

**DISPLACED FILMS AND BALCONY RELEASING  
PRESENT**

**A DAVID ZEIGER FILM**

**SIR! NO SIR!**

**Audience Award, Best Documentary  
2005 Los Angeles Independent Film Festival**

**Jury Award, Best Documentary  
2005 Hamptons Film Festival**

**Nominee, Best Documentary  
2005 Independent Spirit Awards**

84 minutes 35mm Dolby SR [www.sirnosir.com](http://www.sirnosir.com)

**Opening in Theaters:**

**San Francisco, April 7 at Red Vic Movie House  
New York City, April 19 at IFC Center  
Los Angeles, May 5 at Laemmle's Monica 4**

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## Synopsis

In the 1960's an anti-war movement emerged that altered the course of history. This movement didn't take place on college campuses, but in barracks and on aircraft carriers. It flourished in army stockades, navy brigs and in the dingy towns that surround military bases. It penetrated elite military colleges like West Point. And it spread throughout the battlefields of Vietnam. It was a movement no one expected, least of all those in it. Hundreds went to prison and thousands into exile. And by 1971 it had, in the words of one colonel, infested the entire armed services. Yet today few people know about the GI movement against the war in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War has been the subject of hundreds of films, both fiction and non-fiction, but *this* story—the story of the rebellion of thousands of American soldiers against the war—has never been told in film. This is certainly not for lack of evidence. By the Pentagon's own figures, 503,926 “incidents of desertion” occurred between 1966 and 1971; officers were being “fragged”(killed with fragmentation grenades by their own troops) at an alarming rate; and by 1971 entire units were refusing to go into battle in unprecedented numbers. In the course of a few short years, over 200 underground newspapers were published by soldiers around the world; local and national antiwar GI organizations were joined by thousands; thousands more demonstrated against the war at every major base in the world in 1970 and 1971, including in Vietnam itself; stockades and federal prisons were filling up with soldiers jailed for their opposition to the war and the military.

Yet today, with hundreds of thousands of American GIs once again occupying countries on the other side of the world, these history-changing events have been erased from America's public memory.

*Sir! No Sir!* aims to change all that. The film does four things: 1) Brings to life the history of the GI movement through the stories of those who were part of it; 2) Reveals the explosion of defiance that the movement gave birth to with never-before-seen archival material; 3) Explores the profound impact that movement had on the military and the war itself; and 4) Tells the story of how and why the GI Movement has been replaced with the myth of the spat-upon veteran.

*Sir! No Sir!* is a film that challenges deeply-held beliefs not just about the Vietnam War and those who fought it, but about the world we live in today. It is a vivid portrayal of William Faulkner's famous observation that “The past isn't dead; it isn't even past.”

## Short Synopsis

*Sir! No Sir!* energetically reveals the untold story of the GI movement to end the war in Vietnam. This is the story of one of the most vibrant and widespread upheavals of the 1960s – one that had a profound impact on American society, yet has been virtually obliterated from the collective memory of that time. This hidden history combines fast-paced archival footage with thoughtful interviews, “perfectly timed with new doubts about the Iraq War” (*Variety*).

## Principal Credits

Produced, Directed and Written by  
David Zeiger

Produced by  
Evangeline Griego  
Aaron Zarrow

Executive Producer  
Peter Broderick

Edited by  
May Rigler  
Lindsay Mofford

Sound Design  
Tucker

Online Editor  
Bill Russell

Co-Producer  
Louise Rosen

Associate Producers  
William Short  
Michael Slate

Associate Editors  
Duc Nguyen  
Tucker

Camera  
May Rigler  
David Zeiger

Original Music by  
Buddy Judge

Narrated by  
Troy Garity

## Director's Statement

In 1969 I was 19 years old and just starting college. I'd spent the previous two years bumming around Europe, working odd jobs, street singing and writing bad songs, and generally trying to avoid the political turmoil that was exploding around me. By the time I started college, that was no longer possible. For me, nothing was more important than joining the fight to end the Vietnam War. But what to do? I looked around, and met some people who were working at the Oleo Strut in Killeen, Texas—one of dozens of coffeehouses that were opened near military bases to support the efforts of antiwar soldiers. My choice was obvious. Less than a year after starting school I dropped out and was heading to Texas.

