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Hillside

College Heights Herald Magazine

Tuesday, January 26, 1993



COVER STORY: A Western photographer travels to Vietnam to show the effects of the war he fought 24 years ago.

INSIDE: He's at every practice and every game. He'll do anything for the Tops — as long as they don't call him water boy.

VIETNAM: EFFECTS OF A WAR

STORY BY CHRIS POYNTER

PHOTOS BY LARRY POWELL

He was a young soldier — a fit 20-year-old who'd settled at Fort Bliss, Texas, to serve in the army that his father, grandfather and great-grandfather served in. He was only recently married and his wife was pregnant, the baby due in two weeks.

And then, from the United States Army's chain-of-command, came the order that would forever change Larry Powell.

"Sgt. Powell, you have been ordered to serve your country in Vietnam. You will report in two weeks for training and depart for Vietnam afterward."

Powell brought his family back to his native Kentucky and soon was on foreign soil fighting a war that some Americans didn't support.

It's been 24 years since Powell was that fit soldier. Now 46, he's sitting in his office in Western's photography lab reflecting on 388 days in Vietnam.

He came to Western in 1988 after having brain surgery due to an injury during Vietnam. It was his eighth surgery since the war, and it left him partially disabled.

He came here looking for something to do, and he thought he'd learn how to take better pictures of rocks, trees and animals, Powell said.

Photography was only going to be a hobby. Now he's using it as a social tool and instead of running convoys in Vietnam, he is fighting the war's effects with his camera.

Last month, while the rest of Western was leaving for Christmas, Powell went back to the land that 24 years ago was the enemy's territory.

He went back to Vietnam, not in vain, but to help himself come to grips with the war that changed his life. And, more

importantly, he wants America to come to grips with the war that forever stained this country.

"I don't think you can get on with the future unless you deal with the past," Powell said as he

leaned forward in his chair. "For me, the Vietnam war is always going to be in my mind. I'm not going to forget it."

In the newspapers, on the television and on the radio, the media has been telling Vietnam veteran stories nearly every day since the war ended.

But America has yet to deal with the war's emotional pain, Powell said. In this country, Vietnam was isolated to those who fought in it and their families. And most people can't see that the war has long tentacles reaching to all ages and parts of America.

So Powell has focused his attention on telling the people about the war's effects, and he's doing it through the camera lens.

Returning to Vietnam was something Powell had always wanted to do, but he never had the money. Then last year, a German filmmaker who wanted to do a documentary on a veteran returning to Vietnam contacted Powell. After some phone calls and a visit, Powell was on a 25-hour flight to the country that he swore he'd never visit again.

As the plane got closer and closer to the country, Powell's



Hillside

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Page 6: Zack Stroble is student trainer for the men's basketball team. Players say they couldn't get along without him.

Story by Dennis Varney and photos by Darron Silva

Magazine editor: Anya L. Armes
Photo editor: Rick Loomis



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emotions swelled. He braced himself to be considered an outcast.

"I was expecting somewhere along the trip I would be confronted by somebody telling me to go home or yell 'baby killer,'" he said. "I didn't find that. I found very receptive and warm people."

Soon after he stepped off his plane and headed into the country, Powell found himself a magnet. When the Vietnamese people discovered he was American, they clung to him. Powell said he represented America and to them the American way is good even though a million Vietnam soldiers died in the war and some 300,000 are missing in action.

For 18 days Powell saw how

the war's grip is still holding on to a country so impoverished and hurt by years of trade embargoes.

He met women whose legs had been blown off by land mines. He saw the effects of Agent Orange on babies — children born without legs and arms. He witnessed how devastated the country still is today.

"I must say I did feel some guilt," Powell said. "I guess we all deal with guilt. I had 20 some-odd years before I went back to Vietnam to deal with the guilt. I felt guilty. Not so much as a soldier but as a human being. Not so much as a veteran but as a person."

"When you go into the areas and look where Agent Orange was sprayed and you see how much was devastated and you go

into these hospitals and see these babies that have birth defects and you hear their doctors talk about women with a whole lot more increase in cervical cancer and other forms of cancer, you can't help but feel a little guilt. I didn't spray the Agent Orange but I am part of America. I was part of that process — that warring machine that was in Vietnam."

