

# TV show to include Hancock County woman's Vietnam photos

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OF THE NEWS STAFF

As an operating room nurse in 1960s Vietnam, Beth Parks witnessed horror with a zoom lens.

She saw American soldiers with legs blown open, Vietnamese children with pieces of metal lodged in their flesh, and burn victims whose mothers wouldn't recognize them.

Those were just the ones she could save.

Parks returned to the U.S. with some 1,200 photos that documented her stay overseas and the tragedy of war.

"When I got home, I threw them in a clos-

et," she said this week from her home in Corea, a village in Hancock County.

But the photos followed Parks wherever she went: Florida, North Carolina, even a few years she spent in Germany.

In 1990, she opened the boxes and began sifting through the haunting images.

"I must have cried for two days straight," she said.

When Parks stopped crying, though, she had an idea.

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Parks



PHOTO COURTESY OF BETH PARKS

Beth Parks comes out of the second operating room Quonset at the 12th Evacuation Hospital in Cu Chi, Vietnam, circa late 1966 or early 1967.

## Vietnam

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Ten years later, that idea evolved into "A Chunk of My Soul," a 43-minute documentary featuring Parks' photos in a moving montage set to music.

While her documentary was not released to the public, for the first time at least a portion of the former nurse's view of Vietnam will be visible.

Some of it will be featured tonight in a documentary titled "Vietnam Nurses with Dana Delaney," running from 10 to 11 p.m. EDT on the Women's Entertainment cable network.

Parks hasn't seen which of her images will be included, and she said she might be the only one who notices her work. But it's a start.

"Eventually, I'd like to market my own documentary, but that takes money and recognition," she said.

Tonight's program will be hosted by Delaney, who starred in "China Beach," a television series from the late 1980s that portrayed female nurses in Vietnam.

Parks, now 64 and long since removed from combat, could very well have served as a model for the show.

As a volunteer for the U.S. Army Nurse Corps in 1966, Parks was assigned to the 7th Surgical Hospital, or MASH, in Cu Chi, South Vietnam.

A short time later, Parks helped establish the 12th Evacuation Hospital there to replace the MASH unit. She stayed in Cu Chi for about a year, repairing wounded soldiers by day and watching bombs rain over

the Vietnamese countryside by night.

"When I finally went through all my images, I wanted to take people in country to see what I had seen," she said. "It was important to show the wounded, to show the tragedy."

Even with so many photos at her disposal, Parks' documentary took a circuitous route.

Initially developed as something she could take with her to a reunion of the 12th Evac, Parks worked with Kim Mitchell, a media producer at the University of Maine, to create the montage.

She finished her work by infusing the music of recording artist Sarah Brightman. Unfortunately, Parks was never able to secure rights to use Brightman's music and, as a result, "A Chunk of My Soul" never made the transition from shelf to

### Watch it

"Vietnam Nurses with Dana Delaney," including work by Hancock County resident Beth Parks, will be on WE, the Women's Entertainment cable TV channel at 10 p.m. EDT. WE is available in Maine on cable channel 140 as part of the digital basic package through Adelphia.

movie stores and libraries.

Parks said she hopes tonight's documentary might change that by striking a chord with someone willing to help her market her own film.

"Ideally, I'd like to leave my film the way it is, but even if I have to change the music, it will be worth it to get it out there," she said.