

Just Rappin'

By LAIRD BUSSE

(Laird Busse, a newcomer to Monmouth College, has recently completed active service with the US Marine Corps, including two tours of duty in Vietnam. Mr. Busse, a visitor to many countries, sees today's world as being "Totally devoid of recognizable harmony." Busse, the columnist intends to explore the problems of the world as he sees it and also his experiences and confusion in Vietnam. While his writing may be very negative on the surface, he feels that the "negativity represents reality.")

The Patrol snaked its way across the rice fields as an unmerciful sun signaled another long day of war. The unit was

Every morning a similiar patrol was sent to the nearby village. Objective: provide medical aid for the villagers. One summer morning about a year ago, a patrol entered such a village at dawn, walking down the filthy maneur-splattered street, the Corpsman saw a child, maybe two or three years old. Open, infected sores covered many parts of her small body. The patrol stopped as the "Doc" picked the child up. A few minutes later she was given a bath in the river behind the aid station. The wounds were treated, covered with salve and bandaged.

Like an unheard whisper, everyone in the village knew what was happening. Soon the mother appeared, eyes wet with hatred as she screamed again and again. The bandages were torn from the infants's body. She spat brown saliva in the young corpsman's chewing Beatle nuts. Only two black ridges could be seen protruding from her open mouth.

She ran back sown the street screaming, thongs clapping in the dust. The patrol silently watched her go. They thought, "Wow, what's happening here?"

A short time later the woman returned clutching the baby to her breast. Her eyes were wild as she beckoned for the corpsman. He approached, she extended the baby toward him. The eager corpsman received the little girl. His smile went up in blood as an explosion shattered the quiet morning. The woman, the child, and the 18-year-old corpsman lay dead in the dusty street.

Where her breasts had been, she had placed two grenades with the pins removed. The pressure of the child held the spoons fast. Death followed the baby into the corpsman's arms.

In many areas of Viet Nam the people are Taoists. One religious superstition is "a layer of dirt wards off evil spirits."

When the child was washed in the river, only a layer of dirt came off. But how can two thousand years of culture be washed off in a short period of years? Besides, who is to challenge the timeless traditions of any culture?