam a heroin addict, became addicted to amphetamines, and "really became depressed."

Rather than seek professional or peer help, he spent the next two years in a mental "flip-flop" state.

Peterson joined the Vietnam Veterans of America five weeks ago. "It saved my life," he said. "I found out I'm not alone."

Other veterans, however, are angry with what they call the "American assumption that all Vietnam veterans used and/or abused drugs."

Still others think society's concentration on the drug problem in Vietnam was a way of ignoring — even denying — the drug problems in this country.



(Photo by Yvonne Daley)

### Steve Peterson

The statements were made Monday at the second in a series of conferences presented by the VVA as part of the observance this week of Vietnam Veterans week.

Veteran Michael Dodge's first drug and alcohol experiences were in Vietnam. "We used marijuana in mass doses — non-stop ... The fear made you so hyper. Pot slowed us down."

The enemy was frequently stoned, several veterans said. Officers frequently sold drugs. Medics gave morphine to the men.

Peterson said that not only did the chief on his boat get high, but no one made attempts to educate the troops about the dangers of drugs. "I was a kid when I went there," Peterson said.

Not only were drugs accepted as a way of life "in country," but when veterans tried to receive help for depression or pain, they were given even more drugs: Darvon-65, Propoxophene, Darvon-100, Equitrine.

"Doctors encouraged drugs," Rutland VVA founder Donald Bodette said.

Still, other veterans who did not have serious drug or alcohol problems experienced something different.

One who had been under pressure since his return from Vietnam, under pressure at work and home, went out drinking one night, came home and shot his

house up. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

But when he went to the veteran's hospital in White River Junction, he was told he was an alcoholic.

He asked a VA representative at the seminar, Dr. John Severinghaus, why he wasn't given psychiatric treatment or at least an examination. Severinghaus said he didn't know because he was not there.

The drug specialist representative from the VA never showed up for the meeting.

Others who wanted help with alcohol problems have been turned down at the VA hospital, veterans said. Severinghaus said the VA can't take a person in to undergo detoxification unless he has a medical problem.

The positive outcome of the meeting was an agreement between the VVA and the VA to catalogue complaints to come up with better treatments.

Alcohol and drug problems are not unique to Vietnam veterans, Deborah Moorehead, drug treatment coordinator at Rutland

Mental Health Agency, said at the seminar.

World War I, World War II, and Korean War veterans developed drug and alcohol problems, Moorehead said. Michael Corcoran, VVA representative to the Veteran's Administration, said Civil War soldiers had a serious morphine problem.

But, these veterans did not return home to a society whose youths were smoking marijuana, taking mind-altering drugs like LSD, and barbituates and amphetamines recently developed by scientists to change the moods of Americans.

Moorehead said that society encourages the use of drugs: aspirin for headache, Nytol for insomnia, Diatrim for weight loss, beer for macho boosting, cigarettes to make you feel "cool."

(See Page 20: Vets)

## Vets

(Continued from Page 11)

Bodette and Roy Jacobsen, two local veterans who said they had little experience with drugs and alcohol in Vietnam, said that society took it for granted that they had used drugs and still did.

This, they said, might even lead some veterans to take up drugs.

Drugs filled a void, a big black hole, that the veterans brought home with them, Jacobsen said.

Organizers of the Serenity House, a 28-day detoxification center in Wallingford, said they try to replace that void with a sense of "what good living can still be done."

But for others, the void could not be filled. The memory of what they had seen and experienced, the depression, anger and frustration grew.

Al Bardwell, one of the rehabilitation workers at Serenity House, said the best support for an alcoholic (or drug addict) trying to break the habit is family and peer support.

Others who work with people with drug and alcohol problems agreed that peer support is most helpful. Peter Cooper, administrative assistant with Alcohol Information and Referral Center Inc. said support, education and prevention are the three major deterrents to alcohol abuse.

Meeting at the College of Saint Joseph the Provider, the veterans Tuesday will meet with representatives of Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., Sen. Robert Stafford, R-Vt., and Rep. James Jeffords, R-Vt.

# Records Reveal War Veterans Are Frequent Women Batterers

By YVONNE DALEY

More than 50 percent of the women who come to the Rutland County Battered Women's Center for help have been battered by veterans, primarily Vietnam veterans, according to the center's records.

Kris Drumm, a VISTA worker with the battered women's center in Rutland, said center workers began keeping records to determine what percent of batterers were veterans after it appeared that a disproportionate amount of battered women were involved with veterans.

Drumm said that many stories told by battered women began to have a familiar pattern.

For example, she said, one woman who came to the center with a broken arm said that her husband, a Vietnam veteran, beat her regularly, especially when he was drunk.

Drumm said that the stories women tell show that veterans who batter frequently have alcohol and drug problems.

Another battered woman, whose name is being kept confidential because she said she feared retribution, said her husband strangled her during "flashbacks," when he thought he was in Vietnam. She said that he would hide in the bushes or in the back seat of her car and would jump out at her "like I was the enemy."

She said that even after she had her own apartment, the husband harassed her, telling her that "as a Marine, I was trained to kill." The woman said she still feels "hunted."

Her three female children are petrified, she said, because "they don't feel safe from him. I don't feel that I'll ever be safe from him," she told Drumm.

These stories are manifestations of what psychiatrists call Post-Traumatic Stress disorder.

National statistics reveal that Rutlanders are not alone in discovering that this outgrowth of the Vietnam War, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, is affecting both veterans and their families.

One incident of wife abuse occurs every 18 seconds, according to FBI estimates.