For the next two years I found myself in the heart of one of the most intense, exciting, and inspiring movements of the 1960s. I helped organize demonstrations of over 1,000 soldiers against the war and the military; I worked with guys from small towns and urban ghettos who had joined the military and gone to Vietnam out of a deep sense of duty or to escape poverty and now risked their lives and futures to end the war; and I helped defend them when they were jailed for their antiwar activities. Ultimately, these brave people, as Donald Duncan describes them in the film, played a pivotal role in ending that war.

In the decades following those vivid years, I and the thousands of veterans who had joined that movement watched as their reality was rewritten, distorted, and ultimately buried under the myth of loyal veterans returning home to an antiwar movement that spat on them and called them baby killers. The irony of that charge never fails to strike me, since whenever atrocities are exposed that are a direct outgrowth of U.S. government policy—from My Lai to Abu Graib—it is the *government*, not those opposed to these wars, that lays the blame on the soldiers who carried out their orders.

When I started making films in the early 90s, 25 years after the Vietnam War, I knew this was a film that needed to be made. There had been excellent books written about the GI Movement, but their reach was small and, most significantly, none of the feature films made since the war, including documentaries, had even mentioned the movement's existence (*Born on the Fourth of July* gave a powerful depiction of the veterans' movement, but nothing about what went on inside the military). But by then the country was "Vietnamed out," and I didn't see the possibility of finding either financial support or an audience for this story.

That of course changed on September 11, 2001. In short order, our government had invaded and occupied two countries. And suddenly, the story of American soldiers defying and ultimately ending a questionable (at best) war, opposed by millions of their countrymen and women, became very relevant.

It has been a difficult road to complete this film and bring it to the world. But one thing was not difficult. Many people have asked me if the veterans I interviewed were reluctant to speak. Quite the contrary. If anyone's voice has been suppressed these three decades since the war ended it is theirs, and they welcomed the chance to tell the real story.

*Sir! No Sir!* reveals how, thirty years later, the poem by Bertolt Brecht that became an anthem of the GI Movement still resonates:

*General, man is very useful. He can fly and he can kill.  
But he has one defect: He can think.*

## The Cast

*Sir! No Sir!* tells the story of people who, faced with the realization that they "had no choice," changed history. They include:

### **Donald Duncan**

A decorated member of the elite Green Berets, he resigned from the military in protest in 1966 after 15 months in Vietnam. He wrote an article in Ramparts Magazine that became a clarion call for the just emerging GI Movement.

*I was really proud of what I thought I was doing. The problem I had was realizing that what I was doing was not good. I was doing it right, but I wasn't doing right.*

### **Howard Levy**

A dermatologist who was drafted in the early 60s and assigned to train Green Beret medics, he refused to continue training them in protest of the war and was court-martialed and sentenced to 3 years in prison, which he served.

*I think the most startling thing to me occurred as the court martial began...It was the most remarkable thing when hundreds, hundreds of GIs would hang out of windows, out of the barracks and give me the V-sign or give me the clenched fist. This was mind boggling to me. This was a revelation, and at that point it really became crystal clear to me that something had changed here and that something very, very important was happening.*

### **Dave Cline**

Wounded three times in Vietnam, he became an organizer for the GI Movement after returning to Ft. Hood in 1968.

*When you just went through an experience of that nature, and you find out that it's all lies and that they're just lying to the American people and your silence means you're a part of keeping that lie going-I couldn't stop. I mean I couldn't be silent.*

### **Keith Mather**

In the summer of 1968, he joined the "Nine for Peace," soldiers who refused orders to Vietnam and took sanctuary in a church in San Francisco. After his arrest and confinement in the Presidio stockade, he helped organize a sit-down protest when a mentally ill prisoner was shot and killed by a guard. Facing the death penalty when the Presidio 27, as they became known, were charged with mutiny, he escaped and lived for 18 years in Canada.

