

Opinion/Commentary/Letters

Carter's draft evader pardon

Pro

By PHILLIP ROBINSON

When President Carter pardoned the draft resisters the other day, he took the last great step out of the Vietnam fiasco. Peace has made most of us forget the "gook-killing" treachery that some of our most honored military men took part in, and made us all to unwilling to forgive those who refused to participate.

After numerous cries to put the Watergate mess behind us, it's none too soon that we do the same with Vietnam. It has been close to three years since America withdrew from the last Vietnamese base and forsook the nebulous cause "we" were fighting for. That's three years thousands of men have had to wait, while Nixon had to wait only one day. If we are truly guaranteed equal treatment under the law, then the forgiveness given to one man with many crimes against the nation should and must be extended to many men who had but one disagreement with the nation. However, this equalization is not the most important justification of the new President's act.

The Vietnam conflict, in legality, was not a war. And the only reason

we were over there was to prevent the "domino theory" from turning into reality—not for the Vietnamese good, but for our own selfish and egotistical interests.

We, as a nation, were never threatened by the North Vietnamese, except in ideology, and to even compare Vietnam to World War II, as many veterans of the latter have done, cheapens each life lost in service to America. Those who refused to fight following Pearl Harbor were refusing to protect our nation's freedoms and ideals, but I seriously doubt that those who refused to go and take part in such acts as the My Lai massacre were refusing to fight for "liberty and justice for all."

The men who fought, not commanded, in Vietnam knew the war best. And most of them supported the unconditional pardon. If I may borrow a quote from one of these men who fought, was wounded and permanently crippled in Southeast Asia, to close: "I was wrong...they were right. It's up to God to forgive me for what I have done, and it's up to America to forgive them (the resisters) and bring them back home."

Robinson is the president of Texas A&M University Young Democrats and is a junior majoring in zoology.

Con

By MARK ELAM

"When those who chose not to serve their country are heaped with glory and cast as the 'new patriots' let us all remember that FREEDOM IS NOT A GIFT.

On Jan. 5, 1977, 36-year-old Lt. Cmdr. Michael D. Christian purposefully ended his long naval career in a tragic ceremony at Rosewood Memorial Park in Virginia Beach.

This man who had spent more than half of his life in service to his country, including six years as a POW in a Vietnamese torture camp, placed two Purple Hearts, a Good Conduct Medal, two Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit, three Bronze stars, four Air Medals and a Navy Commendation Medal on the grave of WWI Cpl. Marion L. Blevins.

Christian shed his medals out of disgust and dismay at President Carter's promise to grant amnesty to American draft evaders. "I really don't want them anymore," said Christian. "They've lost any value to me. We are making heroes out of deserters and condemning ourselves. The price of honor seems pretty cheap this year."

And so begins the effort to "heal the wounds" of America. No, not the wounds of those Americans who were literally wounded in Vietnam. That does not seem to be on the agenda of the ceremonies being conducted to welcome back America's "new patriots," the draft evaders.

Across the nation some flags flew quietly at half mast in remembrance of those who did serve. The excited news media occasionally took time from long interviews with returning draft evaders to chat with a disgruntled veteran of WWI at the local VFW post. But no one seemed to be interested in the thoughts of men such as Lt. Cmdr. Christian, the true authorities on the war.

Unfortunately, the news media has also been rather silent lately on the subject of what I call New Vietnam. How can the same news media which daily cried out about American atrocities during the war, remain so silent when 300,000 Vietnamese are still being held in detention camps or when a minimum 1,200,000 Cambodian people were killed after the war in communist attempts to reorganize society? Something is definitely lacking.

But what about the amnesty granted to American draft evaders? If it was wrong to do so, as I believe it was, then what might the consequences of this mistake be? To begin with, it is obvious that whenever we condone or simply refuse to punish the law breaker, we in effect are saying that it was alright to break the law. If a need arises to

ever reinstate the draft we are likely to find a large number of people who are unwilling to submit to a law which they were earlier shown was alright to break.

