

Veterans Discard Medals In War Protest at Capitol

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WASHINGTON, April 23 — In twos and threes, the medals flew over a wire fence that had been hastily erected in front of the Capitol and landed at the feet of the statue of Chief Justice John Marshall, at the building's west entrance. The men who had won the medals in Vietnam were throwing them away.

About 700 veterans discarded medals before about 500 spectators. The capital police said tonight that the medals were still where they had been thrown.

"To President Nixon, I send you greetings," said one shaggy-haired young Army veteran, as he tossed a handful of service ribbons over the fence to join the Purple Hearts, Silver Stars, discharge papers and commendation medals piled there.

It was the last, and the most emotional, of the demonstrations this week by members of the Vietnam Veterans Against

the War. About 1,000 members of the loosely organized group came to Washington last Monday to tell the Government and the nation about what many of them said had been the most profoundly shocking experience of their lives — the Vietnam war.

The White House, meanwhile, set a tone of official forbearance toward other antiwar demonstrators, expected to number 100,000 or more, who will gather tomorrow for the fourth mass protest here since Mr. Nixon took office.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said there was no information to suggest violence. He added that the President had instructed his Administration "to proceed in a way that would not lead to possible violence of any sort and with the understanding that people have a right to ex-

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press themselves."

At a special Senate hearing today a succession of the protesting veterans told an overflow audience in the new Senate Office Building about what they said was the previously unreported side of the war.

The session was attended by Senators George S. McGovern of South Dakota, Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota and Philip A. Hart of Michigan, all Democrats.

Representative Charles A. Vanik, Democrat of Ohio, was also present. The hearings were described by an aide to Mr. McGovern as a "special ad hoc" hearing to let the veterans present testimony.

Dale Grenada, 26 years old, a former quartermaster aboard the destroyer Richard B. Anderson, told of a mission in which he said his ship had been directed to "destroy a suspected Vietcong village."

After the shelling began, Mr. Grenada recalled, "the spotter planes reported people fleeing across the open fields, so we switched to fragmented shells and began to chop the people up. Then we began firing phosphorous shells, incendiaries, and burned what was left to the ground."

The only difference between himself and First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr., Mr. Grenada said, was, "Calley was guilty because he could see who he was killing — I couldn't, so I'm not guilty." Lieutenant Calley was convicted for murdering civilians at My Lai in South Vietnam.

Meanwhile, the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Herbert Rainwater, said that "nothing could be further from the truth" than to suggest that the demonstrators typified Vietnam veterans, and some onlookers suggested that most of them were not even former servicemen.

There was no way to take an accurate count of the authentic veterans. Some showed their discharge papers to reporters and others rattled off serial numbers and military unit designations. Nobody questioned the authenticity of the amputees who frequently led the ragtag "search and destroy" mock marches in wheel chairs.

Yesterday, 106 of the veterans were arrested on the steps of the Supreme Court for conducting a noisy protest of the

Court's decision, the night before, to uphold the injunction against sleeping on the Mall. Those arrested were originally charged with the serious offense of obstructing justice, but, at the request of the Justice Department, the charges were reduced to lesser ones of disorderly conduct.

Highlight of the Week

It was this morning's demonstration, though—the spectacle of the men stripping themselves of combat honors and medals given to them by parents of their dead buddies—that probably best exemplified the point the group had been trying to make for five days.

Joseph Bangert, a 22-year-old former Marine who, like most of the others, was dressed in parts of his jungle fatigue uniform, returned six medals including the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

He said that he had first wanted to give them back while still in Vietnam "when I found out that the 'political force' we were fighting was the people. We were taught, 'Don't trust the kids, don't trust the old women, they'll kill you.' It's the people's struggle against the aggressor, but we're the aggressor."

Joseph H. Trigliò, 25, a former Air Force sergeant who threw back a plaque he received as an honor graduate of his basic training school, shook his longish hair. "It was three and a half years of wasted time," he said. "It was a disservice to my country. As far as I'm concerned, I'm now serving my country."

After several hundred of the veterans had filed past the statue, depositing along with the medals and citations a few uniform jackets, helmets and even a plastic submachine gun, Larry Rottman, a veterans' organizer from New Mexico, declared the week's protest "now formally concluded."

Campsite Cleaned Up

After the crowd had returned to the campsite, to clean the area before breaking camp, one of the remaining veterans was asked what would become of the medals.

"I guess somebody will sweep them up and throw them away," he said. "We sure as hell don't want them any more."

The veterans who protested today had suffered some setbacks. Their plan to hold a



The New York Times/Mike Lien

FENCE BUILDER: A Government carpenter at work outside the Capitol on fence erected to curb protesters against war. Later, some veterans threw their medals over the fence.

memorial service for war dead inside the National Cemetery was by locked gates. Their camping on the east side of Capitol Mall, in clear violation of a Federal injunction, had been prohibited by worried officials on government's property.

