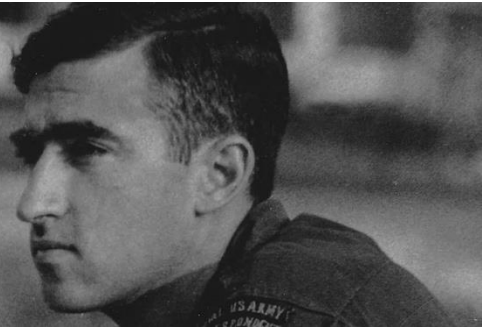


LSNelson Productions

# Vietnam... *through my lens*



**"Vietnam...through my lens"**, written and performed by Stu Richel - **World Premiere** - November 6 - 23, 2014

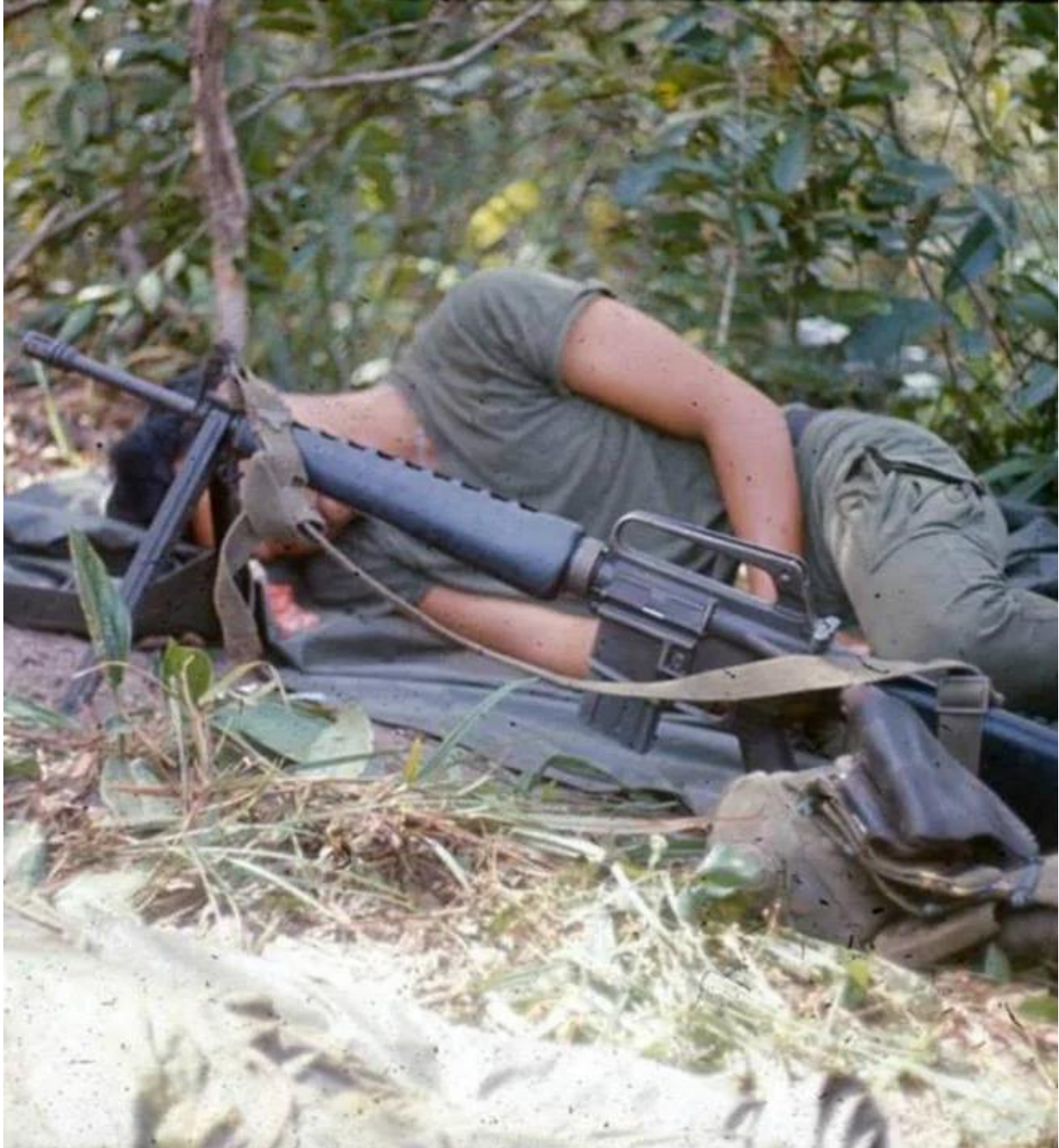
Sometimes poignant, sometimes lighthearted, always thought provoking, this one-man play follows Stu Richel's journey as a combat journalist & photographer to - through - and beyond his military service in Vietnam. The premiere was a limited engagement at the Dorothy Strelsin Theatre, 312 West 36th Street, NYC, NY, November 6-23, with a Special Veterans Day Performance benefiting the **Fisher House Foundation**. Fisher House Foundation is best known for a network of comfort homes where military and veterans' families can stay at no cost while a loved one is receiving treatment. These homes are located at major military and VA medical centers nationwide, close to the medical center or hospital they serve.