He spent time with a woman who had her legs blown off when she stepped on a land mine. She has nobody to love her because a legless woman in Vietnam is of no use to any man, Powell said.

"She doesn't have much hope for the future," Powell said. "As I was interviewing her she was crying. I welled up with tears and the interpreter started crying. So

here the three of us were crying together and we were crying over her situation. That's when guilt played an even bigger role ... I asked her what she wanted out of life. She told me she wanted a wheelchair. A simple thing like a wheelchair is her biggest request."

As Powell trudged through the country seeing all of the pain, he tried to make his photo-journalist skills overpower his emotions. But sometimes the rush was too great. He even found himself staring at a Vietnamese



Retrieving and selling pieces of scrap metal left over from the war is one way people make money in Vietnam. This boy wears dogtags he found while digging.



Every year people are killed or maimed by unexploded bombs that still scatter the Vietnam countryside. These two bombs were on their way to a scrap metal dealer.

CONTINUED ON PAGE A4

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Mountain tribes such as these people are scattered throughout Vietnam.



One thing Powell noticed when he returned to Vietnam during Christmas break was how diverse the Vietnamese are — there are mountain people, city people and tribal people. Here a tribe girl pounds the *chai* from the rice as she cares for her brother.



The effects of the Vietnam War are still resounding throughout the country. Even today babies are born with birth defects because of the chemical Agent Orange that America sprayed over Vietnam. At a hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, jars of dead babies with birth defects line the walls of a room. There are about 200 babies in the room, Powell said. The hospital keeps them for people to see as a reminder of the war, Powell said.

A NEW BEGINNING IN VIETNAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A3

"To see and respond to people differently than I did 24 years ago ... at that time I didn't give thought to their culture, their religious beliefs or their ways of life. I guess we sort of looked at them all like enemies. It's hard to separate something like that. Basically I had no use for them. That's how I felt. I was like a lot of other guys. I wanted to put my tour in and get the hell out."

Powell's proud of his service in the war but the years have taught him that being patriotic doesn't necessarily mean fighting.

"I never questioned my government. I always felt patriotic — my father, grandfather and my great-grandfather had all served in wars. I just really thought I was doing my patriotic duty by going to Vietnam. But now when I look at it, to question my government is the patriotic thing to do, to not follow so easy, to not be led."

"The fact of the matter was that we instigated that war. Those people didn't ask us to come over there and kill them. They just wanted their country."

Powell has spent most of the past five years trying to show people that there's more to war than killing or being killed.

He's made 18 trips to photograph the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington and the people whose lives are touched by it. He has taken all those photos and formed a powerful seven-minute slide show that's packed with powerful images — a son leaning on his father as together they stare at the wall, a boy sitting on a soccer ball

with his elbows perched on his knees as he stares at the massive black memorial etched with 58,000 names.

Everyone who sees it is left with a lump in the throat and a tear in the eye. Powell said. That's what he wants. He wants to send a message.

Mike Morse, head of the photo program, said Powell brings to his pictures heartfelt and caring emotion. He is selfless in his work, and he has dedicated himself to bringing light to social issues, Morse said.

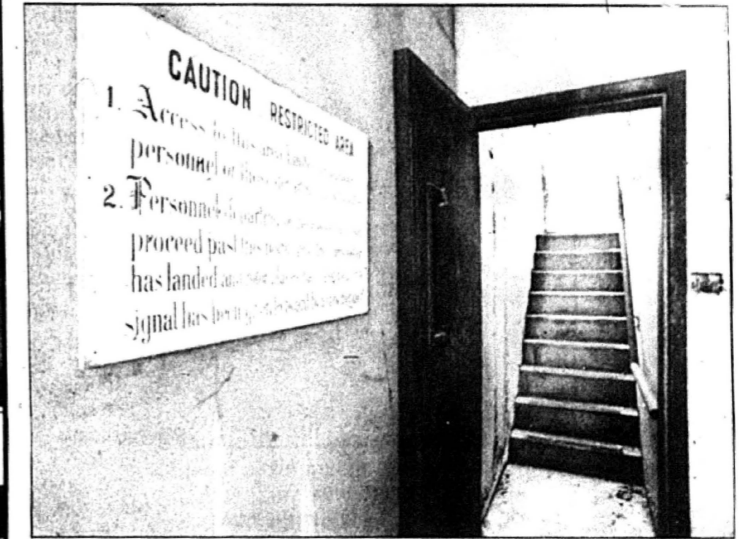
"My life is better because of his influence," Morse said.

