Vietnam Veteran Speaks on Rehabilitation

By Jennifer Sanchez

Vietnam War veteran and founder of the Vietnam Veterans Outreach program, Shad Meshad shared his stories and ideas with students, faculty, veterans, and friends Tuesday to show that America can learn to deal with the tremendous emotional impact that the war has left.

Vietnam, Meshad encouraged students in Professor Walter Capps’ Religious Studies 156 class, Religion and the Impact of Vietnam, to “get your hands on every book and to speak with every veteran you can in order to make sense of this time. It might be easier for you to look and listen, so you don’t have to experience it.”

Try making sense of the war is like taking a preventative medicine, he said.

Meshad recalled a class he had when he was in college 20 years ago. The sergeant teaching the course, a Vietnam veteran himself, showed Super 8 color slides of killings he had participated in Vietnam.

“We watched human beings butcher human beings,” Meshad said. By the end of the class only Meshad and one other of 36 students remained.

“It’s likely for any of you that ever had the opportunity to go to Elgin” — to see people starving, “It’s not just this TV show that turns on cable, but you look at it and you see the flies and you watch the kids die,” he said.

Meshad believed at the time that if he did not attend graduate school, the film would become a reality for him. He went on to continue his education, delaying for four years his “meeting with Vietnam,” but said that he had a strong guilt complex over this decision.

“That film stuck in my mind. You know that there’s something nasty out there. Something that isn’t Walt Disney’s, mom’s apple pie. You know, a candy-store,” he explained.

By January 1979, Meshad was in Vietnam as a psychologist officer. “I knew it was pretty different. I knew right there, I’d be the same,” he explained.

Meshad hung on, remembering the words of his teacher; that in war you have one mission, and that is to survive.

One experience that Meshad will never forget was an massive casualty that occurred while he was working as a hospital director. While he sweated and waited, unprepared for medical work, helicopters delivered 35 injured soldiers. “I was freaked,” he admitted. Meshad was covered with blood and body matter and his knees began to buckle. An officer slapped him repeatedly to keep him on his feet, saying, “If you pass out, you’re dead.”

At the close of Meshad’s speech summarizing the past 15 years of his life, Professor Capps said that Meshad “is more responsible than any other human being for establishing a rehabilitation program for veterans.”

Faced with public hostility toward Vietnam veterans upon his return to the United States, Meshad wanted to return to the war. “I wanted to go back to Nam. It was the only world I knew. Such a contrast — I was an officer, I had an education, I had a great family that loved me, but I was still angry and confused. I had lost the American dream,” he said.

Working through his own anxieties, Meshad met veterans hanging out on pins or living in caves in the L.A. area and began informal conversations with them. His experience as a psychologist officer in the war gave Meshad a firm basis for listening to people and helping them overcome fears, Capps said.

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Campus System May Provide New Source of Energy and Water

By William Dippebrook

A private corporation, asked by UCSB officials to investigate the feasibility of a cogeneration system, is part way through this project, having located financiers for the approximately $100 million project.

Applied Cogeneration, a subsidiary of Applied Companies — run by Hope Ranch resident Barry Klinger — agreed to probe the possibility of building a cogeneration plant on April 1, 1986. Such a plant would burn methane, a gas which produces far less pollutants than the current natural gas fuel system.

“If we were to go ahead on that, they (Applied Cogeneration) should be able to handle the entire project,” said Dick Jeness, vice chancellor of planning and finance.

Handling it all means Applied Cogeneration will supply all funding for the project, Jeness explained. Jeness was quoted as saying, “It would be impractical to take the cogeneration’s profits, using them to eventually buy the plant.”

“If it’s feasible, the contract can be drawn, if the money is forthcoming,” Jeness said.

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Retiring County Clerk Endorses Candidacy of Current Assistant

By Amy Siegel

Retiring County Clerk Recorder Kenneth Pettit announced his candidacy for the recorder’s seat in his final months of service. Pettit, who has served as current Clerk Howard Menzel’s assistant for the past nine years, has secured Menzel’s endorsement in the race against Ken Saxton, a public relations consultant, for the four-year term.

“Because of his (Pettit’s) performance and experience, I think he’s the right man for the job,” Menzel said. “He’s maintained a high level of performance and demonstrated sensitivity to the people who use our services.”

He’s got years of experience in the job,” and has earned the respect of other county employees, Menzel added.

Menzel will retire from the position he held for the past 11 years when his term ends Jan. 5, 1987.

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If elected in June, Pettit plans to enhance automation for record-keeping to speed access in county records.

“Now’s the time for automation,” Pettit said, adding that he wants to see county documents be placed into a computer system to increase storage capacity. Court records are currently stored on microfilm.

Pettit also hopes to increase communication between the recorder’s office and the Santa Barbara community. As a “custodian of records for the supervisors and the court,” the office must be made aware of community complaints and receive community input to function effectively.

Section, who became well-known in Santa Barbara in full lock for his efforts against the oil initiative, has not previously held public office. However, he feels qualified for the position.

(See COUNTY CLERK, p. 9)