*I had nothing to lose, and I had no idea what was going to come. That's a free place. It's a really free place, you know? You don't know what's going to happen, you don't know where you're going, but you know what you're doing.*

**Randy Rowland**

He was an army medic who also helped organize the Presidio stockade protest.

*The Commanding General Of the 6th army, which was the jurisdiction, said that they thought that the revolution was about to start and they really had to set an example, Come down hard, and we were the guys that they decided to do that with, and they did. I mean we were on trial for our life. You know, I kind of came in as an AWOL (Absent Without Leave) and within 2 days of hitting the stockade I was facing a death sentence- for singing "We Shall Overcome."*

**Susan Schnall**

A Navy nurse, she was arrested for flying a small plane over several military bases in the San Francisco Bay Area, dropping leaflets for the first demonstration of GIs and veterans against the war.

*I remembered hearing about the B-52 bombers that were dropping leaflets on Vietnam, urging the Vietnamese to defect. And I thought well, if they can do it overseas...*

**Louis Font**

Sent to Harvard by the military after graduating from West Point with honors, he became the first West Point graduate to refuse to fight in a war.

*I remember calling my parents and they were in tears, thinking that I would end up in prison, instead of getting a Masters Degree from Harvard. But, I told them, "You always taught me to do what is just, to do what is right." And I really felt that I was doing the right thing. And I believe that to this day, 34 years later. I know I did the right thing.*

**Jane Fonda**

One of the best known actresses of the 1960s, she became a political activist after meeting a group of GI resisters in Paris. In 1970, she and Donald Sutherland organized the FTA Show, an antiwar cabaret that performed for tens of thousands of GIs near bases around the world. With the claims that persist to this day that she "betrayed the troops," this chapter of her life has been ignored.

*Here was a way that I could combine my profession, my acting, with my desire to end the war. It just seemed like a perfect fit.*

**Bill Short**

Like hundreds of soldiers, he refused to return to combat after several months in Vietnam.

*I didn't know that there was a GI movement. I just had this strong moral sense of something not being right.*

### **Terry Whitmore**

An African-American Marine, he was in the hospital with serious wounds when Lyndon Johnson pinned a medal on him during a visit. Weeks later, he was ordered back to Vietnam just as Black people were rioting across the U.S. in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King. Seeing federal troops in his hometown of Memphis, he decided to desert and made his way to Sweden.

*Then you actually see what I saw, what was going on in the States. Dudes were running down the streets wearing the same kind of uniform that I got. They're in Memphis. They're beating up on people. Wait a minute, we're over here beating up on people over here and you're beating up on Black people. Dogs are running everywhere. Tanks are on the streets.*

### **Joe Bangert**

Having served in Vietnam in the Marines, he testified at the Winter Soldier Investigation, a hearing organized by Vietnam Veterans Against the War. The veterans testified to war crimes committed as a matter of policy by the United States in Vietnam.

*America went through a choke, because they didn't want to believe that these things occurred in the name of the American people, supposedly supporting freedom and liberation and democracy throughout the world. And there was this terrible slaughter, this terrible inane slaughter.*

### **Billy Dean Smith**

By 1970, hundreds of officers in Vietnam had been killed by their own men in a practice called "fragging"-throwing a fragmentation grenade into an officer's tent. After one such incident, Billy Dean Smith, an African-American GI, was arrested and charged with murder. His case became a cause of the GI Movement, and in 1971 he was acquitted after spending 22 months in solitary confinement.

*I was chosen for the trial because I was an outspoken critic of the war.*

### **The WORMS**

They were Air Force interpreters, trained in Vietnamese, who flew over North Vietnam intercepting radio communications. Seeing the difference between what they knew was going on and what the American people were being told, they formed the WORMS, "We Openly Resist Military Stupidity." During the infamous 1972 Christmas bombing of North Vietnam, many of them went on strike.

