

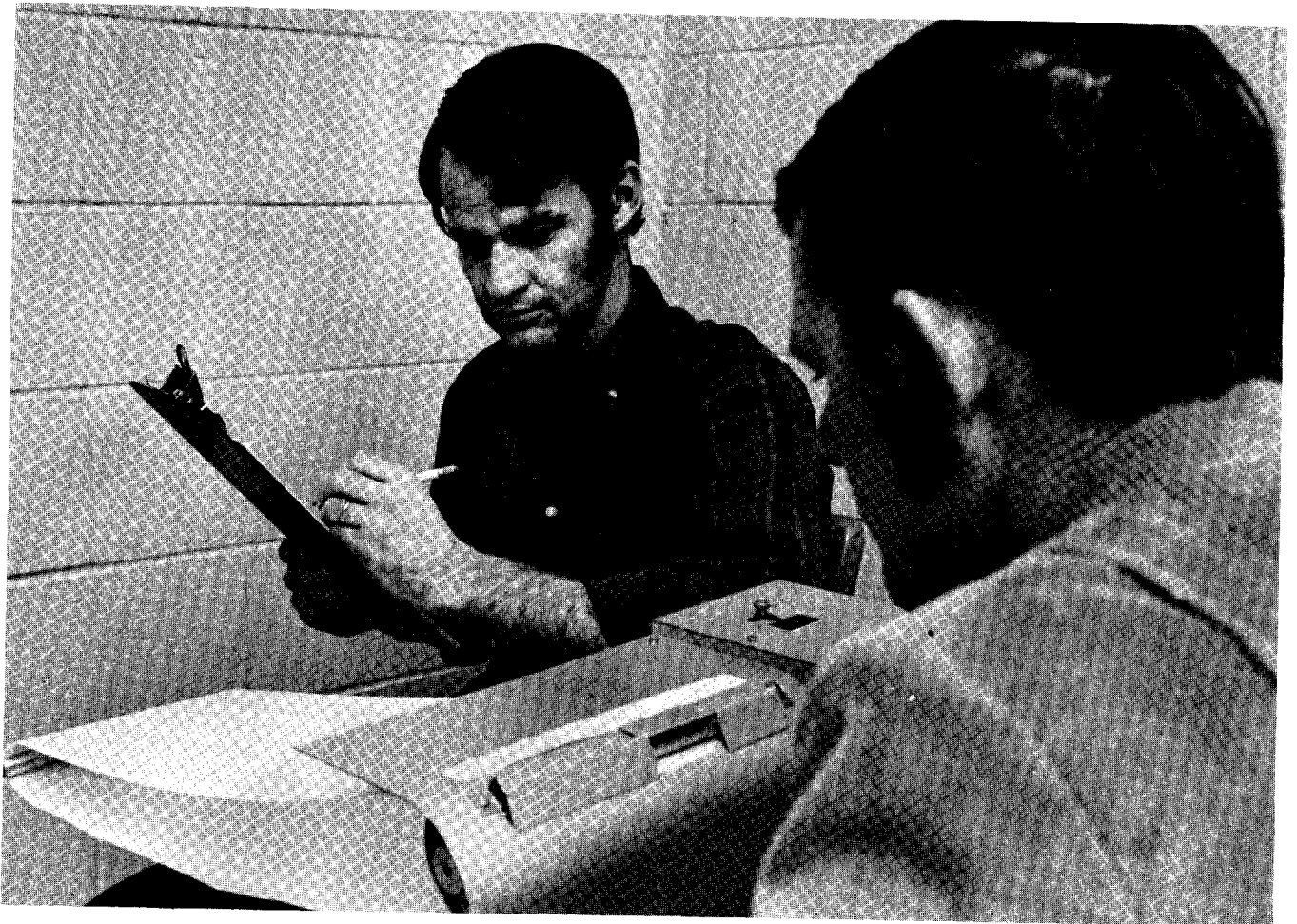
Those who came to OU after World War I as veterans remember well the conditions of being a veteran and a college student—housing shortage, job shortage, money shortage, wives and children to support, lucky to be living in drafty, noisy, cramped Sooner City.

