

Morganton Campus Feels Gulf Debate

Views Clash At Western Piedmont

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MORGANTON — Inside a Western Piedmont Community College peace rally, young men spoke quietly about their fear of killing other young men in the Mideast.

Outside the auditorium, vandals had scrawled "America — Love It or Leave It" on posters announcing the rally.

It's a clash of hawk and dove views at this college in conservative Burke County.

Sophomore Charles McGinnis, lead organizer of the rally, said he's not ashamed to say he prefers diplomatic peace to war.

"It's not just for me," he said. "I

wouldn't want to send a brother or a cousin over there."

About 150 students and faculty members gathered for the 11 a.m. rally. They listened to anti-war songs with a heavy metal beat. They heard colleagues urge peace in the Persian Gulf.

Sophomore Jamie Griffin told the group he feared being drafted. "I asked myself, would I be willing to lose my life for this?" he said.

Scribbling defaced another rally poster and criticized the peace-seekers.

"The red white and blue will not run from ANYTHING," it read.

Ralph Soney, a history teacher and organizer, said the anonymous

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TERRY PHARO

From right foreground, Chuck Evitt, Thurman Whisnant and Doug Ellis listen to a fellow

student speak during a peace rally at Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton

Gulf Debate Comes To W. Piedmont

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messages discourage thought about government policy.

"It insinuates that if you do question it, you're not patriotic," Soney said.

John Hall, 20, a student and a former Air Force reserve member who attended the rally, said he thinks peace activists care for their country. They just don't know the facts, he said.

Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein must be stopped, Hall insisted.

The Air Force could decimate Iraqi troops from the skies before the United States puts any soldiers on the ground, he said. Some Iraqi civilians and Americans would die, Hall added, but that's inevitable.

"There's no soft way of looking at it."

Oscar Tate and Michael Barnes, both Vietnam veterans and Morganton residents, said they hoped today's young people would learn from their own troubles.

Tate, walking with a cane, said

he got lymph cancer after being exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange while in the infantry.

"I was 19, drafted," Tate said. "I had my life together, I thought. Within two years' time, it was over."

Barnes said soldiers are killed and maimed for political causes and alliances that shift all too easily.

Said Barnes: "I wish the students understood that the people we fight one day are the ones we support the next."