*...The bombing of populated areas, civilian areas; the bombing of hospitals-things that the US denied over and over again that we were engaged in. Those are things that we were engaged in and we had access to that information. And the lies were so stark, it challenged your own dignity, it challenged your own loyalty, it challenged your own humanity.*

**Jerry Lembcke**

Having returned from Vietnam to become a professor of sociology, he wrote the book, *The Spitting Image*, in which he investigated and found no actual cases of GIs being spat on by antiwar protestors—a claim that was widely spread during the buildup to the Gulf War.

*If you looked back at the front pages of newspapers in 1969 and 1970, what are you going to see about Vietnam Vets? They're in the streets. They're political activists. They're on the Capital Lawn. They're giving the Nixon Administration fits.*

## Filmmaker Bios

### David Zeiger – Director, Writer, Producer

David Zeiger's most recent previous film, *A Night of Ferocious Joy*, premiered at the International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam. The festival, which featured it as part of its "USA Today" Section, described the film as "not an ordinary concert film...because it will go down in history as the first anti-war concert of the new millennium." Its U.S. festival premiere was at South by Southwest in 2004, which described it as "A rousing and eventful performance film."

Zeiger created, produced and directed the 13 part documentary series, *Senior Year*, for broadcast on PBS in January 2002. The series follows a group of 15 students at Fairfax High, the most diverse school in Los Angeles, through their last year in high school. About the series, Entertainment Weekly wrote, "Others have tried to document high school life (remember *American High?*), but this series succeeds where those drier efforts failed...High school is a time for experimentation, and finally, a truly experimental filmmaker is there." *Senior Year* was broadcast in Europe on Planete Cable, and was a premiere series on the new U.S. English/Spanish cable network S4TV in 2004.

His short film *Funny Old Guys* premiered August, 2002, at the Museum of Television and Radio in Los Angeles. Its television premiere was August 19, 2003, on the HBO Documentary series "Still Kicking, Still Laughing." *Funny Old Guys* captures the final months of the life of Frank Tarloff, formerly blacklisted Academy Award winning writer, as he and a group of friends, all former TV and film writers, confront his imminent death.

*The Band*, Mr. Zeiger's tribute to his son, aired to critical acclaim on the PBS series P.O.V. in 1998. It has screened at the International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam and AFI Film Festival in Los Angeles, and was awarded "Best Documentary" and "Best of Show" at the Central Florida Film Festival. *The Band* was broadcast in 2000 on the French/German network ARTE.

*Displaced in the New South* aired in the United States on PBS in 1996 and on The Discovery Channel International in 1997. That film looks at life in and around Atlanta from the point of view of Vietnamese and Mexican immigrants. Its festival screenings include the Chicago Latino, Cine Acción Latino, South by Southwest, Doubletake and San Francisco Asian American Film Festivals. *Displaced in the New South* was the inspiration for the Indigo Girls' single "Shame on You", featured on their 1997 release *Shaming of the Sun*.

### **Evangeline Griego - Producer**

Evangeline Griego is an independent award winning documentary producer whose credits include *The New Americans* (PBS) (Winner of the 2004 IDA Limited Series Award) *My Journey Home* (PBS) (Winner of the 2004 Cine Golden Eagle Award) *Calavera Highway* and her documentary *Border Visions*. In 1996, Griego directed the award-winning documentary *Paño Arte: Images from Inside*. Her extensive production managing and line producing experience includes short and feature films, music videos, and PSA's. She has worked with Esparza-Katz Productions, the J. Paul Getty Trust, the Walt Disney Company, Morgan Creek Productions and MGM Studios, and is currently producing and directing the independent documentary, *God Willing* (PBS), about a bible-based nomadic cult.

She has worked with OUTFEST as the Festival Manager and is a Founder of the Silver Lake Film Festival in Los Angeles. She serves on the board of directors of The National Association of Latino Independent Producers and OUTFEST the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian film festival. Ms. Griego holds three degrees from the University of Southern California.

### **Aaron Zarrow - Producer**

Aaron Zarrow produced, with David Zeiger, the landmark PBS series *Senior Year*. Prior to that, he was Associate Producer of the Academy Award-winning film *The Last Days*.

