

police clubbed her again to the floor with blows to the head and shoulders. At this point of the pandemonium, I was pushed back by the crowd which was trying to avoid the riot police. I pleaded with a University policeman guarding the office to the School of Commerce "Please let me in. I'm an observer. Let me out of this." This red-haired policeman answered, "You fink, go out like the rest of them." He then pushed me over the heads of several demonstrators who were on the floor. The University policeman kicked the people on the floor, and kicked with vengeance. The front line of the riot police continued to club the people around me. Another group had formed two lines which led to the exit. To leave, I had to run the gauntlet of the riot police. I was hit four times as I went through the gauntlet. As I got to the front entrance of Commerce there were fragments of broken glass which came from a window which the riot police had broken. Many of the riot police, without badges, tried to knock down, or trip, students who were attempting to leave by the front exit. Outside of Commerce police were continuing their assault on demonstrators who had fallen in their attempt to leave. As I left, I saw people with blo[od]y faces; people holding different parts of their bodies.

A soldier in the quagmire

Unlike previous wars, the Vietnam intervention inspired little idealism and sense of purpose for ordinary soldiers. It was a war only vaguely understood by them, and the domestic debate over the legitimacy of the conflict only heightened their bitterness. The high rate of desertion, the breakdown in morals and discipline, the incidence of the use of narcotics, the frustration of fighting a well-concealed enemy without clearly drawn battle lines, and even the hostility from supposedly allied Vietnamese—all reflected feelings of despair and cynicism. While media reporters in the field and domestic critics described the war as a quagmire for the United States, soldiers in the field, although less articulate, knew first-hand the enormity, indeed the futility, of their role. The following letter by a twenty-six-year-old draftee to his former college professor is a striking, sensitive narrative of the military effort and the daily hardships experienced by such soldiers.

Dear Pete,

Got your two letters yesterday at mail call, or I should say a buddy did who later brought them to me. Can't understand why your first letter was returned. . . .

I've been keeping a day-by-day diary since 15 May 68. Hope I can successfully smuggle it out of the country since it's a court martial offense to be keeping one. My buddies are very amused about it all.

Since I've been here, I have acquired the nickname of "professor." This is probably due to my great learning & education, or at least in reference to that of my comrades.

Unfortunately your advice about going to a military hospital to seek possible reassignment is not possible. Am now on a new work schedule whereby I work a half day every day. Certainly, in comparison to the other GI's, we cooks have quite a bit of leisure-time.

Two weeks ago I had off for two whole days & flew down to the huge military-naval complex at Da Nang. Flew down & back in one of our coptors; my first ride in one.

While in Da Nang I had a most unusual & interesting experience. A nine year old youth, or there abouts, approached me while I was waiting for the navy bus & begged me to have my boots polished. I resisted but finally gave in after he started to polish 'em. Initially, the fee agreed upon was 25¢ which is enough to support one Vietnamese for approximately three days. Midway thru, he changed his price to one dollar & later to two & five dollars. When I handed the youth a 25¢ note, he screamed & demanded five dollars. After this I became stubborn & insisted on paying him only 25¢. He took the bill & picked-up two large rocks & approached me in a most threatening manner, especially for a youth of his age. As I began to board the bus, he threw both rocks at me hitting me in the knee & leg. I chased him & naturally caught him. A strong verbal admonishment was being administered by me when a US army truck pulled-up & three South Vietnamese military policemen approached me. They demanded that the youth be paid the full five dollars & that they would accept it since it had "to be registered" at the police station. To me this was nothing but "highway robbery." Suddenly, I saw a shore patrol jeep appear & I dashed onto the highway for help. I attempted to explain the situation to the sailors but the Vietnamese police attempted to interfere. One sailor stopped a truck loaded with armed Marines & then the senior sailor abruptly advised everyone to "shut-up." My story was told & the Vietnamese police suddenly remembered that they "needed gas" & suddenly disappeared. The youth's shoe shine box was found by a Marine & contained a small plastic bomb. I was told to "move out" & to keep my mouth shut. Certainly, I moved out in a very fast hurry. What became of the youth I'll never know. Also, how he gained entry into the post is hard to understand.

Perhaps I advised in my previous letter that I'd subscribed to *The Christian Science Monitor*. My issues usually are two weeks late & come in bunches, but it sure is worth the \$1.00 per month fee charged servicemen.

From David L. Sartori to Edward M. Peterson, July 1968 (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin).
Used by permission of David L. Sartori.

