

THE IMPACT OF VIETNAM

PARTICIPANTS: See page 1, first meeting

CAPPS: I think we'd like to get started again, if we can. We are missing a few, but I think we ought to get started, because this is promising to be a very lively session, and we need to finish for the sake of those who have been traveling from the East Coast today, need to finish early this evening. Before we get started with the topic, I'd like to acknowledge that during the break we have been joined by several people who weren't here before. Bob Michaelson is vice-chancellor at U.C.S.B., sitting at the table, and his wife Florence, over there next to Clyde Curry Smith and Professor Kreyche. My wife is here someplace, I think, and Barbara Ashmore has joined us. And there will be some more coming in the morning. Murray Fromson will be here in the morning. We think Stanley Sheinbaum will be here sometime early in the morning.

Well, tonight we, we have talked about a most important aspect, component of this subject. I would say that if we didn't include this component to our subject, that what we do would really be superficial, artificial, really false. And we have given it the general title, "Veterans' Perspectives on the War." And that title will enable our

two speakers to do whatever they'd like to do with the subject. We have Frederick Downs, who is the author of a book called The Killing Zone, has written several articles on this subject. He recently, management officer of the Veterans Administration in Washington, D.C. He is now moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he is with the Veterans Administration. And Shad Meshad is the chief, the Veterans Resocialization Unit, at Veterans Hospital Brentwood Medical Center, in Los Angeles. Fred Downs has written a paper. It's a brief paper. And he has asked my judgment on whether he should read the paper, and I think, because it is not a long paper, and most people have not had a chance to read it, even though to a certain extent this violates Center policy, we are going to ask him to read the paper. And that will be followed by Shad Meshad, and then they may want to discuss the topic between themselves, then, as we have done before, we will open it up for more general discussion.

DOWNS: O.K. Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. I am sorry to see that some of the people I listened to earlier are not here. Perhaps it's indicative of the way Vietnam veterans have had to face society in the last eleven years. And the reason I am going to

way, that in itself might indicate why people got tired of Vietnam. These figures show that there were 46,660 total dead, or 46,616 total deaths as a result of actions by hostile forces, and 10,386 deaths not the result of actions by hostile forces. In other words, those are accidents. For a total of 57,000 deaths. The same report shows there were a total of 8,734,000 Vietnam era veterans, of which thirty-one per cent, or 2,769,000, actually served in Vietnam. Of those, 2.06 per cent, or 57,000 were killed, and 10.9 per cent, or 303,704 were wounded. The V.A. hospitals now treat a total of 100,000 alcoholics. Thirty thousand of them are Vietnam era veterans. The V.A. hospital treats twelve thousand Vietnam era veterans for addiction to hard drugs. The V.A. survey of half the disabled Vietnam era veterans being treated showed almost thirty per cent of them experienced problems with drugs and alcohol. And that alcohol was the most abused drug among returning veterans. Almost one out of three disabled returning veterans experienced problems when they got back here with drugs and alcohol, and the V.A. has reported to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee that there is an extensive need for counseling and outpatient mental

health services among veterans of the Vietnam period. The V.A.'s chief medical director, Dr. James Crutcher, states that more than seven hundred thousand Vietnam veterans are known to need help psychologically and the V.A. believes there may be, that need may be twice that number, 1,400,000 veterans may need some psychological help. Nearly half of the veterans disabled in Vietnam era military service have experienced readjustment problems. Responding to a question during hearings before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, the V.A. chief Max Cleland revealed that the V.A. has completed an extensive survey among veterans in its vocational and rehabilitation training program. The vocational program, by the way, is a program that is set up so that everyone who is disabled is eligible for benefits, so these are all disabled soldiers. Of these disabled soldiers, the survey shows that forty-five per cent of the veterans surveyed had experienced readjustment problems. Half of those answered yes, characterized their problem as being with family or friends; ability to work with fellow employees was a problem for twenty-five per cent, making plans for the future frustrated fifty-seven per cent; coping with alcohol or drug abuse problems,

twenty-nine per cent; and severe depression had been experienced by fifty-six per cent. The V.A. has reported to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee that the problems are severe. From 1970 to 1975, the number of veterans in the V.A.'s alcoholism program doubled, and Vietnam's hospitals, here in veterans' hospitals the suicide rate is reportedly twenty-three per cent higher among patients from the Vietnam era than among all other patients.

Why is this and what caused it? Vietnam veterans are often accused of being unable to adjust or cope with everyday life.

For an undeterminate number, this is true, because non-Vietnam people have failed to try to understand this veteran. They didn't understand Vietnam, and they don't understand Vietnam veterans.

The veteran who has made the adjustments while learning to cope with America and world society, I remember an Englishman at the Boston airport in January of 1979 who asked me a question, and I replied, and he discovered that I had been in Vietnam, he immediately started an argument with me. All I was doing was transferring between planes, and this was an Englishman who wanted to argue with me. This veteran has become the strongest mentally of any returning

veteran in any war in America's history. And they are stronger because those veterans who have adjusted have had to do so on their own. Each one has had to evaluate, philosophize, and rationalize the war, his place in it, America's reaction to him, and he has had to bring it, all this together in his mind so he could come to terms with himself. Self-analysis is a difficult chore. And many of these Vietnam veterans have not been able to conduct self-analysis. And there we have the other side of the problem. Those who are not strong mentally have fallen into the other category.

For our group, the Vietnam veterans, as I mentioned earlier, the percentage of alcoholism is higher, as is drug usage. And these figures perpetuate the belief of practically everyone that there is really something wrong with the Vietnam veterans. The proof, they say, is in these figures I have just quoted. But I ask you to consider this point: is the problem the Vietnam veteran? Was he warped by his experience in the war, or was he warped by American society's reaction to him when he returned? Was he a victim of America's losing sight of him as an individual? Was the veteran scapegoated for all of America's own fears and labeled as crazy?

The real tragedy was that America's soldiers didn't arrive on the Vietnam scene as a crazy, or leave as a crazy, but that they were treated as a crazy when they got home. Instead of helping him to readjust and come down from the experience of war, which was not better or worse than the experience of other soldiers in other wars, the returning Vietnam soldier was put upon by the American public, and he was faced with a barrage of unending criticism from the very people who should have welcomed him back. The spectrum runs from the young student right through the old veterans. Each in their own way made the returning soldier feel unwelcome in his own country. The students with their vicious Lord of the Flies mentality to the old veterans who stoically ignored our presence.

And as an example I will relate to you three experiences I have had personally.

While I was crossing the university campus, the University of Denver campus, in the fall semester of 1968, one young man came up to me on the campus, pointed to my hook, and asked me if I had lost it in Vietnam. When I replied that I had, he said it served me right. I was stunned that anyone could say anything so cruel.

if he receives no support, plus he is alienated, shunned, or attacked, then the process of assimilating back will take an indeterminate length of time, and a much larger percentage will never make it at all. The assimilation time will vary greatly depending on the individual, so there will be various stages of mental re-entering, entry, for a number of veterans for a great many years. The magnitude of this Vietnam fallout is only beginning to be realized. We Vietnam veterans seem to be unable to get ourselves organized as a group. Our ideas on Vietnam and America's reaction to us have never come from one strong voice, only many small ones without the strength to be heeded. If there is one thing Vietnam veterans have in common, it is an inability to band together in any large single group. We have been so busy coping with our individual problems as Vietnam veterans that we have shied away from each other. That in itself is unusual. Anyone who has gone through an experience with someone else should not have any trouble with joining with that person. However, we are not like that. It is almost as if we spent so much of ourselves trying to regain our dignity, our lives, and our personhood, that we don't want to join a group for

fear we will lose what we have worked so hard for. We went to war in a jet, returned in a jet, and were spread across the nation as individuals with no sense of unity. Because our individualism was all we had, we kept it.

