

Letter: Veterans still not getting care they deserve

To the community,

The following poem was written in 1971 when I was 19 and in the midst of a quest to see every state, city, national park – all this country had to offer. In every city and town, from New York to Dubuque, and on every highway, there were veterans who served in combat during WWI, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

Some I met were very successful business people, ranchers, farmers, and blue collar workers. But tens of thousands were entrenched in our inner-cities and towns, in physical, psychological, and spiritual pain that no amount of alcohol or drugs brought relief from. It was clear to me back then that our government/military had no clue how to deprogram veterans or even treat physical ailments.

Every day I thanked God for my No. 333 in the first draft lottery that allowed me to continue on my journey. I stayed at one military base (Fort Bragg) and visited several others and wondered how many recruits and draftees there would face a similar plight.

Two years later, back home in New Jersey, I shared a place with two Vietnam veterans – a Marine volunteer who withstood two lengthy sieges and an Army draftee who was besieged by crazed South Koreans raiding his warehouse at Cam Ranh Bay. I made several trips with Bill (the Marine) to the veterans hospital in attempts to find out what was in his body attacking it. They were clueless. The conditions there were deplorable.

So here we are in 2014, still reading and listening to news stories about Walter Reed Army Hospital and other facilities around the country and hearing promises to upgrade them and

the research into what our veterans have been inflicted with. Kudos to the city of Phoenix and several other cities for developing and funding programs to provide housing to homeless Veterans so they can begin to find the space to heal. A Jan. 17 USA Today story stated there are 48,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are, or are on the verge, of being homeless. Federal grants have been increased to assist these programs. When a shovel-jumper employed by the city of South Lake Tahoe has more options and better quality health care, the system is flawed.

Veterans Benefits

News-stands stained

with wine and urine

gutters filled

with twice-smoked butts

bus fumes mixed

with soup and coffee

in stomachs hardened

by old floor boards.

Lingering about

downtown hotels

relating old tales

of battles and feasts

while with varying patience

point to scars on their faces

that reveal all the places

they once fought for Peace.

In appreciation,

Ed Mosur, South Lake Tahoe