1,000 Veterans Begin Week's Protest Against War With Capital March
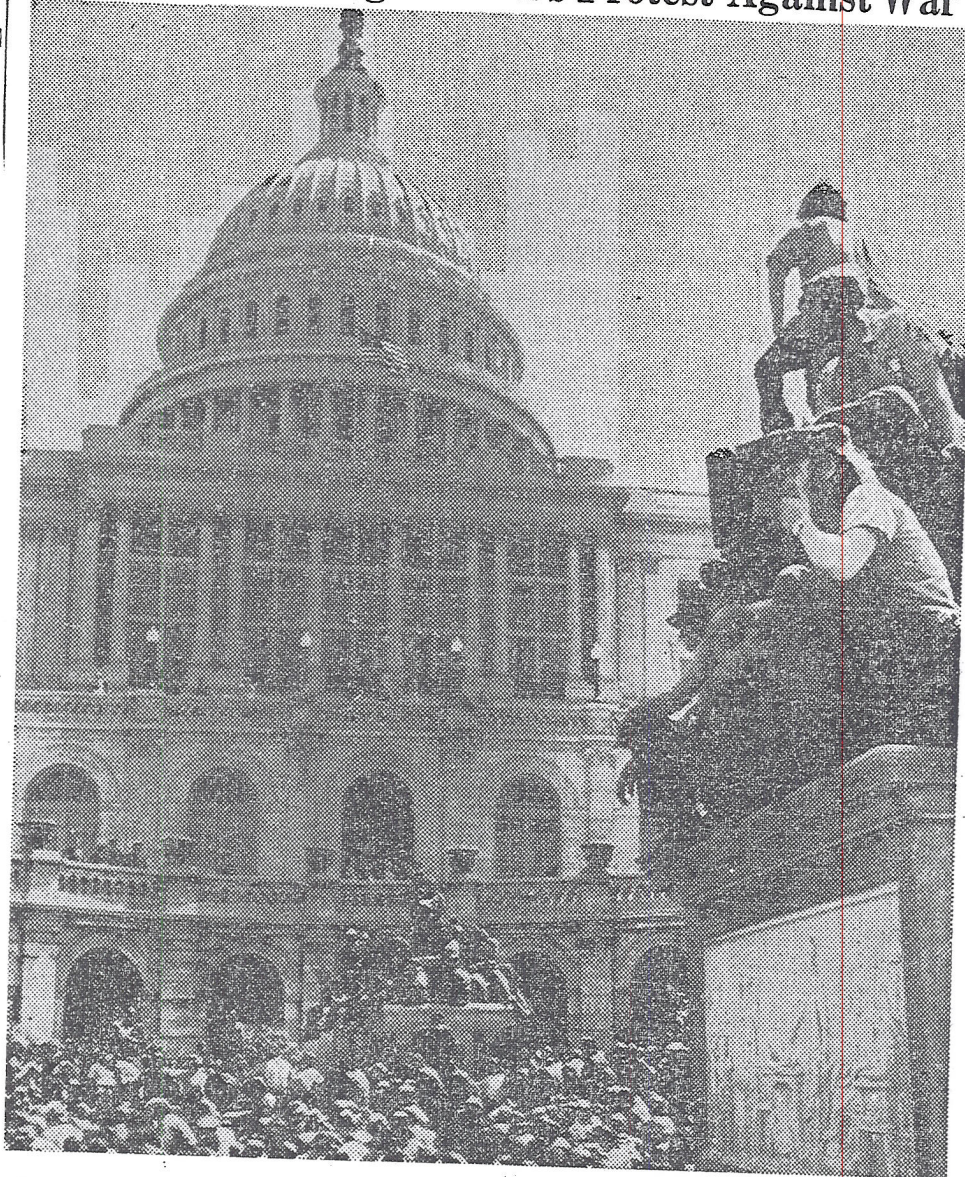

Vietnam veterans gathered at the west front of the Capitol yesterday for antiwar protest

The New York Times/Mike Lien

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WASHINGTON, April 19—About 1,000 veterans, protesting against United States involvement in the Indochina war, began a week-long demonstration in the capital today with a march from Arlington Memorial Cemetery past the south gate of the White House to the Capitol steps.

The veterans, wearing an assortment of military uniforms and medals, also won today in the United States Court of Appeals the right to camp out for the week on the grassy mall parkland in downtown Washington.

The veterans began arriving in small groups from as far away as California yesterday afternoon and spent the night camped out on Federal parkland near the Potomac River.

Last week the Justice Department obtained an injunction banning the veterans group from using the Mall area near the Washington monument. The veterans have said that camping in clear view of the Capitol and the White House is an integral part of their protest.

According to a spokesman for the recently formed Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the appeals courts granted them permission to use the Mall area as long as they maintained sanitary facilities and did not damage the area.

This morning the veterans' group, which included some men who said they were veterans of Korea and World War II with a few wives and girl friends, attempted to lay wreaths honoring American and Vietnamese dead at the Arlington cemetery but found the gates closed to them.

The veterans asked why they were not allowed into the cemetery they believed was spcially for veterans.

John Kary, a oLng Island youth, said as he turned away from the cemetery that he lost his eyesight while serving with the marines in Vietnam.

"The whole thing is a waste of people's lives," he said. "It's our cemetery and people are going to pay respect to their brothers and they close the cemetery. Who do they think they are?"