And that is my paper.
And that is my paper.

CAPPS: Shad?

MESHAD: I don't have a paper. I have a, just looking at the program outline, and listening to the opening session, I am really full of so many things. I have been a counselor, therapist, vocational rehabilitation specialist, for the last eight years, dealing only with Vietnam veterans. I dealt with over eight thousand Vietnam veterans in deep trouble. And as I listen to all the dialogue today, and the interaction amongst panelists from all over the country, I realize that Vietnam is still a thorn in everybody's side, regardless of what approach, or what viewpoint you want to take about it.

I wish I had one hour with everybody in this room, individually, to really talk about Vietnam, and post-Vietnam, with every one of you. I don't think that maybe sharing a few points or touching on

a few things dealing with Vietnam in a few minutes will really accomplish anything in depth. But I am going to give it a shot.

Fred talked about reality. And I think I am going to start there. I, for no other better place to start, trying to deal with things, let's talk about reality.

Vietnam, particularly for the person that was over there, was definitely a reality. As Mr. Downs has said, to a lot of people it really wasn't a reality, it was an unreality. So why do we try to deal with it, why do we tell people what Vietnam was really like, being there, tasting it, smelling it, eating it, and losing parts of our minds and bodies there, for a year, or whatever the amount of time we were there for? What good does it do?

Well, for the Vietnam vet it does a little bit of good. I usually start in all my sessions with any new Vietnam veteran patient, I start with Vietnam. People ask me why. Why do you want to bring up Vietnam? Even professional people. I'm a psychiatric social worker, I work with psychiatrists, I work with clinical psychologists, I work with counseling psychologists, I work with vocational rehabilitation counselors. You name it, I work with them.

And sometimes I feel like, that I'm working against them. Or they feel like I'm working against them, by talking to them about the experience of the patients that they are actually dealing with.

And I think, if that holds true for the counselors and the professionals that are there to deal with dysfunctioning, and maladjustment I think that it also holds true for every American in this country.

I think that it's time, and I think it's sort of happening.

I may be wrong, but I think the awareness of what Vietnam really is, and where it is taking us, in workshops, such as the one I put on recently at North Dakota University, which is a Vietnam veteran awareness seminar. And this seminar, dealing with the impact of Vietnam, and I really want to thank Walter. I am very happy to be here, because I think the impact has been very profound not only on me, and on Fred, because we have visual scars of what Vietnam did to us, but the impact of what it's done to our spirit, and to the reality that we live in, day to day, minute to minute, second to second. And I think that impact in reality can deal with this whole thing of guilt that I listened to people here today, and try to define what the guilt is. I think the afternoon session

dealt with the mechanics, the morality, this, that, or whatever. But I think it really came down to the confusion in what our awareness actually was. I really think it's awareness, it's reality. And reality is nothing unless you are aware of it. A very simple thing. I am a very simple person. I have spent years trying to answer what Vietnam did to me and did to thousands of patients I work with and thousands of peers, or hundreds of peers that are still alive, that I have served with, before and after. And I think the main difference between me and people outside of me, in my brothers, my fellow Americans, whatever, is that awareness, the total awareness and impact of what Vietnam is. And I am happy that this thing is called the impact of Vietnam. I hope we really, in the next day or two, really get into the nitty-gritty impact of what it's meant.

As far as the veteran's perspective goes, and I think Fred spelled it out pretty explicitly, I don't want to be redundant. And I know we have a lot of what we call the intellectuals here in America sitting around this table. And I don't want to bore you. But I think it's really important that we look, and God, please do,

look at the most living by-product of the war that's current. And we look at history books. We look at journals. We look at the archives in Washington, we look at old footage. And we try to talk about these sort of things that are inanimate objects. I mean, they are pictures, and they are things, and they are data, and they are numbers, and they are kills. But the main thing that America refuses to look at is the Vietnam veteran. And he is living. He can talk about it. He can show his scars. I can, you know, remove the top of my head if I want to. We can sit here and we can tell you, and I'm not saying that we are going to give you the answer. I don't think I can, to this day, intellectualize and tell you exactly what happened to me, to Fred, or to a million and a half physically or mentally disabled Vietnam veterans, walking around in this country, that we know about. But I think it's a place to start. I think I am as good as any archive or any book or any data that's ever come out. And I think that not only is a good place to start, but I think for those that haven't been there, I think it's a very real thing. I can now very easily talk very realistically about what Vietnam did to me and to the troops that I counsel.

I was a psychology officer in Vietnam. And I had the task, along with the psychiatrists, to counsel seventy thousand American troops in the DMZ. That was my responsibility. And not only did it sound absurd then, but it sounds very absurd now. And to a lot of people to even talk about Vietnam, or to talk about its impact, sounds absurd. Because it's like, it's overwhelming. The number, when I was told what I was responsible for and what I had to deal with in Vietnam, when I was told that seventy thousand troops, no more absurd, than when someone says, "Hey, why dig up Vietnam? What are you going to prove?" You know, why is Krieger here, what has Capps got to do, why are we talking about Vietnam?

It's the same situation. It's very frustrating, you know, the same questions, of why is this, and why is that, and none of them seem to make any sense. We talk about the intellectuals, we talk about the American people. Well, I think it's important that we really get into the why and what and what the veteran went through. I am biased and prejudiced because I am a veteran. And maybe that's not good, reliable research data, and maybe I, you know, maybe some people will take issue with you. That's fine. I've been told that

before. I think Fred was told recently, you want to share it with us, go ahead, that, he was at this play, and they told him, what does he know about Vietnam? He was in the woods. How could he really talk about Vietnam? How could he comment on the reality of the war? He was just one of the objects that was sent there. He wasn't there to intellectualize and really talk about it. So once again, the veteran is scratched off.

Well, I am damned tired of it. I am damned tired of all the big words, and I am damned tired of America philosophizing and in burying Vietnam. Because what they are doing, they are burying me. They are burying the people that I have to work with. Right now, to show you sort of the Catch 22s that continue to go on, and I could tell you about the Catch 22s. I won't, because I just, I am in the process of completing a book about Vietnam myself, and it deals with a lot of the Catch 22s. It's not titled Catch 22, and it's different, but in a lot of ways there are similarities. But today's Vietnam, the second Vietnam for the Vietnam veteran, which is America, the second war, whatever you want to call it, deals with people like yourselves, like a lot of my peers, that don't understand what the

cry is, what the pain is, unless they can see it.

