



COURTESY OF ZOE FRANCIS

Veterans Mike Martin, of Castro Valley, left, and Bill Green, of Alamo, members of the Viet Nam Veterans of Diablo Valley, have shared their war stories with more than 51,000 students since 2002.

## EDUCATION

# Vietnam vets share stories of the war

Juniors across state study Southeast Asian war this time of year

By **Zoe Francis**  
*Correspondent*

The Vietnam War came to Foothill High School in Pleasanton recently in the form of two veterans with divergent experiences.

Mike Martin, of Castro Valley, and Bill Green, of Alamo, members of the Viet Nam Veterans of Diablo Valley, spoke to juniors studying the war in U.S. history

## SPEAKERS BUREAU

For more info about the Viet Nam Veterans of Diablo Valley and its free speakers bureau, visit [www.vnvdv.com](http://www.vnvdv.com).

classes.

“It’s our passion to share stories,” Martin said. “They’re not getting it in the regular classroom. We’re giving living history lessons. It fills those pieces that are not there in the textbooks.”

See **VETERANS**, Page 6

# Veterans

*Continued from Page 1*

"I feel these children have to know," Green added. "They have to know more than what the book says. By hearing a human voice express their feelings, it's a far better experience than something out of a book."

Martin and Green have shared their stories with more than 51,000 students since 2002 — and that's just when they started counting. Martin has been talking to students since 1993. Green jumped on board in the late '90s. Spring is their busy time of year as high school juniors statewide study the Vietnam War.

It's clearly a personal mission for these two retirees and friends whose banter is reminiscent of great Abbott and Costello skits. Martin's the straight man. Green makes a beeline for the punchline.

"I tried going to college right out of high school (in 1965)," Green said. "I majored in fast cars, pretty girls and beer. I went there to party hearty."

Green's comments elicited the requisite laughter before he got serious and told of how he tried to enlist in the Army in 1967 but was rejected due to his asthma. Ironically, he was drafted into the Army a mere two months later.

"Two months after they refused to take me, they drafted me," he said with a chuckle. "My favorite oxymoron — military intelligence."

Green was stationed in the coastal town of Chulai but spent the majority of his time fighting farther inland in the steep mountains and dense forests of Vietnam. He was trained in booby traps and map reading, so he was the point man who searched for booby traps to protect troops behind him.

Green was wounded

twice and survived three helicopter crashes. He left Vietnam in 1969 with two Purple Hearts and two Bronze Stars.

While Green saw intense combat, Martin experienced the war in an entirely different setting. He entered the Navy as an officer after getting his college degree. He was stationed in the coastal town of Danang to oversee the unloading of supplies and weapons from ships and dispersing those goods to the troops.

Martin also served one full year in Vietnam before returning stateside to complete his military service. He recalls vividly landing at the Los Angeles airport on July 4, 1970, thrilled to be home.

"I walk out into the concourse, and what do I walk into but a war protest," Martin said. "There were probably 200 people dressed in their hippy garb of the day. A young lady comes up to me and starts jawing on me. She proceeds to wrap up her little tirade against me, calls me a baby killer and spits in my face. That's how I got welcomed home."

A hush came over the students as they absorbed the levity of Martin's experience.

"Vets have been fighting in wars to preserve the way we live in our great country," Martin continued. "Freedom of speech is the No. 1 thing. It's OK to protest, but the people protesting the war back in our day and age started taking things out against the individual warriors instead of protesting against the war."

Green returned to college after the war, older than most students on campus and certainly more clean-cut. A young student confronted Green and told him he was stupid for going to Vietnam. Green disagreed.

"I answered my country's call," Green said. "And I'd do it again in a heartbeat."