

oddly, as curbside programs expanded across the state, the authors found, even high-income areas turned in more light alum-

inum cans and bottles at recycling centers than ever. They speculated that curbside access had increased scavenging, with poorer

people finding it easier to scoop up large numbers of cans from the curbs and take them to recycling centers for cash.

PRESS & MEDIA

Not So High in Vietnam

THE SOURCE: "The Myth of the 'Addicted Army': Drug Use in Vietnam in Historical Perspective" by Jeremy Kuzmarov, in *War and Society*, Oct. 2007.

MORE THAN 30 YEARS AFTER THE U.S. military pulled out of Saigon, last year's popular movie *American Gangster* used heroin smuggling during the Vietnam War as a universally recognizable backdrop for a thriller about drug dealing. But Jeremy Kuzmarov, a visiting historian at Bucknell University, says that the 'Nam junkie is largely a myth fostered by the news media and sensationalized by Hollywood.

Drug use among U.S. troops in Vietnam, he writes, was "far from omnipresent, confined largely to the

rear," and did not cause "combat breakdown or the military's collapse." Drugs were less prevalent than alcohol and less socially destructive. A 1970 study showed that 28.9 percent of GIs surveyed had experimented with marijuana during their tour of duty, a figure comparable to rates in the United States for men 18 to 21. But newspapers and magazines inflated the results of a study showing that a majority of U.S. personnel jailed at the Army's stockade in Long Binh had used marijuana to suggest that 60 to 90 percent of American soldiers in Vietnam were on drugs, according to Kuzmarov.

The Washington Post reported

that the first thing soldiers did after killing a North Vietnamese fighter was to search him for his "stash," although Kuzmarov writes that Vietnamese who used drugs rarely smoked marijuana, preferring to chew betel nuts or smoke opium. CBS News broadcast a report that American soldiers were getting high from opium-laced marijuana inhaled through the barrels of their guns, failing to note that the incident in question was staged as an antiwar stunt. *The New York Times* said, without citing evidence, that the North Vietnamese were peddling "brain dulling marijuana" to American GIs.

Pentagon research showed that about half of American soldiers who smoked marijuana had done so fewer than 10 times, and less than 10 percent of soldiers used drugs more than two or three times. About six percent of departing sol-

EXCERPT

One Expensive War

Totting up exorbitant expenses became a matter for competition among journalists [during the Falklands War]. One Californian woman planned to buy a cottage in Ireland with the proceeds of her war; somebody else was going on a special holiday; another was determined to put in a new kitchen at home in

north London, when the conflict was over. The record for expenses (upward of £20,000 in three months) was held by a man called Ross Benson, from the London Daily Express. North American journalists complained that United States employers demanded expense accounts submitted in local currency. This had to be abandoned as inflation grew. The millions of pesos in which business was transacted overflowed the screen on pocket calculators.

—ANDREW GRAHAM-YOOLL, editor of the *Buenos Aires Herald*, in *Antioch Review* (Fall 2007)

diers tested positive for drugs in 1971, a number that dropped below two percent in 1972, although the latter number is disputed because of laboratory problems.

Americans, Kuzmarov says,

overlooked a real alcohol epidemic in Vietnam, and absorbed a sensationalized media portrait of an “addicted army” ravaged by drugs. The media linked “wasted” Vietnam veterans to a rise in the

nation’s crime rate. Subsequent research, Kuzmarov writes, has shown that less than one half of one percent of Vietnam veterans committed a single crime after they returned from the war.

HISTORY

Uppity Abigail

THE SOURCE: “Abigail Adams, Bond Speculator” by Woody Holton, in *William and Mary Quarterly*, Oct. 2007.

IN 1783, AS FUTURE PRESIDENT John Adams, in Paris, wrapped up the treaty ending the Revolutionary War, and his wife, Abigail, managed the family farm back in America, the couple had one of their rare quarrels. The subject was money. John wanted to buy neighboring farms in Massachusetts; Abigail wanted to speculate in 18th-century junk bonds and Vermont real estate.

The famously like-minded pair held almost polar views on investment strategy. John thought that speculation diverted capital from productive uses and merely redistributed it from poor creditors to rich investors. Abigail wanted to make money. She considered the dour and righteous John’s paltry salary a poor reward for his years of public service, and thought nothing

of buying bonds at fire-sale prices and investing in real estate using “straw men” in order to conceal her identity.

Moreover, she carved out £100 of the family’s available sterling and began playing the bond market on her own, even though, under Massachusetts law, everything belonged to John. Woody Holton, a historian at the University of Richmond, writes that Abigail is well known for

denouncing laws that left all property “subject to the controul [sic] and disposal of our partners.” Less known is that her views were not utopian musings. She took family money “which I call mine,” she wrote, speculated (successfully) with it, and set up a fund she used for personal charity.

She was remarkably candid about why. “I derive a pleasure from the regret of others,” the poor and needy whom she would not be able to help further, she confessed before departing for Europe.

Through forthright disagreement with her husband, occasional wheedling, and surreptitious instructions to managers, Abigail managed the family’s assets far more profitably than John ordered her to. When he directed his wife in 1783 to sound out two neighbors about selling their farms, she wrote back that she had a better alternative: state bonds. Unpersuaded, John tried again a year later. By that time, Abigail had joined her husband in Europe and turned her family’s affairs over to her uncle, Cotton Tufts.

When John asked Tufts to buy the farm of

EXCERPT

What Might Have Been

Just as there are phantom limbs there are phantom histories, histories that are severed and discarded, but linger on as thwarted possibilities and compelling nostalgias. After the amputation we live as if, it feels as if, the limb is still there. Its loss is known, even mourned, but it is still experienced as somehow present; it is a loss at once acknowledged and invisible.

—ADAM PHILLIPS, editor of the forthcoming *Book of Interruptions* and author of *Intimacy*, also forthcoming, in *Raritan* (Summer 2007)