

**Golfers, Gophers, and Guerillas:
From the Caddyshack to the Classroom**

**Fran Moran, Ph.D.
Department of Political Science
New Jersey City University
Jersey City, NJ 07030**

“To kill you must know your enemy. In this case, my enemy is a varmint. And a varmint will never quit. Ever. They’re like the Viet Cong. Varmint Cong.”

– Carl Spackler, Assistant Greenskeeper, Bushwood Country Club

I suppose that most readers of the *Forum*, certainly any of you has ever teed up a Titleist, can readily identify the source of my opening epigraph as Bill Murray’s character in Harold Ramis’ 1980 film classic, *Caddyshack*.ⁱ In the following I argue that besides being a great comedy and probably the best golf movie ever made, this film is also one of the most politically subversive; that, in its own way, it is as critical of US involvement in Vietnam as other more acclaimed political films of the era (e.g., *Apocalypse Now*, *Deer Hunter*, *Coming Home*). My discussion focuses on one of the running jokes in the film; i.e., the attempts of assistant greenskeeper Carl Spackler to eradicate a gopher that is damaging the golf course. I examine the scenes with Carl (Bill Murray) and the gopher and argue that the interplay between these two characters is much more than a showcase for Murray’s comedic gifts. Upon closer inspection, these scenes provide a running commentary on the history of US involvement in Vietnam, with Murray serving as a stand-in for the US military and the gopher representing the communist insurgents.

In doing so, I hope to draw attention to two broader academic issues. The first is in keeping with the theme for this issue of the *Forum* and show how we can incorporate

artifacts from popular culture to inform classroom instruction. In this particular case, the way in which a classic comedy can help students understand US military thinking in Vietnam and Iraq. The second is, I believe as important, and may be viewed as the “flip side” of the theme; namely the way in which academic tools forged in a liberal arts education enhance our students’ understanding of popular culture. That is, the kind of liberal arts education we provide at the university prepares students to discover nuances of meaning within the various components of popular culture that allows for a much richer and enjoyable experience of that culture.

I begin with a brief account meant to establish the point that finding a critique of Vietnam within this comedy is not completely off the wall. In the middle sections of the paper I then breakdown sequentially the scenes between Murray and the gopher and connect them to parallel developments in the Vietnam War. My conclusion offers some tentative suggestions about whether the lessons here may also apply to the current war in Iraq.

I. War as a Laughing Matter

Before beginning my study of the film, I first want to establish the idea that finding a critique of the war within a comedy and within the *oeuvre* of Harold Ramis’ Hollywood career should not be dismissed out of hand.ⁱⁱ In terms of the first, we have numerous examples of Hollywood fare mining warfare for laughs – ranging from *Dr. Strangelove* (1961), to *M*A*S*H* (1974), to *Stripes* (1981) – so that the prospects of finding a discussion of war, however veiled, in a comedy like *Caddyshack* is not all that unlikely. I mention *Stripes* here not because it is a film of the same caliber as either of the other two films, but because Ramis co-starred (with Murray) and co-wrote the film’s

screenplay. At one point in an interview where he addresses his experience filming *Stripes*, Ramis notes that “My whole problem was, we’re doing an Army movie and we’re not going to talk about Vietnam? What can I put in this movie to convey my antiwar sentiments? ... We did it when Bill says, ‘We’ve been kicking ass for two hundred years—we’re ten and one!’ *That* was my reference to Vietnam” (Friend, 2004). Although of draft age during the war, Ramis did not serve: “Ramis avoided service in Vietnam by checking every box on the Army’s medical-history form, claiming to suffer from conditions ranging from night sweats and bed-wetting to homosexuality” (Friend, 2004)

So, I think the prospect that Ramis may have attempted to inject his antiwar sentiments into another film shot at roughly the same time as *Stripes*, should not be dismissed out of hand. Likewise, the fact that he could view what is essentially a one-off throw away line in the middle of a lengthy (and very funny) Murray monologue as a subversive statement of his anti-war views should at least allow for the possibility that a superficially comedic interaction between Murray and a gopher could carry deeper import. Now, admittedly, *Caddyshack*, unlike, *Stripes*, is not set within the military. However, Ramis does inject an element of military life – complete with uniforms, strategy, and combat – into *Caddyshack*; namely through Murray’s attempts to kill the gopher. Indeed, Ramis provides an early clue to the pivotal place of the gopher within the film in the opening scenes of the movie, where the gopher is the first character introduced.

