

SPECIAL NEWS FEATURE

"Lest We Forget Iraq"

by Jeffery Czopor

Perhaps a most pertinent question raised by avid followers of the crisis in the Persian Gulf is "how can the general populations of the nations who became so intensely involved in the war now be so indifferent and unaware as to the proceedings and situations that exist there now."

Looking from all different angles of this rhetorical statement, Rick McCutcheon, a peace activist and peace worker who lectured at STU this week, has attempted to revive North American interest in the Gulf situation so that all will become aware of the internal turmoil of Iraq that is literally destroying thousands of innocent people. It is McCutcheon's utmost intent that through this awareness the public will learn to properly dissimulate the actual people of Iraq from a political structure they so eagerly learned to despise.

Upon visiting Iraq last March (shortly after the end of civil fighting) and again in the fall, McCutcheon's very real and tangible confrontation with the effects of defeat greatly moved him. His interpersonal contacts with the actual culture and his witnessing of piles of dead bodies led McCutcheon to believe that the "almighty west" was in dire need to reassess the situation and their involvement (or lack of) throughout the country.

In his talk, the peace activist's objective was not to get maudlin or exaggerated, bias or critical. Like actions, pictures often speak better than words and McCutcheon had no other motive but paint the most realistic and accurate picture he possibly could.

"For the most part, memories of war are shaped by victors - the voices of the vanquished are lost or dead. In the least, the memories on both sides are of the survivors. The tens of thousands of victims - children, women and men - only speak by their body language; the language of terrified contortion, rotting flesh and empty eye sockets." - McCutcheon

Often enough, peace activists are accused of being righteous, pious, and merely interested in the salvation of endangered life. However, perhaps even more disheartening than the average person's conception of peace activists, is his/her conception of other cultures.

McCutcheon believes that many have etched the face of Saddam Hussein and party on every living, breathing Iraqi, young and old, victimized or not.

Just as many would be appalled at assimilating the entire German population with a

man such as Hitler, McCutcheon has come to see that the entire humanitarian aspect of this war has been stripped from its very core and the west has once again overlooked the common elements of a nation - its people.

As a continent, McCutcheon

expressed that we have fallen prey to the proceedings of political red tape. "Somehow we are being encouraged to forget this war." Unfortunately, with the forgetfulness of this war brings about forgetfulness of its dying innocent victims.

The forum in which the talk was presented was very effective for instilling immediacy in the minds of the attentive audience. They passed glances of distress and dismay as they heard countless, disturbing tales of bodies, blood, tears, and chaos. Although many



An Iraqi child sits in the rubble of a civilian quarter of Baghdad bombed by coalition forces. The chances of her still being alive are slim. Photo by Rick McCutcheon

who attended felt compelled to explicitly state that they did not agree with some of McCutcheon's opinions regarding politics and interna-

tional issues, the UN and Economic Sanctions, all appeared to become consumed with the notion that the Iraqi people themselves were not to blame.

"The voices of Iraq's dead and dying have been silenced. What does the young soldier say as he catches sight of the tank's bulldozer blade pushing tons of sand over his body? Can we feel the weight of the sand as it closes over us? Can we feel the first grains of sand go up our nose, working its way into our throat, filling our lungs with death? Does the unemotional phrase 'Nobody said war was pleasant' capture that soldier's experience of war?" - McCutcheon

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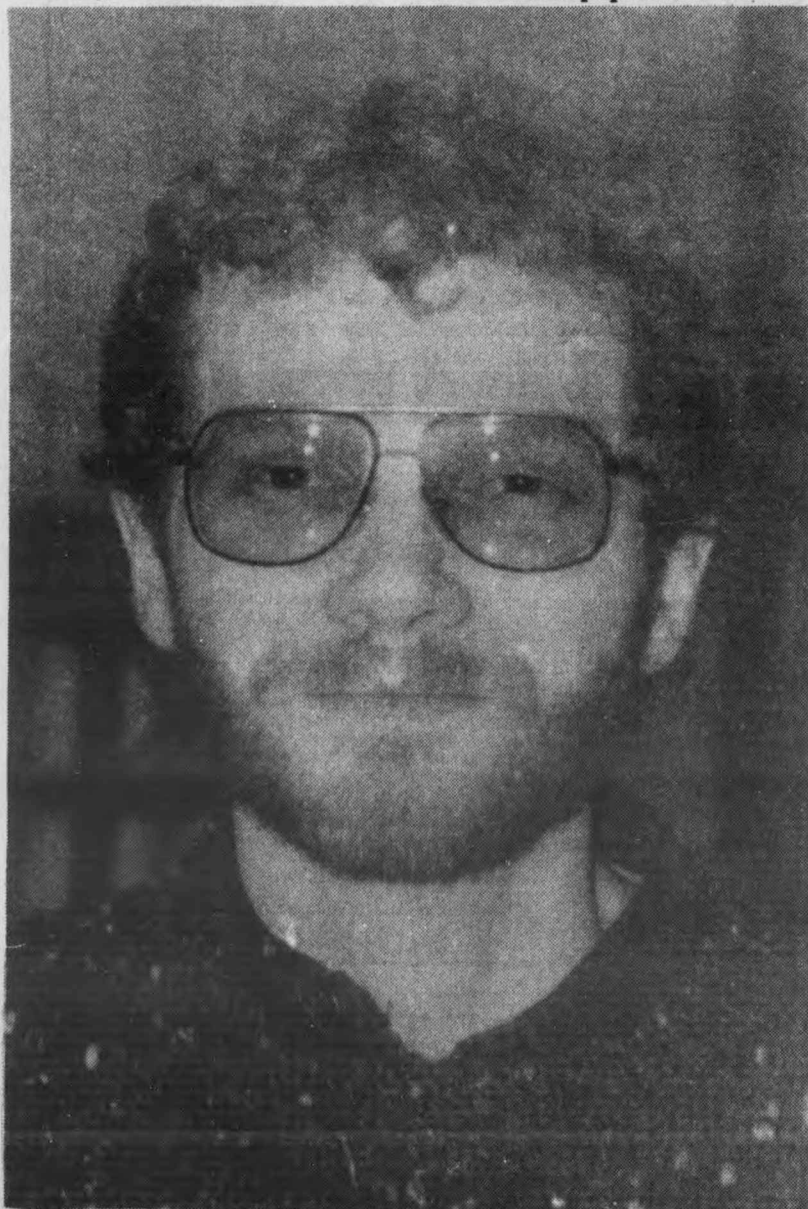
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Shown is Rick McCutcheon speaking at St. Thomas University.