

## Pro & Con

**DAVID ROSSIE**  
Commentary

### CBS gives itself a black eye

A week ago tonight, CBS staged a two-hour orgy of self-congratulation, billed as a celebration of the past 75 years. The timing was fortuitous. If the network had waited a

week, and run the show tonight, many of the celebrity guests might have showed up wearing grocery bags over their heads or not shown up at all. Because on Tuesday the network booked the latest organization to roll over for the radical Republicans and their media outliers.

After weeks of promoting its miniseries, *The Reagan*, the network abruptly pulled the two-part movie from its schedule and issued a statement proclaiming that it had not knuckled under to the people to whom it had knuckled under. Rather, its executives had decided that the film, with which they were eminently satisfied a few days earlier, did not, upon further review, present a balanced picture of the Reagan.

The series had been under attack from the usual sources: the Republican National Committee, right-wing media watchdog Brent Bozell, television gossipmouth Bill O'Reilly, and America's Great Moral Force William F. Buckley Jr. (Buckley, Reagan's son Michael, a talk radio host in California, proclaimed that the series was the work of the "Hollywood Left."

Until recently the word "Hollywood" alone was synonymous with depravity, but since Hollywood's declining influence became the state's Republican governor elected, distinction must now be drawn between good Hollywood and bad Hollywood.

These same movie critics did not utter a peep, incidentally, when a Hollywood producer recently delivered a hilariously fictional account of the life of George Bush as a combination of Indiana Jones and Henry V.

But never mind. Although most of those who worked themselves into a lather over the film had little actual knowledge of what it was, word got out that Ron and Nancy were not portrayed, start to finish, in a heavenly glow. It was said, is depicted as a shrill control freak and an astrologically guided manager of her husband's affairs during her White House days. Imagine.

And according to one account Ron is represented as being scornful of AIDS sufferers, dissuading them from paying for their care. It's no fan of either Reagan, but I can't help but say that this is a fundamentalist fraud such as Robertson or Falwell, yes, but not Bush Reagan. He may have had his faults as president but being mean-spirited was not one of them.

CBS, while denying that it caved in to the radicals has been the Reagan network since a cable television property of its parent company Viacom.

Still, a question remains: Why did CBS feel compelled to make the film at this time? Ronald Reagan is dying, slowly and pathetically, a victim of Alzheimer's disease. Nancy Reagan's life has become that of a devoted caretaker. Bush Reagan and his family deserve better than a film discrediting their Washington lives.



Oregon National Guardsman Sgt. Gerald Brattin, of Portland, holds his daughter Michaela, 5, before saying goodbye last month at the Lane County Fairgrounds in Eugene. One of about 600 members of Oregon's 2nd Battalion of the 162nd

Infantry are scheduled to ship out to Fort Hood, Texas, for training and eventual deployment to Iraq. Brattin is an Army veteran who served from 1967-91, including the Persian Gulf War.

## Honoring veterans

We must maintain the courage to question in time of war

By MOLLY CHAKRABORTY

The spring I graduated from Maine-Endwell, my best friend Marilyn wrote to tell me her older brother, Pfc. Howard Schneider, had died in Vietnam. He shipped out in 1967 right before Christmas. By April 28, 1968, he was gone.

We were 18 and had corresponded since her family moved away during the sophomore year — exchanging carefree, happy, funny letters filled with homecoming games, boyfriends and college plans. After Howard became a casualty, our letters turned somber and serious, filled with sad speculation about an uncertain future. His death at 21 forced us to grow up in an instant — our first painful, intimate experience with a war that shaped our lives and our generation. A war that ultimately claimed others from my high school — Tom Gregory, 20; Craig Swartz, 19; Jerry Zimmerman, 25; and Patrick O'Brien, 21 — along with millions of combatants and civilians on both sides. Lives we might have saved if we had asked more questions and spoken up sooner.

This Vietnam Day we face a similar war in Iraq, and it's easy to feel as if we're right back where we started. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld admits the U.S. occupation will mean a "long, hard day." Daily, the media reports military and civilian casualties — with more lives lost each May 1, when President Bush declared major hostilities over, than during the initial invasion.

Even the search for nonexistent weapons of mass destruction ominously resembles the Tonkin Gulf resolution and the domino theory that were used to escalate the Vietnam War.

Daniel Ellsberg, a former Marine and military analyst who leaked the Pentagon Papers over 30 years ago, recently told the *Salt Lake Tribune* "We're being lured into a war again," and said the situation in Iraq is "very like Vietnam: a stale, hopeless occupation."