The Early Years of the War: Gophers and Guerillas

Caddyshack beginsⁱⁱⁱ with a shot of a private country club coming to life for a day of golf, only to zoom in on a tunnel being dug beneath the pristine fairways of the club, which we soon learn is caused by a gopher. The gopher pokes its head from the mound and begins “dancing” to the movie’s upbeat theme song, “I’m Alright” and the film is underway (“Rise and Shine,” scene 1). Shortly after the opening credits roll, the camera follows another tunnel trail being dug across a fairway, continuing up to the 14th green, and stopping beneath the cup. In short order we see the flagstick wobble and eventually disappear into the ground. The President of the club, Judge Smales (Ted Baxter), observing the incident, immediately and excitedly summons his head greenskeeper, MacTavish, for an explanation. MacTavish at first seems shocked at the news that gophers may be infesting the course, but he quickly speculates that rather than being indigenous to the natural landscape of the course, the animals “are turning in from that construction site” beyond the perimeter of the club. Upon receiving the judge’s order to eradicate the rodent, MacTavish dutifully promises to “put his best man on it,” a choice who turns out to be Assistant Greenskeeper Carl Spackler (Bill Murray). The camera then cuts to Spackler, wearing a camouflage hat and khaki shorts, ogling some women golfers. All in all, it’s a humorous exchange that sets the stage for one of the film’s running jokes and important subplots; namely, Spackler’s attempts to kill the gopher. But if we set aside the humor and revisit the scene with a more critical eye, we can see Ramis setting in motion a running critique of US involvement in Vietnam.

With this opening sequence, Ramis signals to the audience both the importance of the gopher in the film and clues to the nature of that importance. On a golf course, the flagstick indicates to the golfer the location of the hole on the green, and courses vary in the color schemes they use for that purpose. In this case, note that the flag on the 14th green (the one taken by the gopher) features a yellow number on a red background, a color scheme matching that of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (i.e., North Vietnam; the South Vietnamese flag is red with a yellow background).



Figure 1: North Vietnamese Flag

The hole number itself is also a potential clue in that if we subtract fourteen years from the release date of the movie, we're at 1966. That year saw the first large-scale US military search and destroy operations in the South, 389,000 US troops deployed in Vietnam (up from 184,000 at the end of 1965), and Barry Sadler's "Ballad of the Green Beret" as the biggest selling U.S. single, holding the Number One spot on the US pop charts for 5 weeks. The activities of the gopher at the green are also significant since, as a rule, these rodents do not confiscate flagsticks, and a tunnel deep enough to accommodate the 7-foot stick is probably beyond the excavating abilities of these animals (tunnels tend to be 4 to 18 inches below ground, although some may have chambers up to

5 feet below ground; see Kern, 1991; and Knight, 2000; see Figure 1 below)

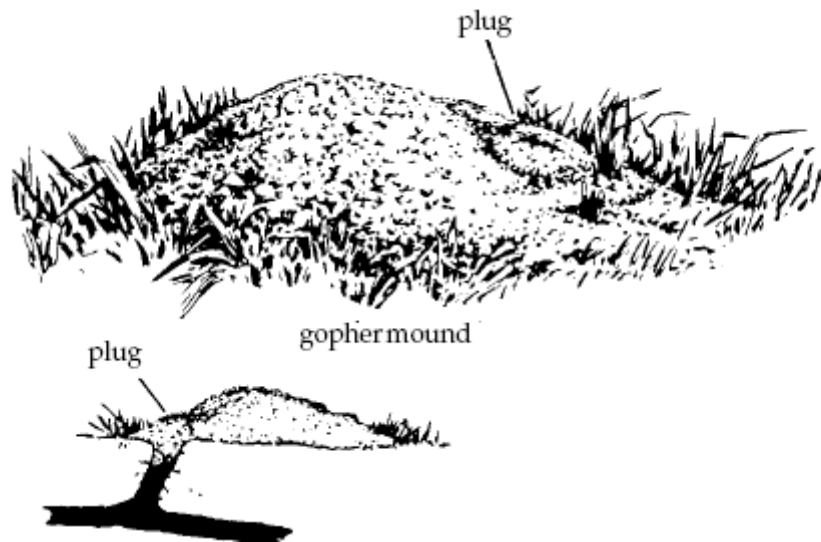


Figure 2: Gopher Mound and Tunnel System (from Case, 2006)