Vietnam is different in so many ways. And I wish the gentleman was here from Korea, and I wish anyone here who was in World War II, I beg to discuss and debate or whatever Vietnam, compared to any other war, after the meeting, because I know we don't have all evening. And I mean that in a good sense, because I think you need to understand the difference. You need to know the differences. It's like a lot of the researchers that are here at this meeting. You have to know the data, whether it's reliable, whether it's, you know, you can make this premise or that premise. If you don't understand the difference, then you don't understand what we're up here, and why we think it's different, and why the Vietnam veterans are suffering so many readjustment problems. You won't understand what Congress, for five years, at least in the Senate, has been pushing for special psychological readjustment legislation. Never before in any war. Why are they pushing it, you know, they only had to spend a year there. They didn't have to go five years. It was this, it was that, you know, you get a million different reasons as to why we try to do it, and of course, those reasons usually win out, because this is the sixth year that this legislation has come up, and the

sixth year that the question is, is anything really wrong with Vietnam veterans, is there anything really different. Is the impact on them really, is it really causing them problems? Well, this year, well, last year they told me for sure, it's going to go through. And I've been involved with the White House for the last year and a half, in designing what psychological readjustment legislation should look like. Here they're going to give us ten million dollars in six months for the first year, and so many million the next year, for a three-year pilot, and yet they don't know what to do. Even the professional people. Because there are very few people, including Americans, and that includes therapists, that know the problems of Vietnam veterans. They don't understand the impact. They don't attend seminars or anything like this, because only a certain people are allowed to do this sort of thing, apparently. Therefore a handful of individuals, such as myself, have been asked to design it, and to get the community involved, and to do outreach to disabled, physically and mentally maladjusted Vietnam veterans. Well, my question is, and my question was to Carter and to Max Cleland, he's a triple amputee, more disabled than the two of us put together, is

you know, what do you want us to do? And they actually asked us, how do we do it?

And I said, "Do you really understand what you're up against? You really understand what we've got to do?" We've got to set up treatment for possibly a million point seven, there are estimated, Vietnam veterans, that are having some type of mental readjustment problem, whether it's drugs, alcohol, or just depression, suicide, or whatever, and we've got to set it up. And I guess I can count the people that are somewhat aware of the problem on my, both of my hands. And we're talking about the whole country.

My question is, how do you do that? How do you really propose and design and deliver some sort of system when people don't even understand the problem? They don't even understand, to some degree, the impact of Vietnam on the veteran. Not the impact of Vietnam on the economy, not the impact of Vietnam on morality, on ethics, or whatever. Not discarding them as unimportant, but no one has started with the veteran, the human being. To me, that's where it's at. I call this legislation the last hurrah. I have nicknamed it the last hurrah legislation. And I think that this is America's sort

of last thing, I say America, legislation, the White House, whoever runs this country, sort of the last fling at saying, hey, we didn't let you down. We are going to give you legislation. Maybe six or seven years late, but you're going to get it, and we've got a few good people that are going to put it together nationwide. And therefore you're going to get help.

But there are a lot of four-letter words I had to say to that. And none of them probably fit your vocabulary, and there are a lot of words that I don't know that I wish I could say to that. I really think that the only, if people such as yourself, all the way down to the non-intellectuals, understand and discuss the total impact of Vietnam, on their lives, on themselves, on our country, on the whole philosophy of the esprit de corps, that at least I was raised up in, in the sixties and fifties that I can remember. I can't relate to any more, but I can remember. Until we can get, realize that that has all been affected and changed, and until there is a sense of urgency, rather than the main issues of inflation, and ecology, and everything which is very important, until we put things in priority, until we get back to the psychological impact of certain traumatic

things that have happened to our country in perspective. I think only then will we be able to deal. And I hope that this conference is about dealing with the impact of Vietnam on us. And I hope that it continues to be talked about.

I am learning a lot myself, even today, just listening to other people at different levels speak about it. But if we don't understand it, and we don't start to deal with it, you can forget the discussions about guilt and morality and religion and everything, because we are not going to get at the core of the problem. And I think until we get back down to our basic human beings, the whole esprit de corps of this country was developed on, 202, or three, or whatever years ago, and as corny as that may sound, and as non-intellectual as that may sound, I think we're in a lot of trouble. And I think more than anything that I fear, and I don't fear an awful lot any more, I am pretty numb to fear, pretty much. I think more than anything I fear, is the loss of something great that we really have. And I really see it going downhill. I don't think I've ever said that in public. I've been on TV at least a hundred times in the last five years talking about the plight

of Vietnam veterans, but I think I want to say that now. I'm really concerned about where our country is going. And I think, I think in terms of resolving that, like I do everything, I think that it's time that we talked about it. I think Vietnam plays a big part, for a number of reasons, in starting to deal with and putting ourselves back on, the type of feeling and wanting to be one of the greatest countries that ever existed. And I don't mean that in the sense of power. I mean that in one, the sense of freedom, the sense of enjoying, probably the greatest liberties and use of free will of any country that has ever existed on this planet. And it strikes me that simple.

I am going to end with that. I thought of a million ways to approach or deliver my feelings about my work and the veteran's perspective on the war, but I think it's really, it starts there, but I think it's really beyond that. I think it's the perspectives of the entire country on the war that's really going to change, or make, or break, anything that's done as far as improving our insight or understanding, and actually improving our situation here in America as far as the country goes. And once again, I feel like

that's the utmost. I hope that's why we're here today. Not to just sit and talk and bicker and debate about the impact, but to understand it, chew it, digest it, spit it out, throw it back at each other, and come back with something and in the long run, effect some sort of change, in the thinking, and awareness, of what we've done, both good and bad, and move on from there.

And it's
Thank you.

CAPPS: Thank you. Jim Rosenau?

ROSENAU: I am impressed with both your presentations. I suppose you would classify me as intellectual. I would like to ask you both if you could program me, so that I would have an appropriate attitude from your point of view, toward the Vietnam veteran, what would you like me to think?

DOWNNS: I would like for you to think that Vietnam veterans were really just involved in something which, and you have to understand the point of view. I was brought up on the farm in Indiana, with no political views one way or the other, except the fact that I was always supposed to do what I was supposed to do for my country. Religion taught me that, my parents taught me that, everything in

school taught me that. And then, when I returned from Vietnam, you see, I went over in 1967, and the antiwar movement didn't really affect me, and it didn't affect a lot of us in middle America at that time. Then, when I returned, why, this vindictiveness against the war was taken out on me as an individual. Now, what I'd like for you to be able to do is put yourself in my shoes, or into a veteran's shoes, and perhaps difficult for you to do, because this person is, well, it would be termed the working class. The people in my platoon were blacks, Mexican-Americans, I had an Indian, Puerto Ricans, some Irish, a couple of Irish Catholics, some whites, and that was it. There weren't any rich people in my platoon, no kids, that is. Any one with any power at all was not in that platoon, because my platoon was an infantry platoon. We were in fighting all the time. And as an officer I saw what happened. If someone was assigned to my platoon who wrote a letter home to their congressman and had any power, they were pulled out of my platoon and sent back to the rear. So the people who did the fighting didn't have any power at all. They were just regular people. So I want you to put yourself in the shoes of this somebody who goes out, and they are an auto mechanic,

they are a gas station attendant, or in the case of some of the blacks that I know now, they don't have any job at all. Did a very good job over there, but over here they don't, they get nothing. And look at that person, and feel like, what would I do if I was in his shoes. And that's what you can do as an intellectual person. Because as you've all admitted here earlier, when we were doing our introductions, you all are very educated, you are very aware, and the one gripe I've always had against intellectuals is not their ideas, because I admire ideas and philosophies, and I like to think I have some myself. I am just not as articulate as some of you. What I don't like about liberals are that they have, or intellectuals, they have good ideas, but they don't temper it enough with reality. And so, instead of being able to do something good with their ideas, they continue to live in this dream world, without that little ten per cent of rationalization of reality needed in order to pull the idea to something substantial that will really work. So we all have good ideas here today, but what are we going to do with it. And--

ROSENAU: Could you be a little more specific? Here I am ready to do your bidding. Suppose I was to write an article, go on a radio

program, what would you like me to talk about?