Very like Vietnam, but with a crucial difference: from the pain and loss and dislocation of that war many of us salvaged a healthy skepticism that allows us to look critically at this one. As that skepticism finds its voice, it could very well lure us into a war again, and said the situation in Iraq is "very like Vietnam: a stale, hopeless occupation."

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contractors like Halliburton. They're negotiating, setting up web sites and talking to the media. Many joined large national "Bring the Troops Home" marches last month in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco, fueled by concern about demoralized messages from loved ones stationed in Iraq. That family outcry took years to happen during the Vietnam War.

As the Bush administration tries to minimize public suspicions about the true character of the Iraq occupation — forbidding photos of coffin arriving at U.S. bases, holding wounded military personnel in Germany where the public can't see them, and working the media to put its own spin on the developing quagmire — U.S. service members are already questioning their role.

After just months at the front, half the troops responding to a survey by the military newspaper *Stars and Stripes* said morale is low, a third felt the war is made of little or no value, and many said they do not plan to re-enlist. Some military personnel failed to return after recent leaves in the United States, while others are refusing to go.

Communities nationwide are questioning plans to spend \$87 billion for the Iraq occupation while schools, health care and other vital services lack funds. And many veterans made ill by war-related toxins — from Agent Orange to depleted uranium weapons — want to know why the government is cutting VA benefits.

Those of us who lost someone in Vietnam have spent years asking why and wondering if some greater good could come from their passing.

## Two generations form an ice cream connection

By MARVIN BLACKMAN

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon, with the glorious fall colors all along the hillsides, 14 men traveled from Vetsal to the Oxford Veterans Home for an ice cream social.

Three of those travelers were Elks club members — Fuzzy Fowler, Dave Williams and me. The other 11 men were members of the Vetsal High School football team, dressed in their game jerseys and faded "spit-and-vinegar" gear.

On the trip-up Route 12, through the winding hills, the players talked about past and future games, particularly their rivalry with the team from Horseheads. As the season was beginning to wind down, their thoughts of playoffs and championships were abundant.

But all that would soon change. As we entered the social hall, which had about 75 men and women veterans, almost all in wheelchairs, the atmosphere was electrifying. I'm not sure who was more taken aback by this initial meeting — the veterans, seeing those strapping football players come to visit, the players, taking in for what for many of them was their first sight of the frailty of aging or me, witnessing this glorious meeting of two generations.

We finally got to the task at hand, which was serving ice cream to these aging heroes. The 11 young men enthusiastically formed an assembly line to dish out the treats and pass them to the veterans, who were anxiously awaiting their desert.

Yes, the ice cream tasted good but that was the least of the benefits of this day. As the veterans ate, the football players sat with them, one or two to a table. Of course they talked about football, but they also talked about the history the veterans had lived through, and about lives and lives lost. They talked about experiences of the past and anticipations of the future.

Not a single person in the room wasn't moved by this interaction.

The most moving event of the day was watching one of the football players sitting with a blind veteran from Vetsal will remember it for the rest of his life. And so will I.

Blackman is Exalted Ruler of Vetsal Elks Lodge 2500.

## Points of view

**Question:** Have the accounting scandals shaken your trust in corporate America?



**RICHARD HILL, 66**  
Retired, Singapore  
"No it hasn't. I think it's the same thing as the real estate scandals of the '80s. It's rather large, but insignificant in the larger picture."



**GEORGE YANG, 20**  
Student, Vetsal  
"Not particularly. Even though these scandals occurred, I believe the basic idea and structure of our businesses are still intact."



**FARIDE RODRIGUEZ, 19**  
Student, Vetsal  
"I feel corporate America is out there to make a profit for their stockholders, regardless of what morals, ethics and laws are there to stop them."



**DONNA MOTYKA, 50**  
Diplomat, Vetsal  
"Absolutely. They've lied to us, they've stolen for us, they've done for us."



**GREGORY MATHIAS, 18**  
Student, Vetsal  
"Yes it has. You don't know if corporate America just wants your money. They don't care about the needs of the consumer. It makes you wonder about job security and your retirement funds."

**ROBBIE CRISPILL, 40ISH**  
Product sales assistant, Oxford

"Yes. You can't trust them. Where do you get a job? There is no such thing as retirement now. You have to save your money in your own way like in the olden days."

— Compiled by Debora Swartz

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