However, capturing the flag *is* generally the object of war game activities. We should note that while it is true that these animals do in fact dig tunnels, and showing the gopher using the tunnel network to move through the golf course has at least a loose connection to reality, the behavior also has parallels to the war in Vietnam. As noted above, Communist forces throughout the war relied on elaborate tunnel networks for safety and as a means of moving personnel and materiel. The Cu Chi tunnels, for instance, comprised a vast 75-mile network around Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon); and American troops and their allies had special units devoted to ferreting out and destroying the tunnels.^{iv}

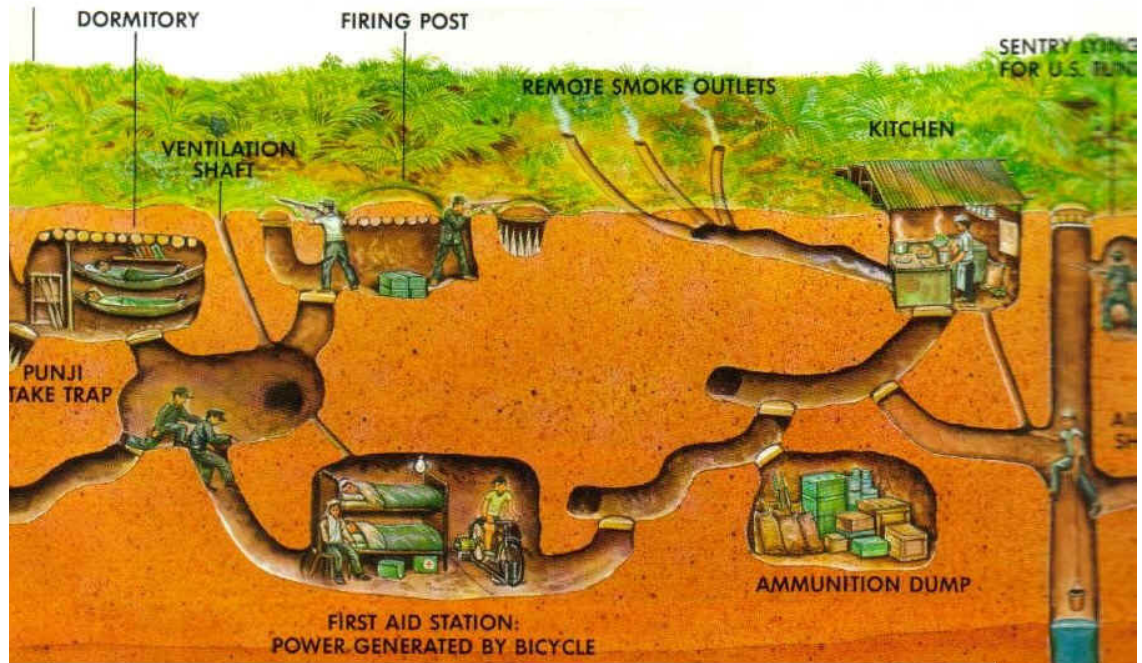


Figure 3: Tunnel System of Communist Forces in Vietnam (from Diggerhistory website)

In other words, we find that the movie opens with a subtle militaristic edge, and one which points towards the conflict in Vietnam.

If we view the gopher as a stand in for communist forces (either Viet Cong or North Vietnamese) then the exchange between the judge and his head greenskeeper takes on another dimension that is worth exploring in more detail. First, note that in identifying the Baxter character as a “judge” rather than as the president or co-founder of the club (which, we learn later, he is), Ramis is also identifying him as a officer of the United States government. And much as Judge Smales is keenly aware of the threat that gophers can pose to the golf course, U.S. officials at the time were alert to the dangers posed by communist forces in Vietnam. Furthermore, the question as to the ultimate source of the gopher infestation – native to the golf course ecosystem or interlopers from abroad – was

also a key question for American officials throughout the War. That is, determining whether or not communist forces were a native opposition group challenging the U.S. supported government in the South or infiltrators coming in from the North, Laos, and Cambodia, would shape both US justification of, and policies for, the war.

This short scene provides a wonderful example, I think, of the way in which popular culture can be used to enhance classroom discussion. In short order the scene can be used as a springboard for discussions of animal ethology, Vietnamese history, golfing history, and US military strategy in the war.

