

The Invisible Vietnam

Increasingly as time passes and new conflicts become ever so close, the Vietnam experience and its repercussions take on many forms. For the Vietnam veteran there weren't cheers, parades, or national recognition which was part of the American spirit in the past. People developed a range of responses that gave very little inspiration to the returning veterans adjusting back into a society which is consistently changing in its values which didn't reflect past heritage. To most returning veterans, Yankee Doodle dandy and the red, white and blue has somewhat been lost in the general anomic conditions.

Most youth in the middle and late sixties were born in a time of national patriotism. But, due to the growth of new philosophies in the 50's, religion, traditions, values and morality, this period would undergo many revisions, alternations and modifications. New emerging philosophies concerning country, God, and state were crystallized by the mid sixties. The greatest pressure of the draft would fall on the middle and lower class youth who consistently fed the military machine. College enroll-

ment by the late sixties would make it even more difficult for the returning veteran to find and maintain a decent standard in the employment market. We see the direct result today in the purchasing power of the college degree.

Returning veterans found that the word veteran itself changed and didn't quite hold the connotation it once did. Many veterans returned to further their education through college. But the Vietnam veteran is disappearing from the college scene today, either by graduation or employment, which economic conditions and cost of education made almost impossible to continue on V.A. allotments alone. It is only recently that the veteran has received increases in allotments, which are still inadequate to depend totally while going to college. The concept of "working your way through school" has also increased in its difficulty.

Most of the returning Vietnam veterans went through the same experience—being flown into J.F.K. and boarding a filthy bus to Port Authority Bus Terminal where glancing around brought about concern, wonder-

ing if there was any difference between where he came from and where he was. I frankly felt safer in Vietnam than on 41st street after dark. The last hour ride home seems the longest for the returning vet, and once home he locks part of his life away in the closet when he takes that uniform off for the last time—no cheers, no parades, no thanks; just a long look into a mirror which reveals tired lines in his face.

The cry of 'Hire The Vet' still has a long way to come in reality. This can be verified by thousands of veterans across the nation in every race, color, and creed. Bob Dylan in 1965 probably said it the best in his song "The Times Are A Changing"; no one believed him but look outside your window. In the last year, several New Jersey legislators pleaded and voted to do something for the Vietnam veteran "before he is totally forgotten", but legislation hasn't responded to the call for justice. Yes, it's true. Yankee Doodle dandy and other inspirations on American life have faded away...

Darrell E. Parchuc