## **what the play is about**

Stu proudly served in the U.S. Army from January 1968 to January 1970. Through much of 1969, he was a combat photographer and journalist with the 1st Infantry Division in Vietnam; it is that service which provided the impetus for this solo, stage performance.

This is a soldier's story, told by an awfully good story teller. No blood and guts. No political statements that try to tell you why America's involvement over there was right or wrong. What you get is simply a woven stream of memories and reflections . . . stories! Just one guy's intensely personal perspective on the most significant period in his life. Share the odd path by which Stu ended up in Vietnam, some of his misadventures as a journalist and photographer, and (perhaps most importantly) how the experience has colored his life. Vietnam, it turns out, had tentacles that reached into the future.

During the course of the show, his words are made even more vivid by video projections of some of his Vietnam photos. Those shots bring his memories . . . and the difficult period of the war . . . into focus, for you, the 21st century audience. His stories will touch your heart . . . and bring on a smile. He will capture your attention within minutes. "You had me from word one!", a recent theatregoer said. And along the way, Stu's stories . . . the pathos, the joy, the humor, the pride . . . may just give you pause to think about friendship, country, important people and moments in your life . . . things that matter, things that count, as we all stumble along and do what we can.



## from the playwright

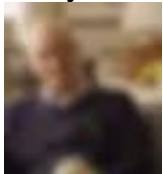
So, I'm outside, freezing my butt off, having a cigar and a beer, and sharing thoughts with Michael Kosch, a friend and composer. That was 2011. Christmas party at the home of Alex Roe, Artistic Director of Metropolitan Playhouse. The subject of Vietnam came up; I don't remember why. I recalled the cascade of emotions I felt on the day that I left Vietnam. Pride, relief, excitement . . . but only after that Freedom Bird actually got off the ground, 'cause . . . you never know. Michael was touched. "Hey, you've got to put that down on paper," he said. Yeah, right.

The following year, same party, different cigar, more beer, another memory or two. Again, Michael pushed. "You've got to put these down. It's important." I guess I didn't think so.

*Third year. Different party. More stories. More "push" from Michael and actor/director Michael Hardart. "Okay," I said. "I'll try." I suppose I needed some assurance that this wouldn't be just a vanity piece, that the material had some intrinsic value.*

***As the process of writing began . . . and goes on . . . so, too, has a good bit of soul searching. Are my words honest? How accurate is my memory, after fifty years or so? Why did I make some of the choices you hear about in the show? Do I think this play can be a meaningful part of the body of literature addressing the Vietnam War? Have I shown proper respect for the valor of so many who went over there, so many who were at far greater risk than I? And, of course, will people just plain enjoy the show?!***

At least on the question of enjoyment . . . so far, so good, I believe! We're getting standing ovations. Lots of folks come up to chat after the show. Robust participation in post show, Q & A sessions. I certainly hope that one day, you will you get a chance to cast your vote too!



***Here is what some folks have had to say about Stu's work on stage:***

"nicely played by Stu Richel"  
New York Times  
Sickle, New York City

"The actors perform ably, especially...Richel as the pensive, doubting physician."