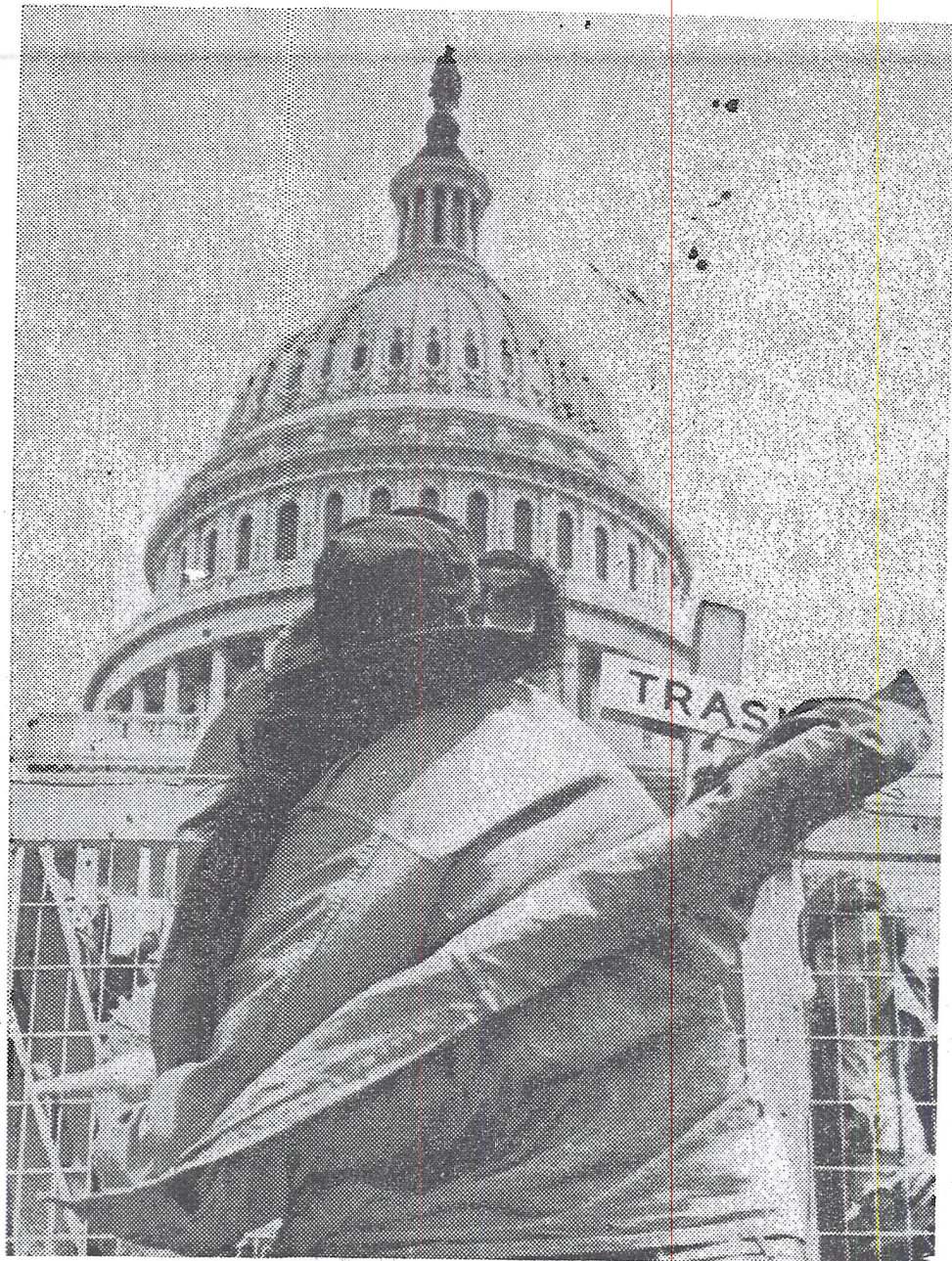
But from these doublings grew an anti-test that, judging by the reaction this city ultimately had an impact far greater than its numbers.

The veterans heard right to sleep on the grounds of the Senate and House, and the Nixon Administration, which pursued the matter to the Supreme Court, the order was upheld, backed down and allowed the injunction to be dissolved.

"It would not have the purpose of cooling the country to have six minutes of television showing of resting veterans," a House official explained this morning.

Mr. Ziegler, the press secretary, added that Mr. Nixon's handling of the matter of the Mall had been "appropriately" handled by the administrators at the Arlington Cemetery said that the locked gates had been a "misunderstanding."

Ironically, if it had not been for the dispute over the "camp-in" and the subsequent support their situation generated among members of Congress, the protest might have passed with relatively little notice.



United Press International

ANTIWAR GESTURE: A veteran tossing his war medals over a fence erected near the statue of Chief Justice John Marshall outside U.S. Capitol as week of protest ended.