

PSH NEWS

'An Evening with Studs Terkel'

Renowned author speaks out against war

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Studs Terkel, a Pulitzer-Prize winning author and unapologetic liberal, called the Persian Gulf War "absolutely unnecessary."

"War to us is something distant," he said. "Do we have to be bombed or invaded to experience the obscenity of war?"

As the fourth speaker in the Penn State Harrisburg 1990-91 Lecture Series, Terkel, 78, said the United States has no business fighting any war.

"Was this trip necessary?" he asked. "In Vietnam we lost to a bunch of little guys in black pajamas, but nobody asked what we were doing there in the first place."

Terkel, speaking before a crowd of 150 at the CUB during "An evening with Studs Terkel", poked fun at the U.S. government for fighting small nations like Panama, Libya and Iraq.

"Imagine Muhammad Ali knocking the hell out of Woody Allen," he said. "We always have to show we're it no matter what."

Terkel, dressed in a red sweater which showed off his white hair, strayed from a formal lecture focusing on one topic. Using a collection of amusing anecdotes held together by his progressive politics, he called the liberal media a "farce."

"You don't see a labor section next to the business section," he said.

Terkel said someone who questions authority when he or she thinks it's wrong is a true patriot.

"A patriot is no longer a flesh and blood being," Terkel said. "It has become a thing."

Terkel won the Pulitzer-Prize in 1985 for his book *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War II*. And for more than 35 years, he has hosted his own radio show in Chicago.

He said many people today have no sense of the past, even of events that happened within the last ten years.

Terkel linked today's many plane wrecks and near-misses to the 1981 air traffic controller strike which led to ex-President Reagan's firing of 15,000 controllers who were striking for better working conditions.

"These guys were striking for our safety," Terkel said. "And 90 percent of us cheered it (the firing)."

He also said many anti-union people fail to remember it was their grandparents and great-grandparents belonging to unions who fought for the



Studs Terkel

Photo by John Rudy

now common eight-hour work day and the 40-hour week.

"It's like we have a national Alzheimers disease," he said.

Terkel blames the loss of historical sense partly on television.

"TV bites provide wisdom in 10 seconds," he said. "Even the better news shows like *Nightline* ask 'You have 15 seconds left, what's your philosophy on life?'"

Terkel said his favorite type of history is "anonymous history". He said he wants to know more about the anonymous people of history like the

ones who built the Egyptian Pyramids.

"People say the Pharaohs built the pyramids," Terkel said. "They didn't build them. Why Mrs. Pharaoh's nails are as immaculate as Elizabeth Taylor's."

"When Sir Francis Drake defeated the Spanish Armada, historians say King Phillip wept," Terkel said. "Were there any other tears is what I'd like to know."

Born Louis Terkel, he adopted the name Studs after the fictional character Studs Lonigan.

"I was in a school play and there were four kids named Louis in it," he said. "I was always carrying around the

book *Studs Lonigan* so they called me Studs."

After graduating from the University of Chicago Law School, Terkel worked as a civil service employee in Washington, D.C., a stage actor, and movie house manager before turning to radio and television broadcasting and writing.

In the early days of radio, Terkel played a gangster in a radio soap opera.

"I used to threaten Ma Perkins five

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Rahrooh said that the Kurds are a people of Indo-European culture, and their descent makes them hated among the Arabs of the Middle East, so hated that in Iraq, they are used for "target practice" by Saddam Hussein.

Ansary said that during the war President Bush promised to divide Iraq with one part going to the Kurdish people, thus granting them the autonomous state they have sought

throughout the 20th century.

But then, Ansary said, Bush pulled out and said, "let the Kurdish people get rid of Saddam themselves."

Bush's message became a signal to the Kurds to go in and try to get Saddam, with the United States militarily backing them, Ansary said. The Kurds promptly went in and were slaughtered by Hussein, who received nothing more than a two-day cease fire warning from the United Nations.

Rahrooh said that the United Nations

imposed the cease fire, the U.S. shot down two Iraqi jets and Bush went golfing in Florida.

But Rahrooh said he is not surprised at the action taken by Bush and the world community. He said the Kurds have been living without autonomy and respect for over 70 years.

Rahrooh said that within the next two to three weeks between 40 and 60 percent of the Kurdish refugee children will die of starvation and disease.

Rahrooh said that during the U.S.

invasion into Kuwait it seemed "not OK for Saddam to kill a half million Kuwaitis but it is now OK to watch 2 million people die in the open desert."

He said that the government of Turkey has had a historical suspicion of its 12 million Kurdish citizens and fears that adding the refugee populations increase the possibility of revolt.

"Saddam Hussein has gotten away with murder for 20 years and will continue to get away with murder for years to come," Rahrooh said quietly.