### **Peter Broderick - Executive Producer**

Peter Broderick is President of Paradigm Consulting, which specializes in cutting-edge distribution techniques and provides strategic consulting services to filmmakers and media companies.

Broderick was President of Next Wave Films, which helped launch the careers of filmmakers (such as Christopher Nolan) from the U.S. and abroad. It financed digital features through its production arm--Agenda 2000.

Broderick played a key role in the growth of the ultra-low budget feature movement. A leading advocate of digital moviemaking, Broderick gave presentations on digital production at Cannes, Sundance, and Berlin. He has written articles for Scientific American, The New York Times, and The Economist. He is a graduate of Brown, Cambridge University, and Yale Law School.

Now focused on the revolution in independent distribution, Broderick has given keynotes on the subject internationally and published a seminal article, "Maximizing Distribution."

As Program Co-Director, he helped organize DigiMart, the first Global Digital Distribution Summit, which brought together leaders of the digital revolution from around the world.

In 2004, he launched <http://www.filmstoseeforeyouvote.org> to harness the power of film to impact elections.

## **Awards**

Los Angeles Film Festival–Audience Award  
Best Documentary

Hamptons Film Festival–Jury Award  
Best Documentary

Vermont International Film Festival–Jury Award  
Best Film in Category, War and Peace

Independent Spirit Awards  
Best Documentary Nominee  
Award to be announced March 4, 2006

Gotham Award Nominee

International Documentary Association  
Award Nominee

## Press

*Sir! No Sir!* rings with an exultant, even elated tone...Perfectly timed with new doubts about the Iraq war...

- Robert Koehler, *Variety*

Some very timely light is shed upon the historically overlooked GI anti-Vietnam War movement courtesy of *Sir! No Sir!*, A penetrating eye-opener of a documentary.

- Michael Rechtshaffen, *The Hollywood Reporter*

Anyone waging war with American troops might want to listen carefully to the largely untold story of David Zeiger's new documentary, *Sir! No Sir!*, of how some of the most dedicated troops became some of the most damaging supporters of the movement to end the war in Vietnam.

- Anne-Marie O'Connor, *Los Angeles Times*

Debunking several myths about America's invasion of Vietnam, David Zeiger's documentary might be the most important documentary to screen in Los Angeles this year. Knowledge is ammunition.

- *Pasadena Weekly*

Through demos, underground papers, combat refusals and so on, these GIs rocked America to its core...Yet today, the memory of the GI movement has been buried. David Zeiger's funky shot of counter-culture spirit manages, for (84) engrossing minutes, to restore some balance.

- *The Times of London*

One of the forgotten fragments of the Vietnam war is the part played by active GIs in the peace movement. At the Oleo Strut in Texas, a military coffee shop set up to soften the blow of the return to civilian life, a GI-led anti-war effort was set up with its own newspaper and network. Former Oleo Strut regular David Zeiger's remarkable film about soldiers wearing peace signs instead of dog tags and organizing mass disobedience has footage that reveals how big the GI peace movement was.

- *The Guardian*

# **SIR! NO SIR!**

## **Interview with David Zeiger**

Interviewed By Jonathan Stein

Originally Published in *Mother Jones Magazine*

The Oleo Strut was a coffeehouse in Killeen, Texas, from 1968 to 1972. Like its namesake, a shock absorber in helicopter landing gear, the Oleo Strut's purpose was to help GIs land softly. Upon returning from Vietnam to Fort Hood, shell-shocked soldiers found solace amongst the Strut's regulars, mostly fellow soldiers and a few civilian sympathizers. But it didn't take long before shell shock turned into anger, and that anger into action. The GIs turned the Oleo Strut into one of Texas's anti-war headquarters, publishing an underground anti-war newspaper, organizing boycotts, setting up a legal office, and leading peace marches.