DOWNS: O.K. Instead of talking about Vietnam as something we did wrong morally, or whatever, talk about our future direction. Something you could really do is develop a philosophy which can get people to understand it as, for future wars, if we have them, and I would hate to think that I am right there, but we probably will have more wars. What kind of philosophy, how are we going to treat future soldiers? Right now, soldiers do not have a good reputation? And why is that? Because everybody is down on the soldier. There is a mental attitude against soldiers. Soldiers are just guys. So what you must do is start to develop an intellectual community, an idea, and a belief, and a philosophy, which is very hard to do, of course, that a man, because he is a soldier, is not less than you are. Because, I will tell you truthfully, there are not too many years ago when I would have felt very uncomfortable in a group like this. I did not feel that I was up to your level. And I have confidence in myself, and I feel capable of, you know, conducting myself properly in a meeting like this. Now, I ask, why did I feel that way? It's because of the attitude that I was treated, in many respects, by, when I was

sort of uneducated, and I retaliated in kind by being against lawyers, doctors, people who made money, that kind of thing. It was the way I was brought up in my family. So what we're talking about here to try to get you to do something worthwhile, is really esoteric. It's an idea which must be developed among your community. What you do, in your job, for instance, what is your--

ROSENAU: I teach political science--

DOWNS: You teach political science. O.K. You teach political science. In your teachings, do you explain the role of a soldier?

ROSENAU: No, talk about the citizen.

DOWNS: You are talking about the citizen, well, a soldier is a citizen, in a democracy. And you probably have never approached your class with the idea that they could be soldiers and if they are, they aren't subhuman, when they become, when they put on a uniform. No one ever approaches them at all, in a positive light. So you in your class could start talking about how a person can serve their country, and even though you don't agree with it, or whatever, or at least they are doing something that's admirable. Now, I say this, and I think to myself, well, what happened to me, you know, people

taught me that way, and then when I came back, they didn't treat me that way. So you have to talk to your students, the students that go from your classroom on up to their doctorate degrees, and go on out into the intellectual community, they must leave your--

ROSENAU: I wish that was so--

DOWNS: They must leave your class with a feeling that the soldier is part of society, and that they have a good feeling about the individual, so they will understand that when he does go off to war and come, and he comes back, he will need help in re-entering the society again.

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(860) BERNSTEIN: Mr. Downs, let me ask you and Mr. Meshad, if you--

DOWNS: I don't know if that's any help or not. If I think of something else, by the way, I'll--

CAPPS: I want to be sure Meshad has a chance before--

ROSENAU: Let me just ask what isn't clear to me. This is not a loaded question. It really is a naive question. Would you like that I conduct myself as a teacher such that those who were critics of the war are criticized, and those who fought the war are praised. Is that a relevant possi--

DOWNNS:I'll answer that first. Of course not. Because everyone had a point of view which was legitimate. You know, the people who were against the war. At one time I was very angry with them. And as I thought more about it, and learned more about it, I understood their point of view. You certainly should not teach your students that, because if you have a view against the war, or against something, then that's a legitimate view. What I am saying is, the tool, the soldier that was the tool, was sent over, when the tool came back, people directed their venom toward the tool instead of the device that sent him over there in the first place. So the antiwar groups, when I was at the University of Denver had to talk against, had to debate all the time with the S.D.S.ers and the Weathermen and groups like that, and the Clergymen against the War, and the religious people. What they never seemed to be able to understand was that I was just an individual like them, who had a point of view. And I tried to see their point of view, but they never ever tried to see my point of view as a person. I wasn't for the war. I was just trying to perpetuate the idea that the soldiers around on the campus were not animals. They were just people who wanted to get on with

living. But they wouldn't leave us alone. They kept harassing us and harassing us and harassing us. We could not understand why they would not look at us as people, as human beings, and so we were forced to take a defensive posture.

CAPPS: Shad, do you want to--

MESHAD: Yes, I just want to comment before--

CAPPS: And then Mr. Holsti is next--

MESHAD: I know. I don't want you to, I don't want to tell you what to teach. I just want to sensitize you. I would like to do a sensitivity workshop for you. You ask me, I am going to tell you what I would like. I can't give it to you in words.

ROSENAU: That's what I want to know, yes.

MESHAD: I would like to do a sensitivity workshop and let you decide what you want to do. I, all I want you to do is to be able to look at both sides and make your decision. It's just like you were saying, we were never asked what our side, or our viewpoint. It was decided. It was like we were just, decided that we go over there, and we came back, it was someone made a decision that this is how you treat them, which is like they are not there. Not that that

was a formal agreement, but that's the way the Vietnam vet has been treated. And that's all. I don't, if, after you have looked at both sides, it's just like people today arguing about, you know, America in Vietnam, whatever. I respect your opinion, whatever you can pull out of that. That's what you are going to go with anyway, no one's going to tell you any different, anyway. I couldn't tell you what to teach your class. I just want them to know both sides. I'd like for them to be sensitive to what the seventeen, eighteen, nineteen-year-old that fought that war went through and what the impact was on him. Because what I was saying, in my presentation, was that's very important. No one ever considers the impact on the living being that went through that. It always starts everywhere else.

FREY: Do you have any evidence that improving people's understanding -- oh, I'm sorry, did I interrupt someone?

MESHAD: Go ahead.

FREY: If I understood your answer correctly, what you said is understand us.

MESHAD: Understand, yeah. I want you to be sensitive to where, to what the Vietnam veteran experienced. And the only way you can do

that is to really look and study the Vietnam veteran and talk to him.

FREY: In your work with, you worked with veterans. Have you worked with non-veterans?

MESHAD: Yes, I have.

FREY: All right. Do you have any evidence that by improving people's empathy, or ability to understand what veterans went through, that in fact that changes anything? Does that make it better for veterans?

MESHAD: It sure does.

FREY: Could you explain to us in what way? It seems to me you are taking a liberal position which you've been, both of you have--

MESHAD: I have spent most of my time outside the hospital speaking in non-veteran groups, organizations in rooms like this, TV and whatever. And the response is, I never knew it was like that. I wish I had known. My own son, I had, I have alienated, I have refused to deal with, whether it was guilt, or whatever your reasons, the number of reasons for it, the fact is, I can kind of understand a little bit better. I am not so afraid to talk about it or to

deal with it. There has always been a positive response. I don 't tell them what to think. I just let them know this side. I sensitize them to the impact on the veteran, this living being that's here now, that they refused to look at. They looked at everything else. We look at ecology, we look at save the cat, save the animals, and we put billions of dollars into everything, but we don't start with the human being. And that's wha t I'm saying. And it's made a world of a difference. I have had people, well, I did the N.B.C. Sunday show the last two weeks, and I have gotten calls from nothing but non-veterans, saying, "I want to do some thing. I have really been ashamed to talk about Vietnam." The same sort of questions as this man, this political scientist asked, what do we do? And I said, just discuss it. I can't tell you what to do. You know, it's like, they ask me, what do we do. I am going to give you ten million dollars. I want you to direct this nationally. What do you do? I don't know. I don't know. The vet's been sold down the river so much, I don't think anything you hand to him, he's going to take. I don't care how nice you make it look, or wha t ever. I have a lot of questions about what I'll probably be directing.