The Village Voice  
*Wind on the Water*, New York City

"A true work of sublime genius"  
New York Observer  
*Mortal Decisions, a Diary of  
the Donner Party*, New York City

"Excellent performance by Stu Richel (as Robert)"  
The Syracuse Post Standard  
*Proof*, Syracuse, New York

"a convincing Luka, the itinerant philosopher"  
Show Business  
*The Lower Depths*, New York City

### ***about the playwright/actor***

Long before *Vietnam...through my lens* arrived, Stu Richel researched, wrote and toured three, other, (solo) stage shows: *Mortal Decisions, a Diary of the Donner Party*; *Theodore Judah and the Transcontinental Railroad*; and *Everyone's War*. He has written a handful of full length plays for "other people," as well. Two of them, *The Same Cloud* and *The Bugs Don't Call Me Nigger*, were produced by Northside Theatre Company, in San Jose, California. He has had readings of a number of his one acts; one of them, *Road Kill*, was produced in NYC several years ago.

On screen, Stu has had principal roles in over thirty-five (indie) films. In *Hiding Divya*, he played the companion of the Indian actress and author, Madhur Jaffrey. In *Death in Love*, he played the father of Lukas Haas and Josh Lucas...and the husband of Jacqueline Bisset. Stu played Jill Eikenberry's husband in *Starting Out in the Evening*, a slimy landlord in *Red Cockroaches*, a lonely, hotel owner in *Friendship Hotel*, an eccentric valet in *Tom & Valkyrie* and a homeless veteran in *Pvt. Francis of Williamsburg*. Stu plays a dad with a wandering eye in the upcoming, indie feature, "Love, Repeat".

On television, Stu has had principal roles in "30 Rock" (Alec Baldwin's boss,) "Billions" (a rich guy in a scene with Damian Lewis), "What Would You Do?" (an old fellow whose best buddy just died), "Gypsy" (Blythe Danner's husband), "The Get Down" (a deacon in a scene with Giancarlo Esposito), "One Life to Live" (fire chief,) "Michael and Michael Have Issues" (irritated, gay man) and "As the World Turns" (Jules, the caterer.)

On occasion, Stu books a corporate ad. e.g. AT&T, Siemens, ING & Nortel. And, every once in a while, you will see his mug in a print ad for a pharmaceutical product. e.g. Xarelto, Leukine & Fentora.

Stu has appeared in dozens of Off Broadway, Regional and other stage shows. Regional appearances include *Proof* (Redhouse, Syracuse), *Twilight of the Gods* (Shadowland, Ellenville), *Holiday* (San Jose Rep), *State of the Union* (J City Theatre, Jersey City), *Mortal Decisions, A Diary of the Donner Party* (Depot Theatre, Westport, New York) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (San Jose Stage.) Some of his NYC appearances include roles in *The Lower Depths* (Luka), *The*

*Philanderer* (Craven), *Summer and Smoke* (J. Buchanon), *Bag Fulla Money* (hotel owner), *The Substance of John* (Jack Kerouac), *Autoeroticism in Detroit* (executive), *Slaughter City* (heartless businessman), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Shallow), *American Soldiers* (frustrated dad), *The Detour* (Jewish peddler) and *Barrier Island* (curmudgeon).

In earlier lives, Stu was a corporate attorney, college teacher, and a teacher/performer in hardcore prisons. He is a graduate of Johns Hopkins University (1964) and Cornell Law School (1967.)

"Richel...organizes the material in a way that teaches something new about the Donner Party fiasco; so, more power to him."

San Jose, California, Mercury News  
*Mortal Decisions, a Diary of the Donner Party*, San Jose, California

"Richel's deftly described characters bring home deeply affecting messages about the human loss in...waging war. But he is never more riveting than when he portrays himself, returning from service as a combat photographer in Vietnam."

The Village Voice  
*Everyone's War*, New York City

"It is to the outstanding Richel's credit that even when Carlo Senior feels like a minor character, the naturalistic actor plays him with major gravitas. His disappointment and weariness as a struggling patriarch are palpable."

Offline Reviews  
*American Soldiers*, New York City

"The performances you offer are brilliant as, in each sketch, the characters and their stories come to life. Seemingly with little effort, but powerful dignity, you return us to the poignant and historic moments that have torn humanity apart, but all the while binding us as an audience."

Norma Wright, San Jose, California, Fine Arts Commission  
*Everyone's War*, San Jose, California

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