Sooner City is gone, but the melody lingers on in 1971 with some 1,700 veterans attending OU with educational assistance under the Post-Korean War G.I. Bill. They are part of more than 14,000 veterans, who have seen some service since January 31, 1955, who have been going to school on the G.I. Bill this year in Oklahoma colleges and universities.

Here Sooner magazine presents profiles of three of those latter day veterans, Taylor C. Anthony III, Norman junior in the School of Art; Gunt Dambro, a Latvian who is a sophomore from Fremont, Nebraska, in the College of Business Administration, and Conny D. Curtis, Roswell, New Mexico, doctoral student in the Department of Psychology.

The article was written by Curtis' wife, Marty, who like most veterans' wives holds down a full time job to supplement the G.I. Bill income. Mrs. Curtis is a writer in OU's Office of Media Information and a former reporter for the Norman Transcript.

The Melody Lingers On



Conny D. Curtis

When the Post-Korean War G.I. Bill went into effect in 1966, Conny D. Curtis, then starting his senior year at Indiana University, decided to take advantage... and take advantage... and take advantage of it.

Four and a half years later, ex-G.I. Curtis is a semester away from receiving the doctor of philosophy degree from OU.

All he lacks is the dissertation, and he's attacking that now, existing most of the day in a Dale Hall basement room where most undergraduates know him only as "Mr. Curtis, the psych experimenter." With the help of two memory drum apparatus in the lab, Curtis is running subjects for an experiment on which to base his paper.

Even in the underground, his humor is evident. There hangs a sign on the closed door: "Experiment in Progress. Do not Disturb—Give Science A Chance."

The 30-year-old veteran, who looks more like an undergraduate himself, could be considered almost a rarity on the G.I. Bill since he will miss—by one semester—the distinction of having received all three of his degrees while drawing Veterans Administration educational benefits. However, a greater distinction for him is being the last of 12 children in his family

a semester short of three degrees on the g. i. bill

and the only one to go beyond high school (a sister also made it through high school).

As a married man with one child, the native of Roswell, New Mexico, had been receiving \$230 a month as a full-time graduate student until his time on the bill ran out in December with the end of OU's fall semester.

But even with the G.I. Bill benefits, Curtis found it necessary to hold down several part-time jobs to get through school, and there was a time—from 1965 to 1967—when both he and his wife were full-time students. His wife, on OU professional employee, quit school in 1967 after earning bachelors and master's degrees.

Curtis' job titles at Indiana University in just one year—1966-67—included undergraduate research assistant in the Psychology Department, sign maker in the library and custodian in university apartments.

Earning the bachelor of arts degree there in 1967, he came to OU where he received the master of science degree in 1968. Since then he has been a graduate assistant in the Psychology Department, teaching the introductory course and doing research in his major field of human learning.

Curtis was drafted into the Army in November 1963 and obtained an "early out" to return to school in September 1965. He thinks veterans—even those who serve just the mandatory two years—have more than earned their entitlement to the G.I. Bill educational benefits.

"Those two years after I was drafted into the Army interfered with both my and my wife's education and delayed the date we would be able to earn an income comparable to that of persons with college degrees," Curtis points out.

"A curiosity about man's behavior" led Curtis to make up his mind to major in psychology when he quit school to work after studying two years at New Mexico State University. A semester of study at Wayland College, Plainview, Texas, preceded his draft

notice, and his marriage in 1963 took place at Christmas during a two-week leave from basic training. He spent an academic year at Wayland after his Army release and before transferring to Indiana.

In the OU Psychology Department Curtis chose human learning (and motivation) over animal learning for his major area because, he says, the former is "more readily applicable."

This semester he has been concentrating on research in verbal discrimination learning, "a special type of verbal learning."