CAPPS: Mr. Holsti had his hand up earlier--

MESHAD: I'm sorry.

HOLSTI: O.K. Let me ask a little broader question than the one Jim posed, but somewhat along the same line. You have talked about some very impressive numbers of individuals. Your 1.7 million is the number that sticks in my mind. Can you either, as individuals, or possibly as spokesmen, for this larger group, say anything about what you believe, or if it were in your power, to say what the lessons of Vietnam ought to be? What should this nation learn? Can you give both, each, individual, an individual statement of what should we learn about the broader questions of America's external relations with the world, and can you make any generalizations on the basis of your contact with veterans? Is there any sense that, is there any consensus among the veterans that you have been dealing with about what those lessons are? There has been a lot of discussion about the lessons of Vietnam, and, but perhaps this is an interesting group to hear from.

MESHAD: O.K. I think one of the biggest things, and I can identify it very well, is the fact that I was sent over to Vietnam, and I knew

Korea, Vietnam, and the future. Korea was really, America is used to fighting the Western way. We fought the powers of Europe, who were the strong powers at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of this century, up to almost the middle of this century. This is what we've always been involved with, ever since our creation, as a country. What Vietnam is, is a realization for the rest of America and for the rest of the world, or they should realize this, is that the Western powers are fading, and the dynamism of the Orient, these are dynamic people. They are fighting over their borders right now. They are doing right now what Europe has been doing for the last thirty, until thirty years ago. Just thirty years ago, Europe finally got their borders figured out, at least for a short period of time. Now the Orient is going through the same kind of thing. And the World War II vets, one reason they didn't accept us, they didn't understand us, and we never understood why, either. But I have developed a sort of a thesis on this. They are used to fighting that old way, and Korea was the first inkling of the emergence of the Third World powers. These are the people who have different religious beliefs, political

and sociological beliefs. And we have been used to supporting countries whose leaders were not educated in the country, but were educated out of the country, in England or here, and who were a number of that very small minority at the top that had all the money. All the lower classes were, they didn't identify with their own leaders. But we never realized that. Well, when Korea got started, that was the first inkling of the emergence. O.K., then the French got a taste of it, with their fighting with the Vietmin. However, with Korea, the problem was solved very rapidly. The world situation at that time was controlled by the Western powers through the United Nations. And so they wanted a solution, so they had Panmunjom, however you say that, which was imposed by the world, the United Nations, which was controlled by the Western powers. And so then the next little bit of evidence was the French experience in Vietnam. They didn't understand it, we didn't understand it, but it was still another piece of evidence to this emergence of these people becoming more aware of their power. So then we got into our war, and we continued to support people who were educated out of the country, who were not connected to the masses, so to speak, and at

first when I started thinking about, I thought, well, I sound like a Communist. I am thinking about people in masses, and I got to thinking to myself, that's wrong, I shouldn't be thinking like a Communist, or I shouldn't be using that term. I am thinking as a person would think. If I was one of the people in that country, I always wished I had a chance to fight in Vietnam again, because I would do a whole different way. I would win the minds and hearts of the people because I know what to do with them. ^{If} I was one of those people, and all I wanted to do was farm or whatever, and I would see the corruption there, I would be very susceptible to the ideas of a ^{guy?} leader coming through and telling me we should get rid of those leaders, using the theme of Communism as the, as something viable, a larger share of the action for myself. So what is happening we have the different religious, political, and sociological beliefs that are merging there in these countries. They are becoming the power at the end of the twentieth century. They will be the power at the beginning of the twenty-first century. And America is in a position, because of our Vietnam experience, to, to think about this, because we can actually assist not only those countries but

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ourselves in the world situation by realizing that these countries are the emerging powers. Europe is old. We are in the middle.

And if we play our cards right, and we start helping those people instead of supporting the wrong kinds of government, we can actually be a leader to those countries as they emerge and draw strength from us, intellectually; we can send over people to help them with their problems in the factories, as they develop energy, and all the rest of it. And we will actually stride forward as their partner, instead of this adversary concept all the time that we are used to dealing with. Because we can't think about it any longer in the old-world terms. The old world has faded, and the new world is the Orient. And this is how I feel about Vietnam and the future at the end of this century and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

BERNSTEIN: Could I just follow it up with one brief question? If I understood what each of you are saying, I, let me see if I understood it correctly. I think I heard, the first set of answers was basically that education and better knowledge of others is a crucial missing element. If I understood the second, it was that we need to continue to be involved with the world, but we need to define our leadership

role in different than military ways. Am I right in saying that both of you, however, are saying that the perspective of the Vietnam veteran is not an isolationist one, rather, we should continue to have an international role, but it should be a different international role, based on different perceptions of the world, different level of education, less ethnocentrism, things like that. Would that be correct.

DOWNS: Right. The friends that I know, and Shad, I don't know if your friends think the same way or not, my friends think this. We think that, yes, we do agree with what you just said, because like the Panama Canal, for instance. We thought it was absurd that anyone would go down there and get Americans killed over that ditch, when the Panamanians, it's time for them now to come to the fore front. South America, all of South America, is starting to come forward. So yes, we do believe in an international, we don't believe in this isolationism, because that actually leads to more war in the future. And we do want to share in the future of the world, because we have the technology, we can really be of benefit to these countries. And the Vietnam guys I know who are my friends,

anyway, and since they are my friends, they have the same kinds of belief --

MESHAD: Wait a minute now--

DOWNS: Well, anyway the people I know pretty well agree with that, yeah. We don't like this thing about fighting wars just for the hell of it, you know, for ditches and the Philippines, and that doesn't mean that we believe in isolationism, or becoming peace-niks, and all the rest of it, but we do believe in the future. And we think that because we are Vietnam veterans, that we have this belief and no one else seems to share it. This is really the first time I have been able to sit down and write out my thoughts, though, so it's really the first time that it's out in the public, so to speak. But it's an article that I have planned for the future, because if I can plant a germ of the idea and get people to think about it, then the power of the pen is really very powerful, and I feel that if people start thinking that way, then maybe it will start happening.

CAPPS: Mr. Bernstein.

BERNSTEIN: I want to begin by really, sincerely thanking both of you

for teaching me something very important, and that is making me aware of both in a human way and in a cognitive way of things that at best I was dimly aware of, and perhaps dimly aware is a generous phrase. I think ignorant might be more blunt and more accurate. But I am also a little confused, and I want to explore with you the area of my confusion, and have you really further educate, enlighten me. I only partly understand the notion that if you had us all, you'd like to, through sensitivity training, to respond to Vietnam veterans as people. And I understand part of the, what you are saying is that there has been a quality of shunning, of treating Vietnam veterans as if they are not there. But what struck me as Fred spoke, is that he indicated not that people were shunning, but that people were condemning. The people were responding and people were attributing values. That people were saying, "You're a veteran, and you fought. You either killed or you tried to kill. And I regard that as immoral, and therefore I, as an Englishman, am going to assail you, even though I have never met you before. I as an S.D.S.er am going to challenge you immediately." Now, what strikes me is that there is a tremendous difference between the

