



# THE HOMELESS VETS

**John Ross**

When he hits his shelter cot at 10 PM lights-out, Jessie Mays is bone-weary. Sleep is precious to this ex-Marine, what with the North Vietnamese always attacking just as they did at Khe Sanh in 1967, with shells blasting their positions every five seconds.

Jessie Mays was a corps medic, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines. He picked up the pieces of his buddies before he finally took a grenade in the leg and hip just before completing his tour in August, '67. The wound laid him up in Japan for eight months before he came home.

Jessie Mays has been coming home ever since. Now home is the Episcopal Sanctuary.

"I never really went home," Mays says. "My father is a minister and a farming man back in Illinois. He was in the civil rights movement, and now he's a

county supervisor. But after I came back from Nam I just couldn't face him. I wasn't even 20 yet and really angry.

"I mean, once a girl in Berkeley asked me how many babies I killed over there. I was a medic, man. I saved lives. They had to drag me off that girl."

Mays' internal "horror movies" had him stalking the streets packing a gun, but somehow in the mid-1970s, Jessie got married, went to college, opened a tee-shirt shop. There were two daughters and material comfort. The nightmares still came, but now he chased them with drugs and booze.

By 1980, things were falling apart—first the business, then the family, then valued friends. "I was acting so crazy, no one could understand," he says. "I just let everything go."

Finally, there was a bad car wreck and Jessie Mays, his jaws wired and his bones broken, made it into a Veterans Administration hospital program for Vietnam combat vets ravaged by Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. A year later, he was back in gear, a computer operator at Stanford University.

On July 4, 1982, Jessie was finally awarded his Purple Heart, and for 13 months, he managed to keep it together. Then he was arrested for a misdemeanor he won't talk about, but says he didn't commit. While he was in jail, all his stuff was stolen from his hotel room, and by the time he hit the streets, Jessie Mays

was furious. The cops caught up with him again inside the offices of the California Public Utilities Commission, smashing typewriters against the walls.

"I just was mad. I wanted to get a government office."

He was still mad when police put him back on the streets. "I had no place, no stuff or money. I walked around skid row looking for someone to hit. I slept out under the freeway in a refrigerator box. I got cold."

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## EARLY RETURNS

Only 92 shopping months  
til the 1988 election

### Notes

Senator Hart has proposed that all youths be required to perform some kind of service to the nation. His bill would give \$3 million to a commission to study matter.

Senators Gore and Nunn, sometimes mentioned as presidential timber, both voted for the MX. The rest of the would-bes voted against it.

### Ded Kennedy says

I've always said I'd like to be president someday, though my sense from my own contacts with people around the country is that they're still too exhausted from the last election to be focusing on the next one.

I will maintain my political committee and contacts, and hopefully that is something that could be readily activated should any decision come.

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As Democrats, we must understand that there is a difference between being a party that cares about labor and being a labor party. There is a difference between being a party that cares about women and being the women's party. And we can and we must

be a party that cares about minorities without becoming a minority party. We are citizens first and constituencies second.

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We cannot and should not depend on higher tax revenues to roll in and redeem every costly program. Rather, those of us who care about domestic progress must do more with less.

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We must acknowledge that some social welfare programs just continued people living in desperate situations. We have to be more innovative. That has been important to our party.

We have to realign our position, but that doesn't mean we have to abandon our present policies.

We have to be more concerned with having less [money] and dealing with it more effectively.

### Jimmy Carter says

In my judgment, the Democrats basically should take the position I took in 1976: a combination of approaches, some of which could be considered quite conservative and some quite liberal.