If we return to the Smales/MacTavish exchange, recall that MacTavish quickly placed blame for the gophers on the construction-work taking place just outside club property. For MacTavish, placing responsibility for the infestation on outside factors – i.e., the activities of the East European sounding, if not actually Russian, “Czervik Construction Company” – makes perfect sense. Had he conceded that the gophers were a natural part of the club’s ecosystem, he would have also conceded that he had not been properly taking care of the grounds and had in fact allowed the infestation to occur. Analogously, in terms of the Vietnam situation, it would have been similarly difficult for the United States to concede that communist opposition to the American supported government in the south was related to the activities of that government rather than due to activities of regimes (be it the communist government in the Hanoi, or its sponsors in Beijing and Moscow) beyond the border.^v So, for example, a State Department report explained that “South Vietnam is fighting for its life against a brutal campaign of terror and armed attack inspired, directed, supplied, and controlled by the Communist regime in Hanoi ... Above all, the war in Vietnam is not a spontaneous and local rebellion against

the established government” (State Department White Paper, 27 February 1965). And much as the Judge ordered that the gophers be destroyed in order to preserve the course, so too did the US claim that it was intervening in South Vietnam to protect the country from these outside aggressors:

For more than 10 years the people and the Government of South Vietnam, exercising the inherent right of self-defense, have fought back against these efforts to extend Communist power south across the 17th parallel. The United States has responded to the appeals of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam for help in this defense of the freedom and independence of its land and its people (State Department White Paper, 27 February 1965).

Eradication and the War I: Identifying the Enemy

After his dressing down from the Judge, MacTavish goes in search of his assistant greenskeeper to relay the instruction to remedy the problem with the gophers (“Gopher Alert, scene 4). When he finds Spackler, he informs him that he is to set aside his previous work schedule and instead kill all the gophers on the course. But Spackler initially has difficulty understanding MacTavish’s Scots accent and confuses “gophers” with “golfers;” and he dutifully reminds his superior that killing the latter will land him in prison. When the miscommunication is clarified and Spackler understands that he is to kill the gophers rather than the golfers, he mutters “that’s okay. We can do that. We don’t even have to have a reason.” With the identification of the enemy and the threat posed clarified, the movie shifts to a protracted sequence of scenes involving Carl’s attempts to kill the gopher. In the following sections of my discussion I’ll continue to

develop the parallels to the Vietnam War effort by examining the strategy and tactics Spackler deploys against his enemy and how they connect to Ramis' anti-war views.

The next time we see the gopher is shortly after Spackler receives his marching orders ("Gopher Geysers and Careening Clubs," scene 10). Murray, as Spackler, still wearing the camouflage hat, is shown singing "great big gobs of greasy, grimy, gopher guts" to the tune of the children's ditty "The Old Gray Mare;" dragging a large hose across the fairway, and inserting the nozzle into a gopher mound. He mutters in the general direction of the gopher: "How about a nice cool drink, varmints? Scum, slime, menace to the golfing industry. You're a disgrace and you're varmints. You're one of the lowest members of the food chain and you'll probably be replaced by the rat." While engaged in the hose ploy, Spackler spots the gopher peeking out of an adjacent mound. In short order he drops the hose and nonchalantly ambles toward the other mound. His monologue continues, with "When I have been pushed ... I think it's about time that somebody teach these varmints a little lesson about morality and about what it's like to be a decent upstanding member of society."^{vi} When a lunge to capture the gopher falls short, Spackler reaches into the hole and calls to the animal ("Come to Carl, varmint, come to Carl") in an attempt to lure and catch it. Wary of Spackler's intentions, the gopher resists the entreaties and retreats deeper into the tunnel, a tactic which provokes Murray into flashing an obscene gesture; which in turn leads the gopher to nip at Murray's extended middle finger. This enrages Spackler and he runs to retrieve his hose. He immediately returns, dragging the powerful weapon behind him: "Okay, I guess we're playing for keeps now. I guess the kidding around is pretty much over, huh? I guess it's just a matter now of pumping about 15,000 gallons of water down there, to teach you a

little bit of a lesson. Is that it? I think it is.” In due course Spackler inserts the hose’s nozzle deep into the burrow and turns the water on full bore, the effect of which is to inadvertently set off a series of geyser outbursts that reveal both the futility of the attempt and the scope of the problem.