Last week we began to move into our own new company area. This is situated on a small hill about a mile from our old area we borrowed from the 131st aviation. I'm still "cooking" in the 131st mess hall as are all the men in our company. Our mess sgt told me this afternoon that next Monday our own mess hall goes into operation.

Despite the fact that we have only 200 soldiers & airmen to feed this will be a real bitch since we have only three actual cooks at present, not counting the mess sgt.

My mess sgt is a negro from North Carolina. So far he has treated me straight but I still like the 131st mess sgt better.

One thing that I really like about my mess sgt is that he told me never to be forced by another NCO into going on any "shit details." This came in handy when a sgt ordered me this afternoon to participate in digging a bunker. I explained that my mess sgt had ordered me not to participate in any non-messing details & that I was to tell any one who "tried to 'fuck' with me to go to hell or try to 'fuck' my mess sgt." Upon hearing of our solidarity, he simply told me to move out.

Our CO is a major. First time that I had a field grade commander & also my first commander older than myself.

I live in the cook's hooch (barracks) which is shared at present with five other men. We got beds just a few days ago. Prior to this, we were sleeping on cots & air mattresses. This certainly was a welcome change. All hooches have a hooch-maid, a Vietnamese cleaning woman. Initially, our hooch-maid was one in her fifties & extremely unattractive. This has all been changed since our mess sgt had his old hooch-maid brought up today. She must be about eighteen. Not only does her talents include being our hooch-maid & sgt's mistress, she has also offered to bestow upon all other cooks her favors for additional rations.

Since my sister-in-law is Japanese, I have met many Japanese "war brides" back in the states. They sure are a world apart from the Vietnamese. The Japanese are so clean, polite, & considerate.

One would seem to think that a man of my education would understand & tolerate the dynamics of "cultural relativity" but I find it so hard to tolerate these people. Intolerance certainly runs contrary to my general personality, but I simply have so little tolerance for these people. . . .

Going back to the "gooks;" they seem to have—both the north & south alike—one thing in common besides their Roman Catholicism & that is their hatred of foreign domination. Among the south Vietnamese, we seem to have become what the Chinese were traditional[ly] to the north.

No doubt you've heard about the "pull out" (evacuation) of the South. It's amusing that the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a statement three months ago that post could be & must be held at all cost. What insanity!

Have heard Hanoi Hannah's broadcast three times since I've been here. If

one could only ignore the "hundreds of American GI's were killed & thousands wounded" it would be a fairly accurate broadcast—or as accurate at least as ours. Last time she broadcasted names of downed pilots over . . . [North Vietnam]. She also played a tape of an American pilot's evaluation . . . of the war. It was so rational and logical to me.

Lately, have been plagued by the Wis. Council for Higher Ed. Loans & the National Defense Loan program for payment of my loans despite by military service. Finally got a deferment form filled-out for my national indebtedness.

. . . Might as well tell you a military secret. Lately, there has been increased NVA copter activity in the . . . [area]. The Army denies it all but it's true. Our own radar has picked up 'copters right outside our perimeter. Rumor has it that about twelve have so far been shot down.

I wrote my Selective Service Board back in . . . [Fond du Lac] & requested the names of the members of the board. Was expecting some "chicken-shit" reply but surprisingly they gave me the board member names.

Last night we had a live entertainment group from Korea. They sang songs, etc. The last time we had a live performance we had a full strip tease. Now I fully can understand the phrase's definition.

dls

Conscience and the war

While there were massive public demonstrations against the war, individual resistance also played a prominent part in the mounting protest. Some refused induction and went to jail; others fled to Canada or other countries rather than submit to the draft or jail; and others already in service, deserted. Captain Dale Noyd, a teacher at the Air Force Academy, attempted to resign because of conscientious objections to the Vietnam War specifically. The Air Force refused to accept his resignation and ordered him transferred to serve as an instructor to train pilots for Vietnam duty. According to the records, Noyd's resignation was rejected because it was "not considered to be in the best interest of the Air Force." Noyd refused to accept his new assignment, was court-martialed, found guilty, and sentenced to one year in jail, which he served in the form of house arrest. Noyd's subsequent appeal to the federal courts failed. This statement is from Noyd's original letter offering his resignation.

8 Dec. 66

1. I, Dale Edwin Noyd, Captain, FR28084, under paragraph 16m, AFR 36-12, hereby voluntarily tender my resignation from all appointments in the USAF. . . .

