

# Editorial

## Vets need more than granite walls to block nightmare

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is officially dedicated. The memorial, two gleaming black granite walls inscribed with the names of the 57,939 Americans who did not return home, was dedicated Saturday after thousands of Vietnam vets paraded triumphantly down Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C.

For many of the veterans, it was a long-awaited welcome home. They had come home not to ticker-tape parades but to embarrassed silence or taunts of "baby killer." It was as if by not talking about the war, Americans could pretend it had never happened.

The veterans found in Saturday's parade what they had been denied — the ceremonial gratitude for their service.

The dedication was a time of both joy and sorrow, triumph and tears. Some of the former soldiers wept openly as they found comfort in a buddy's embrace.

People at the memorial searched silently for the name of a fallen friend, a commander, a husband, a father. Flowers and flags, burning candles and photographs were left at the base of the monument in tribute to those who died.

Although the dedication is finished, the legacy of Vietnam remains. The country still has the responsibility to help those who came home.

Psychiatrists have found a condition they call "post-traumatic stress disorder" in many Vietnam vets. The condition is characterized by nightmares, flashbacks, rages, panics and a sense of guilt. The smell of diesel fuel or the "pop" of firecrackers is enough to send some vets back in their minds to the jungles of Nam.

John Wilson, a psychologist who has studied more than 500 cases of post-traumatic stress, believes the occurrence of these symptoms among Vietnam veterans will increase, peaking in 1990.

Veterans also have expressed concern about the effects of the defoliant Agent Orange, an herbicide sprayed on jungles and farmland to destroy the enemy's cover. Agent Orange has been said to be the cause of disorders ranging from acne to headaches, birth defects in veterans' children to cancer. The Veterans Administration says more research is needed before it can link Agent Orange to any disorder except chordee, a skin condition.

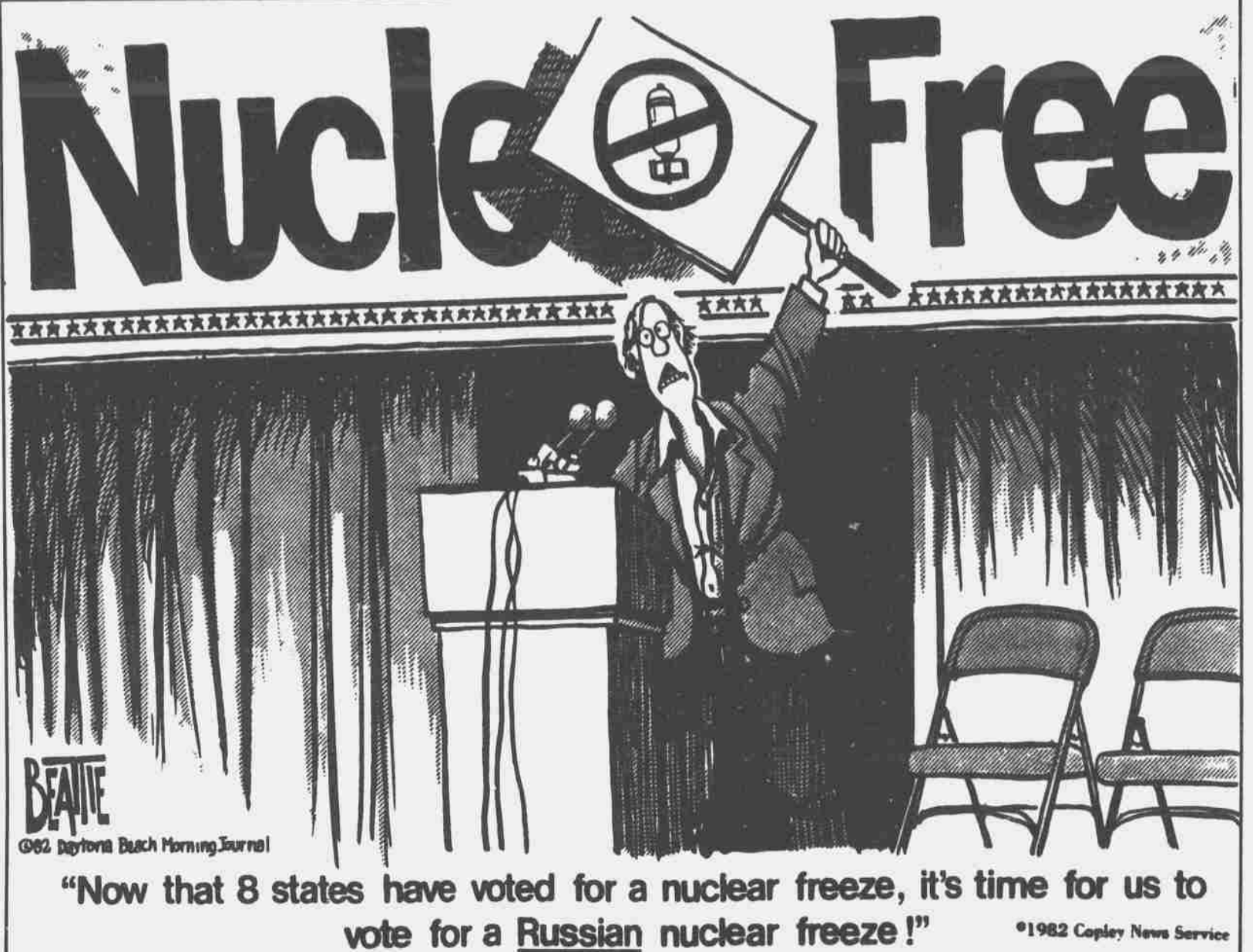
At an informal forum Friday in Washington, Glenn Sinclair, a former Marine corporal, squared off against the VA official in charge of research into Agent Orange. Sinclair told the VA's Dr. Barclay Shepard that all five of his children were born with birth defects and attributed the defects to his being exposed to the toxic herbicide. Shepard said research may produce answers in three or four years.