behavior of shunning, which is to treat one as a non-person, and the behavior of condemning, which is to acknowledge personhood, and then revile the values that are attributed. The question then becomes in part, are the values that have been attributed correct or incorrect? And I want to pursue this, because as I heard both of you talk about lessons, Fred, for example, spoke about, we were a tool, tools. Well, I want him to dilate some more and tell me now what is his understanding of America, and how kids from Indiana are treated by the government, and why kids who grow up on farms, or kids who grow up in the ghettos of cities are more likely to get sent to Vietnam than kids who were born on college campuses. You know, has that led to anything other than an anomaly, or are you now prepared to say that democracy doesn't work, or simply that it's imperfect. When you talk about the war itself, at one point you remarked, and this troubled me, and I want to quote it back to you, because I don't think you really meant to say it. Everyone had a point of view that's legitimate. You know, be it for it, be it agin it, be it for killing, bein' agin killing, thinking the war was nifty, thinking the war was terrible, it's all legitimate. Well, my suspicion

is that some of the people who responded hostilely, and probably unfairly to you, saw you as a representative of a particular viewpoint. These are things that still are rather strongly felt as I think the near-acrimonious dialogue of the afternoon revealed. If you are to ask, address the question, which I would like to ask both of you, why do you think America went to war in Vietnam? How would you now answer it, in terms of your understanding and obviously, you people have thought deeply and anxiously about this. Do you think that going to war was morally legitimate? Do you think that it was simply that we supported the wrong people, and handling matters a little differently would have rendered it morally legitimate? What are you preparing to say about, from your understanding of having been sent to war, and upon returning, having been either reviled or alternately shunned, about American class structure and even about American society, that is--

DOWNNS: O.K.--all these down--

BERNSTEIN: I'll give you--

MESHAD: How many days do we get to--

DOWNNS: I have an answer for everything--

BERNSTEIN: That is, a lot of what you have said assumes that, really makes the implicit contrast with World War II, which was a last, noble, just war, in which America triumphed. It may well be that if one were to go back and look at earlier wars, that you would find better analogies to your own experience.

DOWNS: Well, I don't know. I don't know about the last one, about how far back, might find a war that--

BERNSTEIN: Well, let me leave the other. The others were questions. The last was a declarative.

DOWNS: O.K. First, I think you talked about, you know, why, or did we do the right thing by being in Nam. No. It's my firm belief that the reason that we screwed up on Nam is the same reason we almost screw up with the Panama Canal, Philippines, and other present, hot world situations. We have ambassadors who get their jobs because they pay somebody some money. They don't know how to speak the language, they don't know anything about the history of the country, and their staff are likely to be as ignorant. So instead of sending someone to a country that will understand those people, they don't. So what happened in Nam? We have an example of what I feel is our

capitalist system where it fails. If you give somebody enough money, they will make an ambassador, or something like that. So we have that problem in Vietnam. Who'd ever heard of Vietnam?

No one.

BERNSTEIN: Could I just interrupt you and ask you, are you aware that most of Americans, they will deny it today, but one can establish this on firm evidence, that most of America's Asian specialists, and especially its famous Vietnam specialists, who are generally second-rate intellectuals, ardently supported the war, at least through 1966. But if one uses the measure of the ambassadors lacking expertise, one can find in the academy John King Fairbank, Edmund Clubb, Wesley Fischel, I. Milton Sachs, or--

Wait, let me go one step further, because I want to drive the nail into the coffin. If one moves to the Administration, no administration before or after Kennedy had quite the lustrous intellectual talent. I mean, Rhodes scholars tripping over one another, ardent supporters of the war. Let me go one step further, because I really want to push this. If one looks at the leading scholars, in American history, especially the modern segment, in modern,

in political science, especially those areas that deal, not with theory, but with foreign policy, and international studies, you can count on the fingers of the hands in this room the number of people who were dissenting substantially from that war before 1966.

DOWN: O.K. When I used the word ambassador, then I only use that as an example. I don't know all the other, let's say ambassadors, intellectuals, the people that we send over to involve themselves in a country. Do we adequately train them? I feel that we do not train them adequately. That's my feeling. That's a lesson from Vietnam. We have people representing the United States all over the world. And the few that I have run across, they sure don't represent me. Because I think they are a couple of turkeys. But who trains these people and who sends them over? O.K. That's something that can come out of this meeting as being concrete. Train people to go overseas to represent us that understand our problems and their problems, and they won't solve all the problems, but they will certainly help alleviate a lot of things. Also, we should have in our think-tank groups in the government, people thinking of the future, friends of the world. Because we must

think of the world, with our satellites and our technology. I mean, this is a, we are in something now that we are, I don't even think a lot of people recognize, technologically, what we are capable of doing and what we are doing. So we should have people in our government and special groups that are thinking of how can we best direct the interests of America, and we can do it through our people who are representing us in these different countries. So that should be something concrete. Instead of thinking of it on a war basis, thinking of it on an economic basis, on a food basis, energy basis, all those items. Here we've been ignoring Mexico for years and years and years. I myself, ten or fifteen years ago, I always wondered, we've got all this oil down in Mexico, but we aren't doing anything about it. You know, and I was just a mere college student at that time. And so I don't see any big push right now. So here's something. We could have been planning ahead, and we would be in Mexico and Central America and South America, and instead we are quibbling over the Panama Canal, which gives us a lot of bad press down in South America. If any of you have any friends in South America, you know what that does to us. And

instead of fighting Cuba, which we've been doing all these years, we should be working to, you know, Castro did a good thing down there, from what I've been able to see. There's been, there were some things that went wrong at first, but he's done a lot for the country. Why do we continue to be blind to this kind of things? Because a person has Communist on him doesn't mean that he's not able to think, or he doesn't have a good idea. So we should do that. We were in Vietnam, and we screwed up real bad, because we didn't pay any attention to our political history or to our political future. And then when we got into the war, they start out and, I'm saying this, we decide we are going to help the country militarily, and here's a very good lesson about Vietnam, that we can use in other countries. If we decide to go in and help a country, then we use teams like our special forces teams. Special forces teams are composed of, you know, twelve men--twelve men? Twelve men, each one of them a specialist. And the important point here is that they work with the people of that country to preserve their own country. Now, those twelve men are not going to determine the course of human history. But they are going to help that country if the people have enough

long run, that, I think that's another good thing about the impact of Vietnam, is if you can't, if you decide to help a country, and you do it with special forces troops, and they can't do it, then it's probably a lost cause. What were some of the other questions you asked?

BERNSTEIN: Well, you referred at one point, yourself as a tool--

DOWNS: Yes--

BERNSTEIN: And that raised a question of how you think the American system works, and why it is that yours was a platoon that had, as you put it, blacks, Puerto Ricans, no rich kids, and I think the presumption was very few college kids. That there was a certain skewed composition.

DOWNS: I personally feel that the ideals of America, as formulated at first, are, have gone astray. My personal feeling is this.