David Zeiger was one of the civilians who helped run the Oleo Strut. He went on to a career in political activism and today, at 55, he is a filmmaker and the director of *Sir! No Sir!*, a new documentary on the all-but-forgotten antiwar activities of GIs from Fort Hood to Saigon. The GI Movement, as it was then known, was composed of both vets recently returned from Vietnam and active-duty soldiers. They fought for peace in ways big and small, from organizing leading anti-war organizations to wearing peace signs instead of dog tags. By the early '70s, opposition to the Vietnam War within the military and amongst veterans had grown so widespread that no one could credibly claim that opposing the war meant opposing the troops. Veterans wanted an end to the war; their brothers in Vietnam agreed.

Zeiger put off making this movie for years, convinced the public didn't want to hear another story about the '60s. What finally spurred the project was the Iraq War and the role some Vietnam vets are playing in keeping America's young men and women from seeing the same horrors they saw. When GIs from the current war started coming home and wondering what they'd been fighting for, Zeiger's days at the Oleo Strut took on a new relevance. His film is a remarkable interweaving of vets' stories about their intensifying resistance to the war, starting with the lone objectors of the late '60s and culminating with open disobedience throughout the ranks in the '70s. One vet even recalls an episode from 1972 in which Military Police joined enlisted men in burning an effigy of their commanding officer. The images that accompany such stories are just as powerful. As a young doctor is escorted into a military court for refusing to train GIs, hundreds of enlisted men lean out of nearby windows extending peace signs in support. It's an image that the Army didn't want the American people to see then, and probably wouldn't want the American people to see today.

Sir! No Sir! won the Documentary Audience Award at the L.A. Film Festival and is slated for broad release before the end of the year. David Zeiger spoke with MotherJones.com from the Los Angeles office of his production company, Displaced Films.

MotherJones: Talk a little about your history with the GI Movement.

David Zeiger: In the late '60s I reached a point where I believed that there was really no alternative for me than to become part of the movement against the war. My opposition to the war had grown very deeply but I hadn't been really involved in anything. I started looking around for what was going to be the most effective place and situation to help. I ran into this small group from the GI Movement, some vets and some civilians from Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas. It became obvious to me very quickly that this was the most solid, most direct way to go after the war. It was a situation where people were opposing the war that no one thought would oppose the war. Not just because they were GIs. These were mostly working class guys, guys who had gone into the military out of patriotic motives or because that was just what you did. And they were becoming one of the strongest forces against the war.

MJ: What brought you back to the project, some 35 years later?

DZ: I started making films in the early '90s. I always knew that this story was one that needed to be told and had never been told. But the way I always characterized it was, "This is a film that needs to be made but I'm never going to make it." At the time, it just wasn't a film that would have much resonance for people. It would be another story from the '60s. What prompted me to make the film was September 11, and the War on Terror's segue into the Iraq War. I saw that this had suddenly become a story that would have current resonance, something that would immediately connect with what's going on today.

MJ: How did you find the veterans that appear in the film?

DZ: Several of these guys were people I knew because I had been at Fort Hood. Then there were veterans' organizations like Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans For Peace—I put a call out for stories through their various means of communication. I also ended up [getting] in touch with people nobody had ever heard of before. Their missions were so top secret they were under threat of federal prosecution if they went public with any of their stories. They came to me and basically said, "We want to finally tell our story. We haven't been able to tell it for 35 years." We still don't know what will happen to them. We'll know when the film is in theaters.

Also, several books played a big role in keeping memory of the movement alive and giving me the foundation for the film -- especially *Soldiers in Revolt* by David Cortright, and *A Matter of Conscience: GI Resistance Firing the Vietnam War* by William Short and Willa Seidenberg.

MJ: Did it take any effort to get the veterans to open up—the public conception of the Vietnam vet is of a man too pained to talk openly about his experiences.

DZ: Yeah, that's a very big myth. In this situation that was not at all a problem. These are people whose stories had been suppressed and ignored since the war. They knew that their story was a story of the Vietnam War that needed to be told. For most of these veterans, it was more a matter of finally being able to tell their story, stories the overall zeitgeist was against being told. It was not a matter of reluctance.

MJ: The film has already gotten a good deal of interest in Europe. Do you anticipate that domestic interest will be as strong?

