

POINTS OF VIEW

It's time for our Viet vets to give up bitterness

It's time for the Vietnam War to end. Sure, our troops pulled out of Saigon in the early 1970s, and the ones who didn't go came back from Canada a few years later. But the war continues on the home front.

Just ask President Bill Clinton, who was heckled during a Memorial Day speech at the Vietnam War memorial in Washington. The guy was just trying to make peace with the Vietnam veterans and, for his efforts, he was called a draft dodger.

It's a label that Clinton and I both wear, if that's what you call somebody who didn't have to go to Vietnam because they were in the draft lottery in the early 1970s.

During the presidential campaign, it came out that Clinton was in the same lottery I was during 1970 and his number didn't come up. Mine didn't either.

Up 'til then, I never considered myself a draft dodger and still don't. The same goes for Clinton.

We were in a lottery. Your birthdate was matched up with a number selected at random and you were drafted on that basis. In other words, if you were number one, you better start packing, and if you were 365, it was OK to put the down payment down on the Mustang.

For me there was a certain guilt in not going to Vietnam. Most of my friends went. There were all-night parties and then a dawn drive to Metro Airport where we would put a drunken 19-year-old on a plane.

It wasn't fun.

Luckily, I had a father who didn't want me to go to Vietnam. His contention was that it was a war for the military. The more troops you have; the



JEFF COUNTS

more generals you need. That means rank and money for career military guys.

Being a World War II veteran, my father contended that was enough for our family, especially since somebody in his family had fought in almost every war since the Revolution.

Even my friends who did go to Vietnam didn't show any bitterness because I hadn't.

Oh, sure there were divisions between those who went and those who didn't. There was a certain bit of snobbery on both sides. I remember friends telling war stories in a newsroom at the paper I was working at, and the reporters there ignoring, and even refusing to write about the war. Interviewing Vietnam vets was seen as being pro-war, which wasn't the thing to be at newspapers in the early 1970s.

However, that division started to evaporate as the 1970s wore on and during the 1980s, Vietnam seemed to slip out of our vocabulary.

But it seems as we baby boomers march toward middle age, things are getting worse. That was evident when Clinton tried to talk to the veterans at

the Vietnam memorial. And he was the first president to visit the monument; George Bush and Ronald Reagan headed for good old reliable World War II events for Memorial Day.

There stood Clinton looking as uncomfortable as a Baptist choir boy on a warm Sunday in Hot Springs when the church service is going too long. He was smiling and trying to keep it together while being booed.

The guy was trying to make amends. It's just too bad that the veterans weren't listening. It makes us all victims of the war.

Jeff Counts is the editor of the Plymouth and Canton Observer Newspapers, who still suffers from Vietnam-era guilt and can remember his draft lottery number. He can be reached at 469-2700.

Leftists participate in politically correct bigotry

BY REGINA SALER
GUEST COLUMNIST

Warnings: Right-wing lunatic! If the American Civil Liberties Union had its way, this would become a mandatory button worn by every religious, conservative individual who wasn't comatose or stone-dead.

What a public service it would be to identify these subversives. Mothers with small children could scurry to the other side of the street when seeing a RWL approaching. Enlightened voters could avoid deception.

How easily the public could discern truth when they could discount all RWL ideas by simply pressing the RWL delete button in their minds.

How absurd this scenario would be. Yet time and time again, representatives of the Left refer to conservative, religious individuals as "right-wing fanatics," "right-wing fanatic fringe," and other disparaging generalities, all of which amounts to politically correct

bigotry.

If any other group — gays, feminists, blacks, etc. — were labeled similarly, there would be a huge outcry of protest, lawsuits filed and probably some call for the federal government to compensate the offended group.

But religious conservatives are supposed to take the abuse quietly because, after all, they are responsible for much that ails the world today.

Liberals would have you believe that religious conservatives are the primary promoters of bigotry, intolerance, gay-bashing, woman and child abuse, as well as anti-Semitism.

Furthermore, these RWLs want to force their world view upon the rest of the citizenry.

The truth is that labels and generalities have never been an accurate assessment of any people. The religious right is a group of diverse people whose worldview dramatically contrasts the humanistic, secular worldview espoused by many Leftist individuals.

It could be a wife and mother who is concerned for her children's future. It could be a businessman who wants the best economy for the benefit of his business.

It could be an African-American who believes that the government is not the cure of blacks' social ills.

It could even be a person who has become a committed activist in any one of a number of causes, not unlike the activists of the Left.

These are people so mindlessly categorized as the "right-wing fanatic fringe." The ACLU would apparently like to spread the misconception that these people are second class citizens with less right than others to hold to and practice their world view in any meaningful way, that is, within a cultural context.

It would appear that the liberal gospel of tolerance for a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices ironically excludes those of a Christian nature. Fortunately, the Constitution still

guarantees the right of all people to believe, speak and assemble, regardless of their world view.

Any objective study would reveal that one unifying mission of the Left is the secularization of the United States institutions, a task which has been largely successful over the last 50 years.

The ACLU, the legal arm of the Left, has been the epitome of intolerance as it has filed lawsuit upon lawsuit nationwide to purge Christian influence from public life, especially the practice, even by private individuals.

Through the courts, it has become an organization forcing its views upon the citizenry.

For the ACLU to host a meeting outlining the dangers of right-wing activists is the height of philosophical arrogance. This act alone should speak volumes.

Apparently the Left wishes to close the free market of expression so that the secular, humanistic world view can be promoted without the nuisance of philosophical competition.

How ironic that in the former Soviet Union, where secular humanism was the state mandated religion for so many years, where atheism was taught

in public schools as a matter of course, there is now a cry for religious material.

Meanwhile, we in the United States witness the trend to further secularize our nation in the name of "Separation of Church and State."

For most of our history, we have enjoyed the benefits of being a predominantly Judeo-Christian nation. We must answer the question: "What will be the consequences of becoming a secular nation?"

As world history can demonstrate, pagan nations often pay a price, including increased crime, regimental law-enforcement, loss of personal freedoms, violations of human rights, intolerance of varied beliefs, sexual immorality, breakdown of family units and even ultimately, the downfall of the nation.

We would truly be an ignorant people if we could not learn lessons from nations which have already travelled this course.

If fighting this trend makes one a right-wing fanatic, then I would wear the badge proudly.

Regina Saler, a Farmington Hills resident, is a homemaker and the mother of three children.

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