

# 'He never asked for justice, only mercy'

By KERMIT VANDIVIER  
Troy News Staff Writer

CO

For some people, these letters, CO, might stand for "cop out."

But for Ted Alan Studebaker of West Milton, they stood for conscientious objector — not an excuse for dodging the danger and drudgery of military life, but a working philosophy, deep-rooted in a genuine love and concern for his fellow man.

And that love and concern led Ted to Vietnam and to his death Sunday

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in a tiny Montagnard village near Di Linh in the Republic of South Vietnam.

Ted was killed by enemy action, when a party of Viet Cong launched a senseless attack on the quarters occupied by Ted, his wife of one week, a nurse and another civilian, all members of Church World Service, a church-supported volunteer organization.

When the attack came, just at dusk Sunday, Ted succeeded in assisting his wife and the other two women to escape, but was killed himself in direct hand-to-hand contact, according to a spokesman from CWS.

He had completed his two-year

assignment and upon his marriage on April 17 to a fellow worker, the former Miss Lee Van Pak, had decided to extend his tour of duty for another year.

Ted was in Vietnam by choice, not chance.

"He felt compelled to share the danger and hardships of Vietnam," said his sister, Mary Ann Mishler of Troy. "He had no quarrel with anyone and wasn't against the military or those in the military service. It was just that he couldn't be a soldier, yet he wanted to share the same hardships and to be in danger along with them.

"He had really developed a rapport with the Montagnards," she continued, "and was genuinely concerned about them."

A graduate of West Milton - Union High School, Ted was only 25 at the time of his death.

"All his life seemed directed towards his work," reflected Mrs. Mishler. "He graduated from Manchester College in three years, and then went to Florida State University and got his master's degree in social work. This was his life."

Ted's own thoughts about his life in Vietnam were expressed by him in a letter to fellow members of his church, the West Milton Church of the Brethren.

"Please know that I feel most fortunate to be able to work here in Vietnam as a volunteer agriculturist for Vietnam Christian Service," wrote Studebaker.

But, though he felt "fortunate" to

be able to work in Vietnam, he was appalled at the conflict.

"The meaninglessness, the wastefulness, and the non-necessity of this war is outweighed only by its inhumane effects, both here and in the States."

In a taped interview, Ted once said, "The civilian population is, of course, in the middle of the war, and they are the ones who are losing the war..."

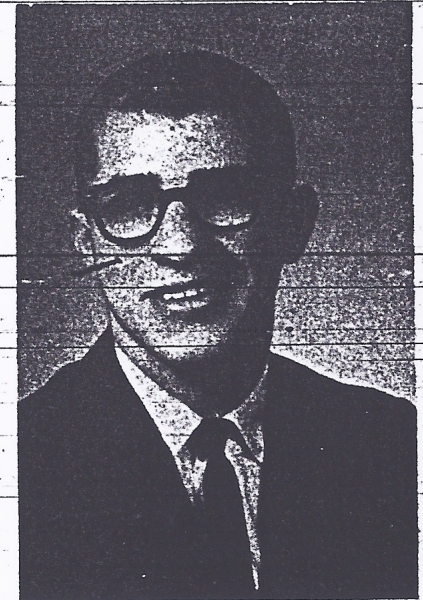
"So many times in this war, mistakes are made and it seems like the whole war is run on a bunch of mistakes."

Studebaker said he wanted to share the grief of the Vietnamese people but couldn't really do so because, "this is their country and their families and their bloodshed, not mine."

Studebaker was raised in the beliefs of the Brethren Church, and his actions received the full support of his family. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Studebaker of County Line Road, Union, his four brothers, Doug, at home, Lowell of Union, Ron of Chesire, Conn., and Gary of Chino, Calif., and sisters Linda Biller of Charleston, W.Va., and Nancy Biller of Troy, all supported his decisions to be a conscientious objector, said Mrs. Mishler, his oldest sister.

"This was what he wanted, and we were behind him 100 per cent," she said calmly, betraying no emotions. "We have no regrets. Why should we? He died doing what he wanted to do."

Mrs. Mishler said she felt sorry



TED STUDEBAKER

for the families of servicemen who were killed in Vietnam, "because I know many of them were in Vietnam against their will."

Her brother's body will be returned to West Milton within a few days, accompanied by his wife, whom the Studebaker family has never met.

"We're looking forward to meeting her and the family will all be together again," said Mrs. Mishler. "We will have no regrets."

A former classmate summed up Ted Studebaker's 25-year life in seven words.

"He never asked for justice, only mercy."