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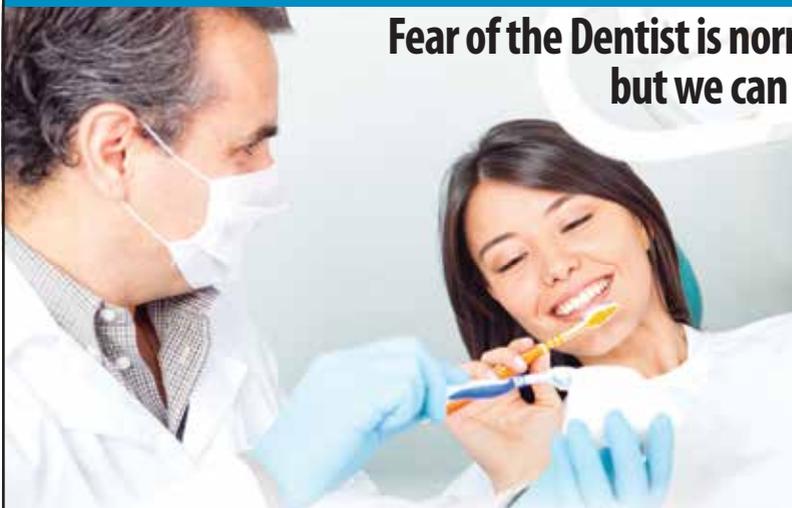
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NEWS & NOTES Q&A

Vietnam behind the lens

The Currier delves into the Vietnam War through photos

The Currier Museum of Art reached out to Peter Burdett, chairman of the State Veterans Advisory Committee, as it pieced together its latest photo exhibit, “Visual Dispatches from the Vietnam War,” on display through Nov. 11.

Q: *What are your thoughts on the exhibit?*

They had the right idea. They decided they wanted to spend some time talking to veterans.

The advisory committee provided guidance.

[Yes], essentially saying, you’ve got to do more than just put up photos. There’s a lot of background.

So just looking at the photos, you’re really not getting the whole picture?

That’s exactly right. ... The photo where the little girl is running away from the Napalm attack — everyone remembers it. The actual Napalm attack was by Vietnamese pilots who dropped a load in an inappropriate time and place. Essentially, it was a mistake. The little girl, she lives in Canada and she communicates with the photographer. She has no ill will against the U.S. ... It’s interesting to get the background.

What was it like for veterans, piecing it together?

What we discovered was that these photographs — they’re all classic ones, like the ones on the cover of Life magazine or the front pages of newspapers — they’re all really pretty emotionally charged for Vietnam veterans. The emotions of the display of pho-

“Visual Dispatches from the Vietnam War”

Where: Currier Museum of Art

When: On display through Nov. 11.

Guests are invited to use a public response area next to the exhibit to share reflections. Vietnam veterans may share personal photos of their combat experience. Send email to visualdispatches@currier.org.

Conversations with a Vietnam Veteran Sunday, Sept. 15, from 1 to 3 p.m.;

Saturday, Sept. 28, from 10 a.m. to noon; Sunday, Oct. 13, from 1 to 3 p.m.; and Saturday, Oct. 26, from 10 a.m. to noon.

Time Stands Still: Play Reading Sunday, Sept. 29, at 2 p.m. This Tony-nominated 2009 drama is the story of a photographer and a journalist who share a passion for the adrenaline rush they get from reporting in the world’s deadliest war zones.

Motorcycle Meetup Sunday, Oct. 6, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Motorcyclists are invited to view the exhibition.

Meet **James Nachtwey** and watch **War Photographer** on Wed., Oct. 30, at 4 p.m. Nachtwey will discuss his experiences as a wartime photojournalist.

tos and the feelings they brought, they were things that were tucked away for 50-something years, through generations of people.



Peter Burdett. Courtesy photo.

And the Currier wants veterans to take part?

They are also calling for opportunities for Vietnam veterans to supply some of their own photos and background stories ... other

than just what those in the U.S. media wanted to sensationalize. ... A lot of Vietnam veterans take extreme umbrage to that, because they weren’t welcomed home in the same ways that those in Afghanistan were.

What feedback are you hearing now?

There are those who never served in the country and a great deal of them have difficulty really understanding the Vietnam experience. The never will; they weren’t there. There are others who don’t quite understand the sensitivity. Those that might get the opportunity to reflect on the exhibit, I hope they’ll try to get at least some sense of the fact that Vietnam was a whole lot more than just a political event. It was a war. People were dying. There was also a great amount of good that no one wants to address. ... They worked to make sure the population was taken care of, orphanages, schools, many of the same things you hear about in Afghanistan.

Burdett said he’s hoping more Vietnam veterans come forward during the exhibit.

They should take their loved ones to this exhibit and talk about what they observed ... in Vietnam and deal with that history.

[Burdett just missed the war himself.]

I was a Vietnam era guy. I raised my hand in 1970, and I got a draft number. Ask anyone of my era if they were 16, 17, 18 years old, if they got a draft number, they still remember it. ... By the time I received my wings to fly in the U.S. Navy, flying helicopters, the war had just ended. ... I would have gone. I was ready to roll, just like anyone else.

What emotions were you going through as you prepared for the war?

I don’t think I was disappointed that I didn’t go. The weather in Pensacola, Fla., was way better than Vietnam. — Jeff Mucciarone