2b. I am opposed to the war that this country is waging in Vietnam; and for the past year—since it has become increasingly clear that I will not be able to serve out my obligation and resign from the Air Force—I have considered various stratagems that would obviate my participation in, and contribution to, that war. Among other alternatives, I have considered grounding myself or seeking an assignment other than in Southeast Asia. But these choices were not an honest confrontation of the issues and they do not do justice to my beliefs. The hypocrisy of my silence and acquiescence must end—I feel strongly that it is time for me to demand more consistency between my convictions and my behavior. Several months ago I came to a decision that would reflect this consistency and sought counsel on what alternatives I might have. This letter is a result of that decision. . . .

2c. Increasingly I find myself in the position of being highly involved and *car-ing* about many moral, political, and social issues—of which the war in Vietnam is the most important—and yet I cannot protest and work to effect some change. Not only may my convictions remain unexpressed and the concomitant responsibilities unfulfilled, but I am possibly confronted with fighting in a war that I believe to be unjust, immoral, and which makes a mockery of both our constitution and the charter of the United Nations—and the human values which they represent. Apart from the moral and ethical issues, and speaking only from the point of view of the super-patriot, it is a stupid war and pernicious to the self-interest of the United States. I am somewhat reluctant to attempt an analysis of the role of this country in the affairs of Southeast Asia for two reasons: First, I have nothing to say that has not been eloquently stated by men such as Senators Fulbright and Morse, U Thant, Fall, Sheehan, Morgenthau, Goodwin, Scheer, Terrill, Raskin, Lacouture, and, of course, the spokesmen for most of the nations of the free world; and secondly, any brief statement almost of necessity will hazard the same defects that have been characteristic of our foreign policy and its public debate—simplistic and obfuscated by clichés and slogans. Nevertheless, because of the gravity of my circumstances and the unusual nature of my resignation, I shall state some of the observations and premises from which I have made my judgments. First of all, in a nation that pretends to an open and free society, hypocrisy and subterfuge have pervaded our conduct and policy in Southeast Asia at least since 1954. This is not only in relations with the Vietnamese and in our pronouncements to

From U.S. District Court, Denver, Colorado, *Noyd v. McNamara*, Secretary of Defense, et al.; 1967, Records and Briefs. Material suggested by B. Alan Dickson.

the other nations of the world, but also with the American people. One need look no further than our public statements in order to detect this. I insist on knowing what my government is doing and it is clear that this right has been usurped. Although I am cognizant that an open society may have its disadvantages in an ideological war with a totalitarian system, I do not believe that the best defense of our freedoms is an emulation of that system. . . .

2g. It is an immoral war for several sets of reasons. It is not only because our presence is unjustified and for what we are doing to the Vietnamese—as I have discussed above—but also because of our “sins” of omission. This country is capable of achieving for its people, and encouraging in other nations, enormous social advancement, but we are now throwing our riches—both of material and of purpose—into the utter waste of the maelstrom of increasing military involvement. If we as a nation really care about people, then we had best make concepts like freedom and equality *real* to all our citizens—and not just political sham—before we play policeman to the world. Our righteousness is often misplaced. Our behavior in Vietnam is immoral for another set of reasons which concern our conduct of that war. As many newsmen have witnessed, time and again we have bombed, shelled, or attacked a “VC village” or “VC structures” and when we later appraise the results, we label dead adult males as “VC” and add them to the tally—and fail to count the women and children. Our frequent indiscriminate destruction is killing the innocent as well as the “guilty.” In addition, our left-handed morality in the treatment of prisoners is odious—we turn them over to the ARVN for possible torture or execution with the excuse that we are not in command but are only supporting the South Vietnam government. Again, this hypocrisy needs no explication. Also frighteningly new in American morality is the pragmatic justification that we must retaliate against the terrorist tactics of the VC. Perhaps most devastatingly immoral about the war in Vietnam are the risks we are assuming for the rest of the world. Each new step and escalation appears unplanned and is an attempt to rectify previous blunders by more military action. The consequences of our course appear too predictable, and although we as a people may elect “better dead than red,” do we have the right to make this choice for the rest of mankind?

