

'The Dodge' pays tribute to those who died in Vietnam

By JUDITH EGERTON
The Courier-Journal

The Vietnam War divided the country and families. Often fathers supported the war while their sons marched in objection to U.S. involvement.

During the 1960s, thousands of young men chose to avoid the draft by fleeing to Canada. The decision to go or to dodge Vietnam is the subject of "The Dodge," a new one-act play by Louisville free-lance writer Joseph Woodson Oglesby.

Although the war split families, Oglesby's play has tightened an already close bond with his son, actor Shane Woodson, who is directing the play.

Woodson, who changed his last name from Oglesby for acting purposes, also plays a character in the play, arranged the 1960s music that accompanies the production, created the poster to advertise it and is building the set.

He wants the production of "The Dodge" to be a gift for his father and "to be perfect," he said, Oglesby has stayed away from the rehearsals and will see his script performed for the first time when it opens Thursday night at the Rudyard Kipling.

The play is set in the bus station of Neon, a small town in the Eastern Kentucky mountains. It is 1966 as three young draftees wait for a bus to take them to Fort Campbell. As they

If you go . . .

"The Dodge" will be staged Thursday through Saturday and Oct. 7-10 at 7:30 p.m. at the Rudyard Kipling, 422 W. Oak St. Tickets are \$8. For more information, call 636-1311.

await their future, the three meet a soldier headed to Vietnam and a Vietnam veteran, each with opposing viewpoints about the war.

Oglesby, an ex-newspaperman who worked at The Louisville Times in the mid-1950s, said his son's involvement in acting caused him to consider writing a play. He hit on an idea during the 1992 presidential campaign. Bill Clinton, the Democratic presidential candidate, and Vice President Dan Quayle, running for re-election, had avoided Vietnam. That gave Oglesby the starting point for "The Dodge."

The Vietnam War "was a class war in many ways," said Oglesby, 67. "College kids and rich kids got deferments, but the poor and blacks were cannon fodder."

Oglesby set his play in Eastern Kentucky because many "poor hillbilly and country boys were drafted and couldn't dodge the war," he said.

In the play, Woodson will play J.W., a young man gung-ho for becoming a soldier and going to war.

Woodson, 25, a graduate of Ather-

ton High School, has performed in nearly 40 plays in Louisville and Los Angeles and previously directed two plays as part of the Rudyard Kipling's Roundtable Theatre, "The Caretaker" and "The Glass Menagerie." He also played a role in "A Congress of Wonders," a KET production directed by former Louisvillian Paul Wagner and based on a story by Kentuckian Ed McClanahan.

Bruce Dickinson, a professional actor with more than 20 years' experience in regional summer theater, will play a Vietnam veteran and Medal of Honor winner who has turned against the war.

Besides his two years with The Louisville Times, Oglesby also worked at newspapers in North Carolina, New York and Indiana. During his long journalism career, he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and an Eclipse Award.

As a free-lance writer, Oglesby has written for national publications and published two novels, "The Fires Down Below" and "The Devil's Disciple." Oglesby recently completed a mystery, "The Wildcat Murders," also set in Eastern Kentucky. He also writes for the Daily Racing Form, American Turf Monthly and Racing Weekly under a pen name, Mike "Lucky" English.

Oglesby's first play, "The Dodge," he said, is a tribute to "all the poor kids who went over there (to Vietnam) and did not return."



BY MARY ANN LYONS, THE COURIER-JOURNAL

Joseph Woodson Oglesby, seated left, wrote the play, and his son, Shane Woodson, is directing. In the cast, standing from left, are Jill Clark, Paul Higginbotham, Andrea Vosper, Andy Pyle, Bruce Dickinson, Everett Ruby, Dave Levy, Isaac Deakyne and Christian Wijnberg.