The people who were in my platoon, like I said, were not able to get out of the draft. So why is it that all these other people were able to get out of the draft? It's because they had money, power, influence. What we are doing, I feel, we are drifting into the old-world ideals, that if you've got power and money, then you

keep it, and you concentrate it. And it makes it harder and harder for a lot of other people to get into it. So what happens is you become more powerful and you have more money, and you start giving yourself more bennies. ?? Now, I have a cousin, a second cousin, actually, and he has some power. So he kept his son, or my third cousin, out of, he was in, he was destined to go to an infantry unit in Vietnam. So I was talking to Tom about it later, and Tom said that his dad contacted a general he knew in the Army, and then Tom, all of a sudden, was transferred to some bunker down in the middle of Nebraska. And I thought to myself, you know, I wonder about that. Because what happened, what goes wrong with the system when you start playing favorites like that. And I think that's one of the big problems with America, as I see it. I started out, I feel, on the low end of the spectrum, and through my own tenacity have come up to where I am today. And I think, well, that's because America has a very good system, if it works properly. But even today I look around me. I work for the government. I look around me and it's the people who are politicians, and I'm not saying this in a paranoid or vindictive way. I'm telling you what I feel are some

of the problems that caused us to get into this situation. If we're going to have a system, let's make it more equitable. And if we are going to have a draft again, we need a draft again, if we have it, then it's got to be straight across the board, no draft deferments. First you say, well, go to college. And then the next thing you know, somebody else gets another draft deferment and it keeps snowballing, and pretty soon you end up with a system ~~you~~^{we} had in Vietnam. And it was almost like the Civil War. You could buy your way out, if you got drafted. So I think our system is becoming more decadent in that way. And it's becoming that way slowly. And people aren't really noticing it. They are too busy right now trying to make it. And I don't see anything wrong with making it, because I feel like I've made it. And I'm still going ahead, too. But I also see the danger of the system, and what's happening to it. And I don't like that. And I'd like to, as I become more able to articulate my fears, then I hope that I can make other people aware of it so they start thinking about it. Because we had a great nation and I had, I have a great amount of patriotism for this country, but if I am asked to go to war again, then I will want to ask a lot

more questions. There is a very good book that many of you should read. It's by Frank Snepp. It's called Decent Interval. And has anyone here read it, by the way? Well, the government has sued him, because they said that he printed a lot of C.I.A. secrets, about the downfall of Vietnam. I read the book. What he actually printed was how stupid a lot of our people who were representing us were. He didn't give away any secrets. When you read the book, Decent Interval, you find out that we really, really fouled up badly at the end there. We did so many things wrong, and when you read the people who caused it, then you find out why, and you have got to think to yourself; if they did it in Vietnam, what are they doing right now in other parts of the country, other parts of the world? And the important point about that, as far as Vietnam is concerned, and teaching us a lesson, is that we must re-evaluate our procedures on those foreign stations right now, because here, and here's the point which I think the government is being decadent about. The government is suing Frank Snepp for telling the truth. And they are trying to lay it on security. When you read the book, it's not security, it's the stupidity of the people

that are shown in it. So our government is wrong. The government should instead take the book, study it, and use it as the basis to correct their own ills. So when a government starts covering up for itself, through suits like this, they are really doing you a disservice. So I think that that's another thing where we've gone wrong, trying to hide things that we should use. On the other hand, to point out discrepancies where we can really improve ourselves, instead of trying to hide it.

CAPPS: Shad, did you want to comment on any of those questions?

MESHAD: --some other questions--

CAPPS: Mr. Lewy?

LEWY: Well, I hate to contradict you, Mr. Downs, because I have found many of the things you have said very impressive and eloquent and moving. But I think it would be wrong to, to leave your last remarks uncorrected. Mr. Snepp is not being sued for having revealed secrets or for having exposed mismanagement. There may well have been mismanagement. That's something else again. He is being charged with having violated an agreement which he made when he took the job in the C.I.A., which was not to publish anything,

secret or non-secret, without permission and screening of their agency.

DOWNS: Have you read his book yet?

LEWY: Yes.

DOWNS: O.K. At the end, he describes what he did go through there. And it's true that semantically I may be wrong about whether it was security or not, but the key point is, Mr. Lewy, is that, the key point is that we are suing him, and we shouldn't be. We should be taking that book and studying it.

LEWY: But Mr. Downs, my point is a different one. It seems to me that, I don't think a government can function where everyone decides for himself what obligations he will honor and what obligations he will not, in a situation of this sort. How are you going to get people to work for the C.I.A. in the future situation.

BERNSTEIN: --can you cite any American policy-maker in the last thirty years who, while in office, having leaked secrets, classified secrets, and so designated as classified, if the press, who has ever been prosecuted? Aren't you struck by the anomalous fact that

only certain kinds of people leaking certain kinds of secrets, which are invidious to certain positions, get prosecuted?

LEWY: I don't think there are any secrets in Mr. Snapp's book.

I agree with Mr. Downs on that. That is not the issue. What I am saying is, Mr. Snapp is being charged--

BERNSTEIN:--violated, but secrecy can be at will violated if it serves certain interests--

LEWY: I don't want to argue that either. Two wrongs don't make one right. But the issue is not secrets here. I am saying, is that when you take a job with an agency like the C.I.A., you undertake certain obligations. One of them is that you will not publish anything about your work without permission. And that seems to me a perfectly reasonable request. Just as, for example, it struck me at the time as perfectly reasonable that the Pentagon Papers, would be classified, much of it, not all of it. Of course, there is information there which was not meant for public consumption. Not in the sense that you see it, but in a sense that delicate negotiations discussed in there, for example, which require protection. Now, we may well benefit from having had the Pentagon Papers leaked. We know a lot

more about this period now. We've learned lots of interesting things. But that again is not the point. The point is that government cannot function, and negotiations cannot take place in a fishbowl. And you know this as well as I do. So there are certain limits that have to be honored, it seems to me. And that's why I felt, saying to Mr. Downs, I don't think you should come down so hard on the government in that particular case, because there may well be a more broader issue there.

BERNSTEIN: You are missing a point that one can cite. There has probably been no official, in or near Defense or State, in the last thirty years, who has not upon occasion, for reasons which may be in the national interest in his perception, or not, leaked secrets to have particular effects. And leaked them to journalists. So one of the reasons that Henry Kissinger and Nixon were so interested in tapping phones following the devices of Johnson, who tapped phones, following Kennedy who tapped a few of his phones, was to find out who in their Administrations were leaking somethings which were regarded as indelicate.

LEWI: Well, then, what follows from that--

BERNSTEIN: What follows from that is when the event occurs where one person is singled out for indictment, when there is a pattern of people leaking secrets, and only one or two are singled out, one must ask the question, why have they been singled out, and what is there about their particular action that distinguishes them? It may well be that they have leaked secrets that are more embarrassing to particular people in power. It's not the fact of leaking, or violating security, but the nature of what they have leaked and who is embarrassed--

LEWY: Do you know of any official in-- I'm sorry--

CAPPS: We only have five minutes left in the session. If we, we are not going to conclude the particular topic we are on tonight. I think we want to stay with veterans' perspectives on the war, or on anything else, and I think Harry Ashmore has--

ASHMORE: That's what I'd like to get these, before these gentlemen elude us again. They are speaking with great authority from the point of view of people who actually fought the Vietnam war. And I'd like to get back to that. I'll confess my sympathies with you.

It's out of date, but I was an infantry officer in that big one a while back. And I think I know something of what you're talking about. But what I am really curious about is, I understand both of you, if I do, your resentment and your protest on behalf of your fellows is directed in general against the American society, which you think neglected you, after you came home. But it's particularly directed against the elements in the society who opposed the Vietnam war, if I understand you, and transferred their disaffection against the war to you who fought it, when you came back. And that's, I find that somewhat curious, and I'd like to hear more about it. For example, I find it a little bit puzzling, not that the, say, the American Legion would be obtuse and super-patriotic, but I would think it would accept a veteran if he came back, fought the war and came back honorably discharged. They wouldn't take out their feeling against the pacifist or the protesters on you. Did they, or are they, is it a matter of neglect, or--

DOWNES: V.F. W. is probably the worst, but I'll let you take it.