The scene is quite funny, and, combined with the previous scene involving Spackler and the gopher, continues both to develop the Vietnam war connection and to advance Ramis’ critique of the war. In terms of the former, we’ll first turn our attention to Spackler’s ode to the virtues of disemboweled gophers just before setting off to engage the gopher in “combat.” One of the more common if less well known aspects of the war was the way in which servicemen refitted folksongs and popular standards to the conditions and situations of the war (see, for example, Cleveland [1986], Bartman [1989]).^{vii} While the dark humor of these songs probably helped relieve some of the stress before combat, the imagery used – i.e., extreme violence, denigration of the enemy – also helped loosen some of the social taboos that might impede battlefield success. Obviously, remorse and compassion for the enemy hinder performance in the midst of a firefight, and one way to overcome these emotions is to nurture the idea that the people you are firing at are not entitled to fully human treatment. We can see the same process at work in Spackler’s first monologue: dehumanize the enemy as a means to desensitize the soldier. Of course in this case, since the enemy is already a “varmint” Spackler cannot simply bestialize his opponent (as one can do with a human enemy), so instead he insults his adversary by placing it at the bottom of the food chain. Note, though, that even the nomenclature Carl uses debases the animal, in that “varmint” is a regional variation of “vermin” and carries with it the associated connotations of a pest and undesirable animal.

The violent imagery and name calling is repeated in the next scene (“4th of July Dance/Night of the Living Gopher,” scene 11) as well, where Spackler, just before embarking on a sniper expedition to shoot and kill the gopher, feigns to pick up the scent of gopher pheromones and muses “the only good varmint poontang is dead varmint poontang.” In other words, the life of the enemy is not valued in the same way as is the life of one’s compatriots. Much as we can kill gophers with reckless abandon (“we don’t even need a reason”) and in good conscience for being a menace to the golf course, so too could American forces kill communist insurgents in Vietnam. Indeed, through Spackler’s behavior here, Ramis is offering an explanation for My Lai and other atrocities of the war by showing how the attitude of the US military towards its adversary – that communists, communist sympathizers, and those suspected of being so – were somehow less than fully human, or at least not to be treated as equals.

This brings me to one final piece in developing the gopher/Vietcong connection and that is the nature of the threat posed by the gopher. Rather than indicting the animal for destroying the greens, fairways, and plant life of the course, Spackler instead charges him with menacing the golfing industry. In other words, it is a tacit acknowledgement that while the gopher may have a role to play in the natural environment; it nonetheless must be eradicated because of the threat posed to an economic interest. Likewise, the great Red Menace of communism had to be stopped in Indochina because of the threat it posed to the American way of life, a way of life that included, of course, capitalism.

In terms of use within the classroom, this sequence expands our academic inquiry even further. The scene can be used to explore folk music in general, protest music

during the War, linguistics and the evolution of regional dialects, military training techniques, Cold War history, and perhaps even the biological basis of sexual desire.

Having properly identified the enemy we face, the struggle between Carl and the gopher is presented as one of escalating violence that ultimately ends in the destruction of much of the golf course, but with the gopher surviving. In the next two sections of my discussion I examine that evolution of the struggle and continue to draw parallels to the US experience in Vietnam. We begin this part of the paper with the scene described at the start of this section -- the ineffectual use of the water hose to try to kill the gopher by flooding its tunnels -- since it amounts to the opening salvo in Carl's struggle with the gopher.

Eradication and the War II: Engaging the Enemy

In the efforts to remove the threat to the golf course – and by extension, communist forces in South Vietnam – it is worth noting that little formal attempt was made to find a peaceful resolution to the dispute. In terms of the gopher problem, trapping would be a more peaceful resolution than death, and Carl does make a belated, if half-hearted attempt at this peaceful resolution. I say “belated” because his initial solution is the hose ploy, so he has clearly already planned for a relatively violent resolution. To his credit, though, when he spots the gopher peeking out of its mound, he seems to try to do his best not to startle or frighten the animal, which at least hints that a peaceful resolution could be in the offing. Recall that Carl slowly approaches the gopher and tells it he is going to teach it a lesson about morality and what it means to be a member of civilized society. Presumably, these lessons could include moral tenets like seeking the peaceful resolution to disputes, the golden rule, and respect.^{viii} Yet when the gopher

rebuffs the offer of surrender (“come to Carl”), Carl responds with an obscenity, an act that shows little patience, tolerance, or understanding of the gopher’s point of view. Indeed it reveals little to no sympathy whatsoever. So any moral lesson to be derived would almost of necessity be the opposite of what one would expect; and the only object lesson in morality that Carl may be giving is in how *not* to behave. Indeed, in setting himself up as a figure capable of teaching a moral lesson, and then falling so far short in exhibiting morality in his behavior, we are treated to a lesson in Carl’s hypocrisy. Insofar as Carl is a stand-in for the American military, we can then see, by extension, Ramis pointing to the hypocrisy of American behavior during the war.