But veterans with health problems, both physical and mental, need help now. Studies and research are necessary, but telling veterans to wait for three or four years does little to help them while they wait. Why not help them while the studies are being conducted instead of waiting until they are finished?

This is not to imply that all Vietnam veterans are scarred forever by the experience. Many veterans came home strengthened, not weakened. But providing treatment at VA hospitals and providing counseling centers to those who need them would help pay back in part the debt Americans have to those who served.

A monument to honor the 2.7 million who served in Vietnam is a needed memorial, but it does not mean Americans now can relax, thinking the war is finally over. For some, it will never be.

Lori Siewert



## Churches take stand in battle

Before the 1982 elections were decided, two of the nation's major mainline church denominations took to the ramparts and fired opening volleys in what likely will be the major battle in the 1984 electoral wars.

In New Orleans in September, the Episcopal Church's House of Bishops issued a pastoral letter appealing in effect for unilateral nuclear disarmament by the United States. It terms our "undiminished production and deployment of nuclear weapons" and "the squandering" of our resources on them as "immoral and unjust." It terms the "American fever to match the Soviet Union weapon for weapon" as "damaging the personality structure of a whole generation."



Ross Mackenzie

A month later a five-man committee of Catholic bishops issued a draft letter exhibiting an equally massive unconcern about the Soviet Union and giving only the most grudging nod to the concept of deterrence. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops is scheduled to debate the letter this week in Washington and to vote next spring on whether it should be adopted as the basis for the American church's teachings on nuclear war.

The Catholic letter says, for instances "We do not perceive any situation in which the deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare, on however restricted a scale, can be morally justified," and "No Christian can rightfully carry out orders or policies deliberately aimed at killing non-combatants."

Perhaps because the American Catholic flock (51 million and rising) is about 20 times bigger than the Episcopal flock (2.7 million and declining), the Catholic letter elicited the bigger response — notably from the

Reagan administration. Comrade Leonid earlier made some timely statements pledging to accelerate the pace of Soviet nuclear armaments and routinely deploring the "imperialistic adventurism" of American "hotheads."

About these letters, let us note first the nation's long tradition of churchmen making statements on political questions a tradition three centuries long. If the churchmen seek to initiate a debate on nuclear weapons, then very well. But let them not be conceded the high moral ground without a fight.

As with opposition to the death penalty, pacifism inherently contains no greater degree of morality than anti-pacifism does. These mainline churchmen should be accorded no more standing on questions of nuclear policy — no more moral authority — than is accorded Jerry Falwell.

And as the debate proceeds, let a number of points be kept in mind:

— The reality of the Soviet Union. The United States is rebuilding its defenses in response to the Kremlin's persistence in the most staggering military buildup that history has seen. To deny the Soviet reality is to deny the need for deterrence; to accept the one is to accept the other.

The morality of self-defense and the morality of defending not merely life (which can be lived in slavery) but life lived in liberty.

The institutional pacifism of the mainline clergy. Given the recent radicalization within many church hierarchies, these letters are thoroughly predictable. Inasmuch as they deal with matters clearly beyond the clergy's expertise, they also are thoroughly wrong.

So let the debate the battle begin. It likely will be decided in the presidential election of 1984.

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## Big-busted woman flattered by ogling, whistling

Last week, I wrote about a woman who for 14 of her 28 years had attracted whistles, catcalls, and lewd comments from men because she was large-busted.

Karen Downs got fed up with that kind



Roger Simon

of treatment and had, in three cases, gotten men punished for what they said.

Downs admitted that other women might think she was nuts. She was right.

The woman in today's column is similar to Downs, except for one big difference: She thinks such comments are flattering.

She gave me her name but asked me not to use it. She said her husband would kill her if he found out she was talking about such things. She is 27.

"Right off the bat, you can say I look like the woman you wrote about," she said.

Large busted? I said.

"Yeah, but I can't say that out loud because I'm calling from the office."

How old were you when men on the street first began making comments to you? I asked.

"Old enough to know what I was doing to them," she said.

And such comments aren't an insult?

"Positively not," she said. "I love it. When men make remarks to me, I don't consider it catcalls or being rude."

But Karen Downs said men shouted things like "Get a load of those knockers!" Isn't that rude? I asked.

"It's a compliment," she said. "It's a fact of life. It happens to everybody. And those women it doesn't happen to, they

wish it happened to them."

But how about when creeps say it to you, total strangers, construction workers, people like that.

"Hey, construction workers are the best ones," she said. "There is real scum out there, real creeps out there who make comments. Construction workers are the admirable ones."

But how about when they make really obscene remarks or shout invitations to have sex?

"I say: 'Drop dead,'" she said. "And I don't walk on that street anymore."

And have you always handled men this way?

"I should say right here that my father is a general contractor, and so I grew up around construction workers. My mother has the same physique and personality I do and so I learned how to deal with it from her."

But those construction workers

wouldn't have made such comments to the boss' wife, your mother, would they?

"Of course they would," she said. "And they did. My mother knew how to deal with it. And so do I."

But these men who make comments to you, they don't know if you're intelligent or a dope or anything about you. All they know is that you have a body.

"That's right, and it flatters me," she said. "It's not derogatory or catcalling. If a guy whistles at you, you smile at him. It makes the guy feel good. It makes you feel good. And next time, you know what he does? He says 'Good morning.'"

Do you ever talk to these guys after the initial whistle or comment?

She laughed. "Don't go into a lot of detail on this part, OK? Because that is exactly how I met my husband," she said.

He ogled you on the street? And you married him?

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