MESHAD: The American Legion, you mentioned the American Legion.

they have been pretty receptive and have really wanted the Vietnam vet, because of, you know, they die off. I think it's attrition, you know--

DOWNS: They need the dues--

MESHAD: They have really reached out. I think the problem is, and it deals with this whole impact, is the Vietnam vet does not trust the class of forty-six.

ASHMORE: Well, I--

MESHAD: And it works both ways. It's not just, you know, to understand that, you have to understand the impact and why the veteran is the way he is. And when they have the big World War II type parties, and I can remember coming back and speaking and going to the American Legion, the D.A.V., and the Daughters of the American Revolution, we have several groups in Los Angeles, they understand more than the American Legion does, you know. And they live a lot longer, for some reason. They didn't have to fight. And, I don't want to take issue with the women. We love the ladies. But it's that whole paranoia that, I spoke about, the question I was, was posed to me on N.B.C. last week was, what is the main thing that

ASHMORE: That would be at the time, but I mean now.

Downs

MESHAD: Now?

ASHMORE: Is there a residue of active hostility?

Downs

MESHAD:--interesting, I think, reading there, Baltimore group, you

know, the--

ASHMORE: That's an antiwar group--

MESHAD: It wasn't antiwar, it turned out it was antiwar group,

they were there, they were your age, you know--

Downs: Shad, I'd like to respond to that. I think that a lot of the so-called hostility, and open hostility, I don't see it that much

any more. I'm not saying it's not there--

Downs:

MESHAD: It's fading away, it's true. It's not as active as it was.

Meshad:

Downs: But just as bad is the indifference.

ASHMORE: All, that's probably universal, I--

Meshad:

Downs: And I think that, that is, I don't, I wouldn't want to spend

time or to delineate any more on the hostility. I think now we have

an individual that's becoming chronically maladjusted. We're talking

about, you know, high estimates, anywhere from a million to two

million individuals, in effect, millions of other individuals, whether

it's their kids, their peers, their family, whatever, and people that they relate to, in a very traumatic way. And I think that that is my concern. It's something which is happening tonight, and I really appreciate the question from the gentleman down there in the maroon coat. I love that. I think it's tremendous that someone asks us hey, what can we do? I like to be directed. A lot of times I say I don't know. But at least we're talking about it. I really don't know. I don't know how to get esprit de corps back in this country. I was raised with it. I want to know. I want to see it happen. I know it's not an overnight thing, but I think until we start talking about it, until we dig up all these things that we've repressed, and placed in the background, and have not dealt with--

1445
2/CH/1
3?: Let me ask you a question. Suppose half, suppose one more than half of the Congress in 1990 comes out of those million people that served in Vietnam. Would that be a good thing?

MESHAD: Yeah, I think so. If we get some guys in Congress --

DOWNNS: --it would really be a different country.

MESHAD: It's an interesting question. Most of the individuals that we are dealing with aren't in any kind of shape to run anything.

They are pretty alienated and--

^{RIGHTY}
1447 ? : No, but in 1990, they are going to be in--

You are
MESHAD: Well, /assuming that all this readjustment and everything is
going to resolve itself--I've got to--

ASHMORE: I want to ask a --

MEASHAD: --just get to--

ASHMORE: --question. You're talking about the Vietnam veterans who
have come back who are crippled, to some fashion, and you've quoted
statistics. What percenta ge is that of the whole, all those who
served, whether they were in the front line or wherever?

MESHAD:O.K. There were roughly, there were under four million
Vietnam veterans, per se--

ASHMORE: --one to--

MESHAD:Well, a lot of people say they've got it. I'm not saying I
agree with the V.A. statistics, or whatever--

DOWNNS: Actual figures, take my word on it--

MESHAD: Well, anyway, we are talking around anywhere from forty-
five, fifty per cent, some type of readjustment problem. Of those
we, the V.A. has quoted twenty-six to thirty per cent are having

readjustment problems. That's significant to me. And it's not necessarily, you know, the kind you can knock on, you know what I mean, you know, it's primarily psychological readjustment. The one, several things, the one thing, and I know we've got to close off soon. Seems like every time we have really started to get into things, we've got to shut up. But, and it's not over yet. I'll never forget, it was six years ago, I was sitting in a meeting with the Western directors, clinical directors of V.A. hospitals in Los Angeles, and my clinical director, a psychiatrist, medical, hospital, medical model, got up after I spoke, talking about the same things that we're talking about tonight, and he was a well-educated man, about five years from retirement, and he got up and I hope he didn't express the feeling of the entire room, but he got up, and he said; "Shad, God Damn." He says, "When are those Vietnam vets just going to become regular vets? How long is this going to go on?" And I couldn't talk. I couldn't respond. I couldn't believe he said it. Everybody kind of looked at me like I was supposed to give an answer to that. On June 27, 1974, Vietnam Vets become regular veterans. And it was that kind of attitude, and this is a person

that runs, is the clinical director, of a V.A. psychiatric hospital, that is now dealing with over fifty per cent of the Vietnam veterans. He is wanting to know when it's just going to happen. And it's not just going to happen. The point is it's not just going to happen. The problems aren't just going to go away. Vietnam is never going to leave us. Unless, and it's never going to leave us, the scars and everything. But I think as far as the mentality, and what we can draw from it, I think there's a lot of good things. I felt completely different and twice, if you can use numbers, the person I was by coming out of Vietnam. I understand the reality of myself, my country, my peers, Vietnam veterans, or whatever. But the sad part about it is, I've crossed the line. I feel very isolated. I feel very alone. Because so many, so many Americans don't. And they don't even want to talk about it. Like I said, give me an hour with everybody in here, and I think you'll have a different perspective. I am not trying to change your opinion, but I think your understanding will make you more aware. And I think the whole thing is the awareness. I think that's what this whole seminar is about.

CAPPS: That's where we have to end it tonight. We are grateful to

both of you for this session. And we are glad you are going to be here for the entire time. We start again tomorrow at nine-thirty. With the session that has been announced in the program. Some of you need a ride back to the hotel tonight, and I think we're going out in front of the building. Is there anything that needs to be announced before we adjourn?

MESHAD: I need a push. My battery is dead.

?: I can give you a push.

CAPPS: O.K. With regard to the ride, and the ride in the morning, the ride in the morning from the hotel, if you meet out in front, or in the lobby, at nine o'clock, there will be a ride, and breakfast is available tomorrow morning at the hotel, beginning at eight, I think in the room, La Lita, La Lita, it's a separate dining room.

END OF MEETING

this opportunity to introduce people around the room who are here as observers. Pat Cathcart, sitting behind us, who is of the editorial staff of The Center Magazine. And over there, they are very well able to speak for themselves, David Chidester, John Stark, and Deborah Sills, from the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California; Professor Krejci, visiting here from the University of Lancaster; and Ruth Majercik, of U.C.S.B.; Professor Clyde Curry Smith, from the University of Wisconsin, who is out here on an N.E.H. fellowship this year; and Mrs. Wendy Yager, a Santa Barbara citizen, friend of the Center; and I'm sorry I don't, there is one person over there whom I don't know.

LAUCKS: Would you introduce yourself?

SWACKHAMER: Yes. I am Gladys Swackhamer, and I have been a friend of the Center.

CAPPS: I think we have some refreshments in the other room, and we'll resume here later this evening.

END OF MEETING