While data demonstrates the occurrence of spouse abuse cuts across all age, income, and educational boundaries, the military has recently admitted that violence is occurring in alarming proportions in military families, according to a study by the United States Department of Justice.

The Center for Women Policy Studies, a Washington research group, will be releasing a report on Spouse Abuse in the Armed Forces in August. An article based on

research for that report stressed that one "population that needs special consideration is the military veteran or serviceman with combat experience.

"... Combat veterans are a high-risk group for being batterers," the study said. "In 1980, the Veteran's Administration officially recognized the "post-traumatic stress neurosis and stated that "some Vietnam veterans, particularly those who actually served in combat in Vietnam are suffering from post-traumatic stress.

"(Researchers) found that battering is a symptom of this delayed stress disorder."

Drumm said that these veterans are victims who are victimizing the women they are with. She blamed the government and the military, not the men themselves. She said that the government brain-washed these men to kill, but never "de-washed" them.

"Women who live with veterans want to help them with their problems," Drumm said, "but helping them could cost them their lives. He may use her to channel all that pent-up aggression."

Another woman, who said her 13-year-old son "suffered greatly at the hands of his father's craziness," said "she was an arm's length away from death frequently."

She said that she stayed with her husband because he threatened to kill himself if she left. Other times, she said, he would threaten to kill her and their child, then kill himself.

These threats are cries for help, Drumm said, but they present dangerous situations for the woman involved.

"These men need help. I'm not trying to point any fingers," Drumm said. "It just shows how ignorant we are in what we owe these men. Society needs to re-introduce these men into peace-time life."

Drumm said that "Veterans who have hurt their wives and girl-friends may tell them later that they have blanked out and don't remember what happened. They promise it will never happen again. Unfortunately, the abuse is likely to be repeated.

"I'm not blaming the veterans," Drumm said. "I'm blaming the militaristic headset that teaches violence,

but doesn't teach the men how to act after the war is over. I'm blaming the military that teaches men to kill, to batter, to have no respect for life and then sends them back in America ... as if they can just forget all that happened.

According to Drumm, "The veterans were left with a lot of nightmares, a lot of ugly stuff in the closet that unfortunately became the nightmares of the women they're with."

Candis M. Williams, writing in a book entitled, "Post-traumatic Stress Disorders of the Vietnam Veteran," was an outreach worker with women partners of veterans. She suggests that women involved in this situation seek sup-

port groups and forums. "This process is facilitated only within an all-women's group, with only women serving as leaders," Williams wrote.

Drumm said that she supports all-women groups for this kind of therapy and said that she would like to work with female members of Vietnam rap groups.

Meanwhile, Roy "Jake" Jacobsen, president of the Rutland Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America, said that the chapter recognizes that spouse abuse is a problem of some Vietnam veterans. He also said that he and Drumm have talked about setting up support groups for battered women.

April 3, 1981



(Photo by Yvonne Daley)

**"Whatever your endeavors, we are with you," Ken Shaw, right, commander of the Rutland Chapter of the American Legion, said as he encouraged Vietnam veterans to join the American Legion at Thursday's conference, part of Vietnam Veteran's Week. At left is Roy Jacobsen, president of Rutland chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America.**

# Veterans Urged to Join Ranks To Help Further Their Cause

By YVONNE DALEY  
 "Vets helping vets" was the theme of the day as outreach workers, job counselors and representatives of four veterans organizations encouraged veterans to join with their "brothers" to insure that the "justice, freedom and democracy" they sought to protect, also protects them.  
 Mark Truhan, a veteran and counselor with the Vermont Job Service, encouraged veterans to help other veterans find work. He agreed with veterans who said they had been prejudiced against when seeking work.

The country placed a stigma on veterans, Truhan

said, marking them "psychopathic."  
 Veteran Marty Beckett said, "Being denied a job isn't what bothers me, but society deciding Vietnam veterans are psychological cripples."  
 Veterans who said they had been denied employment because they served in Vietnam were encouraged to file a suit under civil rights laws.  
 "They wound you up to go to war but no one took the time to help you unwind," Truhan said. "Vets helping vets. That's the solution."  
 "Veterans who have made it — you understand our plight and know the Vietnam veteran needs a chance. You're in the best position to help the veteran who hasn't made it."

Explaining that the Job Service originally began as a job placement network for World War I veterans, Truhan said the Job Service is no longer mandated to give preference to veterans.  
 Veterans, however, Truhan said, are guaranteed preference with federal contracts over \$10,000.  
 Truhan said the Job Service offers counseling and help with finding a job, but the job market is "not very good right now."  
 John Brock, a veteran outreach worker, said that, depending on funding cuts, a satellite center for counseling may be established in White River Junction.  
 "For too long, however, the Vietnam veteran has been thinking he's all alone," Brock said. "You've been isolated. You need to start talking to older veterans."  
 The older veterans seem-

ed eager to talk to the Vietnam-era veterans.  
 The commander of the Rutland chapter of the American Legion, Kenneth Shaw, welcomed the veterans, "the unsung heroes of the Vietnam war," into the Legion. Shaw encouraged the veterans to join with "your brothers to further the needs of all veterans."  
 "We're behind you 100 percent. I'm glad to see you're coming forth and beginning to be recognized. Whatever we can do, please let us know."  
 Disabled American Veterans service officer, Stanley Clark, said that membership in a national organization "helps when you go to Washington."  
 DAV held a free dinner for veterans of all wars and their wives in celebration of VVA week Thursday night.  
 Veterans of Foreign War representative, Frank Belock, said that the VFW recently changed its policy. The VFW can now take a political view. He suggested that a joint organization "would bring action, not just talk."