

Marriages remain secure despite separation

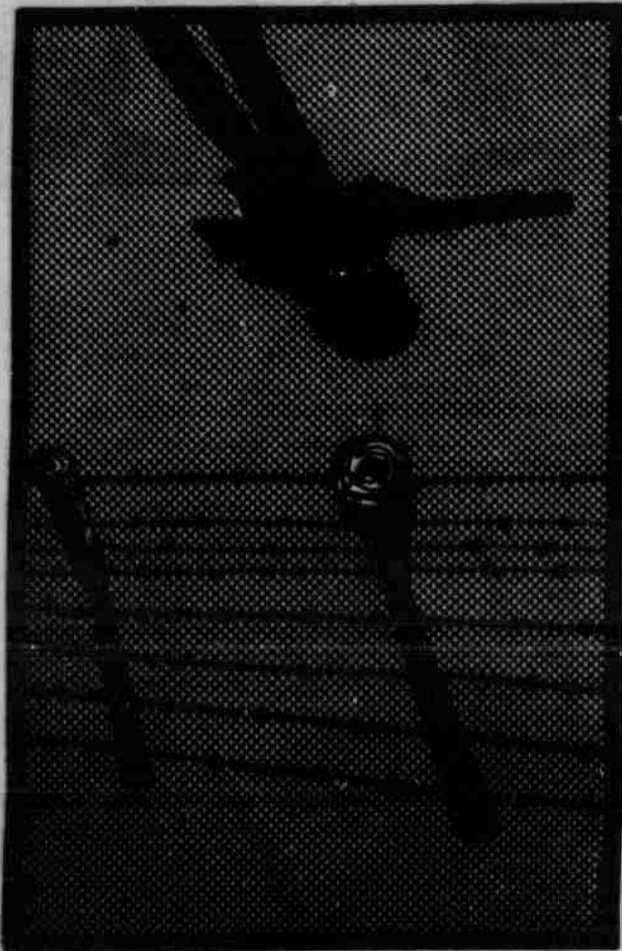
by Duane Leibhart

The Vietnam war has put many young marriages to the acid test by splitting up man and wife for a year or more.

The wife is left alone to fend for herself and her children, if any. She is virtually a widow until her husband returns. Letters and tape recorded messages are about the only contact possible.

According to an Army captain who was stationed in Vietnam, the divorce rates are no higher in the armed forces than in civilian life. "Very few of the men in my unit got 'Dear John' letters," he stated.

The career officer, who wished to remain anonymous, theorized that if a marriage is any good in the first place the geographical separation won't make any difference.



"The military wife is a different breed of cat," he stated. "She has to put up with more problems as a group than any other bunch of wives in the country," he said. "A military wife steps in when her husband leaves like a mama lion taking care of the den."

"My wife is one of those remarkable ladies," he said. "Before we were married she hadn't had a lot of experience in making it on her own."

When the captain was sent to Vietnam he said his wife took care of all the problems that came up, looked after their two small children and paid every bill they owed.

According to the officer, their TV went on the blink while he was overseas. A repairman told his wife it would cost \$200 to repair the set. She decided it was too much for them to afford. One day her cousin, who is familiar with TV repair, looked at the set and fixed it with a \$12 tube.

The captain said married and single soldiers show some differences.

"The married men have had a taste of responsibility and approach day to day problems with less complaints," he said.

Single men are not necessarily any more aggressive combat troops than married men, he said, their attitudes as soldiers are basically the same.

"I think the single men feel they have more to lose than married men," he said. A single man hasn't had a wife or children and feels his life hasn't really been fulfilled, the veteran theorized.

According to the captain, some of the men want to marry Vietnamese girls and take them stateside. The red tape required to get them out of the country is tremendous, though, he said.

"It is purposely designed to be as difficult as possible to get them (the wives) out," the officer said. But it can be done, he added.

The more effort the soldier has to put into it, he said the more he may think of the consequences.

Men who get through the red tape and get their fiancées out are usually those who are really serious about their intentions, the man said.

UNL graduate student Tom Wrenholt, a veteran, was separated from his wife Patty for a year by the war and the Pacific Ocean. The two had been married about a year and a half when Tom left for Southeast Asia in November 1968.

"It was hard for me at first after Tom left, being at home by myself," Patty said. "You're kind of socially isolated—you really can't go out with the married

people or the single ones," she added.

Shortly after Tom left, his wife wrote and told him they were going to have a baby. Patty said she continued working until the day before their daughter was born.

Tom's wife went to meetings of the Lincoln Waiting Wives Club, which had about 50 members in 1969. She said the club had speakers, went on picnics and gave wives an opportunity to socialize.

Frith will discuss reclamation

The regular monthly meeting of the Bluestem Group of the Sierra Club will be held at the Bennett-Martin Library at 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 20, and will feature Charles R. Frith, a fish and wildlife biologist with the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Frith will discuss the effects of the proposed Mid-State Reclamation Project on the wildlife of the Platte River Valley.

In addition to Frith's talk, the Sierra Club film, "The Grand Canyon" will be shown.

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editor in chief: barry pilger
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