

Students from a military world

By TOM CONLON

The students were talking about Vietnamese dervolutionary songs and how inept U.S. military troops were in Vietnam. Jokes were made about soldiers wearing aftershave around the Vietnamese. One of the students in the class was offended.

David Beavers, a 26-year-old senior English and history major who took the history course when this incident occurred, served in the U.S. Army from 1975 to 1977.

"A veteran in college sometimes comes across people with uniformed viewpoints and no sense of maturity," Beavers said. "Although I did not serve in Vietnam, I was bothered by that type of thinking among fellow students."

Having served in the Marines myself from 1978 to 1982, I never came across an incident similar to Beavers', but did find a difference in some of my attitudes as compared to those of my fellow students. I appreciated college life more than if I had entered UNC out of high school because I knew what it was like to not have the freedom students have.

I longed for the opportunity to be involved in extra-curricular activities and a chance to move on in life. There also weren't many women at Camp Lejeune, and those that were there I didn't want to know. Coming to UNC after the military gave me a sense of confidence that I could handle pressures of college and benefit from my past experience.

Beavers, one of 124 veterans at UNC, found the experience of the military as one teaching him to deal with adversity and adapt to problems of everyday life. Although he disliked the Army because, as he said, inefficiency and a lack of recognition for meritorious performance were the norm, learning to live under such conditions gave him better discipline in his future academic pursuits.

"Even with better discipline, being a veteran had an alienating effect at school, because I was older than the average student," he said. "I had been out in the world for a while and saw that what the students were saying about U.S. troops in Vietnam was totally uninformed."

Among the problems veterans face at UNC and college in general, the age difference and higher maturity level of veterans sometimes makes it harder for them to relate to their peers, said R. Grant Wolslagel, UNC assistant registrar for veterans and certifications.

"Student veterans tend to be a little bit older and probably a little more mature than the average student," he said. "The age factor can play a big role in their social life and in their perspectives towards college life."

Jack Earl Hutcherson, an Army veteran from the 1972-75 era who first

entered UNC in 1977, said the age factor was a social barrier for him when he entered school.

"I was out of the typical age bracket when I came back to school," he said. "Being six to seven years older than the other students cut down on the number of friends I could have because I was socially separate."

Hutcherson, who is married, said the social adjustment to college would probably be more difficult for single veterans because of the desire to meet people and be more involved in campus activities.

"Because I was married, I didn't have the social pressure on myself — I had family responsibilities to take care of," he said. "But, regardless if a vet is married or not the social barrier is still there."

While counseling is available through campus counseling services, "the chance to discuss similar needs and problems among themselves would be a great asset to veterans at the University," he said.

"Often times the veteran has a different set of problems from the regular 18- or 19-year-old student and they are not taken into account," Hutcherson said. "Faculty, in some cases, could be more sensitive to needs of veterans by understanding their backgrounds and not comparing their problems to those of their younger peers."

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However, attitudes towards veterans at UNC have changed over the years, for the better, Hutcherson said.

"When I first came to UNC, I didn't want to tell anyone I had been a veteran from the Vietnam war era," he said, citing the unpopularity of the war among students of the past. "Today, people are proud to say they've served, and I don't feel ashamed anymore."

John Adams, UNC journalism professor and dean of the School of Journalism from 1969 to 1979, said many Vietnam veterans and active duty personnel working toward degrees felt all students were against the Vietnam war and would hold them responsible for it.

"The veterans and active duty students we had were pleasantly surprised that the other students treated them as older fellow students," he said. "But many of the service people had a psychological barrier that students would be against

them because of the war."

Adams said the School of Journalism was doing consultant work for Ft. Bragg's psychological warfare center and that the Army sent officers to the school for master's degrees. As dean, Adams established an orientation program for active duty students, all officers, after learning the typical problems incoming military students had.

"It was almost a scenario in their adaptations," he said. "The first semester was extremely difficult for them because they had held command positions at various levels and came into a situation where they were equals with second semester sophomores, juniors or young graduate students," he said.

"Many had been out of an academic setting for years, but they all eventually adapted to the demanding intellectual experience," Adams said. "I remember an Army colonel who was very knowledgeable about the military world but knew nothing about the student world. We had a 45-minute talk and I told him he would probably have problems adapting. He thought it was interesting a dean could foresee his future over a four- to five-month period, but I knew he had an adjustment to make, and he did adjust."

Vietnam-era veterans who returned to school generally were serious students with a strong sense of direction and maturity Adams said. "Activities that other students saw as fun—such as fraternity parties — were frivolous to them, because their sense of priorities had changed," he said.

