

Notes on Washington rally

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DAILY WORLD
Tuesday, April 27, 1971

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'THE SOLDIER CAN THINK'

Tributes were paid to the special role of the Vietnam veterans.

Peter, Paul and Mary dedicated their song, "Give Peace a Chance," to the veterans.

Lt. John Kerry, "who had such an impact on Washington last week," introduced to a thunderous ovation, accepted the applause for "1,200 active-duty GIs who took part in the demonstration."

Kerry quoted Brecht: "Your tank has only one defect, it needs a driver." And Kerry added, "Your plane has one defect; it needs a pilot... Your army has one defect — your soldier can think."

Kerry continued:

"We have undertaken one last mission, to search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war... so 30 years from now when our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm, or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say 'Vietnam' and mean not a desert, not a filthy obscene memory, but mean instead the place where American finally turned around and where we helped turn it around.

"The week is over, but not the quest for peace.

"This country cares more about the legislation for where we sleep than where we die. (applause)

"If this country is going to be without Vietnams, it must be without Selmas, Watts, Kent States."

Two veterans presented symbolic gifts to Rev. Ralph Abernathy as he took the stand: Medals of brothers killed in Vietnam and draft cards which they proceeded to destroy.

A black vet hugs the Rev. Abernathy: "It's the blacks that are getting it in Vietnam," he says.

Abernathy: "The real heroes of the war are the Veterans Against the War who are expressing the nation's outrage."

Early on Saturday, before the rally started, were still visible the remnants of the medals and battle ribbons hurled back the night before at the rear of the Capitol, inside the fence which had been erected as a temporary barrier to protect the speakers' platform.

By late afternoon, many additional clusters of ribbons, infantrymen's badges, medals, and a combat helmet, and someone added a large framed certificate of the award to Sgt. E 5 John E. Sheridan Jr. U.S.A. of the Army Commendation Medal, signed by Secretary of the Army Resor and W.C. Westmoreland as commanding general — dated 13 April 1966, for "Meritorious Service in the Republic of Vietnam."

Veterans, with their plastic M-16 automatic rifles, made a tremendous impact.

Banners of the American Servicemen's Union declared: "Jail the Brass — Free the Camp McCoy Three."

Smaller red, white banners with pictures of three soldiers also said, "Free the Camp McCoy Three."

A long banner: "Active Duty GIs"

A big blue banner with a red fringe: "Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade," with the Liberty Bell in the center and the slogan, "Liberty in Spain."

White overseas hats: "GIs for Peace," "Vets for Peace in Vietnam"