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Published 10/21/2002

Schneider: Readers divided on police chief controversy

Columnists



Schneider: Call Waiting rude in extreme, reader

says

Clearly I'm not the only one not wild about playing the Call Waiting game: [read more](#)

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jschneid@lsj.com



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Melot: Apply welfare rules to pols

Jennifer Granholm and Dick Posthumus are done with debates for this gubernatorial election. And, considering their comments on some subjects, that's not all a bad thing. [read more](#)

Past columns
dmelot@lsj.com

Readers had plenty to say regarding my column about Owosso Police Chief Nelson Gates.

Gates, as you may recall, was relieved of duty after I wrote about allegations that his Vietnam combat experiences, as described in two Argus Press newspaper stories, were fabrications.

Gates insists the military records that show he never left Georgia during his two years in the Army were falsified to conceal his participation in secret missions.

- From Beverly Varney of Lansing: "Another side of John Schneider comes to light. ..."

"An attack on an officer with 36 years of service ... smells worse than dead fish. While some Vietnam vets might object if he is, in fact, not being truthful about his service, of what interest is it to the general public to see this man smeared?"

"Shame on you."

- From Alma Turk of Owosso: "How dare Nelson Gates say he was in Vietnam if he wasn't?"

"We knew guys who went there and came home in a damn box. If Mr. Gates is lying, he is a disgrace to those who fought for their country, and even gave their lives for it."

Tabloid news

- From Bonnie Ward of DeWitt: "It is one thing to take on a big company, like the phone industry, or a big business, but to pick on a person in the press because of what seems to be no more than bragging is too much."

"Did what he said affect his job performance or hurt someone else? I expect this type of thing from a tabloid, but not you. I hope that next time something like this happens, you let other reporters do the article."

- From Dennis Green of Brighton: "The facts appear to lead to only one conclusion: This was a fabrication in Mr. Gates' mind that got out of control. He told the story so many times that he could not back away from it. What a sad way to retire."

By the book

- From Bill Le Veck of DeWitt: "I believe what we have here is a case of

stolen valor, as depicted in a book by B.G. Burkett called 'Stolen Valor.'

"Mr. Gates' claims to have no records of his actions in Vietnam because he was on classified missions are, I believe, false. His military record would include all medals he is entitled to, even if he was awarded them because of a classified mission.

"And if the mission was classified, why did he talk about it in the first place?

"I am a Marine Corps veteran. Although I did not see any action, I know what it's like to be in a classified program. I worked on the B-2 stealth bomber program for six years. I held a top-secret clearance. The program is still classified, but I can talk about it."

"I think Mr. Gates owes an apology to all veterans."

- From Joseph Potvin of Lansing: "I am a real live Vietnam veteran. It would appear that Mr. Gates may be a 'wannabe.' The 'wannabe' phenomenon is very real, and is an affront to all of us who served in Vietnam. It is important to reveal imposters when they are discovered.

"I do have my medals and awards; they were earned the hard way."

- From John Moran, social studies teacher at Charlotte High School: "It was ironic that your column on Nelson Gates ran on the day I planned to discuss false combat claims in my Vietnam War class.

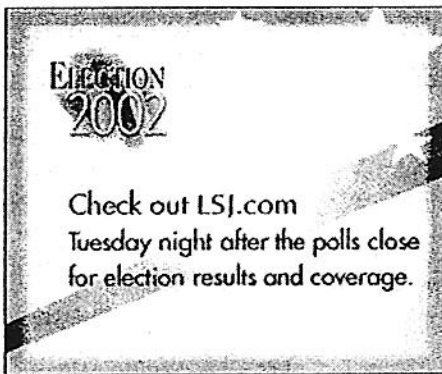
"People impersonating Vietnam veterans is a bigger problem than you might think."

- From Tina Ricksgers of Owosso: "I guess the person who sent the anonymous letter is a coward and must not have much faith in what he or she is saying.

"Nothing in the paper will ever change my mind about Mr. Gates. He is a wonderful person. Now, if you want to print something about Mr. Gates, print this."

What do you think? Call John Schneider at 377-1175, send a fax to 377-1298 or e-mail jschneid@lsj.com.

Include your name, phone number, city, town or township.



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