Reasons vary why veterans went in the military before coming to the university. Mark Steven Brantley, a senior economics major from Durham, said he had already been in college at Virginia Military Institute but had no sense of direction.

"I quit school and joined the Navy," he said. "I had no idea what I wanted to major in or what I would do while at VMI, and I thought the Navy would help shape my career goals."

While stationed in Japan, Brantley took night courses on bases through the University of Maryland's extension service and completed two years of college during six years of military service. He then transferred to UNC.

"The Navy helped me develop my priorities," he said. "In high school, you don't have to take care of your welfare — everything is given to you. A freshman coming to UNC, with no experience in the world, is at a disadvantage trying to decide among many majors and on a career. In the Navy, I realized it was either 20 years of that or get out and get a degree."

Tom Conlon, a senior journalism and political science major from St. Paul, Minn., is a staff writer for The Daily Tar Heel.

Other opinion

West Germany — NATO's big ally

By A.C. MIERZEJEWSKI

West Germany is coming apart. That is the impression that an American can easily draw from reports in the domestic news media. But the impression gained by this observer during the course of two fairly lengthy stays in the Federal Republic of Germany within the last 10 minutes contradicts this. Despite many problems West Germany remains a prosperous society with a viable democratic political system.

The keynote in West German affairs is that of the crises that have never occurred. In 1983, it was feared that major demonstrations would disrupt the deployment of new nuclear armed missiles. But the "hot autumn" predicted by members of the anti-nuclear movement never materialized. Opinion polls taken last summer showed not a rise in pacifism but

continued support of the North American Treaty Organization. Another poll taken at the same time demonstrated that the majority of young men were willing to perform their compulsory military service.

Much attention in the United States has been given to the environmentalist Green Party. But the explosive growth of the Greens is viewed in perspective in the Federal Republic. In a recent by-election in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg in the Southwest, the Greens won 9 percent of the vote, bidding fair to replace the liberal Free Democrats as the country's third major party. But the Greens suffer from the fact that, aside from their proposals for the protection of the environment, none of their schemes for restructuring social and economic affairs find broad resonance. The profound reality is that the majority of West Germans have embraced the pluralistic, democratic form of

government and the advanced consumer-oriented economy. At the risk of vast oversimplification, West German society appears sated with material wealth and fears above all else anything that would put at risk that continued enjoyment of it. Consequently it would be wrong to expect major changes in the Federal Republic's internal or foreign policies as a result of forces acting from within the country. Rather, the potentially disruptive factors lie outside.

June 17 is celebrated each year as the day of German national unity. Both members of the ruling coalition, The Christian Democrats and Free Democrats and the opposition Social Democrats accept that national unity can not be achieved in the foreseeable future. They seek a relaxation of tensions between East and West generally and expanded human and economic contacts with their sister state the German Democratic Republic, East Germany. Only the Greens propose immediate unification with concomitant alliance changes. Yet the dream of a unified German national state remains. This stands in stark contrast to the fact that the international settlement resulting from World War II, which is currently the foundation of international relations, has as its basic component the splitting up of Germany. The majority of West Germans are aware of this. They recognize that not only the Soviet Union but also their neighbors, France and Great Britain, would vehemently oppose any attempt at reunification. Therefore they will not initiate any changes in the World War II settlement. One can easily imagine then the astonishment when two very different American political figures, Henry Kissinger and Gary Hart, both recently proposed reducing the American military commitment to the Federal Republic. Storm signals went up in all of the major newspaper, radio and television commentaries.

Change in central Europe can only take place with the concurrence of the United States and the Soviet Union. All (except the Greens) are aware that the stability and prosperity that has characterized the post-war period in Western Europe has resulted from the maintenance of the World War II settlement. When the commitment to this settlement is suddenly questioned by its Western guarantor, the prospect not merely for change but for upheaval becomes very real. Any rashly conceived plan to modify the American commitment to the Federal Republic stemming from the presidential electoral debate in America could have unwanted consequences for all concerned.

The Federal Republic of Germany is coping in the way characteristic of liberal democracies with its internal and external problems. The real potential for disruption stems from shortsighted American proposals rather than from any source within West Germany itself.

Alfred C. Mierzejewski is a graduate student in modern European history from New Bedford, Mass.

As Unks showed, learning can be fun

By JAY LEUTZE

For those of you who never knew Beaugard Williams XIII, I am sorry. For those of you who never knew the traits of Morris Tselovski and the other "last chosens," I am also sorry. These are just two of the many characters brought to life in Professor Gerald Unks' Education 41 class.