To take but on example, American political leaders routinely framed the war as a struggle between freedom and tyranny; yet the regime we were defending neither practiced nor respected these freedoms. Similarly, American political leaders would decry the civilian deaths attributed to the Vietcong and North Vietnamese, and ignore the civilian casualties produced by American bombing. Thus, in an address on 3 November 1969, President Nixon could intone “We saw a prelude of what would happen in South Vietnam when the Communists entered the city of Hue last year. During their brief rule there, there was a bloody reign of terror in which 3,000 civilians were clubbed, shot to death, and buried in mass graves.” Yet no mention is made of the far higher number of civilian deaths brought on by the mass bombing of the North during the war (around 1,000,000 civilian deaths; see Hirschman, 1995); nor of those civilians caught in the expansion of the war that Nixon authorized into Cambodia and Laos earlier that same year. In fact, Nixon made no attempt to explain why it is permissible for the United States

to send its troops into Cambodia and Laos in pursuit of a political objective, and impermissible for the North Vietnamese to do the same.

While it is true that the gopher rebuffs Carl's peaceful overture and in fact initiates the violence – it strikes first blood, so to speak – its options were severely limited at the time. Surrender likely would have meant certain death. What is interesting is Carl's reaction to the nip on the finger, in that the response – pumping 15,000 gallons of water into the gopher burrow – seems wholly out of proportion to the injury received. Similarly, whether or not the communists (either Vietcong or from the North) were the first to resort to violence in seeking to destabilize and supplant the government in the South, the sheer tonnage of munitions expended by US forces during the war seems out of line with the scope of the conflict. Estimates on the amount of bombs used by the US in the war range from 4 to 8 million tons (Wiesner, 1988; Harrison 1993) and either figures dwarfs the 2.7 million dropped by Allied Forces in all theaters of World War II, a much larger conflagration (Harrison 1993; Littauer and Uphoff, 1971).

Carl's barehanded reach into the burrow and the entreaty to surrender is the first and last time we see any attempt at peaceful resolution. Instead, through the remainder of the film we find a steady escalation in the use of force – from hose, to rifle, to explosives that ultimately destroy the course. However short the peaceful overture may be, though, it does provide the opportunity to explore more philosophically based themes of morality in general, and morality in warfare in particular.

Eradication and the War III: Escalation and Destruction

After the failure of the flood plan, Carl next tries a nighttime sniper attack. In preparation for the attack, we see him sitting in his shack cleaning and loading a rifle,

thinking aloud: “Licensed to kill gophers, by the government of the United Nations. A man free to kill gophers at will.” At this point in the struggle, Carl is befuddled by the gopher’s resilience, and he develops a begrudging respect for his adversary: “To kill you must know your enemy. In this case, my enemy is a varmint. And a varmint will never quit. Ever. They’re like the Viet Cong. Varmint Cong.” He then continues musing on the best means to accomplish this task: “What you gotta do, you gotta fall back on superior fire power and superior intelligence. And that’s all she wrote.” We next see him on the night of the club’s 4th of July party creeping about the course in full camouflage, toting a high-powered rifle (and a six-pack of beer) and positioning himself beside a tree waiting for the gopher to appear. When the gopher emerges from a mound, Carl does get off a clear shot, but he misses and the gopher lives to dig another day (“4th of July Party/Night of the Living Gopher,” scene 11).

With this scene it is difficult to see how Ramis could get more explicit in indicating that the struggle between Carl and the gopher is a stand-in for the war in Vietnam. Carl’s assessment of both his enemy and the means to defeat him parallel closely those of US military leaders in Vietnam. In terms of the former, General William Westmoreland has noted that during the war, “the objective in Washington was to raise the cost of the war from the standpoint of the enemy, to the point that he would come to some negotiated settlement. The attitude of the enemy was not comparable to what our attitude would have been under the circumstances. He was ready, willing and able to pay a far greater price than I would say we Caucasians would” (Westmoreland, 1998). Similarly, former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara has stated that “there are certain things that bombing can’t accomplish. They can’t break the will of people under

certain circumstances. They didn't break the will of the North Vietnamese" (McNamara, 1998).

As we can see in the preceding quotes from Westmoreland and McNamara, US military strategy in the early years of the war was built on a strategy of attrition, of using superior US firepower, in particular near total command of the air, to try to bomb the North into submission. Of course success in this endeavor rested in no small measure on superior US technology. So through Spackler's short speech, Ramis is presenting the essential elements of US military policy in the early phases of the war. The fact that the gopher survives then becomes an indictment of the failure of that policy. In describing the political leadership of his American adversaries, North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap pointed out that "In general, I must say they were the most intelligent people, with certain talents such as military, political and diplomacy skills. They were intelligent people. That was the first point that I want to say. The second point I want to say is that they knew little about Vietnam and her people" (Giap, 1998).

