

opinion

Mary McGrory

Forgotten veterans get help

It could be that there is a faint glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel for the Vietnam veterans.

No soldiers in American history have been more shabbily treated. Richard Nixon glorified the prisoners of war at their expense. Gerald Ford vetoed their benefits bill. Their GI bill was so inequitably drawn that only 10 per cent of them could take advantage of it.

They brought home special problems—drugs, guilt, the contempt of their peers. There is the highest unemployment rate of any group in the country—a rate of 19 per cent between the ages of 20-24 (compared with a 12.6 rate for nonveterans).

They have no powerful spokesman. There are few Vietnam veterans in

Benson, who until recently served on the National League of Cities Vets' program, a search for good reason to relieve the veteran of his "bad paper" is under way.

The panels interview the veterans. They find out some drug discharges which were mislabeled because field commanders did not wish to admit drug problems in their units. They find the "Vietnam syndrome" among deserters—some who came home from combat and could not readjust to the spit-and-polish of garrison life, discovered domestic problems, encountered hostile commanders and simply took off.

The draft was a casualty of the war. Richard Nixon ended it on the cynical—and correct, as it turned out—presumption that if vocal middle-class boys didn't have to fight in unpopular wars, they might cease the kind of agitation that so irritated him during the four-and-one-half years he was "ending" Vietnam.

Army not working

In its place he put the all-volunteer Army. But the volunteer Army is not working out, although the military is not yet ready to admit it.

Thirty per cent of the volunteers are discharged in the first six months of training, Benson says, and 40 per cent are out before their enlistment is up.

And the volunteer Army is creating new "bad paper" discharges at the rate of a thousand per month. Since the Discharge Review Board already has an enormous Vietnam backlog and currently can handle only 10,000 cases annually, it would take years to clear up this biggest chunk of unfinished business—unless, of course, President Carter decides to grant class upgrading for those who most desperately need amnesty.

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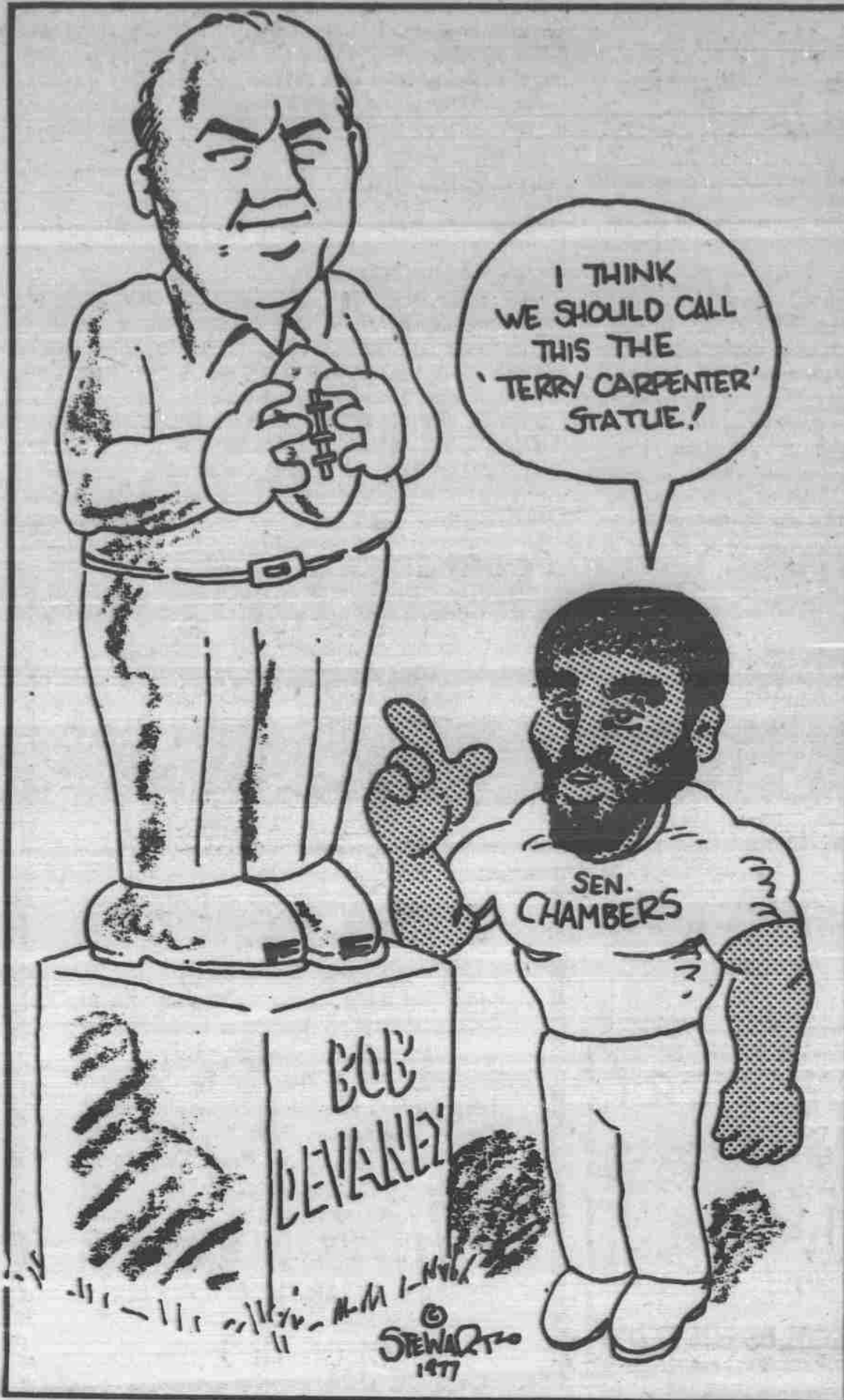
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Congress, members of the upper and middle class having been liberally provided with doctors' excuses and student deferments. They have been too beaten down to organize themselves.

