

Sailor's letter to brother worth heeding

He was not a psychologist nor did he have a group of letters behind his name qualifying him to be a guidance counselor. He was Aviation Ordnance Second Class Michael Schafernocker, USN, but he had learned a lot since he was graduated from Sam Houston High School and entered the Navy two years ago.

He liked the Navy but had plans for his life when he got out of the "canoe club" in two more years. But he will not be getting out of the "canoe club." Mike died Monday in Vietnam when his helicopter was shot down.

Mike had a younger brother, who like so many high school boys, is just not carried away with attending school. He prefers getting a job so he can have more money.

In January Mike gave his brother some advice. It is advice that all the "Ronnies" in the country would do well to heed. It is not from a parent, teacher, minister or youth worker, but from a guy who learned about life looking down the barrel of a machine gun mounted in the door of a helicopter.

In hopes that his letter might help other boys, Mike's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Schafernocker, 1810 Edna, made this part of his letter available for publication.

"I might have already said something about it before, but be sure and tell Ronnie to stick with school. If he thinks that he is putting up with a lot of crap from the teachers he is 180 off.

"I guess you realize now or probably did before, but when I left on the plane for San Diego to boot camp that was the last time that I will be actually living at home. Yes, I may visit, but I won't be living there. I will be out in the world on my own. I am now, in a sort of a way, but Uncle Sam is taking care of me. Once I get out of this canoe club I am up against a world that is mighty, mighty big with a lot of pitfalls and problems that turn up every time you turn around. It kind of scares me in a way, because right now I haven't made up my mind. I am going to have to do some fast thinking.

"Ronnie, the very least you can have in today's world is a high school educa-

tion. I am finding out now that all these girls and the cars aren't what they are made up to be. You can't eat a car, and what do you do with a girl once you run out of money and can't hold down a job. It's more like what's the girl going to do.

In today's world you are going to have to live with one person. You are going to have problems which will not be caused by anyone but yourself. No one, not even Mom and Dad are going to be helping you once you get out of school because you know as well as I do that ever since we were young, Mom and Dad have been teaching us the ways that they know best. They have been good enough to teach us the facts of life that other people never see.

"You have seen for yourself what a little hard work will do in the purchasing of the car. From now on you are going to have to see that Mom and Dad are going to have to stand by their guns and what they say is the law.

"Everybody grows up. You can't help it. Along with growing up comes responsibility. This is not only to yourself but to every person that you are in touch with and a lot that you never see. Ronnie, someday you're going to wake up and see that what everyone has said will have made sense. I have done what I can, now the rest is up to you...

"Mom, I can see now that in this little statement to Ronnie that he is not the only one with a problem. I feel that I too am in this state, in a way. All I can say is now that I have realized it, I believe that I am going to be burning a little more midnight oil.

"Please tell Ronnie that I will make a bargain and a bet with him. I cannot say what the stakes will be except happiness and being well off and the other things that go with a life that is lived to its fullest. But, I bet you Ronnie, that my life will be more fruitful and that I will be more set for life within the next seven years than you will. I would really like to know your answer and I want you to know that I am dead serious.

"I can't think of much more to say, but that I miss you all and I will be seeing you all in 5 and 1/2 months."

There it is. To the "Ronnies" in this country who want to quit school before they are prepared. Some advice and a challenge from a sailor who did all he could. He died so you would have the freedom to decide if you will be a success or failure—"the rest is up to you...."



MICHAEL SCHAFERNOCKER

1949-1969