With two failures behind him, and the gopher showing no signs of leaving of its own accord, Carl returns to his shack, regroups, and begins to rethink his approach to eliminating the gopher. Scene 23 ("Critter-Shaped Explosives/Buddies for Life") begins with a shot of the gopher peering through the window of Carl's shack as Carl sits fashioning clay animals made, we soon learn, of Semtex. Again, we find Carl thinking aloud about his approach to the war, and in this case, in light of Giap's assessment above, his thinking seems remarkably prescient: "I have to laugh, because I have out finessed myself. My foe, my enemy is an animal. And in order to conquer him I have to think like an animal, and, when possible, to look like one. I gotta get inside this dude's pelt and

crawl around for a few days. Who is the gopher's ally? His friend? The harmless squirrel and the friendly rabbit. I'm going to use these two guys to do the dirty work for me." After fashioning an army of explosive models, Carl begins to place his weapons in various burrow entrances around the course. This strategic placement continues in the next two scenes. In Scene 25 ("New Stakes, and a New Contestant") the gopher tentatively touches and investigates one of the models and scurries off. In Scene 26 ("Hard Luck in the Home Stretch,") Carl sings "The Ballad of the Green Beret" as he continues to plant the explosives throughout the course. The film ends ("Winning is a Blast!" scene 27) with Carl detonating the explosives. In short order we see much of the course destroyed as blast after blast roils the hills and valleys of the fairways. When the smoke clears and the dust settles, we watch Carl slink off after the debacle, eyes darting side to side to see if anyone is watching. The camera then zooms to show the gopher emerging from a tunnel and choking, and showing minor wounds from the blasts. He gradually regains his composure, and starts dancing to the closing music (a reprise of "I'm Alright").

In this sequence Ramis presents his full critique of the war. That after all the bombs, all the destruction, the net effect of US policy in Vietnam was to destroy much of the country to no avail; that in the end the Viet Cong triumphed despite the superior fire power and intelligence of US forces, while the US forces sneaked off hoping no one would notice the disaster of the plan. The plan to use purported allies of the gopher to kill the gopher echoes Nixon's "Vietnamization" plan to gradually replace US troops with South Vietnamese units. And for all Carl's talk of getting to know his enemy, he clearly never did and, Giap's assessment of the US military leaders remains intact.

Indeed, in showing the gopher observing Carl as he fashions his Semtex menagerie, and inspecting the explosives as they are being placed, Ramis is suggesting that the Vietnamese likely knew us better than we knew them.

Conclusion:

A bit later in the same interview I cited in my introduction, Ramis concedes that “our movies haven’t ended war or defeated the Republican Party or inspired huge strides in social justice. By allowing people to laugh at injustice or hypocrisy, satirical comedy enables them to feel like they’ve done something: I’m cool, I get what’s wrong with that. That self-satisfaction works against activism, so satirical comedy might actually be counterproductive” (Friend, 2004). Yet as the US is engaged in another war in Asia, one can’t help but hope that the lessons of our experience will not be lost, and *Caddyshack* is a good place for our students and our political leaders to learn some of those lessons.

Bibliography

- Bartman, William J. "Soldiers' Ballads Tell Saga of Vietnam War." *Stars and Stripes* (European edition), July 24, 1989.
- Case, Ronald M. and Bruce A. Jasch. "Pocket Gophers." Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management. URL: <http://icwdm.org/handbook/rodents/PocketGophers.asp>. Retrieved 3 September 2006.
- Cleveland, Les. 1984. "Soldiers' Songs: The Folklore of the Powerless." URL: <http://faculty.buffalostate.edu/fishlm/folksongs/les01.htm>. Retrieved 2 October 2006.
- Cleveland, Les. 1986. "Songs of the Vietnam War: An Occupational Folklore Tradition." URL: <http://faculty.buffalostate.edu/fishlm/folksongs/les02.htm>. Retrieved 2 October 2006.
- Dittmer, Linda and Gene Michaud, eds. 1990. *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Fish, Lydia. 1993. "Songs of Americans in the Vietnam War." URL: <http://faculty.buffalostate.edu/fishlm/folksongs/americansongs.htm>. Retrieved 2 October 2006.
- Giap, Vo Nguyen. 1998. "Interview on CNN's The Cold War, Episode 11: Vietnam." URL: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/11/interviews/giap/>. Retrieved 16 September 2006.
- Harrison, James P. 1993. "History's heaviest bombing," in *The Vietnam War: Vietnamese and American Perspectives*, ed. Jayne S. Werner and Luu Doan Huynh, pp. 130-139. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe.
- Hirschman, Charles, Samuel Preston, Vu Manh Loi. 1995. "Vietnamese casualties during the American war: a new estimate." *Population and Development Review*, 21:4 783-813.
- Kern, William H., Jr. 1991. "Southeastern Pocket Gopher." URL: http://www.wildlifemanagement.info/publications/pocket_gophers_6.htm. Retrieved 3 September 2006.
- Knight, James E. 2000. "Guide to Pocket Gopher Control in Montana." URL: <http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/mt200009.html>. Retrieved 3 September 2006.
- Littauer, Raphael and Norman Uphoff. 1971. *The Air War in Indochina. Revised Edition*. Boston: Beacon Press.

