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TO STEELERS' DEFENSE?

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Sunday

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FINAL

VIETNAM

50 YEARS LATER

The bloody, divisive Vietnam War ended 50 years ago. Western Pennsylvanians fought for their lives in a conflict that tore the United States apart. What follows is the story of the war through the prism of local veterans who lived it.

BY LAURA MALT SCHNEIDERMAN • PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE



Patrick Leach is ready for combat in Vietnam circa 1969. Mr. Leach, now 75 and living in Penn Hills, was wounded four times during the war.

The steamy jungle heat topped 100 degrees, but Patrick Leach was driving a Rome plow — a huge foliage-cutting, bulldozer-like machine — and hot air blowing back from the diesel engine amped up the temperature another 30 degrees.

The roar of the plow filled his ears, as did the helicopter blades chopping the air above. The windows of the plow had only wire coverings, and bugs flew through — malarial mosquitoes, bugs shaped like leaves, 2-inch-long bees whose stings left scars, and when he drove through Vietnam's 3-foot-tall ant-hills, which wasn't uncommon since his mission was

MORE COVERAGE

For more stories and photos related to the 50-year anniversary of the war, use the accompanying QR code.



often to clear 200 acres of jungle a day, red ants swarmed under his clothes, biting everywhere.

It was too hot to wear a shirt. Mr. Leach just had on his flak vest. Like the other men, his last shower had come days earlier, and everyone stank. An M-16 rifle

SEE WAR, PAGE A-10

TRUMP SPENDING BILL

HARD HITS,  
BIG GAINS?  
REVIEWS  
ARE MIXED

Critics say social safety net across Pa. faces major risks; backers tout tax relief goals

By Benjamin Kail and Leia Green  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Many struggling Pennsylvania families, health care providers, food banks and state and local leaders are bracing for the impacts of President Donald Trump's and Republican allies' tax and policy bill that became law Friday, with nonpartisan research groups and nonprofits predicting damaging cuts to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act and federal food assistance.

Republican lawmakers say the "big beautiful bill" makes good on a number of Trump's promises that helped the GOP sweep all three branches of government in November.

They tout the law for providing tax relief by permanently extending broad tax cuts, ramping up investments in border security and defense, phasing out Biden administration

SEE BILL, PAGE A-8

PG SPECIAL REPORT

SILENCE  
& SHAME

How the Jehovah's Witnesses sex abuse crisis in Pa. unfolded

By Madaleine Rubin  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Long after a young woman stepped forward to say she was raped and beaten by a member of a Jehovah's Witnesses congregation, law enforcement agents finally confronted Eric Eleam three years ago at his home in Butler County.

They questioned him about the alleged abuse that started when she was just 12, records show.

They asked him about forcing her to perform sex acts in the privacy of his home.

And they pressed him about his own admission to the crimes during a secret meeting with church members who launched their own inquiry — but never disclosed the allegations to law enforcement.

SEE JEHOVAH'S, PAGE A-6

Resilience, disbelief  
linger in Bethel Park

First in an occasional series

By Kris B. Mamula  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Andy Amrhein, the seventh child in a family of 10 kids, grew up less than 2 miles from the hardware store he now owns in Bethel Park, where he has become a community fixture.

For 28 years, he has hosted the "Handy Andy Show" on KDKA radio Saturday mornings. He answers call-in questions about home repairs. He's also Bethel Park's No. 1 booster.

"It's an amazing, absolutely amazing community that works together," the 65-year-old owner of Evey True Value Hardware said. "I love it."



Bethel Park, where four high school graduates were accepted into U.S. military academies this year, a local record, also was home to the would-be assassin of Donald Trump, Thomas Matthew Crooks.

SEE CROOKS, PAGE A-5



Tim Robbibauro/For the Post-Gazette

Andy Amrhein owns a hardware store in Bethel Park and hosts the "Handy Andy Show" on KDKA radio on Saturdays. Bethel Park is an "absolutely amazing community that works together," he said.

51 DEAD, 27 MISSING  
IN TEXAS FLOODS



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