When Powell first came to Vietnam, photo professor Dave LaBelle saw a shy, timid man who wanted to shoot sunsets, rocks and trees. He's now matured into a photojournalist who is out to send a message.

"Photography became almost an awakening for him to express what he felt about Vietnam," LaBelle said.

While he was shooting pictures in Vietnam, Powell found a message. It was a sort of an awakening, a message that gives him hope for both Vietnam and America.

"One of the most impressive images I shot was a childbirth. That's a picture a lot of people have shot. But what it said to me — and I remember this at the time I was shooting it — was this is new life, new beginning. And maybe if our government can get past the Vietnam War and normalize relations with Vietnam, maybe that's a new beginning."



In 1975 with the fall of South Vietnam, the last hope for people trying to get out of the country was the American Embassy Doorway to Freedom. When people got past this door helicopters flew them to safety.

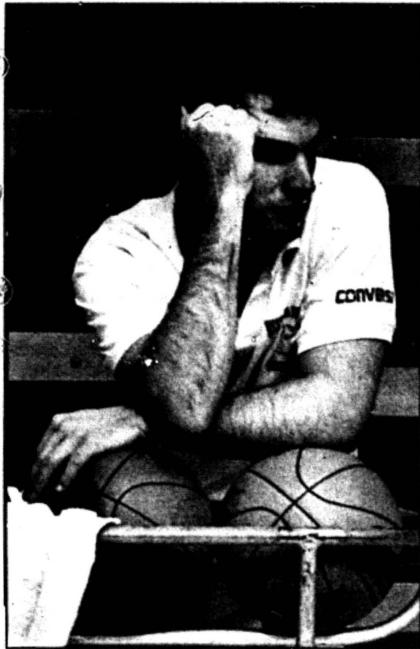


Through his pictures, Powell sends messages to people. Here, however, he found a message that made him realize there is hope for Vietnam's future. "I saw life being given, not taken away," he said. "For me it had a lot of symbolism."

FOR THE TEAM

STORY BY DENNIS VARNEY

PHOTOS BY DARRON SILVA



Zack Stroble, the student athletic trainer for the men's basketball team, spends time on the sidelines while the team practices.

It was just a scrimmage. The men's basketball team was running South Alabama's plays against each other in preparation for Sunday's game.

After a scramble for the ball, Greg Glass hit the floor. Grimacing, he held his ankle in pain.

The trainers rushed to his aid and helped him off the court.

After determining that it was only a twist, one of the trainers helped him try to walk off the injury. With his hand on Glass's back, the trainer led the player back and forth, up and down the sidelines to make sure it was nothing serious.

Each step, they took together. The student trainer for the Toppers, Zack Stroble, is as much a part of the team as the players.

Stroble, a senior from Dayton, Ohio, is more than just a 'water boy,' as some of his friends tease him. One part of his job, in fact, is to fill the players' bodies.

But there's more. Most of the work he does is behind the scenes — taping players ankles, preparing heat and ice treatments and doing hydrotherapy or hot bath treatments for the players.

Western players have suffered several injuries this season, and Stroble has helped in the rehabilitation of many of them, including Louisville junior Cypheus Bunton's wrist injury and a serious knee injury to Bryan Brown, a senior from Austell, Ga.

The team depends on Stroble. Besides preparing the players for the games, he has to be ready to go out on the floor as soon as there is an injury during a game.

"Mainly what we are here for is preventative medicine," he said,

"but we also have to do first aid for players who are hurt. We have to assess and evaluate the injuries to determine the correct treatment."

Stroble treats injured players while the rest of the team practices.

"I get here an hour early to get everything ready," Stroble said. "I stay through the whole practice and I don't leave until all the players are gone."

While he spends a lot of time at practices now, Stroble worked with the team even more last semester.

