

*'They're Stupes'—*

# Wounded GI Censures Anti Viet War People

by GENIE CHANCE

Lance Cpl. Ernest Evans, 20-year old Marine, rolled over in the litter that was strapped to the wall of the air evacuation plane. We were flying in an airborne "hospital" at an altitude of 37,000 feet over the snow-covered mountains of Alaska and Canada enroute to Washington, D. C.

From there he would be flown to the Navy hospital at Pensacola, Florida. And he hoped soon to be transferred to another military hospital near his hometown.

Ernie had been carried onto the air evacuation plane only a few hours earlier in Vietnam. Medical personnel aboard assure that

the patients' care continues uninterrupted between ground-based hospitals.

Ernie's eyes moved from the bottle of plasma hanging above him to the far end of the litter. There was only a large gauze-covered stump where his left foot used to be.

"My outfit—H Company 25—moved out on security patrol about 28 miles from Da Nang," he said. "We were making way for an outfit of tanks that were due to go through the next day. I stepped on a booby trap. When I woke up, I was in a field hospital. I had lost a foot. But I'm alive."

Ernie grew up in Montgomery, Alabama. Three

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years ago he joined the Marines. He has been in Southeast Asia for 11 months.

The haze that covered his eyes when he looked at his stump lifted suddenly when I asked him how he felt about the U. S. involvement in Vietnam. Unhesitatingly, he answered in a firm voice. "Somebody's gotta fight over there for what's right! I feel that it should be us. I think all the fellas do!"

He assured me that if it were to do all over again, he would volunteer again for Vietnam duty.

Concerning the anti-Vietnam sentiment that exists in this country, Ernie said, "We don't pay any attention to those 'stupes! who demonstrate back here. That's just what they are—'stupes.! They don't know what it's all about."

When I asked Ernie about his plans for the future, the fighting spirit crept out of his eyes for just one small moment and then flared back again. "I'm gonna get well and learn to walk again! Then, when I've done that, there'll be time to make other plans."

My big brother was a man when, at the age of 21, he was killed fighting for his country in World War II. My friends in their early twenties were men when they fought in the Korean War.

Today, with a son almost 18 years old, those returning from Vietnam look like boys to me. But they are men! I know. Because I visited with some of them aboard a U. S. Air Force air evacuation plane returning wounded from Southeast Asia to hospitals in the United States.

Only 20 hours from the battlefield, these young men are receiving care in hospitals as close as possible to their hometowns. Enroute, they are receiving compassionate and competent care in the hands of dedicated and highly trained Air Force nurses aboard huge C-141's equipped as flying hospitals.

And almost to a man they are proud to have had a part in the valiant struggle for freedom in the little country that makes big headlines—Vietnam. As Ernie said, "Somebody's gotta fight over there for what's right! I feel it should be us. I think all the fellas do."