But President Carter, who pardoned those who refused to fight, is indicating that he wished to do right by the forgotten veterans. He made mention of them in his first fireside chat. He is giving them top priority in his employment plans. He has set aside for them 200,000 jobs he intends to create in the public and private sectors.

Relieve veteran

According to a former member of a Discharge Review Panel, retired Col. Ben



'Insensitive' letter exhibits 'absence of maturity'

By Peter Levitov

I am shocked and appalled at the blatant hostility, insensitivity and ignorance demonstrated by the "Society" (Letter to the Editor, Feb. 17.) It takes a degree of maturity to accept—not necessarily agree with—people and ideas that are unfamiliar. The absence of such maturity makes one prey to the type of xenophobia exhibited in this letter.

The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act passed by Congress in 1961 purports "to increase mutual understanding between people of the United States and people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange . . . and thus to assist in the development of more friendly and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries of the world." And you advocate deportation for students lawfully admitted

personally I wish to register disgust and disapproval of your statement.

Two years ago a cartoon appeared in the *Daily Nebraskan* characterizing an African professor with a bone through his head. On frequent occasion, African students report that available apartments in Lincoln miraculously become rented in the period of time between a phone call confirming a vacancy and the ride to the premises. Restaurants out-state have been known to refuse service to African students at UNL. Why?

Might I invite your "Society" to visit with me, a white who has been in Nigeria on more than one occasion, to discuss perspectives of Nigeria and Nigerians? Or would you like to meet with a Nigerian member of the faculty? Maybe a detached situation is more to your liking. If so might I suggest attending the meeting of the Western Association of Africanists in Lincoln at the end of the month?

Or would you enjoy an interaction with your fellow students? I would imagine that the African Students Association, offended as they must be at your letter, would be eager to meet with you (without weapons) to discuss mutual misunderstandings. How fortunate you are next year there may be an interdisciplinary course entitled "An Introduction to Contemporary Africa" offered on campus.

Fear, ignorance

Your letter raises to the surface the less-than-adequate preparation most students; indeed most citizens of the United States, have had in the whys and wherefores of other cultures. Parents often have had even fewer exper-

iences in a cross-cultural setting than have their children. Fear and ignorance are easily perpetuated.

In a sense, your forthright statement of antagonism, based, presumably, on a combination of factors—lack of exposure, isolated unpleasant experiences, fear and so forth—may strike a chord with those people responsible for curriculum development in the schools and community awareness in our society, in general.

Ironically, I read your letter while sitting in my office wearing an African shirt. Nigger-lover, you say? No, rather a product of a heterogenous society which has acculturated me to develop an eclectic life-style and, hopefully, an open-minded approach to people and ideas from a universalistic perspective.

I invite your response in the interest of a heightened global consciousness.

Peter Levitov is coordinator of the Office of International Educational Services at UNL.

guest opinion

to this country in furtherance of our national policy?

True, your encounters with Nigerians may have proven to be less than satisfactory and, as a consequence, you may not prefer their company. But have you considered the barriers to effective communication that have been erected by cultural differences?

Are you aware of the difficulties inherent in adjusting to an environment in which most nonverbal cues (nods of the head, tone of voice, posture, and gestures, facial expressions, etc.) are completely alien and unexplained? Are you familiar with the nuances of linguistics to decipher the literal from the figurative aspects of English as spoken by a Nigerian? Do you know that culturally determined behaviors, in the case of Nigerians, stem from a base of 80 million people organized in more than 200 ethnic groups and speaking as many discrete languages? What effort have you, as American hosts, to bridge the gap?

Disgust, disappointment

Your comments directly impugn 75 Nigerian students at UNL. By innuendo, they denigrate all African students and others of African descent—from the Caribbean nations, from Latin America and from the United States. On behalf of the Office of International Educational Services, the 650 foreign students at this University and

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