His day started with practices at 5:30 a.m. Then there was weightlifting in the afternoon. He had to be at pick-up games, sometimes until 9 p.m., in case injuries occurred.

The biggest requirement of his job is time. In addition to his 15-hour class load he works with the team about 35-40 hours a week.

Although he is not required, Stroble has committed himself to travelling with the team during road trips.

"I haven't missed an away game this year and I hope I don't have to," Stroble said. "It depends on how my classes go."

He said his professors are understanding about his busy schedule.

"You can't really make up class time, but I enjoy this."

Frank Neville, Western's head trainer, said that Stroble picked up the slack for him earlier this year during a time when he was sick.

"Zack does a very good job," he said. "It's amazing that he maintains a 3.0 with upper-level classes because he spends so much time with the team."

Although he doesn't receive a salary for his job, Stroble gets his tuition paid.

Stroble said he does his job for



One of Zack's responsibilities is to help the players prevent injury. At a practice last week, he stretches Greg Glass' hamstring to keep him limber.



In the second half of Sunday's game against South Alabama, Zack reacts to what he said was the Tops' poor playing. Zack considers himself extremely competitive and gets emotionally involved in every game.

the satisfaction of seeing the players come back from injuries. He noted a game in which Bunton had a big dunk after coming back from the wrist injury.

"Seeing players go through rehabilitation and treatment and then watching them succeed is the reason I do this," he said.

He is also in the job to help Western win.

"I put in as much time as the players do," Stroble said. "If I am going to put in that much time I want this team to be successful. I'll do anything in my power to help the team win. I would come in at 3 a.m. in the morning to help the team if it took it."

Stroble said the worst part of being a student trainer is the odd hours, but filling

water bottles is not tops on his list of favorite things to do either.

"I don't like it," he said, "but it is a necessity. You have to keep the players from getting dehydrated."

Team members say Stroble is indispensable.

"Without him the team couldn't go," Fredonia freshman Michael Fralix said.

Coach Ralph Willard said that the most important part of Stroble's job is having a good relationship with the players.

"You've got to have that and he does," Willard said.

"He's a real good friend to everybody on the team," Bunton said. "When someone is hurt he does everything he can to help them to make sure they get better."

Stroble never had any

training experience before he came to Western but he has been deeply involved since his first year. He started as a trainer for the football team and worked with the volleyball and baseball teams.

During the summers of 1990 and 1991 he worked



for the National Football League's Cleveland Browns. He was a trainer during the team's preseason.

"It was a tough job," he said. "In the pros it seems like everyone has something

hurt. I really enjoyed it."

Stroble said that working with pro athletes was demanding. "They expected a lot more," he said of the pros. "They have been superstars all of their life and I guess you can expect that, but they were nice."

Stroble plans to use his training experience to get a job after he graduates in January. He is a health care administration major and he eventually wants to become the director of a therapy clinic.

"I have always liked helping people, and working at a clinic would be great," he said.

Stroble said he came to Western because he found that everyone here was friendly.

"I fell in love with the place," he said. "When I got

here I really didn't know what I wanted to do. I told an admissions counselor I was interested in something to do with sports because I have loved it ever since I was a toddler. She suggested training to me. I was offered a position on the football training staff when I was a freshman. Coming to Western was one of the best choices of my life."

For now, his life is Western basketball. Even though he spends most of his time taping ankles and making ice packs, his payoff is the valuable friendships he has gained with the players.

"We're like one big family," he said. "I would do anything for the guys and I believe they would do anything for me."



After the South Alabama game, Zack talks with Stacie Millam in the athletic training room in Diddle Arena. His job isn't done until he checks out all the players.

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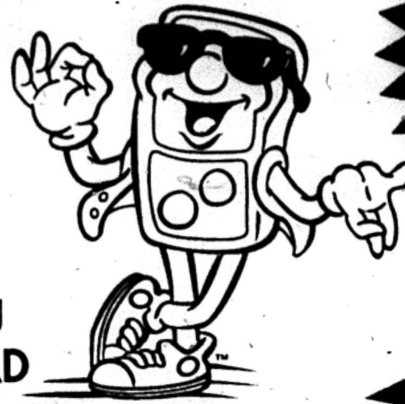
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