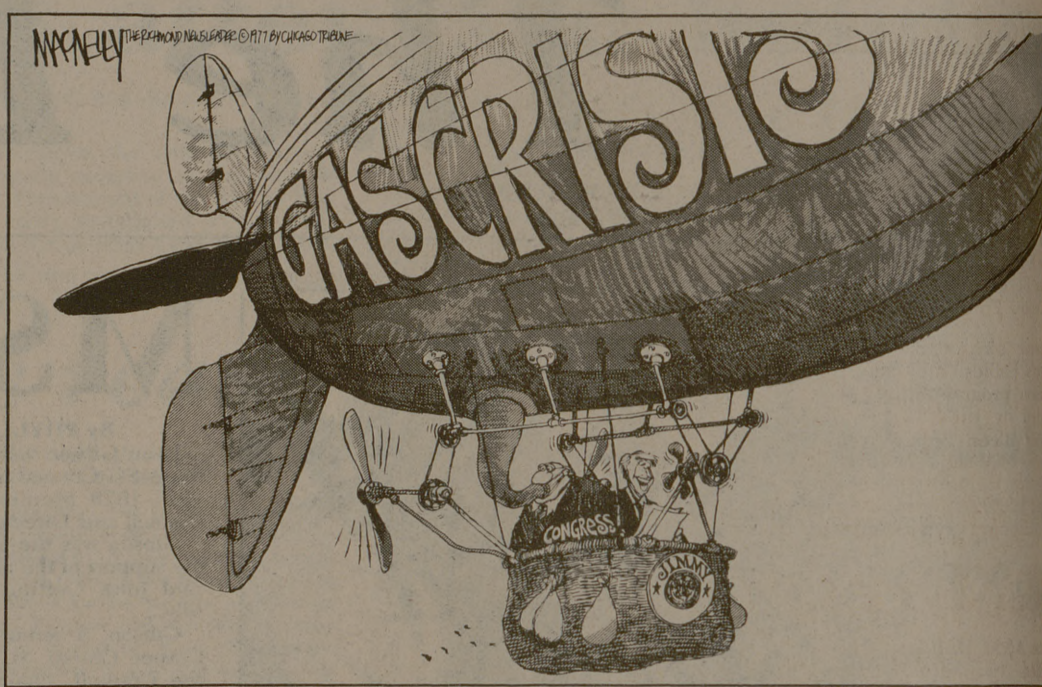
Many excuses were given as to why draft evaders chose to leave their country rather than fight in the war. Taking into account the numerous allowances made for conscientious objectors, I would have to conclude that the most likely excuse, although the most rarely claimed, hinges upon the fact that many evaders were more concerned with saving themselves than with any moral objection to the war. The same men who simply packed it in and took off, now expect and even demand to be delivered from the consequences of their actions as though they were the prodigal son come home. In their case, however, there is no concern for or even admission of wrongdoing. Benjamin Franklin once said that "Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." But how easily we forget such warnings.

And where are the once celebrated leaders of those people who cried out about the injustice of the war? After having lived in Cuba, Russia and China, former Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver now says we should have a military capability second to none to safeguard democracy from the "communist" totalitarian regimes.

Joan Baez and Daniel Ellsberg, feeling doublecrossed by the communist liberators, sent a letter to Vietnam protesting the internment of 300,000 people. They received no reply. And where is that darling Jane Fonda who once said we would be on our knees praying to be communists if we truly understood communism? I do not know. But I do know where to find the father of a Texas POW who replied "I never did crawl very well," when asked how he liked the idea of crawling to Hanoi to obtain the release of American POW's.

Yes, it is time that we bind America's wounds. But let us begin by binding the wounds of America's true patriots; the men and the families of those men who did fight in Vietnam. Men who ask nothing more of their service than that it not be forgotten or degraded.

Elam is vice-chairman of the A&M chapter of Young Americans for Freedom and is a sophomore majoring in political science.



Shuttle system needs work

Editor:

On Jan. 23 I waited from 5:30 p.m. until 6:00 for the shuttle bus. Eventually another student stopped and gave me a ride, so I do not know how much longer I would have had to wait before the bus arrived. But thirty minutes is too long. My apartment complex is the last stop the shuttle bus makes, and it is not uncommon to reach the stop at 7:30 a.m., watch two packed buses pass, finally catch the third and arrive at your 8:00 class five minutes late.

According to one of the bus drivers who requested that I not give his name, the entire route should not take over 15 minutes. Since at least in the morning two buses are operating this route, I cannot understand what the problem is. One thing I do understand is that I paid \$15.00 for the shuttle bus service and the service is not adequate. The school is responsible for this transportation system and I appeal to the school to amend the situation.

—Stephanie Jaye Evans, '80

failed to show the courage to serve in the armed forces of their country or the moral courage to risk expressing their views in court. They have been pardoned, but their actions will never be justified.

—Paul Finberg

Crowd behavior upsets fan

Editor:

This letter is in reference to the unsportsmanlike conduct that was displayed at the A&M - Rice basketball game last Saturday night. One of the more heavyset Rice players was unmercifully ridiculed and laughed at by the Aggie fans. Cat calls and derogatory remarks were shouted whenever the Rice player got the ball. Quite a few of us

in the stands were upset by behavior that was totally unacceptable. To top it all off, the yells of Frank Shannon do nothing to discourage the behavior of the crowd. The fans are supposed to lead their best to control a crowd. In my opinion, this behavior could have been done to a large degree by the yell leaders can stop from yelling at a bad call, could have done quite a bit to control this disruptive behavior.

I love A&M and the spirit the greatest anywhere. I am proud that if this type of behavior continues, A&M will no longer be the same - in my eyes and in the eyes of the public.

—Lynn



Battalion

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Aerobics Club Shoe Sale Continued

The A&M Aerobics Club is selling New Balance Running Shoes to A&M students and faculty. This is not a money making project for the club, we just want to break even, for this reason we are able to sell the shoes for \$15.00 — they regularly run for \$20.00-\$25.00. You can purchase these shoes at G. R. White Col. Annex from 12:30 to 1:30 at Room 255. Here are the sizes left: 5D, EE; 5-1/2B, D; 6D; 6-1/2B; 7-1/2E; 8-1/2B; 9A, B, C, D, E; 9-1/2B, E; 10B, C; 10-1/2B, 11B.

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- Typed triple space
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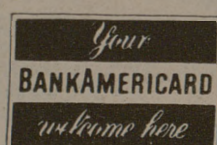
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