DZ: Well, yeah, how to put this? I anticipate that kind of interest, but until the film was made I think U.S. television didn't quite get how relevant the film is in the current world. It was hard to explain that to people. Now that the film is made we're getting much stronger interest. A big strength of the film, and what I think is going to bring it into the mainstream, is that this is historical metaphor. We don't have to say a word about Iraq in the film for it to be clearly identified with Iraq for people. But [because it doesn't mention Iraq], the film can't be shoved into the category of a propaganda film.

MJ: You mentioned that you were a civilian organizer at Fort Hood during the Vietnam War. At that time, was the civilian public widely aware of the GI Movement?

DZ: The evidence suggests that they were. As you see in the film, there were CBS Nightly News stories about the GI Movement. There is a segment in the film of Walter Cronkite talking about the GI underground press. In the state of Texas, where there was a very large anti-war movement in Austin and Houston, and the center of the Texas movement for a time was at Fort Hood. The armed forces demonstrations were major events for the whole state. I think people knew generally that there was opposition in the military, but they didn't know the details or how widespread it was. But it was certainly more prominent than people remember it. It has been thoroughly wiped out of any histories of the war.

MJ: How visible was the GI Movement amongst American soldiers in Southeast Asia? Were they aware that their fellow soldiers were protesting the war on bases abroad and in the States?

DZ: Yes. The GI anti-war press was everywhere. Just about every base in the world had an underground paper. Vietnam GI was the first GI paper. It was sent directly to Vietnam from the U.S. in press runs of 5,000 and they were getting spread all over the place because they'd be handed from person to person. Awareness of the GI Movement was at different levels but it was still very widespread.

MJ: How did the GIs manage to write and print these papers, especially when their actions were, presumably, being watched?

DZ: That was where the coffeehouse came in. [The GIs] did the work, for the most part, off base. At the Oleo Strut we had an office that they worked in and we had a printer that would print it for us. Some of these papers would get mimeographed secretly on the military bases because the guys working on them would be clerks and they had access to the proper resources. So there was a range, from something someone had typed up and mimeographed and got out about 500 copies of, to these pretty sophisticated papers like the Fatigue Press at Fort Hood, where we'd have a press run of 10,000 copies. We'd hand them out off base but they'd also be distributed on base. Guys snuck on base and would go through barracks and put them on beds and foot lockers.

One story we didn't put in the film was about some guys at Fort Lewis near Seattle. They wanted to bring GIs to an anti-war demonstration, but they didn't have an underground paper yet. They took a bunch of leaflets on base late at night and drove around throwing the leaflets out the window. In the military, if there's litter on the base the brass doesn't pick it up; they send out the GIs out to police the base and pick it up. So the next morning they sent several companies out to pick up all this litter and before they realized what this litter was, it was too late. It's funny: repression breeds innovation.

MJ: The movie talks a lot about the GI coffeehouses and how some of them were attacked and shut down. Did GIs ever claim their First Amendment rights were being thwarted?

DZ: Yes, and there were cases that went all the way to the Supreme Court about that. The Supreme Court fairly consistently ruled that so-called "military necessity" trumped free speech. But there was a tremendous support network of lawyers during the period of the GI Movement who would help challenge these things. There were many cases of GIs challenging the military's right to not allow them to distribute the underground papers on base. No one won [laughs], but there were a lot of attempts to create change.

MJ: Another thing you discuss in the film is the FTA ["Free the Army" or "Fuck the Army"] tour, a variety show packed with celebrities that wanted to counterbalance the pro-war Bob Hope. Where did the tour perform?

DZ: Well, it was banned from bases. What they typically did was come into military towns that had a support organization like the coffeehouses, and they would either perform at the coffeehouses, or if it was possible, in a larger venue. I know when the FTA show came to Killeen we spent months trying to get an auditorium or even an outdoor site rented to us and no one would do it. So the FTA Tour came to town and performed at the Oleo Strut, which had a capacity of maybe 200 people. Rather than doing two shows that day, they did four. When they did their tour of Asia, which is where we got the footage for the film, they got a lot of outdoor venues and larger venues, but they were never allowed on bases. Keep in mind, these were the top Hollywood stars of the day, Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland. They had just come off of Kluge, won a ton of awards. But of course they weren't allowed on any bases.