The doctoral student enjoys research and hopes to combine it with teaching at a college or university beginning in the fall. "An effective teacher has to do research in the area he's teaching—has to be involved and enthusiastic to stimulate student interest which is so essential for maximum learning," Curtis believes.

About the applicability of his research, Curtis comments, "A great many psychologists—just like a great many other scientists—are content to study some phenomenon just for the sake of studying that phenomenon, with no concern about how it might benefit society. Like there's a whole psychology of the white rat.

"A great deal of verbal learning research is not as directly applicable as research in fields like concept learning or psycholinguistics, since most verbal learning research is still looking at rudimentary processes."

One reason verbal learning research hasn't been widely applied to, say, education, Curtis continues, is "It's difficult to control all the variables in the learning process because human learning can be so complex. And once you control enough of the factors and are thereby able to point at THE factors that cause behavior to take place, you've got a very atypical situation—one in which hardly anyone ever lives. So generalizing your findings is often very risky."

Guntars (Gunt for short) Dambro looks like the typical boy next door. With his freckles and freshly scrubbed look, you wouldn't guess that he's every bit of 24 and a Vietnam veteran.

In the fall of 1969 Dambro, a naturalized American citizen of Latvian descent, traded his Marine Corps combat boots and fatigues for the more casual and comfortable wardrobe of a university freshman. After a year and a half at OU he has taken on the aura of someone with a "wait and see" attitude.

Not a tremendously self-confident person, Dambro is sort of playing his whole college education by ear. He's a sophomore now and wondering whether he will go all the way through school or take another option—that of quitting and going to work full time in the business world.

Be that as it may, Dambro is currently trying to make it through this year as a management major.

Dambro doesn't exactly wave the American flag, but he admits his background or "upbringing" has had a big influence on some of his opinions, such as, "People shouldn't be so quick to criticize this country when they don't have anything else to compare it with."

The OU student's Latvian mother took her three children in 1951 and left Germany, where they had been living in a displaced persons camp, for America and hopefully a better life. Latvia, which had been an independent republic since 1918, was annexed by the USSR in 1940. It was overrun by the German Army during World War II but retaken in 1944-45. Dambro's hometown is now Fremont, Nebraska.

When Dambro was in Vietnam for 12 months working at POW collection points, he found the work not only physically but also mentally straining—especially having to watch people taking out on the prisoners their frustrations over the war and seeing their colleagues killed in war-torn country.

After observing the conflict firsthand, Dambro says, "If I had it to do all over again, I would have gone in sooner." He blames much of the prolonging of the war on some "great politicians" in this country.

"We could have been in there and out already," he states simply, were it not for these politicians.

After being released from the Marine Corps in 1969, Dambro married and brought his wife to the OU campus to begin his college education. He would have been here sooner, back in 1965, he explains, but at that time there weren't any openings as football manager. And his heart wasn't in coming here without getting that job. Knowing the draft call was inevitable, he enlisted in the Marine Corps.

During his last six months in the service, Dambro began writing the OU athletic office inquiring about football manager openings for 1969-70. One month before his release, an offer came: Either be football manager or live in the efficiency apartment over the OU Golf House and take care of the building. Dambro took both.

As a veteran, married, Dambro receives \$205 a month—giving him a potential drawing of almost \$7,500 for his 36 months' entitlement on the G.I. Bill. But as an out-of-state student, his tuition alone for the 124

hours he needs to graduate will amount to almost \$4,500—and that doesn't include special fees. Neither does it take into account the fact that tuition costs are not stable—but ever increasing.

As football manager, Dambro receives his books free and a monthly subsistence allowance. His wife, Connie, who's had a year of college, works full time as a secretary in the College of Education.

For Dambro, receiving the veterans benefits means the difference between having to take on another part-time job on weekends and having some time to study for his 16-credit-hour load this semester.

Would he have been able to go to OU, or any college, without the G.I. Bill?

"Well, I would have tried it, at least," he says. "I kinda had hopes of coming here."

And now that he's here, he's going to try to see just how far he can go.

freedom from a weekend job

Guntars Dambro