Education 41 is more than fictional characters from Country Club Road in Greensboro, though. Education 41 is an education course about life. It teaches students about our values, it challenges those values and it even attacks many of them. More than once, I left Unks' class shaking my head in disbelief at that "unbelievably liberal" man. Unks wouldn't have it any other way. He says head shaking proves a teacher is teaching rather than merely perpetuating an indoctrination process which begins in the first grade and lasts our entire educational career. He intends to rock the foundations of young minds numbed by the status quo. And it works.

Unks' task is not an easy one. His class meets on Tuesday nights from 7 to 10. That's right, for three hours he holds the attention of 200 students who have visions of Papagayo's dancing in their heads. In this time, he not only "teaches" in a traditional sense of the word, but he also tells jokes and applicable anecdotes. He does something else interesting, and he's done it for more than 15 years at Carolina: He fills his class. He fills his class with students who at first wonder if they can endure a course that meets for three hours at a time. These same

students are often the ones who by the end of the class are staying after to talk to Unks.

You see, Education 41 makes students happy. They enjoy it. It is this element of student enjoyment that leads Unks' colleagues and administrators to cast an eye of disapproval on such a class. We have all been brought up to believe that education has to hurt or else we are not learning. Supporters of traditional education can't believe that people can learn in a class where the teacher allows students to eat popcorn. And supporters of traditional education certainly agree that students can't learn from a professor who feels free to drink a beer (oh my gosh) with his students at a local bar. Supporters of traditional education are wrong in this case.

To be sure, Unks has broken a few rules. Our class didn't have any quizzes or mid-terms. We didn't follow a boring textbook, either. But for three hours on Tuesday nights, we were stimulated by a great speaker who taught us to doubt and ask questions. He taught us to question the all-powerful status quo. He taught us why we are what we are and offered recommendations on how to change! So, for those of you who never had Education 41 with Unks, I am sorry. I am particularly sorry because you will never have the chance. Unks is resigning this year to accept a position in Massachusetts. To those of you who may think all we're losing is a good slide, I say you're wrong. Remember, learning doesn't have to hurt.

Jay Leutze is a sophomore English major from Chapel Hill.

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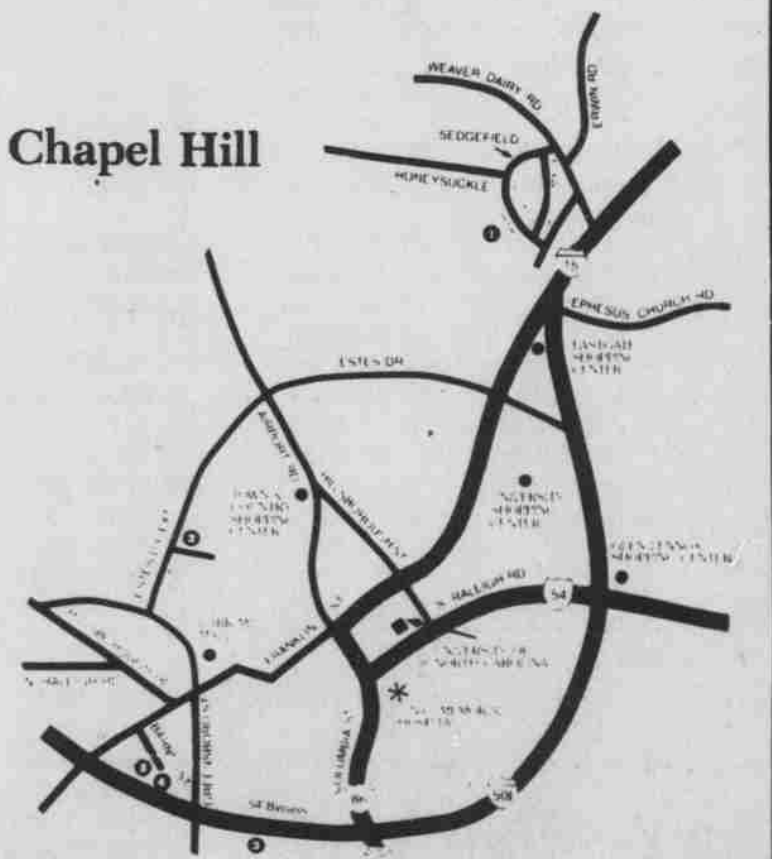
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