

# Mostly about People

By Wally Trabing

## Thank You, Vincent Locatelli

Yesterday morning was quite serene and normal and in the brisk, sweet air I walked to work.

Average morning, except that this time there was a tight knot of mourners in front of the funeral home, waiting for the body of 20-year-old Vincent Locatelli to begin its last trip through its home town to the cemetery.

A few days ago Pvt. Locatelli had his life ripped from his body by a Viet Cong grenade somewhere in Viet Nam. Santa Cruz boy.

I crossed the street to get around the people and passing this quiet scene I suddenly cried a little—just a few seconds.

For the rest of the day I kept wondering why.

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And now I think I have it partially figured out.

Perhaps it was because the Viet Nam war to me is a series of paper headlines; a series of street corner pro and con arguments; and then suddenly on this brisk, average morning there was a coffin moving through our streets — streets growing in bustle with Americans getting on with their new day's activities.

Here was the real Viet Nam war, passing among us in its most poignant finality, yet few recognized it for what it was.

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Maybe it was because this is an undeclared war, without an official patriotic stamp, therefore the city is not officially responsible to pay tribute to its victims.

A kind of semi-war where the American flags in front of the funeral home are lowered at half-staff as if part of the funeral decorations, while across the street the big full sized official flags at city hall and the library, which represent all the American people, remain aloofly

at full staff, as if ignoring the fallen private as a nobody.

Maybe I cried because of the horror of the whole war idea where the mothers of slain Viet Cong are mourning this day their sons who never heard of democracy and died fighting for their ideals.

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Well, my tears dried quickly because I am father's little man, and all I can do now is to say: "Thank you, Vincent Locatelli."

As usual, a little late!

You have given me the most precious gift it is possible to give.

Perhaps I can't use it personally. Most likely it would not have affected my life one way or the other whether or not the United States involved itself in the Viet Nam war.

But I think your gift will mean the difference between freedom and political bondage to my grandchildren and their children.

My grandchildren will not remember you. It is like this in all wars.

And so I am thanking you now for them.

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There are those who might say you died in vain; that this war is a terrible mistake.

Well, all wars are terrible mistakes. This country has made its share of them, but it has thrived in spite of them; its pools of bigotry and its foreign policies and weakness toward a dollar diety.

This time our government has chosen the point of view that it is better to check a militant ideology away from home, than to wait for it to be fought out in our towns and villages and countryside where mothers and babies will bleed and die like those in Viet Nam.

You didn't make the policy, but you went over there as part of our flesh and blood and did what you could and died. Died even for the right for some to protest the war, because this is what this country is all about.

For this, I thank you.

The University of Washington, Seattle, has conferred over 90,000 bachelor and advanced degrees since its establishment in 1861.

Any way you figure it...

THE FINEST  
WELCOME  
TO SANTA CRUZ  
IS WELCOME