McNamara, Robert. 1998. "Interview on CNN's The Cold War, Episode 11: Vietnam." URL: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/11/interviews/mcnamara/>. Retrieved 17 September 2006.

Nixon, Richard M. 1969. "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam, 3 November 1969." URL: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=2303>. Retrieved 2 October 2006.

Suid, Lawrence. 1981. "Hollywood and Vietnam." *The Journal of American Culture* Vol. 4 Issue 2.

U.S. State Department. 1965. "Aggression from the North." State Department White Paper on Vietnam, 27 February 1965. URL: <http://www.cnn.com>. Retrieved 17 September 2006.

Westmoreland, William. 1998. "Interview on CNN's The Cold War. Episode 11: Vietnam." URL: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/11/interviews/westmoreland/>. Retrieved 17 September 2006.

Wiesner, Louis A. 1988. *Victims and Survivors: Displaced Persons and Other War Victims in VietNam*. New York: Greenwood Press.

ⁱ Obviously determining the merits of a particular film is a highly subjective enterprise. Nonetheless, I can offer at least some support for my characterization of the film (despite the generally dismal reviews it received upon release). For instance, in a 2005 Bravo television special on the best comedy films of the past 50 years, *Caddyshack* came in at number 2 (just behind *Animal House*). Likewise on the American Film Institute's comedy list (<http://www.afi.com/tvevents/100years/laughs.aspx>) it was ranked 71st all time, and a similar listing at Listology (http://www.listology.com/content_show/cfm/content_id.16813) ranked it at #22.

ⁱⁱ For studies of films devoted to the Vietnam War, see Suid (1981) and Dittmer and Michaud (1990). *Caddyshack* is not mentioned or included in either volume. A reasonably thorough list of movies, complete with reviews, specifically connected to the Vietnam War can be found at: <http://www.geocities.com/warmoviedatabase/mvietnam.html>. *Caddyshack* is not listed among them.

ⁱⁱⁱ All my references to specific scene numbers and titles follow those in the 20th Anniversary Warner Brothers DVD release of *Caddyshack* (2000).

^{iv} For more on these “tunnel rat” units, see the following URLs: http://www.specialoperations.com/History/Vietnam/Tunnel_Rats.htm and <http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-conflicts-periods/vietnam/tunnel-rats.htm>.

^v “Fifteen years ago North Vietnam, with the logistical support of Communist China and the Soviet Union, launched a campaign to impose a Communist government on South Vietnam by instigating and supporting a revolution.” Richard M. Nixon, Speech of 3 November 1969. URL: <http://vietnam.vassar.edu/abstracts.html>

^{vi} In the quote, Murray's speech trails off after the first sentence; I did not elide any dialogue.

^{vii} Rounder Records has gathered a number of these songs and released them as *In Country: Folk Songs of Americans in the Vietnam War* (1991, CDFLY 552 / 0 18964 0552 2 6). The cd is derived from the much larger collection housed at the Library of Congress; URL: <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/guides/VietnamWar.html>

^{viii} We have reason to believe that Carl may have at least some basis for providing moral instruction. In Scene 5 (“Caddy to the Dalai Lama”), he mentions that he had the opportunity to caddy for the Dalai Lama and, in lieu of tip, the Lama promised him “total

consciousness” on his deathbed. It seems unlikely to think that the Lama would proffer such a gift if the recipient were unaware of its significance. Likewise, in Scene 10 (“Gopher Geysers and Careening Clubs”), we first see Carl promising to teach the lady golfers he is ogling “the meaning of the word respect.”