MJ: And the GIs who saw the shows were free enough that 800 of them could go see the show in one day?

DZ: Yeah. By 1970 and 1971, the combination of the actual organized GI Movement and the general culture of resistance that had emerged inside the military was so strong that you could openly walk around bases wearing whatever anti-war stuff you wanted to wear. Actually, the guys in the U.S. couldn't do that as much; guys in Vietnam were doing it a lot more. But regardless, that sense of opposition, that sense of FTA, was so strong the army couldn't completely stomp down on it.

MJ: Your film never mentions John Kerry. Why?

DZ: Because so many people wanted us to put him in [laughs]. That was part of it. Frankly, we didn't have him in mainly because we didn't want that to become what the film was about. The film made about his military service during the campaign, Going Upriver, has a lot of footage about his involvement with Vietnam Veterans Against the War, which is also in our film. Ironically, that film was made to help Kerry's campaign, but if anything, it hurt it. It didn't win over anyone that was against him to begin with, but people who supported Kerry because of his anti-war stance during Vietnam saw how startlingly far he's gone in his ultimate betrayal of the stand he took in the 1960s. We thought anything like that would be distraction for this film.

MJ: Why do you think the GI Movement has faded from the public's memory of Vietnam?

DZ: There's been a number of factors. There was this whole element in the mid to late '70s of people kind of wanting to forget. Hollywood, in depicting the war in the 1970s, never mentioned the GI Movement. Coming Home, which was a very good film in very many ways, started with a much more radical approach to what GIs had gotten into. But by the time the film was finished, it was a much more conciliatory film, and that became the theme that a lot of people latched onto about Vietnam in the '70s: Let's forget it all. Then in the '80s, the political climate with the Reagan administration became one of rewriting the history of the war. Of course, if you're going to rewrite the history of the Vietnam War from a right-wing perspective, the GI Movement would be written out completely. Both politically and in every film made at the time, the Movement was literally written out of history.

MJ: The rewriting of history you mention seems to posit the troops as honorable American boys that supported the war, distinct from hippie protestors. Your film makes it clear that that's a false distinction, and those are false labels. What impact do you think your film will have on people from younger generations whose only experience with Vietnam is a history that has been revised?

DZ: I hope it will really shock people. I want you walk out of the theater thinking, "Holy shit! I've been lied to so thoroughly I better take a really close look at this stuff." And it's especially important when comparing it to now. I want people to seriously question this

idea that opposing the war means opposing the troops. Hopefully they will come to the conclusion that it's not a given. That's a political perspective, and it's a right-wing political perspective, a very pro-war political perspective. And it's a political perspective that undercuts any serious movement against the war, both among civilians and among GIs. The way the Vietnam War gets summed up is that the Vietnam War was "unpopular," and that's what screwed up the GIs. So people today say, "If that's true, then if the Iraq war is unpopular it's going to screw up the Iraq GIs." Well, the Vietnam War wasn't unpopular. The Vietnam War was criminal.

MJ: One of the most compelling images from the film is the entrance to the Fort Dix stockade in New Jersey, where a sign reads, "Obedience to the Law is Freedom." Vietnam began a period in American life where that axiom could no longer be taken as faith. What do you think the long-term ramifications of Vietnam are?

DZ: That sign really summarized the Army's view of military life. The ramifications are, if nothing else, that it's possible to go up against and defeat a very powerful empire. One of the guys in the film made a point we didn't end up using: The United States had the biggest army in the world, the best equipped, the best trained, the best fed—and we lost. We got beat by an indigenous force that totally undercut the ability of the United State to get a foothold in their country. And that's a universal lesson, and that's a lesson that is extremely dangerous for any country that, despite its protestations, is in fact bent on being a world empire. It's inspiring for anyone who doesn't want to live in that sort of situation anymore.