2h. I am not a pacifist; I believe that there are times when it is right and necessary that a nation or community of nations employ force to deter or repel totalitarian aggression. My three-year assignment in an operational fighter squadron—with the attendant capacity for inflicting terrible killing and destruction—was based on the personal premise that I was serving a useful deterrent purpose and that I would never be used as an instrument of aggression. This, of course, raises the important and pervasive question for me: What is my duty when I am faced with a conflict between my conscience and the commands of my government? What is my responsibility when there is an irreparable division between my beliefs in the ideals of this nation and the conduct of my political and military leaders? The problem of ultimate loyalty is not one for

which there is an easy solution. And, unfortunately, the issues are most often obscured by those who would undermine the very freedoms they are ostensibly defending—by invoking “loyalty” and “patriotism” to enforce conformity, silence dissent, and protect themselves from criticism. May a government or nation be in error? Who is to judge? As Thoreau asked, “Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience, to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume, is to do at any time what I think right. . . . Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice.” The individual *must* judge. We as a nation expect and demand this—we have prosecuted and condemned those who forfeited their personal sense of justice to an immoral authoritarian system. We have despised those who have pleaded that they were only doing their job. If we are to survive as individuals in this age of acquiescence, and as nations in this time of international anarchy, we must resist total enculturation so that we may stand aside to question and evaluate—not as an Air Force officer or as an American, but as a member of the human species. This resistance and autonomy is difficult to acquire and precarious to maintain, which perhaps explains its rarity. Camus puts it succinctly: “We get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking.” We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty and we must recognize that consensus is no substitute for conscience. As Senator Fulbright has stated, “Criticism is more than a right; it is an act of patriotism—a higher form of patriotism, I believe, than the familiar ritual of national adulation. All of us have the responsibility to act upon this higher patriotism which is to love our country less for what it is than for what we would like it to be.” . . .

2j. I have attempted to sincerely state the values and beliefs that are both most meaningful in my life and relevant to my present dilemma. It would appear that I am no longer a loyal Air Force officer if this loyalty requires unquestioning obedience to the policies of this nation in Vietnam. I cannot honestly wear the uniform of this country and support unjust and puerile military involvement. Although it may be inconsistent, I have been able to justify (or rationalize) my position here at the Academy by my belief that my contribution in the classroom has had more effect in encouraging rationalism, a sense of humanism, and the development of social consciousness than it has had in the inculcation of militarism. My system of ethics is humanistic—simply a respect and love for man and confidence in his capability to improve his condition. This is my ultimate loyalty. And, as a man trying to be free, my first obligation is to my own integrity and conscience, and this is of course not mitigated by my government’s permission or command to engage in immoral acts. I am many things before I am a citizen of this country or an Air Force officer; and included among these things is simply that I am a man with a set of

human values which I will not abrogate. I must stand on what I am and what I believe. The war in Vietnam is unjust and immoral, and if ordered to do so, I shall refuse to fight in that war. I should prefer, and respectfully request, that this resignation be accepted. . . .

The agony of amnesty

As direct American military participation in the Vietnam War ended, bitter controversies erupted over the question of amnesty for those who had deserted or refused induction. President Richard M. Nixon steadfastly refused to consider amnesty and claimed that only “a few hundred” resisters had failed to serve. An estimate published in the *New York Times* on January 30, 1973, however, contended there were 10,000 draft resisters in jail or on probation; 80,000 draft resisters underground in the United States; between 60,000 to 100,000 draft resisters or deserters in exile; and nearly 400,000 veterans with less-than-honorable discharges. Nixon and Vice President Spiro Agnew continually insisted that these people were criminals and must fully pay the penalty for their actions. Agnew’s disgrace and resignation, coupled with President Gerald Ford’s pardon of Nixon for all his Watergate-related crimes, finally forced the government to introduce a limited amnesty policy in September 1974. A sample of the national disunity over amnesty appears next, taken from congressional hearings in March 1974.

Testimony of Fred E. Darling, Executive Coordinator, Military and Veterans Affairs, Noncommissioned Officers Association of the United States of America. . .

MR. DARLING. Mr. Chairman and members of the distinguished subcommittee. The Non-Commissioned Officers Association of the United States of America, NCOA, and the Marine Corps League welcome the opportunity to testify in opposition to any and all legislative proposals introduced in Congress that will grant amnesty or earned immunity to draft evaders and armed forces deserters of the Vietnam conflict.

From U. S. House of Representatives, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties, and the Administration of Justice of the Committee on the Judiciary, *Amnesty*, 93rd Congress, 2nd session, 8, 11, 13 March 1974, pp. 394–396, 527–531.